

Berlioz in Time



From
Early Recognition
to
Lasting Renown

Peter Bloom

Berlioz in Time



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to Lasting Renown

Peter Bloom

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—To Catherine, Alex, and Caro

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Prologue

From Early Recognition to Lasting Renown

Dieu! Je vis encore...

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

Berlioz grew up in the provinces of southeastern France. He was not quite eighteen when he arrived in Paris to pursue medical, then musical study. If the formative years had a lasting impact on his life and work as composer, critic, advocate, and adversary, the artistic flame itself was lit in the capital city. Half a century later, the *Symphonie fantastique* would come to represent the culmination of what I have elsewhere called Berlioz’s “initiation”—the *fons et origo* of his instrumental repertory, the trigger of his international renown.¹ The scholars and the critics, the intrepid players and the indomitable *fanatiques* have kept its magical music alive and its fantastical aspects afloat. This collection begins in and around the year of that iconic work, arguably the most sensational first symphony in the history of Western music, and concludes with observations on Berlioz’s principal twentieth- and twenty-first-century biographers, some of whom, to the detriment of objectivity, have seen themselves as rebels with a “cause.” Jacques Barzun, the greatest of yesteryear’s Berliozians, attempted in his day to demonstrate that, as a composer, Berlioz belonged uniquely but unambiguously to the mainstream of music. Barzun’s disciples, of whom I am one, have continued to do battle against those who would nonetheless model the musician as a “maverick.” Others, fearful that it will float too low or gleam too little, have preferred to overinflate the balloon of his importance and over-polish the brilliance of his persona. The man, despite the sound and the fury of his fans, was flawed. But he was astonishingly learned and articulate. His writings, in the community of those authors with whom he may be fairly compared, are exceptional. His music at its best—which is often but not all of the time—is extraordinary. That is a lot. That is enough.

I used to think that most of my various articles, particularly those that offered readers unpublished documents, had served their purpose and settled into comfortable obscurity. I used to believe that some of their findings had become incorporated into the “general knowledge” of those interested in the great French composer and could rest in eternal peace. Now, urged on by friends alert to the needs of current musical scholarship, I have selected these several pieces for resuscitation, encouraged as I have been that their recirculation will prove useful, and perhaps dimly enlightening, to students of Berlioz and of the world of nineteenth-century music. In addition to adjusting passages in need of correction, adding new information, rewriting gobbledygook, and removing hot air, I have attached this prologue, to explain what I believe I have done and am doing, and an epilogue based on an article on Berlioz’s biographers that appeared initially in French, to comment on the writings of those who have supposed, as I do, that Berlioz’s life and work remain significant elements of modern culture, and merit continuing analysis and reflection.

Otherwise, the articles-become-chapters need no special introduction. They are arranged in an order based loosely on the chronology of the principal works and events they consider. This is what I intend by “Berlioz in Time”—and not the evolution of a *style* from something early and imitative to something late and summative: those Beethovenian categories apply uneasily to the music of the unpredictable Frenchman. I do enjoy the coincidence that, in his essay on conducting, Richard Wagner remarked, in English, that “time *is* music.” He probably intended to say, given the context, that “time is *money*”; but perhaps he was telescoping the notion that, to use the later philosopher Susanne Langer’s oft-cited (and oft-misquoted) formulation, “music [is] the passage of time made audible.”² Be this as it may, “Berlioz in time” has served my purpose as I have revised these texts to fit their reincarnation as chapters in a unified book. (The articles originally appearing in French appear here in English, of course, and, in bringing them over, I have felt no loyalty to my second-language prose.) In the chapter on the *Fantastique*, I take a fresh look at some of the musical activities Berlioz engaged in before and during the gestation of the symphony, and at some of the undergraduate campaigns he waged to make himself known. In the chapter on Liszt, I look at the relationship the young pianist maintained with the lovesick composer through a lens tinged, I hope reasonably (after fifty years’ residence at the largest liberal arts college for women in the United States), with feminism. In the chapter on the Théâtre-Italien, I bring to light an episode in the life of the composer that has often remained in the shadows. In the chapter on *Les*

Nuits d'été, one of Berlioz's works that listeners cherish the most, I include new information on Berlioz's incipient relationship with Marie Recio that suggests a real musical connection between the capacities of the young singer and the completion of the cycle. Indeed, the discovery that the woman who became Berlioz's mistress began her career in 1840 under the stage name of Marie Willès, with concerts both in Paris and abroad, has led me to a reconsideration of the genesis of Berlioz's elegant album. In the chapter on Berlioz's "mission" to Germany, I bring into English a little-known document that casts new light on the *raison d'être* of the composer's expedition to the provinces of Goethe and Beethoven: the *voyage* had an administrative purpose as well as the overmastering one, which he announced in public, of making his music known beyond the walls of the city. In the chapter on Wagner, I touch briefly upon some of the elements of the relationship between two titans who shared common ground and suffered copious disparities, a full exposition of which could itself be a history of mid-nineteenth-century European music. In a chapter that originally appeared in German translation, I attempt only to suggest, because I cannot prove, that the original ending of *Les Troyens*, more elaborate than what we hear in the opera house and on the recordings, had a purpose that was more than purely artistic. In the two late chapters on Shakespeare, as well as in the early chapter on Berlioz and the translators, I focus on some of the many moments at which Berlioz engaged passionately and penetratingly with the comedies and tragedies of the Bard. If there is some repetition in those three chapters, and elsewhere, too, you will pardon me, I hope, both for my enthusiasm and my expectation that you will not be reading this book as though it were a nail-biting novel. In "Berlioz Writing the Life of Berlioz," I include information gained from preparing the first fully critical edition of *Les Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*. In other chapters, new information, often based on newly available correspondence and criticism, has led to other changes, less dramatic, perhaps, but changes nonetheless. The result is that this is not a brand-new publication, nor is it in any way a simple reprint of matters ancient or old.

To the extent that my name has been seen in the world of musicology, it has, obviously, been attached to work on Berlioz, which has occupied me from the beginning of my so-called career, in the nineteen-seventies, until now. Early on, Hugh Macdonald, the founder and editor-in-chief of the *New Berlioz Edition*, asked me to join the team then preparing the multivolume publication that now lies at the heart of the modern Berlioz renaissance. At the same time, it fell to me to review the first volume of Pierre Citron's new edition of Berlioz's *Correspondance générale*, an enterprise with which

I would engage for many years and enlarge (with assistance from Professor Macdonald and two French colleagues) with a supplementary volume published in 2016. When the *Critique musicale d'Hector Berlioz* edited by my friends H. Robert Cohen and Yves Gérard reached the fourth of its ten projected volumes, at the beginning of the new century, I was happy to join the editorial committee that provided guidance and supplementary annotations to the work of the principal editors, now Anne Bongrain and Marie-Hélène Coudroy-Saghaï, who brought the series to completion in the autumn of 2020. Finally, when Pierre Citron urged me to undertake a new critical edition of *Les Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*, his own edition being rich with complementary information but not “critical” in the scholarly sense of the term, I began meditating such a project (when Professor Citron and I were members of an international committee that oversaw the worldwide celebrations of Berlioz’s bicentenary) and eventually published the book in 2019, in the year of notable celebrations in Paris and La Côte-Saint-André of the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the composer’s death.

It has been my privilege, therefore, to be associated with the critical editions of the fundamental source-documents—the scores, the private letters, the public writings—upon which all serious research on Berlioz now depends. Over those years, during which I became a French citizen (a fact I mentioned in the introduction to my 1998 biography of Berlioz—the only fact, I fear, that some readers found interesting), it was my good fortune to maintain a correspondence and friendship with the father of modern Berlioz scholarship, the Franco-American intellectual historian Jacques Barzun, who for decades tendered insight and advice with uncommon generosity. Jacques became senior to scholars across the United States of America, but, as the distinguished Columbia historian Henry Graff put it, he never made us feel our “juniority.” It was my good fortune to maintain similarly excellent relations with David Cairns, now the composer’s authoritative biographer, from whom I have been learning, and with whom I have been sparring, for the same amount of time; with Hugh Macdonald, of whose extraordinary accomplishments the completion of the *New Berlioz Edition* may be the most extraordinary of all; and with Joël-Marie Fauquet, now the dean of French musical scholarship, the editor of that bible of nineteenth-century studies which is the *Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXe siècle*, and a friend, like Jacques, David, and Hugh, for nearly fifty years.

I had originally thought to include in this collection articles on subjects other than Berlioz. One of the pieces I prize concerns Robert Schumann’s *Bunte Blätter*, of whose dedicatee, the American piano student Mary Potts,

even the Schumann scholars knew nothing. The momentary involvement of one of the world's greatest composers with the wife of a man deeply enmeshed in a Confederacy that led Berlioz to speak of the "Disunited States of America" is surprising, to say the least; the account of that involvement became more mystery than musicology. And having for some years co-taught an interdisciplinary course with my Smith College colleague Hans Rudolf Veget, an expert on Goethe and Thomas Mann and one of the preeminent Wagner scholars of our time, I have now and again added a drop of my own to the unfathomable ocean of Wagner scholarship. A piece of mine on *Siegfried* resulted from my early career as an oboist, spurred by my studies at the Curtis Institute of Music with John de Lancie, principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the most important teacher of my life. Mr. de Lancie also encouraged me to prepare a comprehensive study of the genesis of the oboe concerto of Richard Strauss, which he inspired when he was a soldier in the United States Army and chanced to meet the great German master at the end of the Second World War. Finally, my friendship with Denis Herlin, editor-in-chief of Debussy's correspondence and complete musical works, led me to prepare a new critical edition of, and write about, the *Quatuor à cordes*. In the end, however, I thought better of including Schumann, Wagner, Strauss, and Debussy in this gathering—I mention them here to demonstrate that I am almost but not entirely Johnny-One-Note—and determined to concentrate on what I know best.³

One of the themes of my research over the years has been "politics," loosely defined, as it has engaged, encroached upon, and been affected by, the art of music. Raised in a politically involved family, and, as an adult, living frequently in Europe, I have become acutely aware of how, in particular on the continent, the arts have long been and continue to be viewed through a political lens, and I have come to see that, however much one might relish the notion of "art for art's sake," the history of music cannot be meaningfully articulated without reference to the political and social matters that weighed upon those who made it, and that actively occupied their minds and their artistic endeavors even when their primary work was in the studio or on the stage. Or in the *stacks*, for that matter, because some of Berlioz's outstanding contemporaries—Charles Nodier, Alexandre Dumas, Casimir Delavigne, Théophile Gautier, Alfred de Musset, Leconte de Lisle, and Anatole France among them—had part-time careers as librarians. Most notably, Berlioz himself was a librarian at the Conservatoire for some thirty years, from 1839 until his death. I do not treat that history here, except to point out that according to his employment dossier, preserved in one of the *registres des*

personnels administrative et enseignant, he was appointed *conservateur de la bibliothèque* on January 1, 1839, at a salary of 1,500 francs per annum; he was named *bibliothécaire* on April 27, 1850; his annual salary was increased to 2,500 francs on January 1, 1852, returned to 1,500 francs on January 1, 1853, and doubled to 3,000 francs on January 1, 1866—but let it be said that “politics” is what enabled him to obtain the post in the first place (it was arguably a sinecure) and to maintain it through the revolutionary year of 1848 and on to the end. On the other hand, “politics” surely prevented him from obtaining more lucrative posts as conductor or professor at one of the capital’s greater or lesser musical institutions (the list of his attempts is not short), or as director of the Théâtre-Italien (explicitly treated here in chapter 4) or of the post-Cherubini Conservatoire. In 1852, he was denied directorship of the new Imperial Chapel of Napoléon III, despite having worked out a detailed and grandiose plan for its organization based on his intimate knowledge of the chapels that had operated successfully under King Louis XVIII and King Charles X. In this collection, “politics” is seen explicitly in the chapters on the *Symphonie fantastique*, the Théâtre-Italien, the *Symphonie militaire*, and *Les Troyens*. Elsewhere, at almost every turn, “politics” inevitably rises to, or lies just below, the surface.

“Politics” has lately led me to write on the merits of honoring Berlioz with a berth in the Panthéon, that imposing edifice atop the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, where one reads, “Aux grands hommes, la patrie reconnaissante.” It would have been fitting for such a piece to be included in a book that opens with an essay on the *Symphonie fantastique*, for it was on August 26, 1830, three months after the symphony was fully drafted, that the new King, Louis-Philippe, declared that that originally revolutionary inscription be restored to the pediment of the building. But I omit it here because its main point, to which I shall return in chapters 5 and 10, can be made in relatively short order: Hector Berlioz, in his maturity, from the early eighteen-thirties to the late eighteen-sixties, had little or no sympathy for the republican form of government. In his private letters and public writings, he made it clear that a head of state whose authority was circumscribed by a body of representatives of the population at large was unlikely to ameliorate the current state of the arts. Berlioz—despite regular cooperation with a fledgling national musicians’ union, the Association des Artistes Musiciens, designed to improve the lot of all musicians high and low—was what we would call an elitist. With a somewhat circular sleight-of-hand, he defined the art of music itself as existing primarily for the happy few, for those possessed of the heightened sensitivities and special abilities needed to appreciate it. He explicitly rejected

the notion of *la musique mise à la portée de tout le monde*, this being the title of an important book published in 1830 by François-Joseph Fétis, one of Berlioz's early *bêtes noires*, one of the founding fathers of modern musicology, and one of the first practitioners of what we know as "music appreciation," who believed that music could and should lie at everyone's doorstep. Berlioz rather believed that music could be properly appreciated only by those with inborn talent, with searching awareness, with skilled ears, and—we may surmise—with some social standing. He was thrilled to perform before the mid-century princes and potentates of the assorted German states; he was delighted to be feted in Russia by the acolytes of the authoritarian czars; he was continuously hopeful of receiving commissions and *encouragements*, as allowances were called, from the "royals" in France. He was revolted by the revolutions of 1848 and repelled by the crowds who demonstrated in behalf of the republican cause. He was surprised by Louis-Napoléon's election to the presidency on December 10, 1848 (he used the date as the title of the 1855 cantata we know as *L'Impériale*), and was delighted by Louis-Napoléon's *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851, despite its cost to some of their French citizenship and to others of their lives. And, had he lived through France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, he would surely have figured among those who advocated, not the establishment of a Third Republic, but rather the return to empire—or to monarchy—as a rampart against republicanism.

Fifteen years after the establishment of that Third Republic, in 1885, the authorities honored via *panthéonisation* one of the country's greatest sons—greatest poets, greatest playwrights, greatest novelists, *pair de France*, *sénateur*—who had gone into exile precisely in order to protest Louis-Napoléon's *coup d'état*, and who had ridiculed him in print as "Napoléon le petit." From the time of Victor Hugo's entombment in the Panthéon until the present day, those who have received the honor of *panthéonisation* have been, in one way or another, like Hugo himself, advocates of the lofty ideals of the great French Republic. "The admission to the Panthéon is an acknowledgement of *republican* accomplishment," the former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin has lately written, contesting the entry into the national shrine of the poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine, proposed by a fraternity of experts and enthusiasts. It is "an acknowledgement of a particular man or woman's lifelong battle in behalf of liberty, equality, and fraternity."⁴ In January 2020, the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, avoiding the political issue, decided to accept the Rimbaud family's expression of reluctance to translate the remains of their famous ancestor to that chilly vault in the Quartier Latin, and thus to forego the *panthéonisation* of

those two renowned, rebellious literary lions. Meanwhile, on Armistice Day, November 11, 2020, Monsieur Macron ushered into the Panthéon Maurice Genevoix—writer, member, and Secrétaire Perpétuel of the Académie Française, veteran of World War I, and celebrated author of *Ceux de 14*, a dazzling historical and literary account of the Great War’s heroism and horror—and with him, by analogy, all of those who had fought for *La Patrie* and who had perished in the conflict.

With Genevoix as point of comparison, with Hugo and Zola, Jean Jaurès and Jean Moulin, André Malraux and Simone Veil therein honorably interred, what are we to do with Berlioz, the inspired composer, the brilliant and witty writer, the agent for the modern orchestra, the advocate of freedom from the constraints of tradition, the pan-European conductor, and the cosmopolitan citizen who once referred to himself ironically as “three-quarters German”—by which phrase he meant nothing of the sort, of course, for he was as thoroughly French as French could be, long regarded Paris as the “*centrum gravitas* of the musical world and of all possible worlds,”⁵ and, though offered positions elsewhere, never seriously imagined settling permanently away from home? Do we set aside his views on the affairs of state and send him willy-nilly to the Panthéon? Do we honor the wishes of his descendants and allow him to rest in peace, with his two wives and mother-in-law, in the serenity of the cemetery in Montmartre, his dwelling since 1869? Or do we take seriously what he said about politics, acknowledge the dissonance between his own leaning right and the republicans’ leaning left, and honor the composer otherwise, appropriately, sufficiently, and simultaneously, by performing his music and by reading his books?

One of the loudest of the current advocates of *panthéonisation* has asserted that, had Richard Wagner been French, he would have enjoyed the honor many a moon ago. The assertion is absurdly hypothetical yet nonetheless provocative. It is true that *wagnérisme* was born in France and that Wagner remains enormously popular in the country of Bizet and Boulez. It is true that Paris, for Wagner, was the artistic capital of the century, whose creative wiles and workings impacted almost all of his grandiose artistic projects.⁶ It is true that had he been French, Wagner would perhaps have remained a leftist. He would obviously not have imagined the satire, *Eine Kapitulation*, that lacerates the losers of the Franco-Prussian War. (Gabriel Fauré and André Messager cut him down to size in their hilarious four-hand quadrille *Souvenirs de Bayreuth*.) It is also true, however, that Wagner would almost certainly have set down *Das Judentum in der Musik* and the other unmitigatedly antisemitic remarks that color his writings, and that would have

appalled the presidents of the French Republic who preside with sole and unique authority over the portals of the Panthéon. It is thus by no means obvious that Richard Wagner would have been carried up those broad stairs and through those mighty doors. Indeed, those who have written on Wagner and his world have long demonstrated an acute awareness of the sometimes troubling political implications of their subject matter, with all of its antisemitic baggage; those who have written on Berlioz, one of whose stellar attributes is his explicit rejection of antisemitism, have preferred to see their fellow as nonpolitical, or extrapolitical—which, as I have attempted to explain, he was not and could never have been.

That fact has apparently not lessened interest in Berlioz's music, which is sometimes uneven (whose isn't?), sometimes astounding, sometimes sublime. Nor has it lessened interest in Berlioz's writing, which is rich in mirth—the portrait of Cherubini, stern and stuttering, with his singular Italian accent; the sketch of Fétis, severe and self-important, with his syrupy speech; the caricatures of Kapellmeisters and conductors drawn in what was a great age for caricature (Daumier, Grandville, Cham)—and which is replete with food for thought, because the man was nothing if not well read, intelligent, and articulate, even when he was undemocratic, politically incorrect, or, despite his great gift for friendship, unkind. His attraction to authoritarianism, seen best in his short story *Euphonia*, can be disconcerting. This portrait of a musical utopia, which appeared in serialized form in 1844 in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* and was revised in 1852 for *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, is in part an autobiographical fantasy of revenge—against that *femme fatale* Camille Moke, who jilted him when he was away in Italy; against what he always felt was the ornamental excess of an Italian music far more popular than his own; and against what he deemed to be unmusical music in general. His utopia, despite its hopeful depiction of a permanent *fête de la musique*, is also a kind of armed dictatorship, a city “under military rule and subjected to despotic regime”—something whose implications the critics, with the brilliant exception of Joël-Marie Fauquet, have preferred to minimize or ignore.⁷

Far beyond the Panthéon, the monuments to the heroes of yesterday, artistic and other, are today under severe analysis and even attack. A famous editor has lately reminded us that the reputation of Rudyard Kipling, for example, “the most talented” writer of the Victorian Era, has long suffered because of his “fatal identification with imperialism.”⁸ I do not see Berlioz as a “hero,” although he shares with heroes a life trajectory that leads from artistic struggle to artistic success. Nor, obviously, do I see Berlioz as “all genius and no talent”—even though versions of that problematical paradox (lately applied

by the novelist Martin Amis to James Joyce)⁹ have at times been draped over the career and coffin of the composer of the *Symphonie fantastique*. The study of the life and work of Berlioz remains relevant in today's world of music, I continue to believe, not because it serves to promote heroism or genius or their opposites, but because, more unassumingly, it forces us to focus upon matter and material that I, following Barzun, see as "conspicuously unique"; it forces us to consider anew the ancient question—the most intriguing question of all, because it is the most elusive and most difficult to answer—of the nature of the relationship between man and music, between life and art. It forces us to confront our aesthetic and ethical assumptions about a "canon" of "classical" compositions in a contemporary society shaped, today as it was yesterday, by political power, and marked, in politics as in the arts, by ever more exuberant and increasingly uncompromising extremes. Perhaps the musicological "globalists," who as I write are intent upon "decentering" the Western canon, can find in Berlioz an interesting case study. He did indeed tend to infantilize the music of other cultures—an obvious minus! But the patterns of his music—a potential plus?—do not readily match those that the new globalists find too male and too white. "You can imitate Wagner," a later composer-translator remarked, "you cannot copy Berlioz."¹⁰



In the list of abbreviations printed at the back of this volume, I set down as a reminder the now essential primary sources for the study of the life and work of Berlioz. In these essays, I do not refer to all of them, but I do use the standard abbreviations. In the bibliography, I give full references to all of the works that are cited, in abbreviated fashion, in the notes. In my youth, I loved footnotes and endnotes, and believed they ought to be substantive. In my old age, I have attempted to avoid such youthful indiscretions. This means that you may skip the notes without loss. When I give the precise dates of Berlioz's letters and articles, those who wish to see them for themselves—interested parties will want to do so, because my translations, which I believe are accurate as to meaning, are freely cast in modern American English—will easily find them in the *Correspondance générale*, the *Critique musicale*, and the other books set out in the list. I specify American English out of caution, not patriotism. When Jacques Barzun published *New Letters of Berlioz* in both French and English, a fellow in the London *Listener* complained of Barzun's "Americanisms"¹¹—as did a gentleman in the *Times Literary Supplement* who had read my *Life of Berlioz* and who was unaware

that Cambridge University Press maintained an establishment in New York City.¹² I would have done well to quote Barzun's reply: "Presumably I should have used colloquialisms now current in the British Isles. Perhaps I might have done so had the book been intended for British readers and had it been published in England. Neither of these conditions applies to the volume."¹³

In the index, for ready reference, I include the names of all authors, editors, and translators cited in the notes.



The chapters here, rewritten but occasionally overlapping, have been revised from articles and papers that first appeared in the following sources: chapter 1, in French, in *Musique et Société: Hommages à Robert Wangermée*, ed. Henri Vanhulst and Malou Haine (Brussels: Université de Bruxelles, 1988), 93–112, and, in English, in the *Journal of Musicological Research* 9 (1989): 67–88; chapter 2, in the *Berlioz Society Bulletin* 202 (June 2017): 37–63; chapter 3, in *Studia Musicologica* 54, no. 1 (March 2013): 75–86; chapter 4, in *Échoes de France et d'Italie: Liber Amicorum Yves Gérard*, ed. Marie-Claire Mussat, Jean Mongrédien, and Jean-Michel Nectoux (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1997), 131–146; chapter 5, *unpublished*, based on a paper given at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, in Atlanta, in November 2001; chapter 6, in *Berlioz Studies*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 81–111; chapter 7, in *Rival Sisters: Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism*, ed. James H. Rubin and Olivia Mattis (London: Ashgate Lund Humphries, 2014), 73–92; chapter 8, in French, in the *Revue de musicologie* 66 (1980): 174–187; chapter 9, in *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 235–250; chapter 10, in a German translation by Nikolaus Schneider, in *Berlioz' "Troyens" und Halévys "Juive" im Spiegel der Grand Opéra*, ed. X. Zuber (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 83–95; chapter 11, in *The Hudson Review* 67, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 239–255; chapter 12, in French, in *Les Comédies de Shakespeare à l'opéra (XIXe–XXIe siècles)*, ed. Alban Ramaut and Gaëlle Loisel (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2016), 39–60; chapter 13, in *Berlioz: Scenes from the Life and Work*, ed. Peter Bloom (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 201–220; and the *epilogue*, in part, in French, in *Hector Berlioz: Regards sur un Dauphinois fantastique*, ed. Alban Ramaut (Saint-Étienne: L'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2006), 53–72.



One never knows, but because it is unlikely that I shall produce another book before shuffling off this mortal coil, I should like to acknowledge some of the persons, scholars, and friends who have assisted my work on Berlioz over the years, as I have pursued with undiminished interest and enthusiasm the life and work of the composer from La Côte-Saint-André. Thank you, for your friendship and encouragement: Dennis Alter, Pascal Beyls, Anne Bongrain, David Cairns, H. Robert Cohen, Joel-Marie Fauquet, Malou Haine, Denis Herlin, D. Kern Holoman, Janet Johnson, Franklin Lloyd Kochman, Sabine Le Hir, Ralph Locke, Hugh Macdonald, Catherine Massip, Alban Ramaut, Cécile Reynaud, Julian Rushton, and Hans Rudolf Vaget. Thank you, Gunther Braam, *für deine erstaunlichen corrections und perfectionnements*. Thank you, anonymous readers for the University of Rochester Press, for brilliant suggestions all of which I took to heart, most of which I incorporated, some of which I decided against. Thank you, too, to the administration of Smith College, which provided a subsidy to support the publication of this book, and to the New Berlioz Edition Trust, which enabled open access publication with a grant of exceptional generosity.

In an ultimate tincture of sagacity and mirth, my great mentor Jacques Barzun dedicated his final book, *From Dawn to Decadence*, “to all whom it may concern,” playfully transforming a common expression into a covert exhortation: knowledge ought to concern us all. Perhaps Jacques would be amused to see that I dedicate this book to those whom it has concerned, let us say, from time to time: my wife, Catherine, with whose dictum (*si c’est français, c’est bon, si c’est américain, c’est...*) I am sometimes inclined to agree, and our two talented and independent children, Alexandra, *unaware* that I had used it on the cover of my biography of Berlioz and thus *surprised* that I was familiar with Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*, and Caroline, *forgetting* that I had been teaching the music of the classic and romantic eras for half a century and thus *surprised* that I knew the date of Beethoven’s birth. *Thank you for your support!*

Chapter One

Berlioz in the Year of the *Symphonie fantastique*

*Et l'inexorable mélodie retentissant à mon oreille
jusque dans ce léthargique sommeil...*

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

At Berlioz's funeral, the eulogy pronounced by the President of the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Institut de France, Eugène Guillaume, included the following passage:

At an early age, Berlioz was irresistibly drawn to music. From the outset, his strong will led him to repudiate some of the wrong-headed and frivolous conventions of the art. He was only at the beginning of his career, and yet his originality was already abundantly in evidence. His first work, the *Symphonie fantastique*, established his reputation.¹

Guillaume was among the many who assumed, correctly, that the *Symphonie fantastique* was the source of Berlioz's celebrity; he was also among the many who assumed, incorrectly, that the *Fantastique* was the composer's "first work." Earlier, Henri Blaze had likewise written that Berlioz first came before the public with the *Symphonie fantastique*, striding on to the musical scene "with the wild look of a Jacobin of 1793."² The error is minor but indicative: talked about incessantly during the composer's lifetime with a partisanship equaled in passion only by that which met the introduction in France of the music of Richard Wagner, the *Symphonie fantastique*, well before the composer's demise, became synonymous with both his name and his role as an *agent provocateur* of musical discourse and debate. Its sketches, drafts, self-borrowings, and several versions have now been scanned, its literary and autobiographical sources have now been well studied. Scholars old and new

have found the symphony and its program eminently apt for analysis, psychoanalysis, and criticism. Does anything remain to be said?

The answer, I believe, is yes. The practical details of its first performance, for example, can be further clarified by documents preserved at the Musée Hector-Berlioz at La Côte-Saint-André: that Berlioz had over fifteen hundred programs run off between November 22 and November 29, 1830, and six hundred publicity posters printed between November 29 and December 3, tells us something of his urgent last-minute preparations for the concert; that he was renting violas, double basses, bows, strings, and mutes up to and including the very day of the première tells us much about the preparedness of his orchestra.³ And as for the narrative program of this “Épisode de la vie d’un artiste,” the storied document which the composer distributed to the audience and attached to the score, new literary sources continue to turn up. In an out-of-the-way book, for example, I was pleased to discover a certain “Épisode de la vie d’un voyageur,” in which a young man wanders round Paris for a month trying to find the beautiful young woman he has seen but once—a woman whose image appears before his mind’s eye, like an *idée fixe*, whenever he sees a rose.⁴ The woman meets a tragic fate. Did Berlioz—who tells us of the extraordinary images he saw in his *own* mind’s eye⁵—read this book?

These are matters of detail—fascinating, perhaps; far-reaching, perhaps not. There are larger issues, however, which in my view merit more extensive consideration. The *ranz des vaches* that opens and closes the third movement is nowhere to be found in the official repertoires of such Alpine melodies,⁶ nor does it closely resemble the *ranz des vaches*, which we can be sure our composer knew, in Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*. Is this Berlioz’s invention? The “*Dies irae*” of the finale is authentic plainsong, and thus, for some, “sanctified.” Was not the parody of the chant—indeed, the mockery of the Gregorian melody (I am thinking of bars 157–162 and other corresponding passages)—an audacious conception at a time when the Catholic Church was powerfully influential upon the censors of the arts, and when sacrilege, for example, was punishable by death? Indeed, is this not what Ludwig Börne had in mind when he called the work “heretical” and even “licentious”?⁷ As for the “*Marche au supplice*,” which Berlioz claimed was written “in one night”⁸: was the composer here taking a stand, indirectly, on the preeminent issue on everyone’s mind at the time of the trial of Charles X’s disgraced ministers—the issue that caused Alfred de Vigny to mold his drama *La Maréchal d’Ancre* around the fundamental idea of “the abolition of the death penalty” and Lamartine to enter the political arena with his *Ode contre la peine de mort*?⁹ Regardless of its origins in the opera *Les Francs-Juges*, from which it

was most definitely extricated (even if the precise date of the surviving source of the march is uncertain), this music—ominous, brilliant, triumphalist—is celebratory in a way that a musical condemnation of capital punishment, if one could imagine such a thing, would not be. In its original guise—if its placement in the libretto of Berlioz’s early opera has been correctly identified¹⁰—it is rather a music for the brutal soldiers of a cruel usurper, for a salute to tyranny, for an acknowledgement of despotism, or so one might wish to conjecture, even though in music, violence, like other emotional attributes, resists facile interpretation. The final fifteen bars of the march, you will perhaps remember, give us the final cry of the love-crazed murderer, the thwack of the guillotine, the thump of the severed head as it falls from the scaffold, and the mighty if macabre applause of the crowd.

The meaning of this gesture, more obviously pictorial than any other in the work, is not readily interpreted. If it does suggest approval of the ultimate punishment, then it puts the composer at odds, not only with Lamartine and Vigny, but also with Charles Nodier and, most famously, with Victor Hugo. The matter needs review in the light of the larger political history of France from the waning years of the Bourbon Restoration to the collapse of the Second Empire; clarification of his stance on the death penalty would further illuminate the picture we have of the composer of the *Symphonie fantastique*. At the end of her life, in 2018, the Berlioz scholar Katherine Kolb was at work on a book entitled *Music After the Guillotine*; it is sad that we do not have the light she would have cast on this dark matter.

Paris in 1830

The year of the *Symphonie fantastique*—1830—was marked at the end of July by a three-day revolution, *Les Trois Glorieuses*, that altered lingering eighteenth-century governmental procedures and pointed the country in a new direction. The political battles that pitted radicals against reactionaries and that resulted in the modest compromise of Louis-Philippe and the July Monarchy had their counterparts in the arts. Most notable among them was, of course, the *bataille d’Hernani*, the controversy that surrounded the opening of Victor Hugo’s tragedy, at the Théâtre-Français (what we more commonly call the Comédie-Française), on February 25, 1830, and its proclamation, in the preface, of “freedom in art, freedom in society: *this* is the double goal which all just and reasonable individuals must work to achieve.” Those who objected to Hugo’s novel techniques (of poetry inflected by drama, of stage action, of set

design, and more), were likened to the partisans of the Ancien Régime; those who applauded their virtues were likened to the new champions of Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité.

But a play—a spoken performance, a work of literature—is not readily transformed into an immediately graspable symbol of struggle. That honor was bestowed upon the most notable painting of the year, and subsequently one of the most famous paintings of the canon, *La Liberté guidant le peuple*, subtitled “le 28 juillet,” by Eugène Delacroix. This work, executed in the autumn of 1830 and now, after a checkered history, hanging proudly in the Louvre, adorned the announcement, in 1841, of the socialist Louis Blanc’s history of the eighteen-thirties, just as it did the posters announcing the socialist François Mitterrand’s election to the French presidency one hundred forty years later, in 1981. For the cover of the catalogue of an important international exhibition of French painting in the age of revolution, the editors chose Delacroix’s *Liberté*. The painting itself, now widely considered a *chef-d’œuvre* of bold design, vivid figuration, and powerful color, is for art historians simply unthinkable apart from the circumstances of its creation: it is a work that succeeds “in joining the world of modern historical fact and traditional allegory,” as the art historian Robert Rosenblum has put it, “in a turbulent, explosive vision that elevates the street fighting of Paris to a hymn to the universal ideal of liberty.”¹¹ Reproduced in the history manuals for generations of French school children, it is in some ways a visual symbol of France itself.

It is not my intention here to sing the praises of Delacroix’s early masterpiece. It is rather to note, in the context of a musicological essay, that this literally revolutionary painting was produced by an artist whose public career up to 1830 was intrinsically linked to French “officialdom.” *La Barque de Dante*, exhibited at the Salon of 1822, was purchased by Louis XVIII; *La Scène des massacres de Scio*, exhibited at the Salon of 1824, was purchased at the instigation of Charles X; *Justinien dictant les Instituts* was commissioned in 1827 by Charles’s Conseil d’État. Though scandalized by the overt sensuality of *La Mort de Sardanapale* (1827), the government’s Director of Fine Arts, Vicomte Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, commissioned the artist (in 1828) to paint *La Mort de Charles le Téméraire*, which was offered by Charles X to the city of Nancy. Meanwhile, having established a relationship with the other branch of the royal family, Delacroix painted *La Messe du Cardinal de Richelieu*, in 1829, on commission from the Duc d’Orléans, the future King Louis-Philippe. *La Liberté* itself, purchased by Louis-Philippe, was originally destined to hang in the Salle du Trône at the Tuileries Palace. It is thus fair

to say that Delacroix's artistic well-being—and he was of course not alone—depended heavily upon governmental good will, governmental commission, governmental exhibition, and governmental purchase.

Delacroix's *La Mort de Sardanapale*, among other paintings, has been convincingly interpreted as an attack on the absolutist pretensions of Charles X.¹² But not all critics equated artistic daring with political ideology. Furthermore, in 1830, Delacroix's *Liberté* was read in some quarters as a glorification of revolution, and in others as a condemnation of such turbulence, presumably because of the graphic reality of certain details.¹³ The man himself was apparently something of a dandy who enjoyed regular social intercourse with the aristocratic world of Paris. From the documents preserved—his famous *Journal* leaps from 1824 to 1847, but letters from the intervening period do exist—it appears clear that Delacroix recognized the abuses of the régime of Charles X, that he had confidence in Louis-Philippe, and that he was pleased by the rapid return to public order after the three-day revolution.¹⁴ More generally it can be said that Delacroix stood with those who championed the cause of “liberty” even well before his explicit tribute painted after the revolution in 1830. The Greek War of Independence against the Turks, the latter viewed as barbarians, had for a decade been supported by the activists of the Romantic generation in France. Delacroix would celebrate the Greek combat with several important works, including *La Grèce sur les ruines de Missolonghi* (begun in 1821) and *La Scène des massacres de Scio*, his first monumental tableau. Some of the sketches and drafts for these two works were later to play a direct role in the composition of *La Liberté guidant de peuple*.¹⁵

This painting, in sum, has been viewed by certain modern critics as simply representative of historical fact. By others it has been seen as “saturated” with ideology.¹⁶ Delacroix himself is viewed variously as close to the political imbroglis of his generation or as far from the revolutionary crowd. One thing is certain: the artist's life and the artist's work can be justly interpreted only in the light of the political history of his day. Even for such an apparently innocuous matter as the interpretation of the “people” of the title, Delacroix's work must be considered in terms of reference beyond those of painting alone. Did he mean “la classe ouvrière” (“the working class”)? Or did he mean “tout le monde” (“everyone”)? We shall hear more of Delacroix in chapter 7.

Berlioz in 1830

In a summary of Berlioz's activities of 1830, the editor of his *Correspondance générale*, Pierre Citron, mentions "politics" but once. July 28, 1830: Berlioz leaves his "cell" (at the Palais de l'Institut) and finds Paris in the midst of revolution. "He wanders through the streets and procures a rifle. But despite his ardent desire to join the battle for freedom, he finds no opportunity to fight and feels ashamed for having served no useful purpose."¹⁷ If one takes Berlioz at his word—that his desire to battle for liberty was "ardent"—then one must assume such a desire was present both before and after the three-day revolution; one must assume the composer, like the other young modernists in the circle around Victor Hugo, was a believer in both political and artistic liberty, and, perhaps worth saying, in their reciprocal relationship. What is the evidence of this? Berlioz most assuredly did not go around inscribing "Vive la liberté" on the walls of Paris during the eighteen-twenties; nor did he parade around town waving the tricolored flag that Delacroix featured in his famous painting. Those who wished at the time to champion the cause of liberty spoke out, as did Byron and Lamartine and Casimir Delavigne and others, in favor of the Greeks and their war of independence. And in fact, during his student days, Berlioz did so as well. On a libretto prepared by his friend Humbert Ferrand, Berlioz began in the fall of 1825 to compose a work entitled *Scène héroïque pour grands chœurs et grand orchestre*, or, *La Révolution grecque*. In his correspondence of the time Berlioz does not insist on the political message of the libretto. But the subject was *ipso facto* political: the call to arms, in Berlioz's score, is set to music of great fire and brimstone; the message to other countries, in the printed libretto, is clear:

Europe, bestir thyself! See them dying!
 O God of the powerful, render your sword visible in their hands!
 Only should you deign with your strength to assist their gallant efforts,
 Will their blows ring true, will their frailty become might.¹⁸

Until the astonishing rediscovery of the *Messe solennelle* (1824), in 1991, *La Révolution grecque*, whose first version was completed in 1826, was the earliest extended work by Berlioz that had come down to us in its entirety. Though in form it is old-fashioned—shaped like a Rome Prize cantata and not illogically viewed as a warm-up exercise for the kind of work Berlioz would compose for the competition—its content was of decidedly current interest, and literally pro-Greek-revolutionary. The music is harmonically

unadventurous and rhythmically repetitive, and while Berlioz revised a part of the score in 1833, for a prospective performance in honor of the third anniversary of the July Revolution, he reused its main musical ideas in no subsequent work—quite the opposite of his later appropriation of the score of the *Messe solennelle*, and a small suggestion that, in hindsight, he was little satisfied by that earlier effort.

Berlioz's major work in 1826 concerned the opera *Les Francs-Juges*, a "rescue opera" befitting of the French revolutionary tradition most famously embodied in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and perhaps influenced by that celebrated work in the choice of the name of the hero, Lenor, who, like Leonora, appears in the opera in disguise. The extant fragments of Berlioz's opera have now been published and studied in detail;¹⁹ they need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that if the cries of "Viva la liberté!" in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* may logically be taken for expressions of the composer's own political sentiments, as they have, then the cries in Berlioz's opera of "La liberté, fille de la victoire, sera le prix de nos efforts,"²⁰ may be reasonably taken as an expression of his.

Other early musical manifestations of Berlioz's "politics" include a setting from 1829 of Victor Hugo's *Chanson de pirates* from *Les Orientales*, in which, among other themes, one finds condemnation of the Ottoman Empire's practice of cruelty to women. (It has been suggested that Berlioz's setting, now lost, became the *Chant de brigands* in *Le Retour à la vie*; in my edition of that work, I propose a different source.)²¹ They also include the most striking number of his *Neuf Mélodies* from December of the same year, the *Élégie en prose*, in which the poet Thomas Moore relates the heroic acts of the Irish patriot Robert Emmet. It is well known that Berlioz made an orchestral arrangement of *La Marseillaise* in 1830, and had an epistolary exchange with the author of the hymn, Rouget de Lisle.²² It is less well known that he made another setting of a work by Rouget de Lisle, the *Chant du Neuf Thermidor*, discovered only in 1984, in the Bibliothèque du Conservatoire de Genève.²³ We may logically suppose that this selection, presumably made from Maurice Schlesinger's republication in 1830 of Rouget de Lisle's *48 Chants français*, was motivated by the coincidence of the dates—le 9 Thermidor = July 27, 1794; July 27 = the first of *Les Trois Glorieuses*—although the political situations were not identical: le 9 Thermidor marked the downfall of Maximilien Robespierre and the beginning of the end of the Reign of Terror; July 27 opened a three-day revolution that was preceded, not by a cycle of revolutionary violence, but by the proclamation of highly reactionary edicts issued by an increasingly authoritarian King. Still, at the time, some observers, such

as the royal naval commander Charles Stuart Cochran, did speak of an abhorrence of authority that ran “from the ferocious Robespierre to the fanatical Polignac”;²⁴ such a comparison was thus by no means out of bounds. Rouget de Lisle, incarcerated as a potential royalist, sent his original hymn to the National Convention on 17 Thermidor (August 4, 1794) to accompany his immediately successful request to be released from prison.²⁵ Perhaps Berlioz, too, thought of his arrangement as a kind of offering to the new “King of the French,” Louis-Philippe d’Orléans, who would be sworn in, not on August 4, but five days later, on August 9, 1830. Such a gift would have been only one of numerous such *hommages*, songs and plays and poems and more, many still preserved in the private archives of the Orléans family.²⁶

The precise dates of the composition of these hymns is not known. It is possible that Berlioz set them down several months *after* the enthroning of the new King, and after the announcement of Berlioz’s victory in the 1830 prize competition, on August 21, as elements of his campaign for an exception to the rules that required him to profit from his fellowship exclusively in Rome. That campaign, to benefit from the fellowship in Paris, went on for some months, as the composer witnessed performances in the capital of *Sardanapale*, on September 30, of the *Fantaisie dramatique sur La Tempête*, on November 7, and of the *Symphonie fantastique*, on December 5. Had it succeeded, Berlioz’s *Chant du Neuf Thermidor* would have been his ticket to freedom, not from prison, like Rouget’s, but from exile.

Administrative Matters

The ambitious aristocrat who created the Direction des Beaux-Arts in 1824 and who administered for the government of Charles X most of the artistic affairs of the capital, Vicomte de La Rochefoucauld, was a grandee of considerable power and influence. Often ridiculed for exaggerated prudishness, he was in part responsible for certain progressive reforms in the musical arena in the later eighteen-twenties, including the regeneration of the Opéra and the foundation of what became the finest orchestra in Europe.

It is to one of the last ministers of the Maison du Roi of King Charles X, Monsieur le Vicomte Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, that France owes the foundation of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. It was upon being solicited by Habeneck, and at the request of Cherubini, that the noble Vicomte issued

the memorable decree that would regenerate French music...²⁷

Like many of his contemporaries, Berlioz had to deal with La Rochefoucauld whenever he wished to appeal to the administration for governmental support. We possess only eight letters that Berlioz sent to the Director of Fine Arts after 1828, but we know that the Vicomte swam into his ken as he contemplated the concerts he wished to give at the time, not so much to reap a profit as to make himself known to the public and marshal his legitimacy and nascent renown. In recognition of the gentleman's assistance, Berlioz took the unusual step of dedicating to "Monsieur Le Vicomte de La Rochefoucauld, Aide de Camp du Roi, Directeur-général des Beaux-Arts," his "opus 1," *Huit Scènes de Faust*, which appeared in April of 1829. To his prior request for permission to make the dedication, La Rochefoucauld had replied, on March 17:

You wish to offer to me, Monsieur, the dedication of the first work that you have designed for publication, the score of *Huit Scènes de Faust* from Goethe, and you lead me to believe that you would be sincerely grateful if I were to accept this *hommage* on your part. In so doing, I am pleased to acquiesce to your wish, and to take this occasion to offer you renewed assurance of my interest in your artistic capabilities, which are already meritorious of encouragement as you enter the initial phase of your career.

Please accept, Monsieur, this expression of my high esteem.²⁸

In my translation, I have attempted to suggest not only the Vicomte's formality of expression but also what I take to be his sincere appreciation of Berlioz's youthful talent, and perhaps even his surprise that Berlioz's first important publication should be dedicated to him. Considering La Rochefoucauld's occasional countermanding of the directives of Cherubini, who was resistant to administrative innovation other than his own, Berlioz's dedication surely bore a grain of sincerity, but also a grain of wisdom, since he knew he would be in need, in future endeavors, of the Vicomte's good will. (For similar reasons, François-Joseph Fétis dedicated his early *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens* to La Rochefoucauld.)²⁹ We thus ought to see the composer as a man whose behavior—despite the pictures he would soon paint of himself as consumed exclusively by Art and Love—was conditioned by the political realities of the time, by the sometime necessity of conformity to convention, of compromise for the sake of career.

Berlioz's relationship to La Rochefoucauld had a bearing on the efforts he made—little known in the literature—to better the lot of all young French composers by widening their opportunities for performance. We tend to view Berlioz as an individualist, as a melancholy and isolated figure who long fought lonely battles for understanding from the public, the press, and the powers that be. But in his student days, Berlioz was a member of a society of young artists who were as interested as he in innovation and change. Proof positive of one such association comes in the form of a fascinating document that concerns a *Gymnase-Lyrique*, which Berlioz mentions in a letter to his friend Humbert Ferrand of November 11, 1828:

You know that I have been named “Premier Commissaire” of the *Société Gymnase-Lyrique*. I am in charge of selecting and replacing the musicians, of renting the instruments, and of looking after the scores and orchestral parts. I am occupied with these tasks at this very moment. We are beginning to receive subscriptions, and we already have some twenty-two hundred francs in the bank. We have received anonymous letters from some individuals who are jealous [of our endeavors]. Cherubini is attempting to determine whether to help us out or to do us in. At the *Opéra*, everyone is babbling about us, as we continue on our merry way.³⁰

The guiding spirit and artistic director of the *Gymnase-Lyrique* was Stéphen de La Madelaine, a chapel singer at the court of Charles X, one of Berlioz's close friends in the eighteen-twenties, and later a functionary at the Ministry of the Interior. Planned in the fall of 1828, the *Gymnase-Lyrique* had as its purpose “the encouragement of those young French composers who have not as yet had an opera or a ballet performed on the stage of one of the Parisian operatic theaters by providing them with the means to become known to the public via concerts equal in brilliance to the best the capital has to offer.”³¹ The organization intended to present vocal and orchestral music by its composer-members with a force of sixty-five instrumentalists and fifty-five singers, with activities commencing, in January 1829, in an auditorium situated in the recently completed *Passage du Saumon*, at the time the longest such *passage* in Paris.³²

Berlioz was optimistic about the group's future, and pleased to be assigned tasks, including that of vocal coach, that would later prove essential to his career as a traveling conductor. His optimism was spurred by the possibility of assistance from Vicomte de La Rochefoucauld. Indeed, as I was pleased to discover, a letter from the founding members of the *Gymnase-Lyrique*, requesting precisely such assistance, was composed and

penned in late October 1828 by the Premier Commissaire of the association, Berlioz himself:

Monsieur le Vicomte,

Monsieur Stéphen, the founder of a musical association entitled *Gymnase-Lyrique*, sent you a letter several weeks ago requesting authorization to employ the leading singers of the Académie Royale de Musique for the concerts of the new association, which are to take place on Sunday mornings once every two weeks.

Since this authorization in no way runs counter to the interests of the Opéra, we should like to add our voices to that of Monsieur Stéphen in begging your assistance. We also hope, Monsieur le Vicomte, that after having thoroughly examined the constitution of our Society, you will be persuaded that it has been conceived in such a way as to produce the most beneficial results and will thus offer your august support to an effort whose success could brighten the future for many young composers by reducing the first hurdles of their professional careers.

We are, Monsieur le Vicomte, with the greatest respect, your humble and devoted servants,
the composer-members of the *Gymnase-Lyrique*.³³

This letter is signed by Berlioz and the following musicians: Mathurin-Auguste Barbereau, Nathan Bloc, Louis-Constant Ermel, Alphonse Gilbert, Claude-Joseph Paris (in absentia [in Rome]), Eugène-Prosper Prévost, Théodore Schlosser, Stéphen de La Madelaine, Jean-Baptiste Tolbecque, and François-Laurent-Hébert Turbry. For Berlioz, who penned the letter, as we know only from his conspicuously chiseled hand, these now largely forgotten individuals, many of them recent competitors for the Prix de Rome, would have been among the musicians of “la Jeune France.” (Turbry was a student of Lesueur’s who, in 1835, would compose a *Symphonie fantastique*, a parody of Berlioz’s, as is obvious from the printed program.³⁴ In the same year, another *Symphonie fantastique* was composed by the Belgian conductor Étienne-Joseph Soubre.)³⁵ The constitution or “Règlement” of the *Gymnase-Lyrique* is dated October 14, 1828; a revision of October 23, 1828, was joined to Berlioz’s letter to La Rochefoucauld and printed in the *Revue musicale* at the beginning of the month by F.-J. Fétis, who wholeheartedly approved of the effort: “The editor of the *Revue musicale* is far too devoted to the cause of the art of music and of the youthful composers not warmly to applaud Monsieur Stéphen’s generous proposition, which he seconds as firmly as possible and with great hope for a successful outcome.”³⁶ This “Règlement” articulates

an idealistic agenda clearly modeled on the democratic program of the new Société des Concerts du Conservatoire (founded only eight months earlier, in February 1828), proposing as it does both shared responsibilities and shared rewards.

It is noteworthy and perhaps revealing that Berlioz and his collaborators chose to pursue this private effort to establish a concert organization at the same time that a similar, public organization, a Société Mineure des Jeunes Élèves de l'École Royale de Musique, was attempting to establish itself in emulation of that same Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. Fétis wrote about it in an April 1828 issue of the *Revue musicale*:

An emulation [of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire] borne of the thunderous public reception of their brilliant performances did not take long to establish itself. A new ensemble has been organized by the youthful students at the École Royale de Musique whose goal is to perfect the talents of the performers by exposing them to the public eye and to have them play the works, or more properly the sketches, of the student-composers who are still enrolled at the school. Monsieur Cherubini has authorized the establishment of this association and has offered it the use of the small concert hall of the Conservatoire.³⁷

Unfortunately for the young musicians of the Gymnase-Lyrique, who were aiming at something higher than a student orchestra, Monsieur Cherubini was not inclined to offer support to them: worried about the potential competition it would offer to both the Société Mineure and the Société des Concerts, the indomitable director of the Conservatoire seems to have convinced La Rochefoucauld not to provide a subvention for the new society. A different but similar organization designed to assist young composers, the Athénée Musical, founded in 1829 by André-Hippolyte Chélar, ³⁸ did manage to put on concerts for some years, after the opening concert of August 26, 1829, in the Salle Saint-Jean in the Hôtel de Ville, apparently with the financial and moral support of the then Préfet de la Seine, Gaspard de Chabrol de Volvic, in what may have been a small demonstration of municipal independence from the government of the state.

The Gymnase-Lyrique, the Athénée Musical, and even the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire were organizations distant from the mainstream of early nineteenth-century French musical life, which flowed through the capital's three major opera houses: the Opéra, the Théâtre-Italien, and the Opéra-Comique. The last-mentioned theater, though frequently in financial difficulty during the period with which we are concerned, was central to

the hopes of young composers desirous of presenting their new music. For many years, from the Restoration through the July Monarchy, efforts were thus made by various groups and individuals to establish a second Opéra-Comique: we find a number of such proposals both in the press and in the archives.³⁹ In 1828, some of the artists mentioned above, this time led by Berlioz's friend from the Théâtre de l'Odéon and the Théâtre des Nouveautés, the violinist-conductor Nathan Bloc, appealed directly to the Minister of the Interior to obtain government support for such a new theater. The petition cited below, signed by twenty-five French composers, including fifteen former winners of the Prix de Rome, was addressed to Comte de Martignac, Minister of the Interior from January 1828 through August 1829:

The Fine Arts are in need of protection. But one art in particular needs greater assistance than all the others. By some unfortunate turn of fate, not only is music not properly supported, but it is and has long been barred from seeking the means to support itself on its own. If you were to accord to us your august protection, all young composers would owe you an eternal debt of gratitude.

There exist in Paris only two theaters that are licensed to present new French operas: the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique. These two theaters normally perform works by composers who are already well known. Those young composers who graduate from our conservatories, and those who win the Grand Prize awarded by the Institut de France, after having worked assiduously for long years and after having long dreamed of riches and renown, see themselves reduced to poverty or oblivion because of the impossible situation in which they find themselves, unable as they are to make their works known to the public. How they envy the lot of the painters and the sculptors! Every year the museums open their doors to all of those who have even a modicum of talent. But while the exhibition of a handsome canvas or a beautiful statue can enable a previously unknown artist to establish a reputation, the musician alone is condemned to silence—and this because the requirement of official authorization prevents all theaters other than the Opéra and Opéra-Comique from performing his work. Thus we find that France, first in the realm of the Arts and Sciences, is, uniquely in the realm of music, inferior to both Germany and Italy.

Do not think, Monseigneur, that our nation is lacking in musical genius. It is rather lacking only in the means of putting such genius on display. Were you to wish it, young French musicians would, in a few short years, be able to stand proudly beside their rivals, because the esteemed masters who have taught them the secrets of their art are unequaled elsewhere in Europe.

Germany and Italy each have a hundred cities, and each city has several theaters in which a young composer can test his abilities before the public and

profit from the lessons of experience. Only in France are there but two lyric theaters.

All musicians thus trust that, in you, their hopes will not be disappointed.⁴⁰

The copy of the petition preserved in the archives omits the signatures. But Berlioz was close to the Swiss-born violinist at the time: Bloc conducted the orchestra for Berlioz's inaugural concert of May 26, 1828, prepared the orchestra for the *Symphonie fantastique*, in May 1830, when the performance had to be canceled *in extremis*, and remained in contact with the composer through the end of that year and beyond, even after leaving Paris to become the conductor of the Société de Musique de Genève, in 1831, and, in 1835, the founding director of the Conservatoire de Genève. Furthermore, when Bloc wrote to a correspondent who was as interested as he in ameliorating the lot of the young composer, on November 10, 1829, Berlioz acted as his scribe!⁴¹ So we may be certain that Berlioz was one of the "collègues" Bloc mentions in the letter cited below. In two essentially identical letters, addressed to two successive Ministers of the Interior and dated October 11, 1829, and January 1830, Bloc resubmitted his original 1828 petition, along with a letter of support from the Section de Musique of the Académie des Beaux-Arts:

Monseigneur,

For a long time, young composers have been in a most unfortunate situation. In order to better their standing, they resolved to address a petition to His Excellency the Minister of the Interior and respectfully to request that he graciously give the authorization necessary such that another theater, in addition to the Opéra-Comique, be permitted to present their works.

I write to you today, Monseigneur, in the name of my colleagues, respectfully to request that you act favorably upon this petition, persuaded as I am of your willingness to protect all that is useful and just. Such a favorable action will be met by all composers with lasting gratitude.⁴²

Many such requests for performance opportunities for young French composers were put to the administration at the time. In the *Revue musicale*, F.-J. Fétis proposed a detailed scheme for opening several new theaters in the main cities of the departments, anticipating by more than one hundred fifty years the artistic "décentralisation" that was in vogue in France during the mid-nineteen-eighties and that to this day rises to the top of one or another political leader's cultural agenda. That Berlioz wished to administer a theater of his own in 1838 is now better known than it once was (this is the subject

of chapter 4); that he had joined his efforts to those of others, ten years earlier, is a less-familiar fact of his student years in Paris.

It is noteworthy that Nathan Bloc's petition calls attention to the relatively happy lot of painters and sculptors, to whom the doors of the museums were regularly open and from whom purchases by the government were regularly made. The notion of becoming known—of being able to put their work before the public, with government assistance—was thus especially attractive to young composers. (Franz Liszt would later propose an ambitious government-sponsored system of musical commission and performance roughly modeled on the annual salon system for painters and sculptors.)⁴³ Had the administration accepted some of the musical reforms that were proposed by a Commission on the Arts in their September 1830 report to the Minister of the Interior,⁴⁴ nineteenth-century French musicians might have enjoyed more celebrity. In particular, had "officialdom" been willing to simply relax the strict system of limited authorizations, or *privilèges*, that restricted the performance of new French works to essentially two theaters—allowing the Théâtre de l'Odéon, for example, to produce opera as well as spoken drama (as Berlioz had explicitly hoped they would), allowing the lesser venues to put on works with new music—then the composer of *Les Francs-Juges* and a host of others might have had more opportunities to hear their music in performance. In fact, the system of *privilèges*, designed to preserve the prosperity of the main houses, persisted until 1864.

Petitions

We have observed that, in behalf of the art of music, Berlioz occasionally joined the political fray by allying himself with other hopeful artists in the effort to improve the collective prospects of all struggling musicians. Most of Berlioz's campaigns were individual ones, however, and some—such as requesting from the Minister of the Interior, Vicomte de Martignac, an "encouragement annuel," on August 20, 1828, to pursue his studies—were daring indeed:

Monseigneur,

I am twenty-four years old, I am a member of an honorable albeit large family from La Côte-Saint-André (in the Isère). Having worked with great diligence, and having received encouragement from the highest authorities, I have just been awarded the Second Grand Prize in musical composition from the Institut de France.

And yet my father, financially drained by the considerable sacrifices he has had to make, is no longer able to support my living in Paris. My career is thus at this moment at an impasse; I am about to lose all hope.

Several students at the École des Beaux-Arts who, like me, have received a Second Grand Prize, have been able to travel to Rome, with the aid of a government grant, in order to pursue their studies.

I therefore dare to solicit the enlightened benevolence of Your Excellency, not in order to gain so great a favor, but rather to benefit from an annual stipend that would allow me to continue my studies in Paris and to compete, next year, for the Grand Prix de Rome.

I should like to believe, Monseigneur, that I shall one day fully justify the encouragement I hope to receive from your good offices.

I am, with profound respect for Your Excellency, your most humble and obedient servant,

Hector Berlioz, student of Monsieur le Chevalier Lesueur, at the École Royale de Musique,

96, rue Richelieu, Paris, this August 20, 1828.⁴⁵

(In my translation, I have interpreted the word Berlioz applies to his father, *épuisé*, as “financially drained.” It is true that, for his two daughters, Doctor Berlioz did have to provide meaningful dowries in order to attract appropriate suitors. It is also true that Berlioz’s father was one of the wealthiest men in his village and surrounding area and was probably not so overdrawn as Berlioz here suggests.) One of the “high authorities” supporting Berlioz’s appeal to Martignac was his teacher, Jean-François Lesueur, whose recommendation is affixed to Berlioz’s letter:

I have the honor to attest to His Excellency that the request from Monsieur Berlioz is founded on the brilliant hopes for success to which his talent and genius give rise, talent and genius that need further development in order to reach their maximum potential. This young man, highly educated in all the other sciences, is in my opinion certain to become a great composer who will bring great honor to the French nation. I do not hesitate to predict that in fewer than ten years, he will even become a true *chef d’école*. But he is in need of assistance in order to complete his musical studies in another twelve to eighteen months. Monsieur Berlioz is a born musician; nature itself seems to have chosen him, from among so many others, to become a composer of such extraordinary talent as to become a veritable painter in his art. But all will be lost to him if he fails to obtain the benefaction of an enlightened minister who is the guarantor of the nation’s arts and letters. Should Monsieur Berlioz be so fortunate as to merit the patronage and support of our French Maecenas, he will repay such noble confidence in his future and will forever

repeat with gratitude: "It is Monsieur le Comte de Martignac who opened the gates to my career."⁴⁶

Victor Hugo was accorded such a government stipend by the administration of Charles X, it is worth noting, but in 1828, Hugo, though only one year his senior, was considerably more established than Berlioz. The composer's petition, in the event, went without response.

Of the other campaigns waged by Berlioz during his student days, none was more concentrated than the two-pronged attack to capture the Rome Prize and, victory attained, to enjoy the traditional government fellowship while remaining in the French capital. Indeed, Berlioz's activities, from the moment of his disillusionment in the prize competition of 1829, may be construed as battle tactics to obtain the prize in 1830. As the 1828 second-prize winner, he had been within his rights, as his letter to Vicomte de Martignac suggests, to expect a first prize in the following year. But in the summer of 1829, he wrote such an original cantata, *La Mort de Cléopâtre*, that the judges denied him the crown. He thus gave a concert of some of his own works, and the "Emperor" Concerto, with Ferdinand Hiller, on November 1, 1829; he published the *Ballet des ombres* in December of that year; he brought out the *Mémoires irlandaises* in February of 1830; he conceived and composed the *Symphonie fantastique* in the early months of 1830; he held a rehearsal on May 16, had the program of the symphony printed in *Le Figaro* on May 21 and in the *Journal des comédiens* on May 23, and prepared for (but had to cancel) a performance on May 30. These efforts, in addition to being logical steps in the development of a career, were ways of making a public impression and of inducing the judges, in a manner of speaking, to award him the prize. Such a strategy was surely not original. The French have long had a passion for prizes that may date from the creation of the Académie Française itself, in 1635. Prize politics have been in the news since time immemorial; they remain in the news today.

Of the 1830 prize competition and prize cantata I have written elsewhere and at length, expressing some doubt that Berlioz's winning entry, *Sardanapale*, was as mediocre a work as he subsequently claimed.⁴⁷ The apparent quotation at measure 89 of a tune from *La Muette de Portici* could be read as an impish prank; the final V–I cadence, tacked on, should be read, considering Berlioz's usual inventiveness at this point of the proceedings, as an intentional impertinence. Be this as it may, it is certain that the completion of this self-designated timid and academic score, played at the Palais de l'Institut on October 30, was accompanied not only by the settings of *La*

Marseillaise and the *Chant du Neuf Thermidor* that I have mentioned, but also by the completion and revision of two other scores, the *Ouverture de La Tempête*, played at the Opéra on November 7, and the *Symphonie fantastique*, finally performed at the Conservatoire on December 5.

During the autumn, Berlioz pleaded with the authorities that an exception be made to the traditional rules of an Académie des Beaux-Arts founded upon and devoted to tradition. In fact, exceptions to the rules were sometimes made by the Academy, as Berlioz knew and as various archival documents attest, but not in the particular sense that Berlioz had in mind—namely, to receive his stipend while remaining in France. It is no secret that the absurdity of sending composers to Rome is the theme of many of Berlioz's writings on the Prix de Rome. It is the theme as well of an article by the liberal journalist François-Fortuné Guyot de Fère, "Musique: Art dramatique," that appeared in the November 21, 1830, issue of the *Journal des artistes et des amateurs*, of which he was the editor. This fellow, a regular in the liberal press, appears nowhere in the Berlioz literature, but in speaking soundly to the paucity of Roman musical life for the Rome-prize-winning composer, Guyot de Fère seems to take a page from Berlioz's book.

In the matter of exceptions, the sculptor Antoine Étex, an unsuccessful candidate for the Prix de Rome in 1828, 1829, and 1830, was in fact awarded a fellowship by the new Ministry of the Interior under Louis-Philippe—in part due to his participation in the July Revolution—"in order to complete his studies and produce a work that would give him the right to hope for his fair share of the artistic monuments commissioned by the government of his country."⁴⁸ Others found their way to Rome with government aid but without a *premier prix*; some shortened their periods of "exile" due to problems of family, or of health.⁴⁹ But no Rome Prize winner seems to have been able to avoid the trip to Rome, as Eugène-Prosper Prévost hoped to do in 1831,⁵⁰ and as Berlioz had hoped to do in 1830.

On August 23, 1830, Berlioz wrote to his mother that if needed he would go so far as to ask the new King himself for permission to remain in Paris. On September 3, he reported to his father in this regard that he had asked for assistance from Alexandre Périer, a member of the great banking family from the Dauphiné, an acquaintance of Berlioz's uncle Félix Marmion (Périer and Marmion had been fellow students at the École centrale de Grenoble),⁵¹ and the younger brother of Casimir Périer, who would become Président de la Chambre des Députés on August 6, 1830, and who would serve as Président du Conseil, that is, Premier Ministre, from March 13, 1831, to May 16, 1832.⁵² At nearly the same moment, Berlioz asked Jules-René Guérin—a

physician who was the founding editor of the *Gazette de santé* (soon the *Gazette médicale de Paris*), and who may well have known Berlioz during his medical-student days, in as much as both men began their studies in 1821—to second his request for an exemption from the rule requiring him to go to Rome by means of an attestation regarding his alleged medical problems. In fact, if we accept Guérin’s testimony at face value—few scholars have—then we must think twice about the remarks of more recent commentators on Berlioz’s mental and physical health:

The undersigned, docteur en médecine de la Faculté de Paris, hereby declares that he has treated Monsieur Hector Berlioz for some five years for disorders of the nervous system [“affections nerveuses”] accompanied by symptoms of stroke [“congestion cérébrale”]. I have noticed that these symptoms become especially acute during the summer months, exacerbated by the hot sun. Consequently, I believe it would be dangerous for Monsieur Berlioz to have to live in a warm climate such as that of Rome, where he would be exposed to conditions likely to renew and augment his medical difficulties.⁵³

In her study of melancholy, monomania, and Berlioz, Francesca Brittan does not mention Doctor Guérin’s diagnosis. In fact, it would tend to support her claim that Berlioz was not entirely well.⁵⁴

On October 20, 1830, Berlioz mentioned to his mother that he hoped a word from Rossini and Spontini would aid his cause, even though the members of the Section de Musique at the Institut de France, other than his teacher, Jean-François Lesueur, would not.⁵⁵ And in a well-known letter of October 28, he appealed directly to the Minister of the Interior, at the time the formidable historian and statesman François Guizot, for permission to receive his stipend in Paris, citing both medical and professional reasons for his request. This is the letter to which are attached statements of support from Doctor Guérin (which we have cited), F.-J. Fétis, Spontini, Meyerbeer, and Lesueur.⁵⁶ A further letter of support addressed to the Minister of the Interior—not included in Berlioz’s *Correspondence générale* and important to reproduce here—is especially revealing:

It is neither my custom nor my belief that it is appropriate to make solicitations on behalf of myself or of others. But I should like to appeal to your fine artistic sensibilities in communicating to you a request in behalf of a young man of great talent and promise for the future.

Monsieur Hector Berlioz has been awarded the Grand Prize in composition [at the Institut de France]; he would like to be exempted from the rule

requiring him to sojourn in Italy, and thus to profit here in Paris from the stipend to which the prize gives him the right. Having undertaken certain immense new compositions and having begun negotiations with several German theaters for the performance of works already completed, he feels that such a long absence [from the capital] would immediately compromise the beginnings of his career.

Monsieur Berlioz is furthermore in deplorable health. He suffers from excessive nervous irritation; the requirement to leave Paris at this moment throws him into such despair that it is my firm belief that such a trip might well be injurious to his well-being. All of this has made him highly distraught, and his friends are trying, in vain, to restore his equilibrium. But alas, musical genius, like poetic genius, gives rise to certain anomalies; and as to the genius of the laureate in question, I can attest to it, as do his teachers, Messieurs Lesueur and Spontini, and as do all of those who have followed him through the course of a musical education, during which he has had to struggle against unimaginable obstacles placed in his path by his family.

I thought, Monsieur le Comte, that you would graciously allow one of Monsieur Berlioz's friends to testify in his behalf and to urge you to support a request the granting of which is, to me, a matter of profound concern.⁵⁷

The writer of this letter, a man whom Berlioz knew well, was Louis de Carné, writer, politician, eventually a member of the Académie Française, and earlier, in March 1829, a founding editor of the newspaper *Le Correspondant*, for which Berlioz wrote several important articles in 1829 and 1830, notably a three-part biographical sketch of Beethoven and an “Aperçu sur la musique classique et la musique romantique.” Carné was a dedicated constitutional monarchist and an ardent Catholic whom Berlioz's father held in high esteem. Berlioz may have met him as early as 1825, through the intermediacy of his friend Humbert Ferrand.⁵⁸ Obviously impressed by Berlioz's musical gifts, and perhaps taken with his ideas on religious music, Carné extended himself to a considerable degree, as we see here, on behalf of the freshly crowned winner of the Prix de Rome.

Vicomte de Carné's letter, further evidence of the “political” associations maintained by Berlioz during his student days in Paris, raises a practical question regarding the composer's claims to be negotiating with theaters in Germany. We know that in May he was discussing with the Austrian tenor Anton Haitzinger a possible German performance of his opera *Les Francs-Juges*, and that in December he sent manuscript scores of his works to Spontini, who since 1820 had been General Music Director in Berlin.⁵⁹ Carné seconds Berlioz's and his doctor's claims that he was subject to intense nervous irritation. He does not mention, for obvious reasons, that Berlioz

was reluctant to leave town because he was head-over-heels in love with Camille Moke.

Why, we may logically be permitted to ask, did Berlioz finally accept the obligation to go to Italy, thus apparently sacrificing both his work and his would-be wife? We know that he needed money. But even without the stipend, the prize offered public acclaim, and thus the possibility of performance in Paris, as well as of the possibility of assistance from what might have been his newly proud family. Furthermore, in 1830, Berlioz was at the beginning of an income-producing career as a journalist, at a time when the newspapers were multiplying and a certain Honoré Balzac (not yet using the nobiliary particle) turned to journalism to earn his daily bread.

Still, like Aeneas leaving Carthage and his beloved Dido, Berlioz, too, despite what he so ardently proclaimed at the end of 1830, was haunted by cries of “Italie! Italie! Italie!,” the cries we hear at the end of act 4 of *Les Troyens*, and was finally drawn, by a sense of duty as well as by a capitulation to necessity, to the French enclave at the Villa Medici, atop the Pincian Hill, in the Eternal City of Rome.

Politics

When Berlioz was fourteen years old, his father was for a short while Mayor of La Cote-Saint-André. Did this make an impression on the boy? Some years later, when he famously confronted Cherubini in the library of the Conservatoire, he had a clear sense of the right of a private individual to enjoy the benefits of a public institution. Indeed, without the rich collection of that particular public institution, founded during the Revolution in 1795, and still one of the musical glories of the Fifth French Republic, Berlioz might never have become a musician. He later much enjoyed the benefits of another institution organized during the revolutionary era, the Institut de France, among whose constituent assemblies was an Académie des Beaux-Arts composed of painters, sculptors, engravers, architects, and *composers*, because music, too, was expected to play its part in promoting the material and moral welfare of the citizenry of the nation.

Like many at the time, Berlioz harbored an admiration for the grandeur and heroism of France’s Napoleonic past. Of his precise political sentiments in and around 1830 we know relatively little. With his friend Humbert Ferrand, a devout Catholic and a “légitimiste,” which at the time meant an advocate of the succession of the senior branch of the Bourbon Monarchy,

Berlioz apparently agreed to disagree.⁶⁰ With his family, and with a number of acquaintances, the subject of politics (as he wrote to his mother on September 19, 1830) was apparently taboo: “Although I have very definite political opinions, I can assure you that I rarely articulate them in public, since I find all conversations about such matters extremely tiresome.”⁶¹ The meaning of this comment, which I believe ought to be taken *cum grano salis*, is not self-evident. Pierre Citron, editor of Berlioz’s correspondence, assumed that Berlioz’s intention was to mask his pro-revolutionary sentiments in the aftermath of *Les Trois Glorieuses*. And yet that same revolutionary fervor became an impediment to Berlioz’s efforts to focus attention upon the forthcoming première, in December, of the *Symphonie fantastique*. It is conceivable that Berlioz kept his political views close to the chest because, while surrounded by young artists optimistic about the future of the new regime, he himself may have regretted the removal from power of Vicomte de La Rochefoucauld, who (as we have seen) had formed a favorable impression of the composer, and who, as director of the Department of Fine Arts, might have authorized the exception that his successors refused to consider. Be this as it may, Berlioz in the year of the *Symphonie fantastique*, as at other times (as I shall too often remind the reader of this book), was more politically aware and alive than we have usually believed.

Eight months after the première of that work, the composer had a brief flirtation with the Saint-Simonians, whose mission to ameliorate the lot of the working classes, in an uncharacteristically fervent letter to one of the movement’s principals, Berlioz seems to have fully embraced. I have frankly wondered about the sincerity of Berlioz’s enthusiasm (tempered by his principled atheism), because from his mouth, the words *mon cher père*—addressed, not to his own father, but to the Saint-Simonian leader Charles Duveyrier—sound odd.⁶² This letter refers to an encounter between Duveyrier and Berlioz which, as I read it, would have taken place in 1831, while Berlioz was away from Rome, on his harebrained and aborted mission to take revenge upon Camille Moke for breaking off their engagement in order to marry Camille Pleyel. Back in Rome from Nice, where he came to his senses, Berlioz read through recent issues of *Le Globe*, to which Duveyrier was a regular contributor. There he saw the page on which a critic—probably Duveyrier himself, as the fellow was a familiar face at the Opéra and would later coauthor the libretto of Verdi’s *Les Vêpres siciliennes*—suggested to the new director of the Opéra, Louis Véron (appointed on February 18, 1831), that he renew the repertory: Rossini and Meyerbeer were still their prime, and “new talent, such as that of Hector Berlioz, was waiting to manifest itself.”⁶³

In its eight-year existence, this was the only time that *Le Globe* printed the name of Hector Berlioz. Circumstantial evidence thus suggests, considering the date of the recommendation (June 23, 1831), that Berlioz's meeting with Duveyrier had a practical purpose. Had he earlier been a member of the inner circle, *Le Globe* would have sent someone to review his concert of December 5, 1830. It did not. When Berlioz returned to Paris in the autumn of 1832 and gave the revised *Symphonie fantastique* with its sequel, *Le Retour à la vie*, on December 9 of that year, *Le Globe* was no longer in existence.

In the France of 1830, all the arts were politicized, whether in the specific sense of serving certain political ideas or ideals, or in the general sense of being subject to scrutiny of an other-than-purely-artistic sort. Some obviously reacted politically to the patriotic lines from the duet in Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, "Amour sacré de la patrie": the opera's performance in Brussels, on August 25, 1830, was widely seen as the catalyst for the revolutionary disturbances that took place in Belgium at that time, and that led to the Belgian declaration of independence, six weeks later, on October 4, 1830. "La liberté" in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, like "la libertà" in *Don Giovanni*, could provoke emotional reactions from audiences both before and after the Revolution of 1830. We know, from countless archival documents, that individual *words*—as much if not more than themes and ideas—were considered by the censors as potentially dangerous: Victor Hugo was not permitted to use the words *lâche*, *insensé*, or *mauvais* to modify the word *roi*—even when the *roi* in question was centuries removed from Charles X. Eugène Delacroix was chided for painting an ideal of Liberty with certain overly realistic and thus potentially immoral details, for only nudes denuded of bodily hair, it would appear, were considered proper for public display. Berlioz risked negative criticism by incorporating the *Dies irae* into a passage of symphonic music, as we said above, because Charles X's Law of Sacrilege of 1825, if violated, could lead to execution.

Berlioz's concert of December 5, 1830, like other public manifestations during the autumn of that year, was for the benefit of the victims of the July Revolution. Some years ago I was pleased to discover in the archives the letter of invitation that Berlioz sent to the new King, probably at the end of November, in the days leading up to the event:

Sire,

Anxious to associate myself with the public's expression of gratitude to the heroes of the national cause, I am now preparing a concert for the benefit of

those wounded in July. A number of distinguished artists have enthusiastically agreed to second my efforts.

Recently crowned by the Institut de France, I simply could not hope to begin my career under more auspicious circumstances. Were Your Majesty to deign to honor by his august presence this musical solemnity, it would serve as yet another affirmation of Your Majesty's concern for our liberators, and would at the same time provide me with the utmost powerful encouragement.

Sire, the fine arts, too, have a role to play in enhancing the grandeur of the nation. The enlightened manner in which Your Majesty has always honored the arts leads me to feel confident, even were it not motivated by such a noble cause, that my request will not be deemed inappropriate.

Sire, I remain, with profound respect for Your Majesty, your most humble and obedient servant and subject, Hector Berlioz, laureate of the Académie des Beaux-Arts.⁶⁴

The program Berlioz proposed, with an orchestra of one hundred musicians under the direction of François-Antoine Habeneck, included the overture to *Les Francs-Juges*, the prize-winning cantata *Sardanapale*, and the first performance of the *Symphonie fantastique*. Despite its subsequent celebrity, the symphony performed on December 5, 1830, was reviewed at the time in only six publications: *Le National* (December 6); *Le Figaro* (December 7); the *Revue musicale* (December 11); *Le Correspondant* (December 14), *Le Temps* (December 26); and *La Revue de Paris* (December).⁶⁵ Berlioz had hoped for a repeat performance, but this became impossible because of the continuing disquiet over the downfall of Charles X: "There is so much commotion everywhere you look," Berlioz had earlier written to his sister, "because everyone is talking only about politics."⁶⁶ The day after the first concert, the Austrian ambassador in Paris, Antoine-Rodolphe Apponyi, noted in his journal the very same thing: "Everyone is talking only about the trial of the former ministers."⁶⁷

Berlioz in the year of the *Symphonie fantastique*, likened by Henri Blaze to a revolutionary Jacobin, as I mentioned, must be seen in the context of the politics of the time. The same is true for Berlioz in the years of the *Scène héroïque* (1825–1826), of *Le Cinq Mai* (1831–1835), of the *Grande Messe des morts* (1837), of the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* (1840–1842), of the *Hymne à la France* (1844), of the *Chant des chemins de fer* (1846), of the arrangements of Méhul's *Chant du départ* and of Rouget de Lisle's *Mourons pour la patrie* (1848), and of the Napoleonic cantata *L'Impériale* (1854). In short, though I list here only the obviously political works, it is true for his entire career. In his fine biography of the composer, Hugh Macdonald speaks

eloquently of the “unreasoning bond which held [Berlioz] in the city he never ceased to curse and abuse but which was, when all was said and done, his home.”⁶⁸ Was that bond truly “unreasoning”? Or was it rather the result of a belief, despite his later suspicion and censure of republicanism, that the Revolution of 1830 was indeed a gesture in behalf of individual and artistic liberty, that French composers had or should have a role to play in maintaining and intensifying that liberty, and that, as in painting and sculpture (which seemed in comparison to have flourished), in music, too, as he optimistically put it in the report we shall present in chapter 8, that in Paris, one could “do better” than anyplace else in the world?⁶⁹

Chapter Two

Berlioz and the Translators

From Scott to Shakespeare

*Quelle est donc cette faculté singulière qui substitue ainsi
l'imagination à la réalité?*

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

On the occasion of my lecture to the members of the Berlioz Society, in London, which prompted the present chapter, the distinguished conductor Sir John Eliot Gardiner was in the audience. This led me to recall his performance of *Les Troyens*, at the Châtelet in Paris, in 2003. As an oboe player, I had noticed, among maestro Gardiner's period instruments, a modern English horn, which is not quite the same thing as the nineteenth-century model. "You *saw* that damn thing!" Sir John Eliot exclaimed, and went on to explain how furious he had been when the poor chap had shown up with the wrong instrument when it was too late to make a change. That wrong instrument was the *only* wrong thing in what was a splendid performance, which starred the ever-splendid American soprano Susan Graham.

On that same occasion I had the pleasure of congratulating Miss Graham on the stage, shortly after the final curtain. She put her arm around me, in thanks, which caused a dramatic rise in my standing among the dusty musicologists of my entourage, who did not realize that she did so not because I was *someone*, but because she was exhausted, drained by trying to speak French, gratified to see a professor from Smith College, where she had friends, and happy in particular to hear my *American English*!

English and French

This brings me to the subject at hand: French translations of literature in the English of yore—British and American. And to a highly important first point:

No two languages are closer and farther apart than English and French. They are close in their mixed history and mutual borrowings, and they look close in their vocabularies—thousands of words are spelled exactly or nearly alike. But they are far apart in grammar and idiom and in the meaning of these very thousands of look-alikes. They are farthest apart in turn of thought and, most important, in the way the “same” sounds are uttered.

I am here quoting from Jacques Barzun’s *Essay on French Verse for Readers of English Poetry*, one of that great intellectual historian’s most perceptive publications. “French is a vowel language,” Barzun goes on to say: “That is the great principle to remember. [...] Whoever wants to learn to speak, or simply to read poems in French, must believe this primacy of the vowels and do something about it”—namely, take a course in phonetics—because “only by being able to *utter* can one properly *hear*.”¹ Unfortunately, Barzun wrote no companion piece on English verse (or English prose) for readers of French poetry (or French prose). That would have helped us to understand what Berlioz was up against. Berlioz tried to sum things up in chapter 15 of the *Mémoires*: “It is considerably more difficult for a Frenchman to appreciate the subtleties of the style of Shakespeare than it is for an Englishman to feel the originality and finesse of the style of La Fontaine or Molière. Our two poets are rich continents; Shakespeare is a world.”² I am not certain of the truth of this assertion, but it represents clearly what our fellow believed.

A highly important second point is this: that Berlioz was living at a time of an explosion of interest in English literature, when such successful booksellers as John and William Galignani could publish in Paris a daily newspaper and a weekly literary magazine in English, and when English-language publications were increasingly available in reading rooms known as “cabinets de lecture,” which we can be sure Berlioz frequented, as did thousands of his contemporaries.³

We know that Berlioz was a fluent reader of Latin; we know that he learned enough Italian to manage simple conversations during his sojourn in the Eternal City and its environs; we know that despite his many crossings of the Rhine, he never learned a word of German, perhaps suffering from

the prejudice common at the time that the language (not the music or the literature) was “Gothic” or “Vandalique,” as Gérard de Nerval humorously put it in his *Études sur les poètes allemands*: “C’est l’irruption des Goths et des Vandales!”⁴ Many of us have wondered more seriously about Berlioz’s competence in English. In speaking, he would have found most difficult what my French wife and French friends find most difficult: the matter of accentuation. Some definite stress is part of every English word, while gentle inflection is rather the norm in French. In reading, what may have stymied the French composer are the *faux amis*, the words that look the same in French and English but do not mean the same thing. At the time of his marriage to Harriet Smithson, Berlioz’s reading knowledge of English was more than adequate. His translation of the gentle letter of thanks that his wife wrote to his sister Adèle—apparently the sole member of the family to maintain contact with the composer in the months following the wedding—is at once entirely faithful and entirely idiomatic, which is to say not at all literal. (I find it amusing that when he published this letter in the *Correspondance générale*, Frédéric Robert mistook Berlioz’s freedom of expression for lack of comprehension.)⁵ By the eighteen-fifties, after several visits to England, Berlioz seems to have developed a certain degree of mastery. I say this in particular because of the wordplay that we find in a letter dated July 3, 1855, and sent to his young friend Théodore Ritter, who had come to London with his father, Toussaint Benet, to hear Berlioz’s performance of *Roméo et Juliette*, on June 13 of that year. Ritter apparently spoke enough English to understand Berlioz’s joke: “We have no pineapples” wrote Berlioz—“pas d’ananas”; we’ve been deprived of them—“nous sommes volés”; but we have a lot of strawberries—“mais force fraises”; indeed we have so many strawberries, *fraises*, that we even have *fraises de veau*—“calf’s ruffles”—which of course have nothing to do with *fraises*, except in name. Berlioz goes on to say: “vile phrase, calembourg anglais”—that is, “vile phrase, English pun.” All of this turns on Polonius’s remark to Gertrude, in act 2, scene 2 of *Hamlet*, that “‘beautified’ is a vile phrase”; it turns on knowing that Shakespeare’s *vile*, pronounced with a French accent, becomes the English word *veal* (the French *veau*), and on knowing that Shakespeare’s *phrase*, pronounced with a French accent, becomes the French word *fraises* (strawberries); it turns, finally, on the recurrence of *fraises* in *fraises de veau*, which is the connecting membrane of veal intestines and a culinary delicacy for carnivores in the know.

In other words, if you followed all of that, you might think, as I do, that Berlioz was by then sufficiently in command of English to do wordplay on vile, *vile*, phrase, and *fraise*, and that he was of course still very interested in

food, despite digestive misery provoked by what we now believe was Crohn's disease, which poisoned the later years of his life. In what follows I want to say a word about Berlioz's literary appetite for Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, and then touch upon some of the other authors—especially Byron and Moore—who came to have a memorable impact on the composer's life and work.

Walter Scott

In the correspondence that has been preserved, we find Berlioz's first mention of Walter Scott in a letter to his sister Adèle from the winter of 1825, in which he suggests that their sister Nanci, visiting the Veyron family domain in Pointières, eight kilometers from La Côte-Saint-André, must be enjoying their château: "The view is magnificent, there is a little bit of Walter Scott in it [...]."⁶ This letter is undated; Pierre Citron logically assigned it to 1825, one year before Berlioz began working in earnest on an opéra-comique, on a libretto by Léon Compaignon entitled *Richard en Palestine*, which is based on Scott's *The Talisman*. Although he was initially very enthusiastic about the project—there are three little-known notebooks, in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, filled with sketches for the opera in the hands of both Compaignon and Berlioz—the composer gradually became disenchanted with his collaborator's rendering of the libretto, and by February 1827, when *Les Francs-Juges*, with Humbert Ferrand, was occupying much of his time, he simply let it go. (Ferrand was then sketching yet another libretto, on *Robin Hood*, based of course on Scott's *Ivanhoe* of 1819, first translated into French in 1820.)⁷ At the moment, Scott, in Berlioz's mind, was a rich vein to be mined.⁸ In fact, in September 1827, the Théâtre de l'Odéon put on an *Ivanhoé* on a libretto by Émile Deschamps and Gustave de Wailly that was set to various snippets of music by Rossini. This put an end to whatever *Robin Hood* collaboration Berlioz and Ferrand had in mind.

On June 4, 1827, Berlioz complained to his twenty-year-old sister Nanci: "You never speak to me about what you are reading; I think well enough of you to suppose that you know by heart your Walter Scott, that giant of English literature; but Cooper, do you know Cooper, the American Walter Scott?"⁹ There are one hundred ninety-six pages on Scott in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France; these list hundreds of Scott's publications, many in English, that were brought out in France during the Scottish writer's lifetime. It would seem that the first of his novels to be translated

was *Guy Mannering*, published in English 1815 and translated immediately, in 1816, by a gentleman whose name will sound familiar, Joseph Martin. This, however, is not the army officer Joseph Martin, who fathered Berlioz's second wife, Marie-Geneviève Martin, whom we know as Marie Recio. In chapter 57 of the *Mémoires*, Berlioz imitates the schoolmaster Dominie Samson's many-times repeated word, "prodigious"—which proves that he did indeed read *Guy Mannering*.¹⁰ The second Scott novel to be translated was *The Antiquary* of 1816; it was rendered into French in 1817 by Sophie de Maraise, a novelist in her own right. The third was *Rob Roy* (1817), translated in 1818 by Auguste-Jean-Baptiste Defauconpret. Defauconpret would go on to translate the complete works: his "complete" Scott, many times reissued, began to appear in 1820, one year before Berlioz departed for Paris from the family home in La Côte-Saint-André.

The Talisman, published in English in 1825, is a novel Berlioz must have read later that year, as soon as it appeared in French (as *Le Talisman, ou Richard en Palestine*) since he was almost immediately involved with the opéra-comique I have mentioned—whose French title, we note, comes from the subtitle of the French translation; in the Furne edition of 1830, the title is *Richard en Palestine*, the subtitle, *Le Talisman*. (The English edition had only the single title.) The first translation, by Defauconpret, was published in Paris by a man whose business became very famous when he began to bring out the works of Balzac and Victor Hugo. In fact, between 1822 and 1830, Charles Gosselin would bring out a nearly complete edition of the works of Scott in sixty compact volumes, whose contents (substituting the original English titles for the French while following the occasionally gapped numbering in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) are as follows:

1. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel; Marmion; Search After Happiness*
2. *The Lady of the Lake; Rokeby; Harold the Dauntless*
3. *The Lord of the Isles; The Bridal of Triermain; The Vision of Don Roderick; The Field of Waterloo; The Dance of Death; Thomas the Rhymer*
- 4–5. *Waverley*
- 6–7. *Guy Mannering*
- 8–9. *The Antiquary*
- 10–11. *Rob Roy*
12. *Tales of My Landlord (The Black Dwarf; Old Mortality 1)*
13. *Tales of My Landlord (Old Mortality 2)*
- 14–15. *Tales of My Landlord (The Heart of Midlothian)*

16. *Tales of My Landlord (The Bride of Lammermoor)*
 20–21. *The Monastery*
 22–23. *The Abbot*
 24. *Kenilworth*
 26–27. *The Pirate*
 28. *The Letters of Paul*
 29–30. *The Fortunes of Nigel*
 31–32. *Pevevil of the Peak*
 33–34. *Quentin Durward*
 35–36. *Saint Ronan's Well*
 37–38. *Redgauntlet*
 39. *Tales of The Crusaders (The Betrothed 1)*
 40. *Tales of the Crusaders (The Betrothed 2; The Talisman 1)*
 41. *Tales of the Crusaders (The Talisman 2)*
 42–43. *Woodstock*
 44–53. *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*
 54–55. *Chronicles of the Canongate*
 58–60. *Anne of Geierstein*

As concerns *Waverley*: the novel was first published in English in 1814; it appeared in French translation in 1818, and not in 1822, if I may be permitted to correct Diana Bickley's dating in volume 20 of the *New Berlioz Edition*. The translation is by the aforementioned Joseph Martin. Did Berlioz try to read the book in English? Berlioz told his sister Nanci on November 1, 1828, that he was taking a public course in English which met for one hour three times a week¹¹—a course he had to give up in January 1829, as he told his sister in a letter written on the 10th.¹²

On the title page of the autograph manuscript of his own *Grande Overture de Waverley*, Berlioz cites eight separate passages from the novel. The question we would ask is: Was he citing a French translation that he knew? Or was he translating himself? Before attempting an answer, let me take note of the carefully scripted dedication set down on that title page: "À Monsieur Brown, témoignage d'une vive et inaltérable amitié, Hector Berlioz, ce 16 avril 1839." "A rich and immutable friendship" is no small thing—which makes it doubly odd that there is no other mention of a "Monsieur Brown" in Berlioz's preserved writings. This fellow, not yet identified in the Berlioz literature, was a certain Jean-François-Adolphe Brown, who lived in Paris in the eighteen-thirties and -forties at 20, rue des Fossés du Temple, and at 15, Quai Bourbon. He was a translator, interpreter, professor of English at one of

the secondary schools of the capital, and he gave lessons at home.¹³ In 1837, he seems to have entered into an association with the watchmaker Pierre-Charles Leclerc at 2, rue des Enfants rouges—an association formalized on November 4, 1840, according to the *Gazette des Tribunaux* of November 15, 1840—to form the enterprise of “Leclerc et Brown” for the purpose of manufacturing a musical instrument that was patented on July 31, 1837, as having “two wind chambers, keys, and strings,” and that was known as a *mélophone*.¹⁴ A detailed description of this instrument first appeared in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* on May 26, 1839, in an article (by Berlioz’s colleague and Richard Wagner’s friend Gottfried Engelbert Anders) on the current exhibition of French industrial products in the Champs-Élysées, where the *mélophone* would win a silver medal.

How can I be sure that “Monsieur Brown” of the *mélophone* is the “Monsieur Brown” of the *Waverley* Overture? Because Berlioz himself mentions the instrument in his article for the *Journal des débats* of May 28, 1839, noting that, in Halévy’s opera *Guido et Ginevra*, one hears the *mélophone* of Monsieur Leclerc. “This instrument at once resembles the flute, the horn, the clarinet, and the basset horn. We cannot explain its interior mechanism because until now Monsieur Leclerc has preferred to keep its secret to himself.” Berlioz was always fascinated by new instruments; he was particularly taken with hand-held instruments such as this one and the English *concertina*, to which he consecrated an entire chapter of the second edition of his orchestration treatise. He always befriended instrument makers, including two who became lifelong friends: Adolphe Sax, of the saxophone, and Édouard Alexandre, of the *orgue-mélodium*. Perhaps the co-inventor of the *mélophone*, “Monsieur Brown,” the professor with an English surname and a French Christian name, had family relations in London; perhaps he had something to do with the performance of the *Ouverture de Waverley* that took place in London on March 23, 1839, only three weeks before Berlioz offered the autograph manuscript to this hitherto unknown gentleman. Perhaps the man, who seems to have annotated French translations of Shakespeare,¹⁵ and who, as a teacher, insisted that “no word of the student’s native language” be used in the teaching of English, was in fact teaching English to Berlioz! Be all of this as it may, “Monsieur Brown” is most certainly the Jean-François-Adolphe Brown we have identified:¹⁶ if we knew more about his friendship with Berlioz, we might know more about Berlioz’s study of English.

Comparisons of the French and English texts of the eight quotations Berlioz affixed to the title page of the *Waverley* Overture, in French, can be instructive.

Scott [1814]: “He was in his sixteenth year when his habits of abstraction and love of solitude became so much marked as to excite Sir Everard’s affectionate apprehension” (chapter 4).

Defauconpret [1826]: “Il était dans sa seizième année, lorsque son amour pour la solitude et son caractère distrait et rêveur commencèrent à donner de tendres inquiétudes à sir Éverard.”

Berlioz [1826?]: “Waverley étoit dans sa seizième année, lorsque son goût pour la solitude et son caractère mélancolique et rêveur commencèrent à se manifester [...]”

Are the differences between Berlioz’s version and the Defauconpret translation due to Berlioz’s unbelievable but sometimes unreliable memory? Or are they rather due to his conviction that his own renderings were more accurate? “Habits of abstraction” is not readily rendered in French: “caractère distrait” is perfectly fine; “caractère mélancolique” is more expressive. “Love” of solitude is literally “amour” for solitude; “goût” for solitude is better reflective of the psychological reality. Berlioz’s use of the old-style spelling (“étoit”) of the imperfect tense, here and elsewhere, is characteristic of his usage in the eighteen-twenties; it is also what we find in Defauconpret’s translation. The composer’s reversal of the order of the expressions with “habits” and “love” is also characteristic, not of Berlioz, but of French sentence structure in general, although I have not seen this rule of transposition in the official guides: in Moore’s “When he who adores thee,” cited below, “lovers and friends” become, in the translation, “les amis” and “les amants,” in that order; the colors of the flag of the United States, for an American, are “red, white, and blue”; the colors of the flag of the French Republic (the same), for a Frenchman, are “bleu, blanc, [and] rouge”!

Scott [1814]: “In the corner of the large and somber library [...], he would exercise for hours that internal sorcery by which past or imaginary events are presented in action, as it were, to the eye of the muser” (chapter 4).

Berlioz [1826?]: “Dans ces lieux solitaires et silencieux Édouard se plaisoit à donner l’essor à son imagination... Il se représentoit des scènes merveilleuses, plus brillantes que toutes celles dont il avoit entendu parler...”

Here Berlioz's version is identical to that of Defauconpret: this would be evidence that the first quotation is indeed a misremembering and not an invention.

Scott [1814]: "This secrecy became doubly precious as he felt in advancing life the influence of the awakening passions" (chapter 5).

Defauconpret [1826]: "Son secret et son isolement lui devinrent doublement chers lorsqu'avec le cours des années il sentit l'influence des passions naissantes."

Berlioz [1826?]: "Son secret et son isolement lui devinrent doublement chers, lorsqu'en avançant dans la vie, il sentit l'influence des passions naissantes."

Here, Berlioz's version, "en avançant dans la vie," is closer to Scott's "in advancing life" than Defauconpret's "avec le cours des années." Is this a misremembering? Or is it rather a Berliozian *perfectionnement*?

Scott [1814]: "My dear Edward, it is God's will, and also the will of your father, whom, under God, it is your duty to obey, that you should leave us to take up the profession of arms, in which so many of your ancestors have been distinguished" (chapter 6).

Berlioz [1826?]: "Mon cher Édouard, la volonté du Ciel et celle de votre père, volontés que vous devez respecter, font que vous entrez dans la carrière des armes, où plusieurs de vos ancêtres se sont couverts d'une gloire immortelle..."

Here again, Berlioz's version is identical to that of Defauconpret.

Scott [1814]: "The next morning, amid varied feelings..., Edward Waverley departed from the Hall... He now entered upon a new world, where, for a time, all was beautiful because all was new" (chapter 7).

Defauconpret [1826]: "Édouard, agité de mille sentiments confus, sortit de la vaste cour du château de Waverley... Il entroit dans un autre monde où tout lui parut d'abord charmant à cause de la nouveauté."

Berlioz [1826?]: "Édouard, agité de mille sentiments confus, sortit de la vaste cour du château de Waverley... Il entroit dans un autre monde où tout lui parut d'abord charmant, parce que tout étoit nouveau."

Berlioz's quotation from chapter 7 leaves out several sentences that Defauconpret includes, but his renderings differ from Defauconpret only at the end, where the composer's "parce que tout étoit nouveau" is a literal and in this case better rendering of "because all was new" than "à cause de la nouveauté," because the latter fails to capture Scott's expressive repetition of "all... all."

Scott [1814]: "But hear ye not the pipes, Captain Waverley?... Waverley took Flora's hand. The dance, song, and merry-making proceeded, and closed the day's entertainment... Edward at length retired, his mind agitated by a variety of new and conflicting feelings which detained him from rest for some time in that not unpleasing state of mind in which fancy takes the helm, and the soul rather drifts passively along with the rapid and confused tide of reflections than exerts itself to encounter, systematize, or examine them. At a late hour he fell asleep, and dreamed of Flora Mac-Ivor" (chapter 23).

Defauconpret [1826]: "Entendez-vous le son des cornemuses, Capitaine Waverley?... Waverley prit la main de Flore, et la soirée se termina par la danse et d'autres passe-temps agréables. Édouard se retira, le cœur agité de mille sentiments; il chercha pendant longtemps, mais en vain, à fixer ses idées; puis il s'abandonna tout entière à son imagination et vogua sous sa conduite dans le pays des illusions; il s'endormit enfin, et pendant son sommeil il rêva constamment de Flore Mac-Ivor."

Berlioz [1826?]: "Entendez-vous les cornemuses, Capitaine Waverley?... Waverley prit la main de Flore, et la soirée se termina par la danse et d'autres passe-temps agréables. Édouard se retira, le cœur agité, il chercha pendant longtemps, mais en vain, à fixer ses idées; puis il s'abandonna tout entière à son imagination, il vogua sous sa conduite dans le pays des illusions; il s'endormit enfin, et dans son sommeil il rêva constamment de Flore Mac-Ivor."

Here we find only minuscule differences between the Berlioz and the Defauconpret: the official translator departs from the original, rather complicated text, with its "fancy takes the helm," in order to simplify, and Berlioz seem to follow. But where Defauconpret adds a word ("le son des cornemuses"), perhaps because of an insecurity regarding the English word "pipes," Berlioz prefers, or seems to prefer, the original.

Scott [1814]: "There was an awful pause of about three minutes, during which the men, pulling off their bonnets, raised their faces to heaven and uttered a short prayer... Waverley felt his heart at that moment throb as it would have

burst from his bosom. It was not fear, it was not ardour; it was a compound of both, —a new and deeply energetic impulse, that with its first emotion chilled and astounded, then fevered and maddened his mind. The sounds around him, combined to exalt his enthusiasm; the pipes played and the clans rushed forward, each in its own dark column. As they advanced they mended their pace, and the muttering sounds of the men to each other began to swell into a wild cry.... ‘Forward, sons of Ivor,’ cried their chief, ‘or the Camersons will draw the first blood!’ They rushed on with a tremendous yell” (chapter 47).

Defauconpret [1826]: “Il y eut alors un silence imposant d’environ trois minutes, pendant lequel, se découvrant la tête, ils levèrent les yeux au ciel, et prononcèrent une courte prière... Waverley sentit alors battre son cœur, comme s’il eût voulu s’échapper de son sein. Ce n’étoit ni la crainte, ni l’ardeur du combat; c’étoit un mélange de ces deux sentiments, une émotion nouvelle et énergique, qui l’étourdit d’abord et lui causa une espèce de fièvre et de délire. Le son des instruments de guerre augmentoit encore son enthousiasme. Les Clans s’avancèrent en bon ordre; chaque colonne fondit sur l’ennemi; le murmure de leurs voix réunies se changea bientôt en sauvages clameurs... ‘En avant, enfants d’Ivor,’ s’écria Fergus; ‘laissez-vous les Camérons répandre le premier sang?’ Ils se précipitèrent avec des cris effrayants...”

Berlioz [1826?] “Il y eut alors un silence imposant d’environ trois minutes, pendant lequel les montagnards, se découvrant la tête, levèrent les yeux au ciel, et prononcèrent une courte prière... Waverley sentit alors battre son cœur, comme s’il eût voulu s’échapper de son sein. Ce n’étoit ni la crainte, ni l’ardeur du combat; c’étoit un mélange de ces deux sentiments qui l’étourdit d’abord et lui causa une espèce de délire. Le son des instruments de guerre augmentoit encore son enthousiasme. Les Clans s’avancèrent en bon ordre; chaque colonne fondit sur l’ennemi; le murmure de leurs voix réunies se changea bientôt en sauvages clameurs... ‘En avant, enfants d’Ivor,’ s’écria Fergus; ‘laissez-vous les Camérons répandre le premier sang?’ Ils se précipitèrent avec des cris effrayants...”

Here Berlioz leaves out a few words (“une émotion nouvelle et énergique”; “une espèce de fièvre”), but otherwise seems to remember Defauconpret and not to translate himself.

Scott [1814]: “The battle was fought and won, and the whole baggage, artillery, and military stores of the regular army remained in possession of the victor” (chapter 47).

Berlioz [1826?]: “La bataille étoit finie, tous les bagages, l’artillerie, les munitions de guerre, étoient restés au pouvoir des vainqueurs...”

In this final passage, Berlioz's version is identical to Defauconpret's. Which leads to the conclusion that Berlioz did indeed well know the Defauconpret translation, and that he had the original text to hand, partly for edification and partly for verification—because even with very little English of his own, he sensed the translator's capacity for treachery.

That translator, Auguste Defauconpret, was born in Lille in 1767 and worked successfully in Paris as a *notaire* until a reversal of fortune led him to emigrate to England. There he remained for some twenty-five years, translating and writing novels of his own. He returned to France in or around 1840, where he died, at Fontainebleau, in 1843. Defauconpret is credited with as many as four hundred translations.¹⁷ His philosophy of translation displeased some of those whom he translated, among them the Irish writer Lady Morgan, the author of *Florence Macarthy*, published initially in 1818 and in Defauconpret's translation in the following year. In fact, Lady Morgan rejected Defauconpret's unauthorized translation, which led to a rejoinder from the translator, dated January 31, 1819, that was printed on February 8 of that year, in French, of course, in the *Journal des débats*:

Sir: From London, where I am staying for the moment, I have just learned that Lady Morgan has had it announced in several French newspapers that she *dis-avows* the translation I completed of her latest novel, entitled *Florence Macarthy*. Lady Morgan, quite certain of her writerly merits, believes that her works ought to be translated with the religious respect normally reserved for the works of Horace and Tacitus. I have the misfortune of not entirely sharing her opinion. I believe that in bringing a novel from one language to another, the translator must first and foremost ensure that the text is pleasing to the new readers he hopes to find for it. English taste is not always like our own. I offer as evidence Lady Morgan herself, who falls asleep during the performance of a tragedy by Racine, who criticizes his style, and who dislikes the acting of Mademoiselle Mars in the lovely scene of the *déclaration* [act 3, scene 2] of *Tartuffe*. I therefore removed some details [from her novel] that French readers would have found pointless, and I shortened the portraits of some of the characters who are in no way related to the main action. I have permitted myself to take the same liberties with regard to a writer whom Lady Morgan admires and whose reputation in England is far greater than hers, Monsieur Walter Scott, and the acclaim that *Old Mortality*, *Rob-Roy*, and more recently *The Heart of Midlothian* has found in France only proves that I was not wrong in so doing.

This attitude, that a translation must also be an arrangement, was prevalent at the time. But for Berlioz, as we know, an *arrangement* was a *dérangement*! And, as he would later feel more strongly, many a *traduction* was a

trahision. But not for Defauconpret, who, in translating Scott, not only changed words and sentences but also the sequence of the action, in order to render it more dramatic, and more logically chronological.¹⁸ Here is a small example of Defauconpret at his best.¹⁹ Describing Lady Rowena, in chapter 4 of *Ivanhoe*, Scott writes: “Her complexion was exquisitely fair, but the whole cast of her head and features prevented the insipidity which sometimes attaches to fair beauties.” Defauconpret writes: “Son teint était d’une blancheur éblouissante, mais la noblesse de tous ses traits préservait sa physionomie de la fadeur qui résulte fréquemment de cet avantage.” The idea of “la noblesse de tous ses traits” for “the whole cast of her head and features” is a wise and succinct interpretation of what in the original is essentially an implication.

James Fenimore Cooper

In a letter highly revealing of his literary sensitivities, sent to his sister Nanci on June 4, 1827, Berlioz goes on at length about the “American Walter Scott,” James Fenimore Cooper:

While in no way approaching his Scottish model in dialogue or character portrayal, one cannot help but admire [Cooper’s] portraits of the violence of nature, and the interest he creates in his protagonists. Among others, there is one who appears in three separate novels, the celebrated hunter *Natty Bumppo*, a highly unique fellow, a European whose hankering for solitude has turned him into something of a recluse, and something of a philosopher of the desert. He first appears in *The Last of the Mohicans*, then in *The Pioneers*, and finally in *The Prairie*. This is the order in which you must read the three books, for as you go along, you become gradually more attached to this hunter; and his death, which you have to be expecting, because he is ninety years old, afflicts the reader with a kind of sadness that is simply indescribable. *The Prairie* appeared only a month ago, I devoured it right away, and arrived at the end at seven in the evening. At eleven, I was still weeping while leaning against the pedestal of a column of the Panthéon. You should read all three novels, I know you will like them.²⁰

Berlioz is unaware that Natty Bumppo will appear again in both *The Pathfinder* (1840), translated in that year as *Le Lac Ontario*, and *The Deerslayer* (1841), translated in 1843 as *Le Tueur de Daims*. (Cooper’s *The Pioneers*, published in English in 1823, appeared in French in the same year;

The Last of the Mohicans, published in English in 1826, appeared in French in 1827; *The Prairie*, published in English in 1827, appeared in French in the same year.) Perhaps confused by the potentially English-sounding name of Nathaniel Bumppo, Berlioz suggests that Natty is a European, which is not correct, although the character, raised by Delaware Indians, does at times ally himself with various European factions, and is given by Cooper a Dutch heritage.

Defauconpret's translation of *The Pioneers* carries many footnotes, which explain to the French reader aspects of the English text, including "la culture de l'érable," or the making of maple syrup, about which the French know very little. (Most French people I know like neither American peanut butter nor American maple syrup.) Indeed, the very notion of "Pioneers" was something curious to French readers, who inhabited a country whose pioneers presumably arrived with Julius Caesar in 52 BC.

I add one further word about Berlioz's reading of Cooper—concerning a sentence from *The Pathfinder*, published in English in 1840 and, as mentioned above, translated by Defauconpret in the same year. The passage describes the death of a Delaware Indian who attempts to paddle out to an island in the rushing waters of a lake situated above a torrential waterfall.

For a few moments his efforts were so frantic that he actually prevailed over the power of the cataract; but nature has its limits, and one faltering stroke of the paddle set him back, and then he lost ground, foot by foot, inch by inch, until he got near the spot where the river looked even and green, and as if it were made of millions of threads of water, all bent over some huge rock, when he shot backwards like an arrow and disappeared, the bow of the canoe tipping just enough to let us see what had become of him. I met a Mohawk some years later who had witnessed the whole affair from the bed of the stream below, and he told me that the Delaware continued to paddle in the air until he was lost in the mists of the falls.

I take note of this passage, colorfully and faithfully translated by Defauconpret, because only eight years later Berlioz would set down a quite similar image at the close of the *préface* to the *Mémoires*, which is dated March 21, 1848—when he himself was depressed by having to paddle against the current of a revolution in France which, he believed, would send the art of music over the waterfall.

Who knows what will have become of me only a few months from now?...
My resources, for myself and my family, are hardly assured. Let me therefore

make the most of the minutes that remain to me, even though I may soon have to adopt the stoic resolution of those Indians of the Niagara Peninsula, who, after struggling heroically against the raging river, recognize the futility of their efforts and in the end abandon themselves to the current. Contemplating courageously the short distance that separates them from the abyss, and singing aloud up to the very moment of their seizure by the cataract, they swirl and whirl with the waters into eternity.²¹

There were other literary descriptions that the composer might have known of the terrible force of Niagara Falls, but it is reasonable to suppose that Berlioz's image here derives from his reading of James Fenimore Cooper. We know that Berlioz continued to read Cooper into the eighteen-fifties: in an unpublished and as yet unstudied account book for the years 1849 through 1851, preserved in the Macnutt Collection, at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, we see, among other things, that he bought two new books by the celebrated American writer.

Furthermore, on the subject of Cooper and the *Mémoires*, Berlioz invokes *The Last of the Mohicans* in the fourth letter of the *Voyage en Allemagne*, which of course forms the centerpiece of that book. There he includes a transcript of the letter he sent to Felix Mendelssohn when the German composer suggested an exchange of their conducting batons. "Mendelssohn's musical scepter was immediately brought to me," writes Berlioz. "The very next day, I sent to him my heavy oak cudgel, with the following letter, which 'the last of the Mohicans,' I should like to hope, would not disavow." There follows Berlioz's letter, addressed to "chief Mendelssohn," which evokes the exchange of the "tomahawks." Our composer wrongly thinks that a tomahawk is some kind of club, when in fact it is hatchet, but he correctly remembers that the "real" last of the Mohicans, the character Uncas, is particularly adept at throwing the tomahawk. "The last of the Mohicans," in the *Mémoires*, is at any rate not the title of Cooper's book but rather the fellow to whom the title refers.

When Berlioz returned to Nice in September 1844 (he had stayed there in 1831), he sketched an overture that he christened *La Tour de Nice*. This was first performed in January 1845. He then rebaptized the work *Le Corsaire rouge*, using the title of Cooper's *The Red Rover*, which was first published in Paris, in English, in 1827, and subsequently in England, and in the United States, in 1828—the year it appeared in French, in Defauconpret's translation. There is, in Cooper's novel, a tower on a rocky coast, like the tower in Nice. When he determined to publish the overture, however, Berlioz changed the name to *Ouverture du Corsaire*, thereby transferring the literary reference from

the American Cooper to the Englishman Byron, whose *The Corsair*, published in English in 1814, had been translated into French, by Amédée Pichot, the man most responsible for the dissemination of Byron's work in France.

Lord Byron

Byron first appears in Berlioz's correspondence in a letter to Humbert Ferrand of June 28, 1828, when the composer mentions to his friend a conversation he has had with a musician by the name of Jean-Baptiste Pastou (1784–1851)—a violinist, guitar instructor, and music theory teacher whose new-fangled methodology led to his hiring at the Conservatoire as professor of solfège and of what was called *harmonie orale*.²² "I'm happy to see you," Pastou said to Berlioz; "I went to hear your concert [on May 26, 1828]. Do you know something? You are the Byron of music! Your overture to *Les Francs-Juges* is a *Childe Harold* [...]"²³ We know that over the next several years, Berlioz read Byron, and we know that he read Thomas Moore's biography of Byron,²⁴ translated by Louise Swanton-Belloc in 1830 as *Les Mémoires de Lord Byron*. Indeed, in 1831, in the libretto of *Le Retour à la vie*, Berlioz cites Byron's famous remark about a version of *Antony and Cleopatra* as "une salade de Shakespeare et de Dryden."²⁵ In the *Journal des débats* of April 13, 1850, Berlioz calls Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst "the Byron of the violin." Six years later, in 1856, Berlioz would tell his then biographer, Eugène de Mirecourt, that Byron was one of the poets who had influenced him the most.²⁶ But what, exactly, was he reading?

Here we see the opening stanza of *The Corsair*, with the French translation by Amédée Pichot:²⁷

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Sur la plaine riante de la mer azurée,
 Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
nos âmes sont libres comme elle et nos pensées n'ont point de limites.
 Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Aussi loin que peuvent nous porter la brise et les vagues écumantes,
 Survey our empire, and behold our home!
nous contemplons notre empire et notre patrie.
 These are our realms, no limit to their sway,—
Voilà nos états qu'aucun terme ne borne...
 Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.
Notre pavillon est un sceptre obéi par tous ceux qui l'aperçoivent.

The problem with the translation is that no matter the form of the original—Spenserian stanzas, blank verse, octosyllabics, ottava rima, or heroic couplets (lines strictly paired by rhyme, in iambic pentameter), as here—Pichot turns Byron’s poetry “into the same bland and rhythmically neutral prose.”²⁸ Actually, the first-line expressions “plaine riante” and “mer azurée” are very attractive, as are others. Further, even without the rhythms and the rhymes, Berlioz’s analysis of the character of the Corsair—“that character at once tender yet obstinate, generous yet ruthless, that bizarre amalgamation of two apparently opposite sentiments: love for women; hatred for mankind”²⁹—is not at all off the mark.

In other writings, Berlioz reveals that he has read Byron’s play *Marino Faliero*, his poem *Lara* (1814), and of course *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, published in English between 1812 and 1818 and in French beginning in 1819. Many commentators have been far too quick to associate Berlioz’s second symphony with *Childe Harold*. The original inspiration, as it was reported on January 26, 1834, in the *Gazette musicale de Paris* (a report necessarily authored by Berlioz), was for a *Fantaisie dramatique* for solo viola, orchestra, and chorus, on the final moments of the life of Mary, Queen of Scots, “Les Derniers Instants de Marie Stuart.” This, had the idea persisted—one supposes that it was sparked by Schiller’s drama, which existed at the time in several French translations, and which was the subject of a lengthy chapter in Madame de Staël’s *De l’Allemagne*—would have meant that the second symphony, like the first, would have included a dramatic musical beheading. Only later, we know not when, did Berlioz determine to associate the work with Byron’s poem. When he announced the first performance of the new symphony, in *Le Rénovateur* of November 3, 1834, he was in a highly ironic mood, and spoke of the symphony as a “tissue of absurdity and extravagance of a sort not even imagined in the insane asylum.” “What in the world is a symphony that calls itself ‘Harold?’” he asked. He then answered his own question: during the various scenes presented in the score, one could always find “the solo viola, the Harold, a daydreaming wanderer, like Byron’s hero, characterized by an annoying and longwinded melody that is repeated with hopeless uniformity.” “That,” he said, “is what is *Harold*.”

This comical and self-deprecatory bit is not usually quoted in the biographies, which prefer to cite the perfectly serious description of the work found in chapter 45 of the *Mémoires*. It is not impossible that Berlioz sometimes found the quintessential Byronic hero—Harold, or Byron himself—to be something of a bore. I add, however, that at least one medical

doctor has taken Berlioz's Byronic "spleen" or "mal d'isolement" (isolation illness), seen in his descriptions of *Harold* and of his own wanderings, as evidence not of an essentially aesthetic *malaise* but of a genuine physiological malady: juvenile myoclonic epilepsy or "Janz syndrome."³⁰ (Such *d'outré-tombe* medical diagnoses may or may not be accurate—we will probably never know—but they are certainly appealing products of the physicians' professional... creativity.)

Let me again remind you of what Berlioz actually read, by comparing the opening of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* to the French translation by Amédée Pichot:³¹

Oh, thou! in Hellas deem'd of heavenly birth,
O toi, à qui Hellas donna une origine céleste!
 Muse! form'd or fabled at the minstrel's will!
Muse, qui reçois ta forme ou ton nom fabuleux de l'invention capricieuse du ménestrel,
 Since shamed full oft by later lyres on earth,
les lyres modernes t'ont si souvent humiliée sur la terre
 Mine dares not call thee from thy sacred hill:
que la mienne n'ose pas t'invoquer sur ton mont sacré;
 Yet there I've wander'd by thy vaunted rill;
cependant j'ai erré sur les bords de ta source fameuse;
 Yes! sigh'd o'er Delphi's long deserted shrine,
oui, j'ai soupiré sur l'autel depuis longtemps abandonné de Delphes,
 Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still;
où tout est muet, excepté le faible murmure de l'onde;
 Nor mote my shell awake the weary Nine
mais non, ma lyre ne doit pas réveiller les neuf sœurs fatiguées
 To grace so plain a tale — this lowly lay of mine.
pour embellir une histoire aussi simple... un humble poème tel que le mien.

The translator notes: "We believe that what Byron means is that modern lyres have profaned the name of the muse"—that Byron here deems as decadent the state of modern English poetry. But the translator is not certain of Byron's irony, and thus adds a defensive and self-protective note. He has of course made no effort to replicate Byron's Spenserian stanzas (eight lines in iambic pentameter followed by one line in iambic hexameter, with a rhyme scheme of *abab bcbc c*). Did Berlioz know something of the original? Would he have appreciated the comments, in *The British Review and London Critical Journal*, of an early reviewer of the great poem?

His lordship has managed the stanza with poetical skill; and in the distribution of the pauses, and particularly in the cadence of the closing line, has given the expanded melody, of which the verse is susceptible, without the monotony to which it is liable. The caesura which is generally placed on the sixth syllable of the last line, is varied in the other parts of the stanza with considerable delicacy of ear; and upon the whole, we cannot but think that the rhythm of the stanza has received some improvement under his lordship's hands.³²

Had he wished to set the poem to music, Berlioz would indeed have had to concern himself with rhyme and meter, cadence and caesura. But that is something he seems never to have imagined. In fact, the composer was acquainted with Byron's translator, Amédée Pichot, who in 1833 was the editor of the *Revue de Paris*. In February of that year, Berlioz gave Pichot an article for the *Revue*, writing to his friend Joseph d'Ortigue on February 5, 1833, that he had "something to give to Pichot, which could suffice for a first article."³³ But I find in that magazine only notices and reviews of Berlioz's various Parisian concerts, and no piece by Berlioz in the issues published between 1830 and 1844. I note in passing that in that letter to d'Ortigue, Berlioz closes by saying in English, "God bless you!"—this no doubt because he was at that very moment seeing a good deal of Harriet Smithson and planning with her both a benefit concert and a marriage. When she fell from her carriage and broke her leg, on March 1, 1833, plans for both events were ruptured.

Thomas Moore

In her thoughtful introduction to Thomas Moore's *Les Amours des anges et les mélodies irlandaises*, Louise Swanton-Belloc, writing in 1823, composed a short treatise on the nature of translation. Belloc, born in France of an Irish father and French mother, raised and educated by English women, became a notable advocate for women's education. Here she asserts that the English language is more suited to poetry than to prose—which would suggest that the French language, for her, was more suited to prose than to poetry. This is what is denied in the book I have mentioned by our forefather who art in heaven, Jacques Barzun, whose *Essay on French Verse* is in fact a *defense* of French poetry, which, like all poetry, loses in translation precisely the ingredients that make it poetry: compression, harmony, and singularity of expression.

But perhaps Berlioz agreed with Belloc. One day, when he returned home from a soul-searching walk in the country, he came upon Moore's

Irish Melodies, as he describes the moment in chapter 18 of the *Mémoires*: “My eyes fell upon the poem that begins with these words: ‘Quand celui qui t’adore’ (When he who adores thee).” Berlioz gives the line in both French and English, then asserts that he immediately set the words to music. This was “the sole occasion,” he writes, “on which it seems that I was able to paint such an extraordinary emotion while still under its active and immediate influence. I believe that only rarely have I been able to achieve such a truly accurate and poignant melodic setting immersed in such a tempest of ominous harmonies.”³⁴ In a letter written two months later,³⁵ Berlioz referred to the song as his *Élégie en prose*. The suggestion is that it was as much Belloc’s *prose* as it was Moore’s poetry that had a profound effect on the composer.

In her translation of Moore’s “When he who adores thee,” Belloc includes the footnote that appears in the first edition of Moore’s poem: “These words allude to a story, in an old Irish manuscript, which is too long and too melancholy to be inserted here.” In fact, when Berlioz was in England in 1847 and 1848, he learned the content of the story, and recited it in the preface to the second edition of the *Élégie*:

The profound emotion I felt on setting these lovely words to music led me to do research in England on the event to which they allude, and I am grateful to the celebrated English poet Leigh Hunt for the following information. The person who speaks in Moore’s poem in fact lived under the name of Emmet. He belonged to an honorable family. Of a dignified and noble character, high-minded intellect, of a warm and devoted heart, he was seduced by brilliant aspirations and disappointed by unfaithful friends. Highly active during the Irish Rebellion of 1803, he had therefore to endure the consequences of its failure; he was condemned to death, and was executed at the age of twenty-four. He appears to have loved Miss Curran, the daughter of the celebrated lawyer of that name [John Philpot Curran], and to have been loved by her in return. It is surely of Miss Curran that the youthful enthusiast wishes to speak in that passage, in his speech to the judges, of which we reproduce here only the proud conclusion. Miss Curran would remain forever faithful to Emmet; she died only a few years ago, in Rome. But what is the crime that Moore has Emmet accuse himself of committing as he addresses himself to Ireland and to Miss Curran? That is what I have been unable to discover.

In fact, Berlioz is wrong about Sarah Curren, who was not forever faithful to Emmet; she married a British officer and died, not in Italy, and not “a few years ago” (Berlioz wrote those words in 1849), but in Kent, in 1808.³⁶ And as to the “fault” ascribed to Emmet by Thomas Moore, which puzzled

Berlioz, this was presumably a reference to Emmet's having lied to the judges, during his trial, about the identity of Sarah Curran, who had long been aware of Emmet's plans to lead an insurrection, and who would therefore, had her identity been discovered, have been judged an accomplice to a crime. Or perhaps it was simply a general reference to Emmet's revolutionary sentiments, which Moore did not share.

Berlioz's setting of the French translation of Moore's "When he who adores thee," published with his *Neuf Mélodies* in March 1830, is indeed emotionally charged; of that there is no question. But the piano writing is problematical because the effort to create an orchestral sonority via extended tremolo is, in my view, in vain. (This is surely what led Hugh Macdonald to orchestrate the piece; his *arrangement*, to the best of my knowledge, remains unrecorded.) Below I cite the text of the poem, essentially in anapestic tetrameter and trimeter, with the unrhymed and unmetred prose translation upon which I have imposed separate lines:

When he who adores thee has left but the name
 Of his fault and his sorrows behind,
 O say, wilt thou weep, when they darken the fame
 Of a life that for thee was resign'd?

*Quand celui qui t'adore n'aura laissé derrière lui que le nom
 de sa faute et de ses douleurs,
 oh! dis, dis, pleureras-tu s'ils noircissent la mémoire
 d'une vie qui fut livrée pour toi?*

Yes, weep, and however my foes may condemn,
 Thy tears shall efface their decree;
 For, heav'n can witness, though guilty to them,
 I have been but too faithful to thee!

*Oui, pleure, pleure! Et, quel que soit l'arrêt de mes ennemis,
 tes larmes l'effaceront.
 Car le Ciel est témoin que, coupable envers eux,
 je ne fus que trop fidèle pour toi.*

With thee were the dreams of my earliest love;
 Every thought of my reason was thine:
 In my last humble prayer to the spirit above,
 Thy name shall be mingled with mine!

*Tu fus l'idole de mes rêves d'amour;
chaque pensée de ma raison t'appartenait.
Dans mon humble et dernière prière
ton nom sera mêlé avec le mien.*

Oh! bless'd are the lovers and friends who shall live,
The days of thy glory to see:
But the next dearest blessing that heaven can give,
Is the pride of thus dying for thee!

*Oh! bénis soient les amis, oui, bénis soient les amants qui vivront
pour voir les jours de ta gloire!
Mais, après cette joie, la plus chère faveur que puisse accorder le Ciel,
c'est l'orgueil de mourir pour toi!*

The first edition of Berlioz's *Élégie* gives the text only in French—another indication that what moved the composer was indeed the translation and not the original. In fact, when it first appeared, that translation was highly praised: “Madame Louise Belloc, initiated in childhood into all the mysteries of the English language, has captured in French all of the grace, coloring, originality, mannerisms, and, in a word, all of the genius of the Irish poet. Her translation is at once relaxed and scrupulously faithful. One has the impression that she is doing nothing but freely expressing her own ideas.”³⁷ In the second edition, which appeared in 1849 under the new title of *Irlande*, the original vocal line is supplemented with a second vocal line that sets the original English text because, as Berlioz puts it in chapter 18 of the *Mémoires*, the French translation was so faithful that he was able to fit the music to the original text.

In the third edition, printed in the *Collection de 32 Mélodies* brought out by Simon Richault in 1863, the translation is ascribed to “anonymous” rather than to Louise Swanton-Belloc for reasons that are not clear, although I have seen other instances of the conspicuous absence of a woman's name on a musical publication: one of the most egregious instances of this sin of omission concerns the five songs we now know as the *Wesendonck Lieder*, which Richard Wagner first published without setting down the name of his muse, the poet Mathilde Wesendonck.

In Berlioz's setting of Moore's Emmet poem, there are several places in which, his claim to the contrary notwithstanding, the English does not fit the melody. At the lines “O say, wilt thou weep, when they darken the fame,” the music seems to say, “O *say*, wilt thou weep *when* they dar-*ken* the fame,”

thus violating the anapestic meter of the original. Did Berlioz *feel* those anapests? Later we get “For heaven can wit-*ness* though guil-*ty* to them,” another infringement upon the meter of Moore’s poem. However, even in Berlioz’s setting of the French translation we find abnormalities: for the words *when they darken the fame*, that is, “s’ils noircissent la mémoire,” the *music* seems to say: “s’ils noircis-*sent* la mémoire,” with the mute *e* falling on a strong beat. This, to a purist, is a demerit. Julian Rushton has well summed up the situation: “We are left,” in this song, “with one of the more uncomfortable results of [Berlioz’s] lack of cadential routine.”³⁸ Indeed, this is one of those works that can disappoint Berlioz’s friends and comfort his foes.

In chapter 52 of the *Mémoires*, the *Voyage en Dauphiné*, Berlioz explains his continuing love for Estelle Fornier by means of a reference to “Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,” a poem by Moore that Berlioz felt encapsulated his own feelings. When we see the well-known photograph of the elderly Madame Fornier, taken in Geneva in 1865, we may wonder how it is that she was so readily able to reignite in the composer the sparks of youthful love. When we look at the little-known photograph of her in Lyon, by Frédéric Favre, taken some four years earlier, we get a better sense of the warmth and charm of her personality.³⁹

But whatever her appearance—Berlioz admitted to the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein that “the years had destroyed nearly all of her outward allure; you have fully to use your imagination in order approximately to reconstruct her splendid beauty”⁴⁰—the composer’s feelings were surely encouraged by Moore’s delightful poem, which in its simple way, in the author’s characteristic anapests, reveals a profound truth about the nature of love. The written word, after all, had always had a larger-than-life impact upon the composer, who was initially inspired to pursue musical study, it must never be forgotten, by *reading* in an encyclopedia the lives of Haydn and Gluck. Here, beneath the original English, we see the translation of the poem as it appears in the *Mémoires*, and, beneath Berlioz’s French, the translation by Madame Swanton-Belloc.

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms [Moore]
Crois-moi, quand tous ces jeunes charmes ravissants, [Berlioz]
Ah! crois-moi, si tous ces jeunes charmes ravissants, [Swanton-Belloc]

Which I gaze on so fondly today,
que je contemple si passionnément aujourd’hui,
que je contemple si tendrement aujourd’hui,

Were to change by tomorrow and fleet in my arms,
viendraient à changer demain et à s'évanouir entre mes bras,
changeaient dès demain, et s'évanouissaient entre mes bras,

Like fairy gifts fading away—
comme un présent des fées,
comme les dons fugitifs des fées,

Thou wouldst still be adored as this moment thou art,
tu serais encore adorée autant que tu l'es en ce moment.
tu serais encore adorée comme tu l'es à présent.

Let thy loveliness fade as it will;
Que ta grâce se flétrisse,
À quelque heure que tes attraits se flétrissent,

And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart,
chaque désir de mon cœur ne s'enlacera pas moins,
autour de la ruine chérie,

Would entwine itself verdantly still.
toujours verdoyant, autour de la ruine chérie.
chaque désir de mon cœur s'enlacera plus ardent et plus tendre!

I cannot prove that Berlioz made his own translation of the poem, but if he did, he was nonetheless remembering phrases from the translation he read in 1830. Still, in line two, for “fondly,” Belloc chose “tendrement,” while Berlioz chose the more enflamed word “passionnément.” In line four, for “fairy gifts fading away,” Belloc chose “les dons fugitifs des fées”; Berlioz wrote “un présent des fees,” which lacks the element of “fading away.” In lines seven and eight, for each wish entwining itself around the poet’s heart, Belloc added the elements of “plus ardent et plus tendre” for Moore’s “still verdantly,” while Berlioz, more literally, wrote “toujours verdoyant.”

Shakespeare

The text of Moore’s poem, the *mélange* of Berlioz and Swanton-Belloc, provides yet more evidence of the man’s remarkable memory, which allowed him to quote the Latin and French classics, the French moderns, and Shakespeare, ten of whose twelve tragedies he seems to have known, in full, or in part, by

heart. The ones he knew best are those he saw in 1827, at the Odéon, with Harriet Smithson in the leading roles, and those that he read in the anonymous translations found in the brochures published in the Place de l'Odéon by Madame Vergne. (We shall speak more of those editions in chapters 11 and 12, devoted to Shakespeare, which is why he gets short shrift here.) Very few of Madame Vergne's pocket-sized editions have been preserved. The anonymous translator of *Romeo and Juliet* used the 1748 Garrick ending of the play that inspired our composer. Following the great eighteenth-century actor in having Juliet awaken before the poison does Romeo in, Berlioz, for that moment, set down some of the most ecstatic music of his entire catalogue (I am thinking of bars 90–147 of *Roméo au tombeau des Capulets*).⁴¹ On that page of the play, in act 5, we read: “Romeo is thy husband; I am that Romeo. Nor all the opposing powers of earth or man shall break our bonds or tear thee from my heart” (“Roméo est ton époux; je suis ce Roméo. Et tous les pouvoirs réunis de la terre, et des hommes, ne pourraient rompre nos nœuds et t'arracher de mon cœur”). Those are not the words of Shakespeare, but those are the words Berlioz knew.

The same anonymous translator made a number of cuts in *Romeo and Juliet*, just as she or he did in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, and *Richard III*, and these would have infuriated the composer, even though the aesthetic and ethical matters regarding the “updating” of Shakespeare, now more fiercely debated than in Berlioz's day, will never be settled once and for all. (In Ian McEwan's witty novel *Nutshell*, published in 2016, the author has the Hamlet story narrated by an omniscient fetus alive in Gertrude's womb! What would Berlioz—or Shakespeare—make of that?) Let me say that I have been surprised that the Shakespeare scholars have not yet identified the translator of the Madame Vergne editions that were so important to Berlioz's bewitchment by the Bard. That translator's identity was apparently well hidden at the time, because if he had been able to do so, Berlioz would surely have outed him or her, no doubt with rage. “The translators are such asses,” wrote Berlioz to his old friend Humbert Ferrand on October 28, 1864, in a letter I shall have occasion to quote again; “I've corrected in my copy I don't know how many silly errors of Monsieur Benjamin Laroche, and yet it is he who is the most faithful and least ignorant of the lot.”⁴²

“Suit the action to the word, the word to the action”: Hamlet's advice to the players, imitated in *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*, would have been Berlioz's advice to the translators, too. Easier said than done.

Chapter Three

Berlioz and Liszt in the Locker Room

Et, encore, elle, toujours elle, avec son inexplicable sourire...

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

Locker room conversation, in the United States of America, refers to the unelevated discourse that is characteristic of men, even those of educated station, as they shower and dress, after sports, in the room where they have stored their clothes. “Locker” can mean “sleazy” in German, and that is indeed what is at issue: remarks that in French would be “des plaisanteries de bas étage.”

Nicolas Dufetel wrote not long ago that the relationship between Liszt and Wagner, so often discussed, has yet fully to be understood.¹ The same is true, I would claim, of the relationship that began precisely ten years earlier between Liszt and Berlioz, which is the subject of the current chapter. Considering the warm friendship that burgeoned between the two artists on the eve of the first performance of the *Symphonie fantastique*, and considering the intense affairs of the heart that then preoccupied them both, it is not surprising that these young men should almost immediately speak openly of their private lives. Nonetheless, as points of honor, honorable men keep to themselves the intimate aspects of the *person* of the woman they love. This would pertain even to those who enjoyed the company of courtesans, in whose worlds privacy was otherwise rare. Indeed, men could be not ashamed but proud of their associations with courtesans: women who might be externally glamorous, if internally unhappy, and who might be intelligent, if not formally schooled—except in the ways of love, of course, which made them excellent teachers of the young. Liszt spoke openly of his relationship with Marie Duplessis, for example, the model for *La Dame aux camélias*, the

object of the pianist's attentions in 1847, and the first woman he truly loved, he tells us, who had breathed her last.²

If, in the obviously less dramatic world of sincere and monogamous love, marital or other, a man's devotion to his lady did indeed incorporate protection of her intimacy, then I think it is reasonable, in historical as well as contemporary terms, to find peculiar if not patently offensive the letter that Berlioz sent to Liszt in the immediate aftermath of his marriage to Harriet Smithson, in which he announced to his younger friend that his wife had been a virgin, "tout ce qu'il y a de plus vierge."³ This is offensive because it draws attention to defloration, in this case the defloration of a thirty-three-year-old woman, something that is usually left unmentioned, unsaid other than in expressive ellipses, or understated, as in Flaubert's description of the wedding night of Charles and Emma Bovary—on the morrow of which Charles appears more changed by the experience than Emma herself. It is offensive, in the end, because it unwittingly reduces the history of a woman to the story of her body.⁴

I am led to pursue this subject—the indelicate *confidence* that Berlioz shared with Liszt—not only because "the erotic impulse" (the title of a recent book, by Lawrence Dreyfus)⁵ and the subject of music and Eros are now comfortably out of the closet, but more particularly because of the curious and revelatory concatenation of five events. (1) The first performance of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* in conjunction with its sequel, *Le Retour à la vie*, on December 9, 1832. (2) The presence in the audience, on that occasion, of Harriet Smithson, which led to a first in-person encounter with Berlioz, to a stormy courtship, and to a marriage, ten months later, on October 3, 1833. (Also among the public: Berlioz's former lover, Camille Moke, now Madame Pleyel, who would have occupied one of the ten places reserved in the concert hall for associates of her husband's piano emporium.)⁶ (3) The presence in the audience, on that occasion, of Franz Liszt, which led to the renewal of his friendship with Berlioz and to Liszt's creation of versions of both works on that day's program—the symphony, whose arrangement was completed in 1833 and published in 1834, and the sequel, whose arrangement—*Grande Fantaisie symphonique pour piano et orchestra sur deux thèmes du Mélologue de Monsieur Berlioz*—was completed in 1834, with Berlioz's explicit help (as we know from jottings in the autograph),⁷ but published only in 1981, and then with a slightly misleading title—*Grande Fantaisie Symphonique über Themen aus Hector Berlioz' 'Lélio'*—because the name "Lélio" was added to the work only in 1855.⁸ (4) The presence in the audience, on that occasion, of Marie d'Agoult, who had been aware of Berlioz for some time, and whose attendance at his concert might have been the catalyst for her liaison with

Liszt—rather than the meeting at the home of the Marquise de Le Vayer that took place in that same month, as the Countess recalled in *Mémoires* set down several decades later.⁹ (5) The publication in the *Revue de Paris*, on that very day, December 9, 1832, of *La Marquise*, a short story by George Sand that raises issues of male and female sexuality that are highly relevant to a consideration of the relationships among Berlioz and Smithson, Liszt and Marie d'Agoult.¹⁰ In addition to its early feminist evocation of gender difference—here it is not a man who falls in love with an actress, but a woman who falls in love with an actor—this story gives us, as the object of that woman's irrational love, a man whose name is Lélío, precisely the name that Berlioz later attributed to the artist-hero of the sequel to the *Symphonie fantastique*.

I am certain that Berlioz read this story, attributed to “Monsieur George Sand,” both because it appeared in the *Revue de Paris* in the same volume as the first published biography of Berlioz, by his friend Joseph d'Ortigue, who quite specifically, on two occasions, likens Berlioz's passion for the actress Harriet Smithson to Sand's heroine's passion for the actor Lélío;¹¹ and because d'Ortigue's manuscript was annotated and corrected by Berlioz himself, as we know from the autograph, which has been preserved.¹² Joseph d'Ortigue was also Liszt's first biographer, of course, and he writes in that biography that, for Liszt, Berlioz was “une apparition.”¹³ No one has commented on the obviously religious overtones of the word, as in “apparition de la vierge Marie,” but such usage is not startling from the pen of the pious d'Ortigue, nor would it be startling if it came from Liszt himself, because the *Symphonie fantastique* was the most striking piece of modern music that Liszt had ever heard. D'Ortigue was aware that the malady suffered by the protagonist of Berlioz's symphony—the “mal du siècle” or, as Chateaubriand called it in *René*, the “vague des passions”—was precisely the same malady from which Liszt suffered in the aftermath of his separation from Caroline de Saint-Cricq.

I need to linger on the amorous obsessions of the two artists because they may have gone beyond conventional attachment and into the realm of clinical disorder. This, in the case of Berlioz, is the argument made by Francesca Brittan, relying upon the work of the early nineteenth-century psychiatrist Dominique Esquirol, in the attempt to illuminate Berlioz's *idée fixe*—that is, his anguished two-and-a-half-year pursuit of a woman who would have nothing to do with him, a woman who, given her physically revealing performance of Ophelia and her apparently perfect incarnation of the adulterous Jane Shore, was hardly seen as a saint, and a woman who, I might add, was considerably older than the teenager a man like Berlioz might normally

have courted: Camille Moke, Berlioz's fleeting fiancée during the winter of 1830–1831, for example, was eighteen years old. So, too, was the young woman with whom Berlioz imagined running off to Germany, in August 1833, in the face of Harriet's continuing reluctance to marry. Berlioz's uncle Félix Marmion remarked unkindly, on seeing Harriet close up, in February 1833, that she “doesn't even *look* young.”¹⁴ (Would that we had Harriet's impression of her suitor's insensitive and intrusive relative!)

Brittan suggests that Berlioz's *idée fixe* was a physiological phenomenon as well as a psychological aberration, a nervous disorder, a kind of delirious monomania.¹⁵ It is worthy of note that one of Doctor Esquirol's case-studies is precisely that of a man compulsively attracted and delusionally attached to an actress who rebuffs his attentions. In fact Liszt was an acquaintance of the very psychiatrist invoked by Brittan: Dominique Esquirol once called upon the pianist to observe a mentally deficient patient with extraordinary musical skills.¹⁶ It is highly likely that Liszt reported Berlioz's obsession to the doctor, for Liszt was obviously aware of Berlioz's recurring intention, during those tumultuous months of 1833, should he be unable to marry Harriet Smithson, to suffer some “malheur définitif,” as he decorously put it in a letter to Ferdinand Hiller,¹⁷ that is to say, to do himself in. The fear of such a desperate act filters through the letters of Berlioz's family from the spring and summer of 1833, when his sisters were convinced that their brother had lost his mind, when his father wrote to Miss Smithson to say that he would sell off all of his property (his holdings were enormous) rather than risk giving her access to the fortune Berlioz would inherit, and when Berlioz himself, asking to borrow money from a friend, said that without it he might well die.¹⁸

Marie d'Agoult was well aware of the close relations between Liszt and Berlioz in the frenetic period that led from the première of the complete *Épisode de la vie d'un artiste* in December 1832 to the marriage of Berlioz and Smithson in October 1833. In April, Liszt wrote to Marie: “Pauvre Berlioz!... Oh, how I sometimes find myself in total sympathy with him. He is here, right next to me. A few minutes ago he was crying, sobbing in my very arms.”¹⁹ A month or so later, Liszt wrote to Marie to tell her that he was withdrawing for a few days to the apartment of his friend Pierre Érad: “Je souffre, j'ai besoin d'être seul,” adding, “Only my mother *and Berlioz* are permitted to enter.”²⁰ In early August, exasperated by his beloved's continuing doubts about marriage, Berlioz swallowed a potentially fatal dose of opium before Smithson's very eyes, causing her reluctantly to promise to marry. This led the composer to take an emetic, which saved his life, as Berlioz tells us in a medically informed letter: he was the son of an opium-using doctor, he

had himself been a medical student for three or four years, he certainly knew his way around hallucinatory drugs.²¹ Liszt became immediately aware of the incident: “A thousand things are preoccupying me,” he wrote to Marie in early August, adding straight away: “Berlioz intervenes”—“Berlioz survient”—which I take to be a reference to his attempted suicide.²² That Liszt writes so succinctly is proof that Marie, too, was aware of Berlioz’s plight.

If the private friendship between Berlioz and Liszt turned on the vicissitudes of love, it turned as well, of course, on common interests in music—in Beethoven and Weber²³ in particular—and in books. Though Berlioz had a classical education, while Liszt had almost none (“You don’t speak or think too badly, for a musician,” quipped George Sand),²⁴ both were voracious readers: both read Chateaubriand, both admired Victor Hugo, both became members of his *cénacle* in and around 1830, both admired Shakespeare and read the Bard in English and in French.²⁵ One may logically assume, from the music they wrote in response to the play, that both were fanatical admirers of *Hamlet*. Berlioz had fallen in love with Smithson in 1827 essentially because of her incarnation of Ophelia, whose tragic fate, poignantly voiced and mimed by the Anglo-Irish actress, captured the Frenchman’s imagination and cultivated his sympathy. His later song, *La Mort d’Ophélie*, which exists in solo and choral versions with piano and with orchestra, is expressive and tender in the extreme. As it happens, the first version of this exquisite work (which is the subject of chapter 7) is dedicated to none other than Marie d’Agoult.

Curiously enough, Liszt’s comment on Shakespeare’s Ophelia is the opposite of sympathetic—and it is relevant to cite it here, even though it was penned some years later, after Liszt saw *Hamlet* in Weimar, with the German actor Bogumil Dawison in the title role. In 1856, Liszt wrote to Agnes Street:

Dawison clearly resolves in the affirmative the question of whether Hamlet does or does not love Ophelia. Yes, Ophelia is loved. However, Hamlet, like all exceptional characters, urgently requires from her the very *wine* of love, and will not be satisfied by its mere *whew*. He wants to be understood without being laboriously obliged to explain himself. Thus, it is Ophelia who corresponds to the notion widely associated with the character of Hamlet: it is *she* whose mission is thwarted by her inability to love Hamlet as he *absolutely needs* to be loved, and her madness is nothing more than the *decrescendo* of a feeling whose inconsistency does not allow her to remain in the world of Hamlet.²⁶

One need not be a feminist to find in Liszt’s view of Ophelia the sentiments of a person who believes that exceptional men deserve exceptional women

capable of fathoming the depth of the sentiments of their consort without that consort having to make an effort to communicate it; a person who believes that if a woman fails to love a man as he desires, even if the discourse of his desire is impenetrable, then it is she who is insufficiently exceptional, impotent, and at fault. Eleanor Perényi, who writes in some detail of Liszt's sexuality, claims that the famous pianist urged his women "to give up the old relation of slave to master."²⁷ But Liszt's view of Ophelia falls into that universe of the masculine discourse which Berlioz used, not when he spoke of Ophelia, but when he spoke, I think crassly, of Harriet's sexual innocence.

The friendship of these two artists was imprinted upon the public's imagination by the series of concerts that Berlioz gave in the mid-eighteen-thirties, in many of which Liszt was a major participant. The first of these took place on April 2, 1833: this was a benefit for Harriet Smithson, who, one month earlier, had fallen from her carriage and badly fractured her leg. Liszt performed at the concert, along with Chopin, the violist Chrétien Urhan, and the Italian tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini. He would from that moment become a collaborator, performing at Berlioz's concerts of November 24, 1833, December 22, 1833, December 28, 1834, April 9, 1835, December 18, 1836, and later, on April 25, 1841, and May 4, 1844. Joseph d'Ortigue would see the pair as brothers: "Liszt and Berlioz, two names that march together: the instrument of the one is the piano; the instrument of the other is the orchestra."²⁸

It was between May and August 1833 that Liszt, who had only recently restarted his virtuoso career with recitals at the Salons Dietz on January 19 and at Wauxhall on March 12,²⁹ made his sterling transcription of the *Fantastique*: "La *Symphonie fantastique* sera terminée dimanche soir," he wrote to Marie d'Agoult on Friday, August 30, 1833; "Say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys in its behalf!"³⁰ He closes the letter in English—"Good bye, don't forget me completely"—obviously remembering Berlioz's frequent habit of saying *adieu* by misquoting the final words of the ghost in act 1, scene 5 of *Hamlet*: "Farewell, remember me." We know he was in Berlioz's company because the composer was surveying the pianist's work: on the same day that Liszt wrote to Marie (August 30), Berlioz wrote to a friend: "Liszt has just arranged my symphony for the piano; it is astonishing."³¹ When the work went to the engravers, in the spring of 1834, both Liszt and Berlioz read proof: "The symphony has been engraved; *we* are correcting the proofs."³² In fact they read at least four sets of proofs before Maurice Schlesinger first advertised the work in the *Gazette musicale de Paris* on November 9, 1834.³³

After Berlioz's marriage, which took place on October 3, 1833—with the little-known Robert Cooper and Bartholomew Stritch serving as witnesses

for the bride (the latter first identified in my edition of the *Mémoires*),³⁴ Liszt and Jacques Strunz serving as witnesses for the groom (Ferdinand Hiller claimed erroneously that he and Heine were Berlioz's *témoins*)³⁵—Liszt followed with especial closeness Berlioz's preparations for the concert of November 24 of that year, another benefit for Harriet, now the composer's lawfully wedded wife. On November 1, Liszt wrote to Marie with news of the concert and urged her to come: "You will try to come, won't you? The Marquise will come along as well, because there will be no performance of the *Symphonie fantastique!*"³⁶ (Marie's great friend, Catherine Davidoff, Marquise de Gabriac, was obviously no fan of Berlioz's first symphony.) The next day Liszt wrote again to Marie to advise her that the concert had had to be postponed to a later date: "vous viendrez—de grâce venez—Madame."³⁷ After that concert on the 24th, Berlioz and Liszt remained inseparable. Liszt wrote to Marie on or around December 21, 1833: "Our friend Berlioz is still on my back; it's impossible to continue to write!"³⁸

It was presumably at this time—although we have no contemporary documentary evidence, and the autograph is not known—that Liszt set down his quite remarkable meditation on the *idée fixe* of the *Fantastique*, the complete title of which, in the first edition, is: *L'idée fixe, Andante amoroso pour le piano d'après une mélodie de H. Berlioz.*³⁹ We know that Harriet was deeply moved by the *Fantastique*—a recollection of the *Scène aux champs* had her weeping all day long⁴⁰—and one can imagine Liszt playing his *Andante amoroso* to the loving couple as a kind of present to the actress. I also hear Liszt's brief fantasy as a mild rebuke to the composer, whose sometimes curious or commonplace diatonic harmonizations—I am thinking in particular of the second phrase and of the conclusion of the *idée fixe*—become in Liszt's hands smoothly and gently chromatic. In my view, these subtle alterations of Berlioz's principal thematic material, which even so celebrated an admirer of Berlioz as Tchaikovsky found "feeble,"⁴¹ may be heard as Liszt's way of saying, "mon cher Berlioz, you ought to have done it like this." The *Andante amoroso*, in other words, would pay tribute to Berlioz for the intensity of his love and at the same time tease him, as friends do, for the banality of the harmony or for the tedium of the end of his tune.

Had they seen less of one another, we would have more correspondence between Berlioz and Liszt and know more of their discussions—of love, marriage, and music. I cannot here review the relations maintained by the two artists over the next twenty-five years, of which most of the details have been often rehearsed. (A useful catalogue may be found at hberlioz.com.) Among the items recently published in a supplement to Berlioz's *Correspondance*

générale, we find one that paints those relations in a slightly new light. This is an unpublished letter from Liszt to his secretary, Gaetano Belloni, in which the great pianist, now Kapellmeister in Weimar, expresses to his man in Paris the hope that Berlioz has not misunderstood why he has not systematically undertaken the performance in Germany of the Frenchman's major works. He has not done so because, until now (January 1852), he had neither the material means to do so nor the "moral authority" ("le crédit moral") to impose Berlioz's innovative works upon those whom he calls the idiots and the snobs: the "cuistres," the "encroutés," and the "imbéciles."⁴²

Another item that appears in that supplement is a revelatory letter from Berlioz's uncle and frequent visitor: Félix Marmion was a military officer who was greatly dismayed by Berlioz's affair with Marie Recio, the singer with whom the composer began a relationship in 1840, when Harriet's apparently unfounded yet unceasing jealousy led him finally to give that jealousy a *raison d'être*. Marmion tells us that Berlioz tried but failed to end his extramarital *liaison dangereuse*, even in the face of what he, Marmion, believed were infidelities on the part of Marie Recio as well. (Of these we have no knowledge.) "I am assured," writes Marmion to Berlioz's older sister, "that his friend Liszt, aware of this fatal attraction, has done everything possible to get Hector to see reason, but in vain."⁴³ Hector did of course remain with Marie, and married her, seven months after Harriet's death, in October 1854. He was honor bound to do so, he told his son,⁴⁴ with a kind of humility quite different from the hubris that marks the letter to Liszt of October 7, 1833—to which we now return and with which we conclude:

Mon ami, Veux-tu te trouver ce soir chez Hugo à sept heures? Tu sais qu'il doit lire son nouvel ouvrage [*Marie Tudor*], j'y serai.

Eh bien, avais-je raison de croire la voix secrète de mon cœur? *Mon expérience* a réussi; oui, à telles enseignes que j'en suis tout brisé d'efforts. Mais à ce soir.

Adieu. H. Berlioz.

[P.S.] Vierge, tout ce qu'il y a de plus vierge.

My friend, will you be going to Hugo's this evening at 7 o'clock? You know that he intends to read his new play [*Marie Tudor*]. I shall be there.

Well, was I right to believe the secret voice of my heart? *My experiment* succeeded; yes, so much so that it has left me completely exhausted. But wait until tonight.

Adieu. H. Berlioz.

[P.S.] A virgin, as pure as the driven snow.⁴⁵

How are we to read this letter? Why, to describe his fatigue, does Berlioz use the poetic figure of “brisé d’efforts,” a phrase found in the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1830) of Lamartine, whose poetry, Liszt had said in May 1832, was “all around” him.⁴⁶ The ironic distancing implied by such quotation would support a reading of the comment, it seems to me, as machismo posturing.

Is it *true* that Harriet was a virgin? In different cultures and at different times, virginity has meant different things.⁴⁷ From time immemorial women have found it necessary to feign not only sexual pleasure, alas, but also virginity—and various devices were available to help them do so. Furthermore, feigning, as acting, I hope I may be permitted to say, was of course Harriet’s profession. But dissimulation, I hasten to add, was also not unknown to Berlioz. As a critic he certainly admitted that he had had at times to say the opposite of what he believed. Furthermore, in April 1830, when he was temporarily able to exorcise his obsession with Smithson and thus prepare the score of the *Symphonie fantastique*, he claimed that the renunciation resulted from learning certain horrible truths about her—“d’affreuses vérités,” as he puts it—which implies that he was told, and that he accepted at the time, that she was a wanton woman.⁴⁸ (After all, she had performed on stage with her breasts partially bared, if the lithographic evidence is to be believed, and in the portrait of Harriet that Peter Raby seems most to admire, she has what a politically incorrect lothario would call “bedroom eyes.”)⁴⁹ In short, when it came to “truth,” Berlioz was not always forthright, and not always right. What is clear is that he now *wanted* Liszt, as well as his friends and family, to *believe* that Harriet had been chaste—as much for the sake of his own honor as for hers.

What does Berlioz mean by his “experiment”—his “expérience”? This would seem to have to do with the process of defloration, a subject, as I have said, that is usually left unmentioned. In John Cleland’s erotic classic, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, which most people know as *Fanny Hill*, Fanny eagerly awaits the “promised pleasure” of first intercourse, as well as “the pain of the *experiment*.”⁵⁰ Berlioz may be alluding to what had been a gradual demonstration of the physical act at hand, for Harriet, unlike women of a certain social station, had no ladies in waiting, no servants, and no mother in attendance to prepare her for what was to come. Alternatively, the comment may be read as an invitation to Liszt to peer into the experiment in the manner of a voyeur. Liszt, after all, would use a similarly wry locution when referring to his own recent “experiments,” with Adèle de Laprunarède, as “höhere Stilübungen in der französischen Sprache”—“advanced exercises

in the French manner.” (I am instructed that the phrase implies a distinction between German haste and French patience and variety.)⁵¹ Be this as it may, Berlioz’s choice of the word *expérience* would seem to be a manifestation of braggadocio, and his exhaustion, the result of having attempted to lead his bride through the thousand-and-one stations of passion and ecstasy.

Finally, why does he make this assertion *to Liszt*? Is it perhaps because the young virtuoso was himself what an American specialist has called a “stud”?⁵² To his friend Humbert Ferrand, Berlioz tells of Harriet’s virginity with almost legalistic solemnity: “For my part, let me say, as I would say only to my best friend, and let me swear on my honor, that I found my wife to be as pure and as virginal as it is possible to be.”⁵³ Here, the tone is defensive. In the note to Liszt, who had obviously had his doubts, the tone is brash. In an article on Berlioz and Liszt, Cécile Reynaud observes that at their first meeting, Berlioz addressed Liszt in the way in which a student might address a professor.⁵⁴ Addressing Berlioz’s harmony through his improvisation on the *idée fixe*, Liszt was Berlioz’s professor, although one might wish to add, considering the role of the *idée fixe* in the development of the symphonic poem, that Berlioz acted as Liszt’s professor as well. In the letter that has concerned us here, written *post noctem voluptatis*, Berlioz addressed Liszt man to man with words, almost out of character, that he might well have used... in the locker room.

Chapter Four

Berlioz's Directorship of the Théâtre-Italien

Regardez le plus souvent possible les mouvements de votre chef!

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

Berlioz, I confess, never became director of the Théâtre-Italien. That he nearly occupied this position, however, seems worth a few minutes' traffic upon this stage, for the tale speaks in a way that others do not to the composer's standing in the artistic world of the eighteen-thirties and to his relationship at the time with French officialdom. Indeed, the tale overlaps with the most fateful episode of his career, the failure at the Opéra, in 1838–1839, of the “opéra semi-sérieux” *Benvenuto Cellini*. If the reasons for that failure were partly political, it was politics pure and simple that led to Berlioz's *non*-directorship of the Théâtre-Italien. It is my intention in these pages to review the story in the light of documents previously unnoticed or unmentioned in the standard literature.

After a performance of *Don Giovanni*, on Sunday, January 14, 1838, a terrible fire broke out in the Salle Favart, home to the Théâtre-Italien since November 1825, when the building was purchased and refurbished at the expense of the government of King Charles X. Attempting to leap to safety from the balcony that gave on to the Place des Italiens, Carlo Severini, co-director of the company, hit his head, broke his back, and died moments later at the Hôtel des Italiens next-door. Severini's partner, Édouard Robert, escaped by the skin of his teeth. Others living in the building, or owning adjoining boutiques, saw their properties incinerated. “Hardly had the smoke dissipated,” writes D. Kern Holoman in his perceptive biography of the composer, “than [Berlioz] was writing to the Ministry [of the Interior] to secure the privilege of reorganizing the theater.” Berlioz's proposal was

“on the verge of ministerial approval,” even though the composer, in Holoman’s view, was an artist “ill equipped for such tedious and ultimately trivial pursuits.”¹ Here Holoman echoes Jacques Barzun, who suggested that Berlioz’s failure to obtain the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien was a “blessing in disguise,” for it spared him “endless worries of an alien kind.”² Similar sentiments were earlier expressed by Adolphe Boschot, whose hard-to-explain cynicism toward the composer so often mars his otherwise important work. Indeed, Boschot’s account of the matter of the “Italiens,” flawed though it is, is rather more detailed than those of Berlioz’s two great modern biographers: their two-page treatments confirm an admirable preference for art over administration.³

From my perspective, however, Berlioz’s adventure with the Théâtre-Italien—the name is often conflated with the building it inhabited but refers first and foremost to the Italian opera *company*—was not “alien,” because his talents as an impresario had to have been formidable. And the pursuit of the directorship of what was arguably the then most elegant and successful theater of the French capital, despite Holoman’s witty allusion to the popular parlor game, hardly seems to merit the epithet “trivial.” The venue of the revivals in the eighteen-thirties of major works by Bellini and Donizetti, and of the premières of newly commissioned works by Bellini (*I Puritani*; 1835), Donizetti (*Marina Faliero*; 1835), and Mercadante (*I Briganti*; 1836), was no out-of-the-way outfit: these works, beyond their intrinsic merits, “helped set the stage,” as Philip Gossett long ago put it, “for the advent of Giuseppe Verdi.”⁴ Privileged to give Italian opera three times a week six months a year, the director of the Théâtre-Italien was furthermore permitted to give foreign works of a different sort during the remaining six months: German opera, for example, highlighting works by Beethoven and Weber, and English drama—something hardly insignificant to the husband of an Anglo-Irish actress whom the French had much admired and whose career Berlioz at the time was still attempting to advance. As director of the Théâtre-Italien, then, Berlioz might have overseen performances of a *variety* of works beyond those by Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti that we tend too facilely to say were antithetical to the French composer’s taste and aesthetic; he might have secured a generous income that would have allowed him greater freedom to compose; and he might have found a setting for the display of the talents of his wife, who, had she flourished, would have been a partner more satisfied and more satisfying than she was soon to become.

In the aftermath of the fire, the surviving director, Édouard Robert, newly associated with Louis Viardot (the respected man of letters who would

marry Pauline Garcia, two years later, in 1840), immediately began an effort to maintain control of the company. On February 6, 1838, Robert, who had rapidly managed to get his operation up and running in the Théâtre-Ventadour, wrote to Rossini:

Nothing has as yet been decided as concerns the future of the Théâtre-Italien. The Commission de Surveillance de l'Opéra has been asked by the Minister of the Interior to review the matter, and you surely know the make-up of that group. Most of them are mortal enemies of the Théâtre-Italien. Two days ago, however, Viardot appeared before them on my behalf, because, with my recent injuries and my gout, I am still confined to my bed. He distinguished himself by the force of his argumentation and explained perfectly the validity of my right [to maintain the *privilege* of the theater]. He put me very much in contention and thus left the members of the commission uncertain as to how to proceed.⁵

Édouard Robert and Louis Viardot were eventually successful, during the course of the 1838–1839 season, in maintaining the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien. But this outcome, the *raison d'être* of the present chapter, was for some time in doubt. The Minister of the Interior, Comte de Montalivet, did indeed call upon the Commission de Surveillance de l'Opéra to advise him as to the long-term future of the theater. This powerful group oversaw the contracts of the several directors to whom an exclusive *privilege* or commercial concession had been granted, in a system created by Napoléon, in 1806, that was devised to ensure financial success by drastically limiting the number of theaters officially permitted to offer dramatic entertainments in the capital city. Established on January 29, 1831, the current Commission Spéciale acted as the administrative overseer, not only for the Théâtre-Italien, but also for the Opéra and the other royal theaters as well as for the Conservatoire, serving as intermediary, as it were, between those in music and those in power, and establishing the relative magnitude of these institutions by establishing the magnitude of the budget of each.⁶

In early January and February of 1838, Berlioz argued against the possible reunion of the Théâtre-Italien and the Opéra, submitted requests to obtain the *privilege* of the Théâtre-Italien, and made a detailed proposal to exploit it in a newly renovated Salle Ventadour.⁷ (In the letter to Rossini cited above, Édouard Robert suggests that the favored candidate—who would rebuild the Salle Favart—was François-Louis Crosnier, at the time co-director with Alphonse-Théodore Cerfbeer of the Opéra-Comique.) The several letters Berlioz addressed to the Minister of the Interior, on January 16, February 5,

and February 10, and the documents specifying the changes he would make and the economies he would achieve, have been available since the publication in 1975 of the second volume of Berlioz's *Correspondance générale*.

According to the report in *Le Figaro* of February 16, 1838, there were, in addition to Berlioz, Robert, and Crosnier and Cerfbeer, four other candidates for the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien: Henri Duponchel, director of the Opéra; Charles-Gaspard Delestre-Poirson, director of the Gymnase-Dramatique; the playwright Ferdinand de Villeneuve, director of the Théâtre de la Renaissance; and the music publisher Maurice Schlesinger. On March 19, 1838, Berlioz explained his hopes to his father: "The businessmen who selected me and who have asked for the directorship in my name have promised me a fixed salary of ten thousand francs and one fifth of the revenues produced by the theater."⁸ On March 29, 1838, Berlioz suggested to the Minister (the letter has not been preserved) that if objection were raised to his plan of renovating the Salle Ventadour, he and his associates (whose names, with one exception, we simply do not know) would agree to construct an entirely *new* theater.⁹ Shortly thereafter, however, Berlioz, like Crosnier before him, proposed to rebuild the burnt-out Théâtre Favart. This is the proposal that Comte de Montalivet determined to support.

Montalivet had been Minister of the Interior, briefly, in the autumn of 1830; he assumed the office twice again in 1836 and 1837–1839. He was the first Minister to take charge of the operatic affairs of the capital after the Revolution of 1830, when the former director of the department of fine arts, Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, was obliged to resign, and was thus not unfamiliar with such reorganizational matters. It was Montalivet, for example, who negotiated the government's agreement with the most famous impresario of the decade, Louis Véron;¹⁰ and it was Montalivet who established the first Commission de Surveillance de l'Opéra, in February 1831. Montalivet was an early supporter of the July Monarchy, remained a devout *orléaniste*, became one of those who accompanied Louis-Philippe out of Paris in 1848, and watched over the royal family's interests for some years to come. Berlioz may have made Montalivet's acquaintance through his uncle, Félix Marmion, who knew the man and found him sympathetic when Berlioz was stunned—as we know from his revenge fantasy, *Le Premier Opéra*—by the sudden cancellation, in July 1837, of the performance of the *Requiem*.¹¹ In his letter to Rossini of February 6, 1838, mentioned above, Édouard Robert implies that Laure Cinti-Damoreau, the celebrated soprano, was Montalivet's mistress (Montalivet was "sous l'influence de la Damoreau")¹² and that she was no

friend of Robert's. She was presumably fond of Berlioz, however; his reviews of her performances in 1838 are very positive indeed.

The specific clauses of the contractual agreement that Montalivet proposed to Berlioz, and for his signature to Louis-Philippe, have rarely appeared in print and never in English. Furthermore, the details of the story I tell here are ignored by Albert Soubies, whose history of the Théâtre-Italien remains more than a century later one of our few authoritative sources. Those clauses form the content of the proposition that was eventually sent to the legislative assembly. The document, officially a *cahier des charges*, that is (in this case) a statement of the parties' contractual obligations, was apparently drafted in Berlioz's behalf by Edmond Blanc, secretary to Montalivet (as well as to the once and future Prime Minister, Adolphe Thiers). It was first to be reviewed and approved by the Commission Spéciale that I have mentioned, then by a committee of elected representatives, then by the full legislative assembly.¹³ I have made a good faith effort to render in English the import of the articles, in order to communicate the essence of the agreement, but lawyerly readers will of course want to consult the original legalese.

Ministry of the Interior

We, Pair de France, Secretary of State Minister of the Interior, in view of the various propositions that have been made to us for the reconstruction of the venue known as the Salle Favart, reserved for exploitation by the Théâtre-Italien, have decreed and hereby decree the following:

Article 1

The concessionaire pledges to execute and complete, within a six-month period, at his risk and peril, and for an amount not to exceed one million two hundred thousand francs, all of the repairs necessary for the complete and total reconstruction of the venue known as the Salle Favart. The said six-month time period shall commence on the day upon which the architectural plans and cost estimates—which shall be submitted to the Administration during the month of the passage of the statute that will ratify the present authorization—shall have been corrected as necessary and approved.

The work of reconstruction shall be supervised solely by the concessionaire, with the understanding that the Administration will reserve the right to ensure that the work corresponds faithfully to the architectural plans and cost estimates that will have been submitted.

It is required that the new construction be as solid of structure and as elegant of design as the former Salle Favart. It is furthermore required that the

construction support a fully iron roof, and that it follow all extant specifications as prescribed by the competent architectural authorities.

The concessionaire shall be required to respect all easements that may currently encumber the building, and to respect and to maintain in their entirety, throughout the duration of the present authorization, the ownership of or access to the loges as these are at present constituted and uncontested.

In the interior of the building, there shall be no lodgings established other than those strictly necessary for the managerial and custodial staff. On the exterior of the building, the establishment of even a single boutique is strictly forbidden.

If the cost estimates appended to the architectural plans and approved by the Administration do not rise to the agreed upon sum of one million two hundred thousand francs, the number of years of the present authorization shall be reduced proportionally at the time of the approval of the said architectural plans and cost estimates.

The concessionaire pledges to provide the auditorium with all such mechanical materials and furnishings as are required for dramatic productions.

Article 2

The sum of two hundred thousand francs, the value of the insurance policy previously taken out with insurance company, the *Compagnie française du Phénix*, is [as a result of the fire that destroyed the building] to be paid to the [new] concessionaire. The Administration shall guarantee the recovery of this debt. Any and all legal action against the insurance company, should this become necessary, shall be undertaken at the request, effort, and expense of the Administration.

Article 3

The concessionaire is authorized to make use of all extant appurtenances in or belonging to the *Salle Favart*, whether currently on the premises or on deposit in the warehouses of the Administration.

When the concessionaire's authorization shall have expired, the Administration shall remit to the concessionaire the monetary value of all currently extant furnishings as well as of those purchased by the insurance company, furnishings that Monsieur Robert [the current concessionaire] is now required to itemize for the Administration.

For those furnishings used by the current concessionaire [Monsieur Robert] and belonging to him, the new concessionaire [Berlioz and Company] is required to reimburse the said owner, Monsieur Robert, an amount equal to their value as determined by the expert assessors.

Article 4

Acceptance of the new construction, on completion, shall be approved at common expense by the architects and the experts jointly selected.

Also at common expense, there shall be prepared a detailed description of the [new] premises and furnishings associated with the theater in order that the [new] concessionaire or his designated beneficiaries may be properly discharged at the time of the expiration of this authorization.

Article 5

In order that the concessionaire be compensated for the expense of the reconstruction that he has agreed to undertake, in accordance with the present contractual obligations, with the express condition that these obligations shall be followed to the letter, and with the understanding that the premises shall be used solely and uniquely for dramatic representations, the Administration grants to the said concessionaire the permission to exploit the Salle Favart for a period of *thirty-one years*, as from the first of October 1840.

The Salle Favart shall be accorded free of charge to Monsieur Robert for the period extending from the first of February 1839 [when the proposed new construction is scheduled for completion] to the thirtieth of September 1840 [the date of the expiration of Robert's contract], under penalty of monetary damages to be paid to Monsieur Robert.

The warehouse in the rue Louvois currently housing appurtenant theatrical materials and decorations shall continue to serve the needs of the Salle Favart. The Administration agrees to permit the future concessionaire to use the present warehouse or a different warehouse of satisfactory dimensions in equally convenient proximity to the theater.

Article 6

From the first of February 1839 until the expiration of his authorization, the [new] concessionaire shall be required a) to pay all taxes and local charges associated with this kind of property; and b) to maintain and secure the premises in accordance with all provisions of the law as it pertains to such concessionaires.

Article 7

As pertains to fire insurance, the concessionaire is required to pay all insurance premiums, whether in France or abroad, up to but not exceeding the amount of ten thousand francs per year. Should the premiums themselves

not rise to this amount, the concessionaire shall each year deposit the difference between the total premiums to be paid and ten thousand francs into the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations as an additional guarantee in case of fire. On the expiration of the current authorization, and on proper deliverance of the building, the sum total of these supplementary deposits shall be remitted to the concessionaire.

Should the building suffer irreparable damage or destruction, the concessionaire shall not profit from the above-stated clause, unless he wishes immediately to proceed to reconstruction at his own expense, in which case he shall benefit from a one-year extension of his authorization [to exploit the theater].

Article 8

The concessionaire shall be obliged to furnish, as a guarantee against the costs associated with the use of the facility, a deposit of sixty thousand francs.

The concessionaire may cede to another, in part or in full, the rights confirmed upon him by the present contract, but he is strictly forbidden to organize a corporation or a joint stock company [for the operation of the theater].

Article 9

At the time of the conclusion of each contract authorizing the exploitation of the Salle Favart by the Théâtre-Italien, the concessionaire or his designated beneficiaries shall be required to remit the Salle Favart and its dependent structures to the entrepreneur who shall be designated by the Minister of the Interior for the continued exploitation of the building by the Théâtre-Italien or by a foreign theatrical company assigned uniquely to the said building, and this at an annual rental fee fixed at a minimum of seventy thousand francs and a maximum of one hundred six thousand francs. This annual rental fee, the amount of which shall be established by mutual agreement or by arbiters selected by the concessionaire and the incoming entrepreneur, shall be the sole imbursement imposed by the concessionaire upon the incoming entrepreneur.

Article 10

At the time of the expiration of this authorization, the concessionaire or his designated beneficiaries shall remit the Salle Favart and its associated structures to the Administration in an excellent state of repair in conformance with the detailed description of the premises as stipulated in Article 4.

Repairs as needed, in conformity with the document stipulated in Article 4, shall be undertaken by specialists.

The concessionaire or his designated beneficiaries shall be held responsible for the value of all objects determined to be missing as per the document prescribed in Article 4.

As concerns musical instruments, scores, decorations, costumes, and all other furnishings that are the property of the concessionaire, the Administration shall reserve the right to retain them in full or in part, promising at the same time to compensate the concessionaire by a sum equal to their value as determined by specialists.

Article 11

The concessionaire, during the eight-day period that shall follow the presentation of the statute that will confirm the present authorization, shall be required to make a security deposit at the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations in the form of a subscription to French Government Securities in the amount of two hundred thousand francs.

This security deposit shall be remitted in full to the concessionaire, as per a special authorization to be delivered by the Administration, at the time of the completion and approval of the construction.

Article 12

The present contract shall take effect only after it has been established by the concessionaire, in the presence of the members of the Commission Spéciale des Théâtres Royaux, that he is in possession of the financial means necessary for the execution of the articles of the present contract.

Article 13

The present authorization shall take effect only after passage of the associated statute, at which time it will be subject, at the time of registration, to a fee fixed at one franc.

Signed and sealed at Paris on this day, June 2, 1838.

[signed:]

Montalivet

[Berlioz's hand:]

Accepté le présent cayer [*sic*] des charges dans toute sa teneur.

[These specifications are accepted in their entirety.]

Paris, June 4, 1838

[signed:] Hector Berlioz¹⁴

Shortly after signing this document, Berlioz and his associates did indeed satisfy the Commission Spéciale that their finances were in order, and did indeed submit a bond to guarantee the good faith of their negotiations. Meanwhile, on the day Berlioz affixed his signature to the *cahier des charges*, Louis-Philippe—by no means indifferent to the fate of the theater, especially in that his government had been supporting the company with a generous subvention smaller only than those offered in the eighteen-thirties by the Maison du Roi to the Académie Royale de Musique, the Opéra-Comique, and the Comédie-Française, and aware that the new arrangement with Berlioz required *no subvention* from the State¹⁵—simultaneously affixed his own signature to the official draft bill or *projet de loi*.

Article 1

The proposition made by Messieurs Berlioz and Company to reconstruct the Salle Favart and its dependent structures is accepted.

Consequently, all of the clauses and conditions, whether those that are the responsibility of the Administration or those that are the responsibility of Messieurs Berlioz and Company, as stipulated in the *cahier des charges* signed and sealed on June 2, 1838, by our Secretary of State Minister of the Interior, and accepted on June 4, 1838, by Messieurs Berlioz and Company, shall be executed in full.

Article 2

The *cahier des charges* and its acceptance by Messieurs Berlioz and Company shall be affixed in annex to the present statute.¹⁶

It needs here to be said in no uncertain terms that in an earlier period, the will of the Emperor, or the King, as expressed here, would have become the law of the land: *Berlioz et Compagnie*, despite the fact that that business-like appellation will forever sound odd to those of us who inhabit the world of music, would have been awarded the contract.

In contemporary correspondence, Berlioz speaks rather obliquely of his “associates” in his effort to secure the *privilège* of the Théâtre-Italien. We have only circumstantial evidence that points to the members of the Bertin family and their bankers as his principal protectors. Here is what we find on the front page of *Le Constitutionnel* of June 5, 1838:

Who would have thought that Monsieur Berlioz, music critic for the *Journal des débats*, Monsieur Berlioz, poet, Monsieur Berlioz, composer, would one day assume *coram populo* [in the presence of the people] the purely commercial title of *Berlioz et Compagnie*?

In fact we believe that Monsieur Berlioz has in this case allowed himself under pressure to serve as an intermediary for a powerful family that would like to control the theaters as it does the ministers of the Administration, and has thus compromised his authority by employing it in the service of a young woman whose talent, full of promise for the future, ought not to be fostered in this way. Mademoiselle Bertin's success, as the composer of *Faust* and *La Esmeralda*, has already been compromised by the political influence that has been foisted upon her, and now Monsieur Berlioz, already solicited to conduct the rehearsals of *La Esmeralda* at the Opéra, will yet again be accused of directing a theater uniquely in order to promulgate the works of Mademoiselle Bertin. These accusations, which we dare without trepidation to put forth in print, will come from all corners.

In as much as we believe, in these circumstances, that Monsieur de Montalivet has imposed upon Monsieur Berlioz and Company requirements that are particularly severe, precisely because he has as his patrons the greatest friends of "le 15 avril" [that is, the Bertin family, who patronized those who were restored to power on April 15, 1837, including Montalivet, serving for the fourth time as Minister of the Interior], we fear for the future of this young woman, whose talent without political influence would have had a meaningful impact in our own musical era, and yet who, even favored with too much political influence, has yet to find on any stage the warm recognition that she rightfully deserves.

The director of *Le Constitutionnel*, Charles-Guillaume Étienne, was a centrist associated with the figure of Adolphe Thiers, who wished to rein in the excesses of the monarchy. The composer's support for Louise Bertin's *La Esmeralda*, première at the Académie Royale de Musique in September 1836, is well-known: Berlioz respected her musicianship, suggested a limited number of corrections, and regretted the politics that caused the work to fail. If, in return, the Bertin family supported Berlioz's endeavor with the Théâtre-Italien (in its eventual report on the failure of Berlioz's effort, the *Gazette de France*, too, on June 12, 1838, reported, with revealing ellipses, that the *Journal des débats* had been "particularly interested in this matter..."), he certainly did not speak about it. The single associate Berlioz names is Vicomte Henri-Catherine-Camille de Ruolz-Montchal, a composer from an ancient aristocratic family who had studied composition with Henri Berton, Ferdinando Paër, Jean-François Lesueur, and Gioachino Rossini. Ruolz's career as musician and critic was preceded and succeeded by scientific

studies. In a document dated July 5, 1840, he tells us that he had been “a member of the faculties of letters, law, medicine, and science” and that he had “abandoned a scientific career in order to concentrate entirely on musical composition.”¹⁷ As a chemist, Ruolz invented a process that would bear his name: the process, eventually sold to the celebrated Maison Christoffe, permitted the gold- and silver-plating of metal by submersion in a bath charged with voltaic (chemically produced) electricity. Apparently known to the Queen and to Madame Adélaïde (Louis-Philippe’s sister), Ruolz had friends in high places both in politics and in the arts, including Fromental Halévy, who on one occasion—playing on the synonymy of his name and his invention—wrote to him as “Mon mol ami, mon fondant Henri, mon fluide Ruolz”—“My soft friend, my melting Henri, my fluid Ruolz.”¹⁸

In 1836, when he began a four-year stint as music critic for *Le Messager des chambres*, Ruolz came into competition with Berlioz for a commission from the Opéra, the one proposing *La Vendetta*, on a libretto by Léon Pillet and Adolphe Vaunois, the other, *Benvenuto Cellini*. Not long after the première of *La Vendetta*, on September 11, 1839—*Cellini* had opened one year earlier, on September 10, 1838—Ruolz’s erstwhile business partner penned a review. Berlioz criticizes the melodies, the harmony, and the orchestration of the new opera, but tries to soften the blow by inventing an amusing dialogue, in which he has Ruolz say to his negative critic: “I didn’t realize that I was such a good friend of yours!” (Berlioz attributes the ironic comment to Lucullus, but he was actually remembering Jean-Baptiste-Louis Crevier’s *Histoire des empereurs romains*, of which he would have seen the edition of 1824. Here, it is the Emperor Augustus who, on being treated to an ill-prepared collation, approaches his host to say, ironically, “Je ne croyais pas être si fort de vos amis!”)¹⁹ Still, in 1838, Ruolz’s qualifications as a musician and as a man of grand social standing were surely what led him to seek, with Berlioz, the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien. It is furthermore difficult to imagine that Berlioz would have wished to associate with someone who was ill prepared for the task.

Berlioz and Ruolz appeared before the Commission de Surveillance on April 18 and 20. Then, on May 8, 1838, Montalivet called them in “to ask for some new information regarding our plans and intentions,” as Berlioz told his sister Adèle on the 10th, “which is a very good sign.” He then offers some information that the biographers have skipped over:

In fact it is a *compatriot* who is thwarting my efforts, a friend of my uncle’s, Monsieur Félix Réal, from Grenoble, a representative who does not beat

around the bush when it comes to pursuing his own private interests. The fact of the matter is that his children are in line to inherit the fortune of the former director [of the Théâtre-Italien], Robert, a relative of Réal's, so Réal is moving heaven and earth to have this "poor fellow" regain the directorship. All of our other competitors are out of contention, so that, were it not for the influence of this accursed representative from the Isère, I would be named director right away, and I would be assured of annual income, for fifteen years, of thirty thousand francs. The whole matter will be decided in the very near future.²⁰

We know little about the non-administrative life of Félix-Martin Réal (1792–1864), who served as a representative from the Isère throughout the July Monarchy, from 1830 to 1848, who was a supporter in the eighteenth-thirties of the political alliance led by Louis-Matthieu, Comte Molé, and Montalivet, both ardent defenders of Louis-Philippe, and who in 1837 was named to the Conseil d'État. Before 1830 he had been Avocat général près la cour de Grenoble, which means that the "uncle" Berlioz mentions could have been his father's younger brother, Victor-Abraham Berlioz, who was likewise a senior officer of the law in Grenoble, although it was more likely his mother's brother, Félix Marmion, who, like Réal, was often in Paris. Considering the eventual outcome of the deliberations, it is clear that Réal carried real weight in the legislature, more, it would seem, than the momentarily optimistic Berlioz seems to have imagined, and more, even, than the Minister of the Interior himself.

Ten days later, to his sister, Berlioz continued the story:

The director of the Théâtre-Italien has not yet been selected. Five days ago, Félix Réal thought he had won the game, that he was going to be able to have his cousin [Édouard] Robert nominated. But today Robert's stock is falling, we have given him a ducking ["une passade"], as we say in the world of natation, so we will have to see if he manages to return to the surface.²¹

We do not know the nature of this "ducking," but by late May, Robert's candidacy, supported by Réal (who was a friend of Rossini, all powerful at the time), had been set aside in favor of Berlioz's, presumably because of the overwhelming weight of the fact that Berlioz and Ruolz were seeking no government subsidy for their proposed operation.

Montalivet presented his bill to the Chambre des Députés on June 4, 1838, the day it was signed by the King. He spoke in terms highly favorable to Berlioz, and concluded:

You are already aware, Messieurs, that the new agreement with Monsieur Berlioz, for the future exploitation of the Théâtre-Italien, stipulates that the company shall receive no government subvention. Thus, as from the month of January 1841, the budget of the Administration will be reduced by seventy thousand francs. Please allow me to express my particular satisfaction with this result while at the same time suggesting to you that the subventions provided to the royal theaters, which have at times been criticized by members of this body, have on occasion been advantageous in ways that are not immediately obvious. No one can deny the positive influence that has up until now been generated by the Théâtre-Italien, both upon the prosperity of the capital and upon the development of the art of music in France. The forward-looking munificence of the government has thus not been without profit, for it is precisely that munificence which has led, at considerable cost, to the remarkable assemblage of artists of the first order whom we have here, something that is the envy of all the capitals of Europe, and that has led to the renown of our Théâtre-Italien and its audience. And because non-native music has triumphed on our shores, and has conquered a wealthy and abundant clientele, this magnificent company will now be able to prosper on its own, without a subvention; it will be able to cover, via annuities, the enormous cost of the reconstruction of the theater; and it will be able fruitfully to continue to pursue its mission.²²

Berlioz's proposal, taken by some of the patriarchs of the press as a *fait accompli*, was reviewed by a special legislative commission whose nine members included the aforementioned Edmond Blanc, the representatives Jean-Jacques Berger, from the department of Puy-de-Dôme; Eugène Janvier de la Motte, from Tarn-et-Garonne; Pierre-Paul-Désiré-François Pérignon, from La Marne; Laurent-Pierre de Jussieu, from La Seine; Marc (known as Saint-Marc-Girardin), from Haute-Vienne; Pierre-Chaumont Liadières, from Basse-Pyrénées; Alphée Bourdon de Vatry, from Moselle; and, lastly, Jules-Étienne-François Muteau, from La Côte d'Or, who acted as reporting secretary. Muteau was an appropriate choice, he knew something about music, and would be crucial to the establishment of the Conservatoire de Dijon, in 1845, as a branch of the Conservatoire de Paris.²³

As reported in *Le Constitutionnel* on June 8, 1838, an opponent of Berlioz's nomination proposed that the Théâtre-Italien be strictly forbidden to stage operas *by French composers*, in this way ensuring, he believed, that the theater would not be used for the personal benefit of Monsieur Berlioz. As reported in *Le Siècle* on the same day, the deputy from Le Doubs, Théodore-Simon Jouffroy, expressed his concern that the burdens placed upon Messieurs Berlioz and Company were too onerous. Others felt that the

cahier des charges was too generous, especially in awarding to the new directors (rather than to the Administration) the insurance payment mentioned above in Article 4.

As reported in *Le Figaro* on June 12—the day on which the Minister of the Interior informed Berlioz that he should indeed proceed to make the required deposit of two hundred thousand francs, as stipulated in Article 11²⁴—only one member of the special commission, Edmond Blanc himself, the man who had drafted the *cahier des charges* in the first place, expressed approval of the proposal as it stood on that day. The remaining eight members apparently expressed hostility. It thus became rumored that Montalivet was preparing to withdraw the proposal. Berlioz and Company nonetheless proceeded to make the security deposit, and in the days that followed, the legislative subcommittee established to review the proposal met to do its work.

François Muteau delivered the Committee's report to the legislative assembly on June 19, 1838. On the following day, his remarks were variously cited in the newspapers of the capital, among them *La Presse*, *Le Siècle*, *Le Constitutionnel*, and the *Journal des débats*, whose article reads as follows:

Monsieur le Président reads the text of the proposed statute authorizing Messieurs Berlioz et Compagnie to undertake at their risk and peril the reconstruction of the Salle Favart and its dependent structures, therein to operate the Théâtre-Italien.

Monsieur Muteau, reporter: I believe I must review the reasons that the Commission has voted to reject the proposition as it stands because of the impossibility of evaluating the expenses that it would in fact occasion.

The first task of your Commission was to examine the proposed plans and cost estimates in order to understand the charges that would impute to the Administration, thus determining whether the government would renounce control of the building for a certain number of years, or whether the government would procure from the treasury the sum necessary for the restoration of the theater, two eventualities that in monetary terms would in the end amount to the same thing.

However, no plans and no cost estimates were provided to the Commission. The only information that was provided was the approximate figure of one million two hundred thousand francs applicable to the reconstruction of the theater, and notice that the guarantees to be given by the concessionaire to the Administration were subject to the approval of the Minister of the Interior subsequent to passage of the statute.

Put in such a position, your Commission, not wishing to offer blind approval, had little choice but to reject the proposal.

It is unnecessary to point out to you the various contradictions and irregularities that mark the various clauses of the proposed statute, for it is unacceptable in its entirety, and it would be an abuse of your patience to discuss them in detail.

Our aim has been to require the Administration to put forth, between now and the beginning of the next session of the legislature, a proposition that is better prepared than the present one, a proposition improved by the advantages that healthy competition for the directorship should provide. It is my hope that the Minister of the Interior will in fact agree with the conclusions of the Commission.

Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur: I do not wish to disagree with the Commission's decision.

Monsieur Delaborde: There are in the project presented by the Administration very serious flaws that will need to be corrected if it is to be presented again during the next session. I find it perfectly acceptable that the new concessionaire be granted a lengthy period of exploitation in order to reconstruct the theater at his own expense and at no cost to the government. But I should prefer that the period of exploitation be even longer in order to require that the concessionaire refashion a façade that is in no way monumental and that is currently in very poor taste. You have simply no idea how many foreigners, among whom are many with exquisite taste, accuse us of having no artistic sensibility whatsoever!

According to the newspaper accounts, the remarks made by Comte Alexandre Delaborde, the representative from La Seine, caused a stir in the chamber. From those accounts, we learn that there was particular opposition to the notion of passing along to Berlioz the extant furnishings of the theater as well as the indemnity of two hundred thousand francs for damages incurred by the fire, which the insurance company, as noted, would normally have paid to the Administration. Opposition was also expressed because the statute as proposed was not open to amendment, something that in and of itself, some thought, was a reason to reject it out of hand.

The two articles of the proposed statute presented by the Administration were then put to a vote. The number of those voting was 232; the necessary majority was 117; the number of ayes [*boules blanches*] was 36; the number of nays [*boules noires*] was 196. The measure was rejected. The meaning of the rejection is not that Berlioz and Company were forever denied the direction of the Théâtre-Italien. It is that they were invited to present a second, more complete application at a future time, and in competition with others who would do the same.

On June 21, Montalivet informed Berlioz that, because of this rejection, he had authorized the return of the deposit of two hundred thousand francs that Berlioz and Company had made to the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations.²⁵ On the same day, the *Gazette de France* offered a commentary on the comportment of the Minister of the Interior, who might have but did not excoriate the judgement of Monsieur Muteau and the Commission, which had so negatively judged his proposition:

The preferred candidate [Berlioz] must surely have thought, on the model of a certain proverbial Automedon, that the censure of the Chambre des Députés much resembles that of earlier *parlements*. In fact it is not the preferred candidate whom we most criticize here, for he disdains the Chambre, and he may be correct in doing so, because the Chambre has no notion of how to make itself respected. The proposed statute was thus rejected by common accord. If Monsieur de Montalivet had been a representative, he, too, would surely have voted against the proposition. Such inconsequential actions, such frivolities, are these days all too common, and all too indicative of the low point to which for the moment the sincerity and dignity of representative government have fallen.

The mention of Automedon, Achilles' charioteer, presumably refers to Berlioz's role as orchestra conductor and conductor of the present project regarding the Théâtre-Italien. The reference to Berlioz's disdain for representative government is more revealing: this is not at all criticized by the journalist, because he was writing for what was one of the July Monarchy's leading legitimist newspapers, openly advocating the return of the Bourbons (who had their run-ins with *parlements* past) in the person of Charles X's grandson, Comte de Chambord, the would-be Henri V.

On June 28, in a letter to his always-sympathetic sister Adèle, Berlioz composed an explanation of what had transpired.

If I have not written sooner about the matter of the Théâtre-Italien, it is because it was still up in the air. What happened proved the point: *the Chambre des Députés rejected the statute put forth by the Minister of the Interior*. All of that hue and cry caused me so much irritation and aggravation that I have decided that, next year, I will not chase that hare. I was not born to occupy myself with financial matters, and the question of the *reconstruction* of the building, which the Administration insists that the future director undertake, is one that is both very serious and very complicated. Montalivet is very angry, even angrier than I, about the rejection of his proposed bill, even though *he is the sole reason for its defeat*. He seems to have every intention of compensating me for my efforts. We shall see what happens in that regard. Meanwhile, my head is spinning be-

cause of all of my rehearsals [for *Benvenuto Cellini*], which keep me busy from morning until night.²⁶

In a sense, Berlioz *was* compensated for his efforts. As of the first of January 1839, he began his service as “sous-bibliothécaire” or associate librarian at the Conservatoire, a position, which some scholars have described as a sinecure, that he would hold until the end of his life. (In 1850 he became head librarian, and on April 4, 1866, he would assume the directorship of the instrument museum at the Conservatoire.) On May 5, 1839, Louis-Philippe, whose action Berlioz foreshadowed in his letter to his sister of May 20, 1838, appointed the composer Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur. (On August 12, 1864, he would be promoted to Officier de la Légion d’honneur.) In April 1840, he would receive word of the commission for what became the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* (the subject here of chapter 5). Berlioz would almost always be granted leaves from the library, with pay, to pursue his concert tours abroad. But never did he obtain an administrative position, such as the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien, that would have made him wealthy. My own view—since there is no evidence that Berlioz was a lazy man, and there is plentiful evidence that he gave countless concerts on shoestring budgets without being sentenced to debtors’ prison—is that he would have been able excellently and energetically to balance the financial considerations of a for-profit enterprise such as the Théâtre-Italien with the artistic requirements of the company, and to do so with the inventive imagination that made him the finest French composer-critic-conductor of the day.

To conclude this chapter, I should like to comment on three points in particular. First, it needs to be said, if it is not self-evident, that the Administration desired a person who was French to stand at the helm of the capital’s Italian Theater. The political realities of the day, in which power was shared by the King and the Chambre des Députés (something Berlioz regretted, as the journalist for the *Gazette de France* surmised), were such that objection would surely have been strenuous had the government paid a subvention of some seventy thousand francs and offered other financial advantages to an enterprise entirely controlled by “foreigners.” Indeed, according to a police report to the Minister of the Interior, the reason that Édouard Robert was hired in the first place—since it was clear that Rossini was the *de facto* director at the time—had largely to do with his good French name.²⁷ (Having served in the Napoleonic army, Carlo Severini, Robert’s future co-director, may also have become a naturalized Frenchman.) Apprehension about a “cultural invasion” from Italy can be felt from writings

by Jean-Toussaint Merle, Henri Berton, and Jean-François Gail,²⁸ among others, who advocated the continuing development of a *French* lyric theater, with libretti standing on their own as dramatic constructions and sung by men and women capable of singing, acting, and proper French pronunciation! Still, if there was a certain resentment against the high-society elitism of the audience at the Théâtre-Italien—something Berlioz had hoped to maintain—there were nonetheless many within and without the government who recognized the positive influence the institution had had on French musical culture as “an operatic school of the first order.”²⁹

Second, it needs to be said that Berlioz was not so prejudiced against Italian music as one might suppose on reading chapter 14 of the *Mémoires*, where he imagines blowing to bits the Théâtre-Italien and with it “its entire Rossinian population.”³⁰ One of his early musical heroes was, after all, Gaspare Spontini, and in 1829 he became a proofreader of the score of *Guillaume Tell*, which he admired, as he did the singing of Laure Cinti-Damoreau, among others, who by all accounts had thoroughly mastered the Italian vocal style. The settings of *most* of Berlioz's mature works (*Harold en Italie*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Les Troyens*, *Béatrice et Bénédict*) are marked by his rich Italian experience: he had virtually roamed the Italian countryside as boy, reading the *Aeneid*, and when he first stepped outside of France, it was upon Italian soil. The *Requiem* was handsomely printed by the Casa Ricordi, with which house Berlioz long maintained cordial relations, including the period in which the famous Milanese publisher brought out Alberto Mazzucato's fine translation of the *Traité d'instrumentation*. Not only had the composer learned enough Italian to write the choral text of the *Ouverture de la Tempête* before going to Italy (he had begun studying the language in 1826), but in 1833, after his *viaggio a Roma*, he considered writing in Italian what years later became *Béatrice et Bénédict*. At the same time, he also thought of having his earlier *Francs-Juges* translated into Italian: “I shall make my début at the Théâtre-Italien,” he told his sister Adèle on January 23, 1833; “I have excellent relations with the Administration there.”³¹ Further, while Berlioz denigrated the *rossinistes*, he appreciated “the sparkling qualities” not only of *Guillaume Tell*, but also of Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, for the score of which (but not the libretto) he has kind words, in the *Mémoires*, and Donizetti's *Marino Faliero*, for which, in *Le Rénovateur* of March 29, 1835, he expresses genuine enthusiasm. French conventions exerted a powerful influence upon the Italian style as it was on view at the Théâtre-Italien—Philip Gossett has demonstrated this in detail³²—and there is no reason to believe that Berlioz, had he become a prolific composer of operas with the stage of

the Théâtre-Italien at his disposal, preposterous as that now sounds, could not have effected a further synthesis of French dramatic urgency with Italian formal principles and lyricism. To my ear, there are moments in the early *Waverley* Overture and *Ouverture de La Tempête* that sound distinctively like the overtures of Rossini. The Rossini scholar Janet Johnson finds characteristic Italianate elements in *Benvenuto Cellini*, in the *strophes* of *Roméo et Juliette*, and in some of the arias and ensembles of *Béatrice et Bénédict*.³³ In this regard it is relevant to remember how assiduously Berlioz worked, in 1859, on a fusion of the French and Italian versions of Gluck's *Orphée* as a vehicle for the still resplendent talents of Pauline Viardot.

Finally, it should be recalled that from the inception of his public career to the present day, critics and commentators have understandably attempted to read the “facts” of Berlioz's biography as they might be found in the fictional spaces of his music and his prose, much of which, taking a cue from the *Symphonie fantastique*, could be labelled “Épisodes de la vie d'un artiste.” In view of the particular perch that he occupies in the musical world, this “romantic” artist, who coolly and self-consciously intermingled life and art, seems in retrospect to have been an unlikely candidate for the mundane reality of theatrical management. And yet it was Berlioz's mission, as David Cairns rightly suggested in the first volume of his great biography of the composer, “to seize hold of reality and bend it to his ideals.”³⁴ I should like to think that he would have made an exceptional imprint on Parisian musical life as director of the Théâtre-Italien—contracting, casting, conducting, commissioning, and, despite his reticence, calculating incomes and outflows with what was, after all, a lifelong passion for the exact. He might also have composed a fantastical *Schauspieldirektor*, in French or Italian, modeled partly on himself, with a lightness and verve that we might have found to be Mozartian.

Chapter Five

The Local Politics of Berlioz's *Symphonie militaire*

L'ardeur de ce jeune orchestre me rendra peut-être la mienne...

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

“All politics is local.” Americans know the phrase. Most associate it with Thomas P. (“Tip”) O’Neill (1912–1994), congressman from Boston and longtime speaker of the United States House of Representatives, who used it as the title of a memoir.¹ But the concept is as old as the hills, and we see it at work throughout art and music in *Geschichte und Gegenwart*. We see it at work in all of Berlioz’s relations with officialdom; we have seen it in the previous chapter, in his relations with the Ministry of the Interior, and we shall see it again here, as it pertains to the *Symphonie militaire*, the work Berlioz eventually called *Grande Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*: the longer title was adopted at the time of the revision of the score, two years after the completion of the original manuscript, when a work for a specific occasion, and designed specifically for large military band performing out of doors, was transformed into a work for orchestra, and for performance in the concert hall.² Berlioz himself continued to refer to the composition as “militaire” until 1842, but the words *funèbre* and *triomphale* are found in the press from the beginning, sometimes modifying “marche,” sometimes modifying “symphonie.” Curiously enough, the official program of the public ceremony of 1840 speaks of the performance of a *Symphonie religieuse*.

I emphasize this matter at the outset because, while the titular expression is not my chief interest in this chapter, those titular words are not without significance. Jeffrey Kallberg has argued that Frédéric Chopin might have removed the word *funèbre* from his own famous march because he wanted to put as much distance as possible between his work (the third movement

of the B-flat-minor Piano Sonata, composed in 1839 and published in 1840, now one of the most celebrated funeral marches in the world) and Berlioz's march, which he and George Sand heard in open rehearsal at the Salle Vivienne, on July 26, 1840.³ Kallberg goes on to suggest that by not at all mentioning Henri Reber's arrangement of Chopin's great march, which accompanied Chopin's funeral procession at the Église de la Madeleine, on October 30, 1849, Berlioz may have been remembering Chopin's disdain of his own *marche funèbre*.⁴ But this is far-fetched: Berlioz was sincerely chagrined by the death of his friend, and, while he was indeed capable of bearing a grudge, he would not have remembered that moment from the summer of 1840 at the funeral ceremony in the autumn of 1849. Had he wanted to say something impertinent, he would have focused upon the *arrangement* by Reber, which we would suspect he heard as a *dérangement*. (By a later arrangement, however, he seems to have been impressed.)⁵ Be this as it may, here, as always in French culture, *words matter*.

On the broader subject of Berlioz's politics and the politics of Berlioz, artistic and other, interest over the years has been slight. The issues heat up every hundred years or so, as in 1903, for example, at the centenary of his birth, when Raoul Gunsbourg staged *La Damnation de Faust* in Paris to the displeasure of the purists (who know and appreciate that it is not an opera) and to the delight of the public (who want everything to be operatic); or as in 2003, when the directors of an international Berlioz committee recommended to the President of the French Republic that he order the translation of Berlioz's remains to the Panthéon, where the *grands hommes* of the nation receive the posthumous *reconnaissance de la patrie*. That president, Jacques Chirac—not many people know that he once worked as a soda-jerk in Harvard Square—was apparently “harmonophobic,” to use the term Berlioz applied to Napoléon III, but he did agree to the committee's recommendation, and in an elaborate press conference held in Paris in February of 2000, his then Minister of Culture, Catherine Trautmann, announced the decision to the world.

The *panthéonisation* of Berlioz, which I have considered in the Prologue of this book, was proclaimed at precisely the same time that Jörg Haider's Freedom Party—which many observers deemed a neo-Nazi organization—announced that it was forming a governing coalition in Austria, home to the famous Salzburg Festival, where, it happens, Berlioz's *Les Troyens* was scheduled to be the principal offering in the summer of 2000. The artistic director of the festival, Gérard Mortier, immediately announced his resignation: “Je pars pour des raisons absolument politiques”—“I am leaving for reasons that

are purely political.”⁶ And while he later changed his mind, others continued to protest the ongoing festival, of whom one—a certain Gottfried Wagner, the great-grandson of a certain Richard Wagner—went so far as to disapprove of the performance and television transmission of Berlioz’s great opera because of its imperialistic ideology, an ideology, he claimed, which is that of a “so-called providential ruler who would found a supposedly imperishable world order.”⁷ Despite this surprising protest, *Les Troyens* was both performed at the Grosses Festspielhaus and televised from Salzburg to the world at large. Herbert Wernicke’s *mise-en-scène* employed machine guns and Nazi uniforms, with colors in blue and black presumably representative of the newly empowered Haider coalition, but no further protests were lodged, and the politics of Berlioz receded from page one.

The ideology of opera is an issue that is very much in vogue, and it is an issue that merits more careful and dispassionate study than some modern directors tend to give it. I shall take up the ideology of *Les Troyens* in chapter 10, hoping to bring clarity to a subject far less exhausted than the ideology of *Die Meistersinger*, for example, the debate over which has generated both much heat and, quite frankly, much light. Even the ideology of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony has at times entered the arena of the controversy, as, for example, when it was performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, in May 2000, in the former concentration camp at Mauthausen. That performance was intended as an act of Austrian atonement, but the ceremony was compromised and tempers flared when the aforementioned Jörg Haider’s party came to power during that very year.⁸

Berlioz’s *Symphonie militaire*, because it is not enshrined in celebrity, is a far less incendiary device. The occasion for which it was commissioned—a grand celebration of the tenth anniversary of the July Revolution—seems to have been the brain-child of one of Comte de Montalivet’s successors, Charles de Rémusat, journalist, philosopher, *homme de lettres*, *député*, and Minister of the Interior in the cabinet formed by Adolphe Thiers on March 1, 1840. (We shall meet another of Montalivet’s successors, another administrator apparently well-disposed to Berlioz, Charles-Marie Tanneguy Duchâtel, in chapter 8, when we consider the composer’s “mission” to Germany.) The Thiers cabinet would last for only two hundred forty-two days, as the newspapers were later at pains to emphasize (“la durée du ministère Thiers a été de 242 jours, c’est-à-dire de 7 mois et 28 jours”),⁹ for the political tensions of the moment would soon cause Thiers to be replaced, in October 1840, by the man who had lately been French ambassador to England, François

Guizot. For at least one historian, the transfer of power to Guizot brought an end to the founding principles of the July Revolution.¹⁰

The Thiers ministry fell, among other reasons, because of the debate over France's role in what was known at the time as "the crisis of the Orient," an exigency provoked by the conclusion of a quadruple alliance among England, Russia, Prussia, and Austria designed to guarantee the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire and thus to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East in the face of the turmoil caused by Egypt's insistence on continuing to control that part of Syria which the Turks felt was their domain. The announcement of this alliance, concluded on July 15, 1840, and posted in the Paris press on July 25, caused a furor, not because France was opposed to maintaining the balance of power (which is why a compromise was soon reached and the quadruple alliance was soon dissolved, in March 1841), but because the alliance reminded many in power of the force of the invaders of 1814. Some editorialists took the quadruple alliance as a *casus belli*; the project to complete the fortifications of Paris was given new impetus, and reserves were called up in order to prepare an army of some five hundred thousand men. It is precisely because of the apparent urgency of military preparedness that none other than Hector Berlioz was sentenced to spend a night in prison! He had failed to appear for duty as a member of the Garde Nationale, two days after conducting the first performance of the *Symphonie militaire*, on July 28, 1840. This came to the attention of the authorities in the autumn, and, in September, Berlioz was officially notified of his delinquency—his violation of the law of the law of March 22, 1831, that obliged all Frenchmen between twenty and sixty years of age to defend the constitutional monarchy, and those in the "service de reserve," in "extraordinary circumstances," to make exceptional tours of duty, in the commune of their legal residence:

On my arrival [from a visit to La Côte-Saint-André], I found a sentence of two days in prison for having missed my guard service for July 30. When I went to see the *appropriate authorities* who had condemned me by default, spoke to them of my absence on the 29th, and explained that my having conducted some two hundred musicians for five hours under the hot sun [on July 28] surely merited exemption from service on the following day, they cried out: "What? You mean *you* are the one who, etc., etc." I thus believe my prison term will be reduced to practically nothing.¹¹

Berlioz accepted his punishment on the night of November 13, 1840, as we learn from the letter he wrote on that day, to his sister Nanci, which

opens with his statement of the address, the date, and the *raison d'être* of his confinement:

Hôtel des-z-haricots, quai d'Austerlitz no 35, près le Jardin des Plantes à côté de la loge des loups, ce 13 novembre l'an 10 de *la Liberté*. (24 heures de prison.) Avoir manqué ma garde le lendemain de la cérémonie du 28 juillet. N'importe! Vive la liberté!

Hôtel des-z-haricots, quai d'Austerlitz no 35, near the Jardin des Plantes, next to the wolf cages, on this 13th of November in Year 10 of *Liberty*. (24 hours in prison.) For having missed my guard service on the day after the ceremony of July 28. Never mind! Long live liberty!

The inscription needs comment. "Year 10" is a sarcastic allusion both to the tenth year of the July Monarchy and to the French Republican Calendar that was in effect from 1793 to about 1805, and proof, if more proof were needed, that Berlioz never missed an opportunity to lampoon the Republic. The emphasis on "liberty," considering his incarceration, is doubly ironic. The *z* in "des-z-haricots" is a jibe at those who would make a liaison, where none is required, between the *s* of *des* and the *h* of *haricots*. The colloquial name for the prison, Hôtel des Haricots, may be a transformation of the common expression *maison d'arrêt* (house of arrest), with *maison* gentrified into *hôtel*, and *d'arrêt* humorously made to sound like *haricot* (bean)! Or, *haricot* may be a transformation of the name of the authoritarian Napoleonic General Darricaud (which rhymes with *haricot*), a man known for having arrested and imprisoned rebellious soldiers and others absent without leave. Finally, *haricot* may be an allusion to the vegetarian régime practiced at the ancient Collège de Montaigu that was at one time situated in the Place du Panthéon and that was later transformed into a prison.¹² I mention these details because I believe they speak to the literary culture of our composer, who always placed a premium on proper French: the language was spoken and written at the time by fewer *citoyens* than you might think. Yet Berlioz's very notion of nation, of what it was to be *French*, was clearly linked to his pride in his native tongue.

The first public announcement of the commissioning of Berlioz by the Minister of the Interior is found in *Le Ménestrel* of May 24, 1840, but it is clear that the composer had had word from Comte Dûchatel, regarding a new symphony designed to honor the régime, some time before that date. On March 11, 1840, he mentioned to his sister Adèle that "a thousand and one projects" were tormenting his soul.¹³ One of these was the concoction of

a festival, at the Panthéon, for which he sought official permission at the end of that month, and for which he may conceivably have intended a performance of what would become the *Symphonie militaire*.¹⁴ On April 4, 1840, he wrote to his now familiar acquaintance, Comte de Montalivet—who had sponsored his candidacy at the Théâtre-Italien in 1838, and who now occupied the post of Intendant Général de la Liste Civile, that is to say the director of the royal office of administrative pensions and subventions—to ask for authorization to give a concert, on May 10, in the concert hall of the Conservatoire. While it was not possible for Montalivet to authorize this request, it was possible for him to suggest to Comte Duchâtel that Berlioz be commissioned to compose a magisterial work for the forthcoming anniversary, the tenth, of *Les Trois Glorieuses*.¹⁵ Be this as it may, the official commission for the work was not signed by the Minister of the Interior, oddly enough, until July 11, only seventeen days before the actual celebration was to occur:

Monsieur, I have the honor to inform you that I have charged you with the composition of a Funeral March for the translation of the remains of the combatants of July, and of another musical composition, to be performed during the lowering of their coffins into the subterranean vault [beneath the July Column in the Place de la Bastille].

It is understood that you shall conduct the performance of both works.

Please visit the offices of the Department of Fine Arts in order properly to arrange for payment of the expenses of the performance.¹⁶

The government officials in contact with Berlioz never quite understood the fact that Berlioz conceived his new composition as *a single* work in three *movements*—*Marche funèbre*, *Hymne d'adieu*, *Apothéose*—of which the second and third, as per the program distributed at the first rehearsal, were linked. Nor did they spell out with precision, as we learn from subsequent correspondence, the amount of the honorarium that Berlioz was to receive. As late as August 18, 1840, Berlioz mentioned to his father that he was still uncertain as to “what he was scheduled to obtain.”¹⁷ Earlier, he had told Doctor Berlioz that he expected “three or four thousand francs” for the score, which, he claimed, he had written in fewer than forty hours.¹⁸ (This was obviously an exaggeration as well as an admission, if to no one other than himself, that he had made plentiful use of preexistent materials, in all likelihood a melody from the opera *Les Francs-Juges* and two of the seven movements he had planned for a *Fête musicale funèbre*, which, in a letter to his friend Humbert Ferrand of late August 1835, he claims at that time to have

completed.)¹⁹ The archival dossier indicates that the initial amount allotted for the entire endeavor was 7,360 francs, but that that amount was raised to 10,000 francs by the Minister of the Interior when he learned that Berlioz's own costs had come to over 6,900 francs.²⁰ Here, as elsewhere, it is difficult to discover the precise amounts of Berlioz's expenditures and profits; here, as elsewhere, we have to be satisfied with approximations.

We do know from chapter 50 of the *Mémoires*, in which Berlioz describes the prescript and the performance, and from further correspondence, that the composer appreciated both Rémusat's commission and his confidence, even though, in Rémusat's own *Mémoires de ma vie*, the author asserts that he deserved no particular credit for being a supporter of music. Rémusat was a habitué of the operatic theaters of the capital, it seems, and does tell us that Berlioz conducted the *Symphonie militaire* "like the maestro of an Italian opera":

Berlioz was a lively and intelligent fellow whom some of his friends believed to be a musician of genius. In his *Mémoires*, published after his death, he set down the entire history of this *Funeral March*, to which he seems to have attached considerable importance, and he enlivened his narrative with several anecdotes in my honor, even though we had had no real personal relations. In as much as he believed that he had been wronged by earlier Ministers and Ministries of the Interior [because of the difficulties he had had with the commission of the *Requiem* in 1837 and the permission to direct the Théâtre-Italien in 1838], he allowed himself in this case to sing my praises. Thus, if Berlioz's *Mémoires* are read in future years, I shall benefit from the much undeserved reputation of having been the Minister who most loved music and best treated musicians.²¹

Berlioz had of course conceived this symphony for performance on the urban stage of Paris, and specifically for the predetermined trajectory of the funeral procession that began on July 28, 1840, at 8 a.m., at the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, just east of the Cour Carrée of the Louvre, that moved westward to the place de la Concorde, up the rue Royale to the Église de la Madeleine, then along the semicircular *grands boulevards*—the Boulevards de la Madeleine, des Capucines, des Italiens, du Montmartre, du Faubourg Possonnière, de Bonne Nouvelle, de Saint-Denis, de Saint-Martin, du Temple, des Filles du Calvaire, and de Beaumarchais—to the Place de la Bastille, arriving there three hours later, at 11 a.m. The trajectory was first and foremost practical, because the gigantic sarcophagus—designed by Berlioz's friend the architect Joseph-Louis Duc to accommodate the bodies of the four or five hundred victims of the July Revolution (the precise number

is a matter of dispute) who were to be newly entombed on that day under the Colonne de Juillet, likewise designed by Duc—could not have passed through any but the widest of streets. And, like the great parades of the first three years of the new regime, the trajectory was also symbolic, extending as it did from the Louvre, epitomizing the Ancien régime, to the Bastille, exemplifying the liberating force of the revolutions of 1789 and 1830—all the while traversing districts that were then under modification and modernization in accordance with a new urban self-consciousness that most of us tend to associate with Baron Haussmann and Napoléon III, but that was already being felt during the reign of Louis-Philippe.²²

The score and parts for the *Symphonie militaire* of 1840 are lost. Hugh Macdonald's critical edition of the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* is based on materials from the revised version of 1842. It is thus worth mentioning that while the original score was presumably set down like others from Berlioz's middle period, the original parts had to have been written on small sheets glued to cardboard, as would have been needed for the wind and brass players who would be marching through the streets. Such cardboard parts have been preserved for three celebratory marches written at almost the same time by Auber, Halévy, and Adam, and it is at least possible that the Berlioz parts, too, are still waiting to be found, in the basement of a library or archive, in a large and dusty wooden box.

In chapter 50 of the *Mémoires* Berlioz describes the open-air performance of the symphony and the miserable conditions that led him to conclude, in an article for the *Revue et Gazette musicale* of July 10, 1842 (using a phrase later incorporated into chapter 66 of the *Traité d'instrumentation*), that music for the out-of-doors simply does not exist: "Voilà pourquoi la musique en plein air n'existe pas." Years earlier, in *Le Rénovateur* of June 22, 1834, he had said the same thing: "Music in the out-of-doors is simply not possible." Chapter 50 of the *Mémoires* was written many years after the event, and some of the facts may have been slightly altered in order to maintain the amusing and ironical tone of the book. But Berlioz's comment that the playing of the *Apothéose* was muzzled by a noisy assault from the fifty snare-drums of the Garde Nationale, which began a premature recession, is certainly true. The anonymous reporter for Berlioz's own newspaper, the *Journal des débats*, wrote that the *Apothéose* was "the most brilliant part of this magnificent work [and that] even the passing crowd saluted it with their cheers."²³ But the critic for *Le Courrier français* said that because of the exit of the Garde Nationale, "the end of the work was hidden under the sound of the drums."

The presence of the Garde Nationale, some sixty thousand men, according to *Le Constitutionnel*, was of course not fortuitous—and for two reasons. First, the ceremony was itself an indirect tribute to the Garde Nationale, the citizens' militia which, under Général La Fayette, had so strongly supported the new “citizen-King” in the aftermath of the three-day revolution, in August of 1830, and which had thus been instrumental in stabilizing the “révolution harmonieuse,” as Berlioz called it, whose tenth anniversary was now in full celebration. Second, as the archival documents make clear,²⁴ the Minister of the Interior was seriously concerned about security: Louis-Philippe had already survived five attempted assassinations, and on this occasion made an appearance, as the cortège passed by, only from a window at the Louvre. It was also for reasons of security that Berlioz and his musicians were ordered by the Ministry to appear in uniform, so as to be readily distinguished from the crowd.

Monsieur, it will be necessary, in order to avoid a potentially troubling disturbance, and in order to give to the cortège of July 28 its appropriately dignified character, that each and every one of the musicians charged with performing under your direction the March and the Funeral Symphony appear in uniform. I should be grateful if you would thus so inform the musicians.²⁵

The larger ceremony—whatever the musical results (Berlioz himself was more than satisfied, as he expressed at length in a letter to his father of July 30)²⁶—seems to have contented the powers that be. This we learn from the letter of congratulation that Berlioz received from Edmond Cavé, a journalist, writer, and for most of his career, from 1833 until 1848, director of the Division des Beaux-Arts at the Ministry of the Interior:

My dear Berlioz, your music is stunning, absolutely stunning; it was completely successful. All of the connoisseurs admired your grand and elevated composition: it is honest, original, and gorgeous—so it is good. Even your detractors agree.

The Minister is highly gratified. He has asked me to forward his compliments to you until such time as he shall do so himself. He regrets only not having been able to hear to the end the final movement, in front of the July Column, because he had to begin the procession, which took some three hours because, as you know, the legions from the suburbs had to travel a good long way.

While expressing his regrets this morning, the Minister communicated his hope that you will soon find an opportunity to perform again your two pieces, a desire with which I concur, because I did not hear as much of your music as

I should have liked. But how shall we go about this? Do you have some suggestions? Please come to see me to discuss the matter.

And please accept, my dear Berlioz, my heartfelt congratulations and my warm and affectionate good wishes.²⁷

I include the complimentary closing of Cavé's letter because, for an official communication, it is exceptionally friendly. Considering Berlioz's excoriation of the man, in the *Mémoires*, we are compelled to question its sincerity. My supposition is that Berlioz never quite forgave Cavé for his part in the postponement of the performance of the *Requiem*, in the summer of 1837, and for his failure, if that is what it was, to expedite Berlioz's payment for that work, which had originally been scheduled, like the *Symphonie militaire*, for performance on the anniversary, the seventh, of the Orléans régime. It is not inconceivable that by commissioning Berlioz to provide the music for the tenth anniversary of the July Revolution, Cavé, and the ministers whom he served, were in some sense making amends.

If not that, then why, we may ask, did the Minister of the Interior turn to Berlioz on this occasion? Why did Charles de Rémusat, who at the time was engaged in the eventually unsuccessful effort of rejuvenating the régime of Louis-Philippe by returning to the more parliamentary and less authoritarian government of the years immediately after 1830, by excluding the King from certain meetings of the cabinet, by readjusting the laws that guaranteed liberty and the laws that maintained order, by reminding the legislature of Louis-Philippe's own participation in the Revolution of 1789 in order to reaffirm the *constitutional* aspect of constitutional monarchy, why, at that juncture, did Rémusat select Berlioz to provide the music for the *fête nationale* of July 28, 1840—which he hoped would renew the youthful spirit of the *Monarchie de Juillet*?

Despite his musical modesty, Rémusat was not naïve in artistic matters. He personally selected those of whom busts and statues would ornament the Chambre des Pairs, then under reconstruction. He knew well that military music would lend pomp and circumstance to his self-styled "imposing event" that would confound the enemies of the state and the enemies of the government, as he later reported to Guizot.²⁸ He must also have known, or have been told, that Berlioz was a composer of "architectural" music in a city where political leaders, from the time of Louis XIV to the time of François Mitterrand and beyond, considered architecture the "first among all arts."²⁹ And he was presumably aware of Berlioz's relationship with the heir to the throne, the Duc d'Orléans, who had attended a

number of Berlioz's concerts and had compensated him with what were genteelly called *encouragements*—sums of money considerably greater than the normal price of a ticket. Indeed, the published score of the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* was eventually dedicated to the Duc d'Orléans, arguably the most popular member of the royal family, who would die in a tragic carriage accident on July 13, 1842.

In July 1840, Berlioz was thus an almost obvious candidate for Rémusat's grand occasion. Had he been aware of Berlioz's settings of the *Marseillaise*, *Le Cinq Mai* (the cantata on the death of Napoléon, of which the dedication was offered to Louis-Philippe), and of course the *Grande Messe des morts* of 1837, then perhaps he would have assumed that Berlioz even shared his desire to revivify the ideals of 1830. I cannot prove this, but a fan letter that Berlioz received from an avowed leftist, after hearing the *Apothéose* of the *Symphonie militaire*, offers evidence: Auguste Luchet, an ardent republican, wrote to Berlioz to say that only he had fully understood "the people of July," and that only he had known how to celebrate "in a noble and dignified way" the tenth anniversary of the régime. "You took your task seriously," Luchet wrote to Berlioz, "and you accomplished it as a citizen and as a poet. Bless you a thousand times!"³⁰ A not completely unknown writer and journalist, Luchet figures nowhere in the Berlioz literature, but in 1840 he believed that the composer was a kindred spirit. In fact, he was mistaken, for while Luchet would soon welcome the Revolution of 1848 with open arms (which he did as Governor of the Château de Fontainebleau, at a celebratory banquet that was held there on March 12, 1848),³¹ Berlioz would decry it as marking the end of an era of civilization. Still, some of the reviews of the performance of the *Symphonie militaire* would second Luchet's notion. In the *Revue du progrès*, for example, Berlioz was seen as one of those artists who "move their century forward." In the liberal *National*, Berlioz's old enemy Joseph Mainzer had kind words for the work, as did Athanase Mourier, in *L'Univers*, and as did others in *Le Commerce*, *La France musicale*, and *La Revue du dix-neuvième siècle*.

Berlioz himself, while pleased with that day's labors, spilled the beans, as it were, in a letter to his father written on July 30, 1840:

Now I am off to the Ministry [of the Interior], where Monsieur de Rémusat, I am told, has *a number of things he would like to say to me*. This, however, does not erase the fact that, two years ago, they asked Rossini to compose a *Requiem* in honor of the Emperor! A *Requiem* by Rossini would be something very interesting indeed, if in fact he were to take the trouble to write one! Were

he to do so, then I would probably be asked to compose some kind of triumphal march to accompany the entrance into Paris of the funeral cortège. This would require a lot of people, a good deal of money, enough time to prepare everything, and sufficient composure on my part not to be emotionally overwhelmed by the subject... for the subject is Napoléon. I am really annoyed to have written that triumphal march *for our little heroes of July*; it would almost have been fitting for our great hero.³²

“Nos petits héros de Juillet,” as Berlioz puts it (the italics are mine)—suggests something of his view, in 1840, of the events of July 1830. It is one more indication of Berlioz’s sympathy for authoritarianism, absolute monarchism, or imperialism, which came to the fore when the “great hero,” Napoléon I, was on his mind—for at precisely that moment, in the summer of 1840, plans were indeed underway to celebrate the return to Paris of Napoléon’s remains. This was another of Charles de Rémusat’s grand projects, conceived in conjunction with Adolphe Thiers (who became president of the Conseil des Ministres on March 1, 1840) and, eventually, with King Louis-Philippe himself, who had early on embraced the cult of Napoléon (this explains the logic of Berlioz’s offer to him of the dedication of *Le Cinq Mai*) and who sent his third son, François d’Orléans, Prince de Joinville, to retrieve the body from the British colony at Saint Helena, in the South Atlantic Ocean.

In the letter of July 30 that we have cited, Berlioz articulates the hope that he will be asked to contribute to the forthcoming ceremony. Writing to his father a few weeks later, on August 18, 1840, he laments: “I’ve still heard nothing about the ceremony for Napoléon. I have the feeling that they are going to opt for some silly trifle. Rossini is ridiculing [the whole matter] and is doing nothing, or at least that is what his friends have told me. In two weeks it will be too late to begin anything serious at all, since the ceremony is to take place in December.”³³

For that ceremony—which occurred at Les Invalides on December 15, 1840, and which in the history books has eclipsed the ceremony of July 28—the three marches by Auber, Halévy, and Adam, to which I earlier alluded, were played. (In his memoirs, the Prince de Joinville, who described the event, mentioned no music.) Berlioz, who seems to have attended the ceremony, had heard the marches in rehearsal two days earlier, on December 13, 1840. A few days later he revealed to his sister that at the end of November, *he*, Berlioz, had finally been asked to write a triumphal march for the occasion, as he had imagined in July and August, but that he had refused to do so “on the pretext,” he admits, of such short notice:

You know that, two weeks before the ceremony, I was asked to write a triumphal march for the Emperor, which I refused to do *on the pretext* that this was no simple marriage ceremony for which one could improvise a few ditties in the evening before going to bed. In reality, however, I wanted to offer myself the pleasure of seeing Auber, Halévy, and Adam making fools of themselves in the wake of my *Apothéose de Juillet* [from the *Symphonie militaire*], and I succeeded so well that it almost hurt. A more total and disgraceful failure than that of those three poor devils, in the midst of the auditorium of the Opéra filled to the rafters on the day of the rehearsal, is simply impossible to imagine. All of the musicians paid me their compliments on their way out. And one of them, whom I do not know, seized my hand in the stairway of the theater, and said: "Monsieur Berlioz, because of the events of today, you shall be placed atop the Vendôme Column!"³⁴

Here we confront one of the less than stellar aspects of Berlioz's character, because revenge is indeed something of a leitmotif in his life and work. (Katherine Kolb explored the matter in detail, and referred to two of Berlioz's most important stories, *Le Suicide par enthousiasme* and *Euphonia*, as "revenge stories.")³⁵ In this instance, "revenge" occurs in the aftermath of a commission for an event insufficiently magisterial, and in the context of Berlioz's admiration for Napoléon, which remained constant from his youth to his old age: whether advocating *Saint-Simonisme* or *je-m'en-foutisme*, Berlioz was always a *bonapartiste*, and was clearly pleased, here, that his interlocutor found him worthy of a spot atop the Vendôme Column, where Charles-Émile Seurre's new statue of the Emperor, commissioned by the government of Louis-Philippe, had been standing since 1833. Was Berlioz *in fact* asked to compose a march for the return of Napoléon's remains? Nothing in the archives confirms this, but some boxes remain to be checked.³⁶ Was the disdain he expresses for the marches of his three colleagues—I admit to finding it both wicked and amusing—in some sense justified? The Auber has not been published. The Halévy, a curious and unequal work lacking the high purpose of the funeral march in act 5 of *La Juive*, for example, exists in a modern arrangement by David Whitwell and is available on YouTube. The Adam, too, has been recorded: like Berlioz's funeral march, it, too, is in the minor mode, is marked by dotted rhythms, and moves in the second phrase to the flattened supertonic. Such superficial similarities, which for Frédéric Robert, an editor of Berlioz's correspondence, suggest imitation, only confirm Berlioz's judgment as to its poverty, for Adam's march is otherwise utterly banal and predictable.³⁷ Robert briefly cites Antoine Elwart's

review of the three marches, which appeared in *Le Ménestrel* on December 20, 1840. I cite the review at greater length:

Monsieur Halévy's march, above and beyond the fact that it features the novel effect of twenty-four long trumpets created by Monsieur [Jean-Baptiste] Schiltz, is marked by many attractive and even noble effects. It is grandiose, it does not *whimper*, if I may use such an expression, and it will find much appreciation among connoisseurs of musical science. Monsieur Adam's march, written with great understanding of the brass instruments, is well orchestrated, popular in style, and effective. If it did not begin in the minor mode, as do the two others, it would in my view have been perfect. But Monsieur Adam was under the unfortunate impression that a march, when written for the glorious return to Paris of a Napoléon, must adopt the sorrowful tonality of a *Miserere*. This is to adopt a rather singular point of view.

I hasten to add that Berlioz, whose magnificent music for the anniversary of the July Revolution still resounds in our ears, stood out brilliantly by his non-appearance in this imposing triumphant procession. Everyone regretted his absence, friends and enemies alike, in what was a kind of retrospective celebration of the composer of the *Requiem* for Général Damrémont [whose death, during the siege of Constantine, in October 1837, occasioned the first performance of Berlioz's *Messe des morts*, on December 5 of that year].

There is a bitter footnote to the ceremony of December 15, 1840—which had of course required a collaboration between France and England, in as much as Napoléon's retreat at Saint Helena was a part of the British Empire—and that is that exactly one hundred years later, during the German occupation of France, the remains of Napoléon's son, Napoléon II, known as *L'Aiglon* (the eaglet), were also buried at Les Invalides at the behest of... Adolf Hitler, who made the gesture in order "to place the relations of France and Germany on a new basis of peace and cooperation," as it was reported in *the New York Times* on December 13, 1940. Indeed, the German ambassador in Paris, Otto Abetz, had imagined a grand ceremony for this occasion, in the hoped-for presence of Maréchal Pétain and Hitler himself, that would have become a symbol of what he hoped would be a continuing collaboration between France and Germany.³⁸

Richard Wagner, whose name and posthumous fame were well known to the ignominious German Führer, heard at least one of the concert performances that followed the outdoor première of the *Symphonie militaire*, on August 7 and 14, and what he said of it has resonated over the years: "I gladly predict that this July Symphony will continue to live and provide inspiration as long as there exists a nation that calls itself France."³⁹ The oft-cited

comment is found in an essay that is at pains to emphasize Berlioz's essential "Frenchness," by which Wagner seems to mean an "ebullience" that leads to astounding but superficial effects. And yet the German—most of whose own astounding writing for wind and brass was yet to come—was apparently attracted to the *Symphonie militaire* precisely because it was popular in the sense of appealing to the French equivalent of "das Volk," or to some sort of "public consciousness" that he associated with the culture of ancient Greece, and that became a central element of his own aesthetic doctrine. Indeed, in Wagner's comment on Berlioz's Frenchness, it is possible to see an admiration of a kind of national identity to which *das junge Deutschland* and Wagner himself would aspire.⁴⁰ As a composer, Wagner was surely more impressed by Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*, which, as Egon Voss suggests, had an immediate impact on the German's decision to begin a *Faust* Symphony.⁴¹ *Roméo et Juliette*, many have said, had a later impact on the composition of *Tristan und Isolde*. I furthermore hear an echo of Berlioz's military music in Wagner's *Trauermusik* of 1844, scored for numbers of winds and brasses not dramatically different from those required for the *Symphonie militaire*.

In the twentieth century, Wagner's brand of nationalism had nefarious consequences for which his personal responsibility, without entering into that ongoing debate, is at best circumscribed. Berlioz's "patriotism," on display in the *Symphonie militaire*, had no such consequences at all. Our composer became excessively anti-republican in 1848 because the party of order had been overthrown, and, in his mind, only the party of order was conducive to a productive musical community. He nonetheless chose, during that revolutionary season, to return from exile in England "to that country which is still called France," as he put it, "and which is, after all, my own."⁴²

To conclude this chapter, I return to the immediate afterlife of the première of the *Symphonie militaire* in 1840 and, specifically, to the Opéra de Paris, where, on the first of November, Berlioz directed a colossal music festival, with an ensemble of four hundred fifty singers and instrumentalists, that featured works by Gluck (the first act of *Iphigénie en Tauride*), Handel (a double chorus from the oratorio *Athalie*), Palestrina (the madrigal *Alla riva del Tebro*), and himself: four movements of the *Requiem*, most of *Roméo et Juliette*, and, as it was listed in the program printed in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* of October 23, 1840, the *Symphonie militaire* in its entirety. The orchestra was preparing to commence the last-mentioned work when Louis Bergeron, the well-known radical republican who was an editor at the republican-leaning newspaper *Le Siècle*, approached Émile de Girardin, the editor of the Louis-Philippard newspaper *La Presse*, and,

in a premediated act of belligerence, slapped his face. He did so because Girardin's newspaper had without evidence associated Bergeron with Marius Darmès's recent attempt to assassinate Louis-Philippe, on October 15, 1840, while the royal carriage was on the way from the Louvre to Saint-Cloud.

The incident at the Opéra was mentioned in all of the Parisian papers; each put its own spin on precisely what took place. We had to wait until the publication in 2017 of *Louis Bergeron: Un regicide sous Louis-Philippe*, by Jean-Michel Miel, to find an account that places the matter in its full historical context. Eight years earlier, in 1832, Bergeron had been accused of attempting to assassinate Louis-Philippe, but, at the trial, for lack of proof, he was found not guilty. By alluding to Bergeron's possible culpability in the earlier episode, Girardin was flirting with defamation. Having at first attempted to challenge Girardin to a duel—a challenge Girardin rejected because he had earlier put to death another newspaperman and wished to duel no more—Bergeron thus publicly insulted the famous journalist with the slap, regretting with an odd sort of gallantry the necessity of delivering the blow in the presence of his adversary's wife. The republican zealot was arrested on November 9, 1840, put on trial, condemned to a fine of fifty francs, and sent to prison for a term of *two years*. His appeal of the verdict led, not to a reduction, but to a hardening of the sentence from two years to *three*—which he served in full, at Sainte-Pélagie, the prison in the Latin Quarter that had once been home to the Marquis de Sade.

Unfortunately, this political provocation overshadowed the press coverage of the musical event—Berlioz's grand festival, which was the first of its kind. In chapter 51 of the *Mémoires*, Berlioz gives a lengthy account of the rehearsals, the performance, and the striking incident we have mentioned. In an annotation in his own copy of the *Mémoires*, Jacques Offenbach wrote that it was Habeneck, of all people, who “paid Bergeron” for the disturbance!⁴³ This speaks to Offenbach's wry sense of humor, but it does remind us that for the future composer of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, aware of the tensions between the controversial composer and the famous conductor, the musical world took precedence. That was of course true for Berlioz as well: to a letter from Henry Forbes, the organist at Saint Luke's Church in London and conductor of the Società Armonica who, in March and June 1840, had given the first performances in England, in the Hanover Square Rooms, of Berlioz's overtures *Les Francs-Juges* and *Waverley*, and who near the end of that year had asked if Berlioz had written music for wind instruments alone, the composer replied, on January 15, 1841:

I have only a single composition for wind instruments, my *Symphonie militaire*. I believe that it could be properly performed and understood in London; indeed, the director of the Drury Lane Concerts [Eduard Eliason] asked me for it through the intermediacy of a French artist of his acquaintance [the trombone player Théodore Faivre]. It calls for at least one hundred forty instrumentalists. Copying the parts would cost nothing because I have all of them at my disposition. However, as I explained a few days ago to Monsieur Eliason's interlocutor, I have now determined not to allow the publication of my music in order that it not be performed without my participation. If the musical organization that Monsieur [Frederick William] Allcroft hopes might perform my symphony were to find it possible to bring me to London, and if the terms were acceptable, then I should be happy to come over for a fortnight.

If the musicians are carefully selected, the work can be performed after only three rehearsals, and you may be sure, I believe, that it will produce a strong impression, even upon a musically unsophisticated public. My experience during the ceremony of the July Revolution for which it was composed, and the four regular concerts in which it was performed, offer proof of my assertion.⁴⁴

Allcroft, whom Berlioz mentions here, was a music dealer and publisher with a shop in New Bond Street. He was one of those responsible for bringing Berlioz's music to the attention of the English public, although he seems not to have had any Berlioz performed at what were called "Mr. Allcroft's Concerts." The request for the *Symphonie militaire* seems to have been made in particular because of the rise of the importance, in Victorian England, of the specialized British brass band, and the concomitant desire to spread musical awareness among the members of the working classes. This is the reason for Berlioz's specific suggestion that his symphony will produce an effect "sur un public même inculte," which I have translated as "a musically unsophisticated public," but which means more literally a public that is "uncultivated" or, more crudely, "ignorant." In the burst of nationalism that followed the Franco-Prussian War, that underscored the importance of the native French artist, and that crowned Berlioz with a certain posthumous glory, the *Symphonie militaire* ought perhaps to have come more to the fore. Some at the time proudly endorsed Berlioz as "our Wagner," among them the composer Alfred Bruneau.⁴⁵ But Bruneau was thinking of *Les Troyens* and *Die Walküre*, while Wagner's preferred work, precisely because of its capacity to reach "the people," was, as we have said, the *Symphonie militaire*.

By the time Berlioz's symphony was published as a *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, in 1843, Wagner was no longer living in Paris. The new and now definitive version of the work was dedicated to Louis-Philippe's eldest son, Ferdinand-Philippe d'Orléans, with whom Berlioz had been in friendly

contact since at least 1833, and from whom Berlioz had regularly received *encouragements* in the form of both compliments and cash.⁴⁶ Shortly before his death in the carriage accident we have mentioned, the Duc d'Orléans had accepted the dedication of the work, which Berlioz forever afterward referred to as "the Duc d'Orléans' symphony." Writing to his brother-in-law Marc Suat one month after the accident, Berlioz noted wistfully: "I simply cannot tell you how sad I felt after this tragic event..."⁴⁷ The ellipses speak volumes: had this art-loving sovereign succeeded his father as King of the French, Berlioz, apparently liked and respected by the Duke, might well have enjoyed a career less fraught with obstacles of the material kind.

Or would he! Despite support from Armand Bertin, editor of the powerful *Journal des débats*, from François Guizot, the then Foreign Minister of France, from Abel-François Villemain, the past and future Minister of Public Education, and from the Duc d'Orléans himself, Berlioz, in the summer of 1842, was refused the position of Inspecteur de Chant or director of the vocal programs in the public schools of Paris. At the time, Berlioz's competitors were the vocal pedagogues Joseph Mainzer, Auguste Panseron, Frédéric Massimino, and Joseph Hubert, the directeur-adjoint to the former Inspecteur, Guillaume-Louis Bocquillon-Wilhem, who had died on April 26, 1842. In May, the Conseil Municipal, charged with the replacement, reduced the future Inspecteur's salary from six thousand francs to thirty-five hundred,⁴⁸ but this did not cause the competitors to withdraw. That Council—composed of thirty-six members of whom two, named by the King, served as president and vice-president—had limited powers, and usually reacted to propositions made by the Préfet de la Seine (at the time Claude-Philibert Barthelot, Comte de Rambuteau, who Berlioz believed had a favorable opinion of him),⁴⁹ and the Préfet de Police (at the time Gabriel Delessert, with whom Berlioz would later have only tepid relations).⁵⁰ Even though he had visited most of them in person, Berlioz reported to his sister Nanci, the members of the Council had apparently "decided in advance" that the former Inspecteur would be replaced by his directeur-adjoint; "that the modest requirements of the position did not require the talents of a great musician."⁵¹ We know nothing of what actually took place during the Council's deliberations. Their outcome was not announced until November. The view from here is that the national authorities, among whom Berlioz had prominent supporters, were overruled by the neighborhood commissioners. Tip O'Neil was right. "All politics is local."

Chapter Six

In the Shadows of *Les Nuits d'été*

*Hélas! Ces vers qui contiennent une allusion évidente
à mon fatal égarement...*

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

In the shadows of Berlioz's *Nuits d'été* are persons, places, paintings, and poems once a part of the richly textured fabric of its genesis, now obscured, in the musical world, by the brilliance of the aesthetic object, the enduring artistic entity itself. This is not always the case. Many listeners know something of the *scandale* surrounding *Le Sacre du printemps*, for example, while knowing nothing of its substance; many shudder at Schoenberg prior even to the sounding of the “set.” It is my intention here to examine some of the paths that lead to and from a work whose prior reputation provokes no such aural paralysis, for it is one of Berlioz's works “to treasure most,” in Hugh Macdonald's words, though one about which Berlioz himself was “shy to the point of silence,” the song cycle *Les Nuits d'été*.¹ I wish to consider, not the orchestral version—frequently performed, often recorded, well known indeed, but the original version for voice and piano—rarely performed, rarely recorded, not well known at all. In the five sections that follow, I consider, in the first, the question of the date of the first *Nuits d'été*; in the second, the autograph manuscripts; in the third, the relationship between Berlioz and the poet, Théophile Gautier; in the fourth, the reviews of the cycle and what they tell us of the work's *raison d'être*; and in the fifth, the third song of the cycle, “Sur les lagunes,” in the attempt to construct what Berlioz might have called an “admirative” critique.

The Time

The nineteenth-century French *romance* or *mélodie*, as opposed to the German *Lied*, is a genre against which many hold a certain prejudice: a ditty produced by a second-rate composer to satisfy the demands of an increasingly middle-class public for a music readily performable at home. The genre deserves a second hearing. It was a vehicle for certain political sentiments that in other guises might have been subject to censure; it was a favored outlet for the sometimes formidable creative energies of women composers who did not compete in other musical arenas; and it was the music of the people in the very real sense of the sounds many Frenchmen thought of when they thought, if at all, of the art of music itself.² I use the word *genre* because the distinctions between the *romance* and the *mélodie* do not hold firm. Schubert's *Lieder* were generally published in France in the early nineteenth century as *mélodies*, but Mendelssohn's celebrated *Lieder ohne Worte* became, in French, *romances sans paroles*. Berlioz, who made some forty contributions to the category, used both terms without pedantic distinction. In the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Berlioz's *Nuits d'été*, it happens, were announced as *Gesänge (balladenartig)*—"ballad-like songs."³ The term *mélodie*, does, in principle, suggest an element of musical gravity that was lacking in the more light-hearted and often sentimental *romance*. The new seriousness was inspired by the choice of more substantial poetry, of which there was a great flowering from the Romantic generation in France. But for the musical term alone, we might simply consider the title page of the first edition of Berlioz's Opus 2: *Neuf Mélodies imitées de l'anglais (Irish Melodies) pour une et deux voix, et chœur, avec accompagnement de piano [...] dédiées par les auteurs à Thomas Moore*. The word *mélodie*, in this issue of 1830, is used in the literary sense of a poetic text intended for recitation or singing: Thomas Moore, it probably needs saying, wrote *poetry*, not music. Berlioz's collaborator, Thomas Gounet, wrote *poetry* that *imitates* Moore's rather than translates it, because Gounet was obliged to write verses of regular meter and *rhyme*, which necessarily precludes literal translation. Furthermore, Berlioz and Gounet received equal billing as "les auteurs"—a practice that has faded: we do not commonly speak of even so celebrated a cycle as *Dichterliebe* as by Robert Schumann and Heinrich Heine.

When the second edition of these songs was published, in 1849, the word *mélodie* had become widely understood in its purely musical sense: the phrase "avec accompagnement de piano," earlier useful, was now superfluous. Still, when he wrote to the publisher of the orchestral version, in 1856,

Berlioz spoke of his “*délicieuses romances*.”⁴ A leading French dictionary takes Berlioz’s *Irish Melodies* of 1830 as the “point of departure” for the new genre of the *mélodie*.⁵ The path leads, ten years later, to *Les Nuits d’été*.

“Ten years later” takes us to 1840, the year during which these small compositions were conceived, although we cannot date *Les Nuits d’été* with calendrical exactitude. In his correspondence of that year, Berlioz does not mention the collection. The autograph manuscripts of the songs are not dated. We know only that the titles “Absence” and “Le Spectre de la rose,” the eventual fourth and second numbers of the cycle, appeared in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* on Thursday, November 5, 1840, as items on the program of the concert, sponsored by that journal, to be given on the following Sunday, November 8, 1840. But when the same periodical appeared on Sunday morning, these two songs did not figure on the printed program. From the detailed reviews of this concert that appeared in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* itself, and in the elegant magazine *L’Artiste*, reviews that discuss every item on the printed program of November 8, we can assert with confidence that the songs were not performed.⁶

It has been suggested that they were not performed because they were not yet written, but that is not the case, as we shall see. Indeed, there is one piece of evidence that suggests that Berlioz had indeed begun to set a series of poems by Théophile Gautier as early as March 1840: an autograph fair copy of the eventual first song of the cycle, “Villanelle,” now preserved in Darmstadt, in the Hessische Landesbibliothek.⁷ This manuscript is signed and carefully dated “Paris, 23 mars 1840.” It was reproduced some two and a half years later by the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, on November 16, 1842, in the journal’s intermittent series of facsimiles of composers’ manuscripts—with Berlioz’s signature, but without the date.⁸ Berlioz was not in the habit of putting precise dates on his autograph manuscripts; when he did so, it was sometimes after the fact, and inaccurately. The date on the Darmstadt manuscript of March 23, 1840, looks suspicious, as I shall explain, as though it were added, to commemorate something important, at the time the composer sent the manuscript to Carl Ferdinand Becker, editor of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, in 1842.

Becker had good reason to reproduce Berlioz in November of that year: in the issue of the 16th, he printed an excerpt from Karl Gutzkow’s *Briefe aus Paris*, which had just appeared, apparently with a splash.⁹ Gutzkow was of course one of the important members of the Junges Deutschland movement, one of the more faithful painters of the Parisian scene, along with his better-known contemporaries Ludwig Börne and Heinrich Heine, and one

of Wagner's associates in Dresden in the eighteen-forties. In this excerpt he writes of the dramatic contrast he finds between the mind and the music of Hektor Berlioz:

His brow lacks the imprint of daring enterprise and the smoothness of serene resolve, though it expresses rather nobly a pensive seriousness and a certain brooding, melancholy spirit. [...] To express the other-worldly harmonies that sound in his soul, he has been unable to find the right worldly technique, the right measure, the right notes.¹⁰

In 1842, Becker may have sent to Berlioz the paper he was to use to make the copy of "Villanelle" that appeared in November: three single sheets sewn together of a size and watermark, "GFJ," elsewhere unknown in his œuvre. In March 1840, Berlioz himself would have had no reason to make the kind of careful fair copy of "Villanelle" that served the editor of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. He had finished *Roméo et Juliette* in September 1839 and would not receive the commission for what became the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* until, at the earliest, April 1840. Between March 17 and April 12, 1840, Berlioz wrote nothing for the *Journal des débats*; and for the *Revue et Gazette musicale* he reviewed only the orchestral concerts at the Conservatoire (on March 12 and 29, and April 9). I therefore suppose that the Darmstadt manuscript was indeed prepared in the autumn of 1842, shortly before its facsimile reproduction, and that the date Berlioz inscribed on it, March 23, 1840, represents either the composer's recollection of the moment at which he had composed the song—he would have had time to do so at the time—or, more likely, as I shall indicate below, his *mis*-recollection of the date of a performance. Be this as it may, *Nuits d'été*—Berlioz's title, not Gautier's, and thus a bit of evidence by no means too obvious to consider—may tell us something of the season of its main composition. From an article to be cited in the final section, below, we know that the cycle was in fact completed by the end of October 1840.

As for the publication: The *Bibliographie de la France*, primarily for literary publications, did have a regular section for artistic productions, including music, but *Les Nuits d'été* nowhere figures in that semi-official periodical. Berlioz's publisher, Adolphe Catelin, whose prints do appear in the *Bibliographie de la France* in 1840 and 1841, seems neither to have registered nor to have advertised Berlioz's newest collection. Catelin had had dealings with Berlioz since 1836, bringing out a second edition of the *Neuf Mélodies* as *Mélodies irlandaises*, and the full score and parts of the overture *Le Roi Lear*

(both mentioned in the *Journal des débats* of March 28, 1840), and the piano reduction of the cantata *Le Cinq Mai* (mentioned in the *Débats* as well as in *Le Constitutionnel* of May 14, 1840). Some seven months later, in a letter of November 9, 1840, Berlioz specifically chastised Catelin for not advertising his works, saying that, after all, “the public cannot divine their existence”!¹¹

Like many French publishers, Catelin kept changing addresses, and for a time he had more than one. From a plate number near to that of the Berlioz, it can nonetheless be established that *Les Nuits d'été* appeared no later than August 1841.¹² Indeed, though no advertisements of the Catelin edition have been found (when Simon Richault took over Berlioz's publications from Catelin, in 1843, he did include *Les Nuits d'été* in an advertisement he placed in *La France musicale* on November 26, 1843), Berlioz's cycle is mentioned in the feuilleton of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of September 1, 1841. More important, a review of the collection appeared in Paris, in the capital's leading music journal, as early as July 4, 1841. I shall say a word about the substance of this review below. Here let me note simply that the author was the pianist-composer Stephen Heller, who later became one of Berlioz's closest friends. A copy of the Catelin edition, with an autograph dedication to Heller (“à M. St. Heller, témoignage d'amitié et d'une vive admiration pour son grand et noble talent. H Berlioz”), has been preserved,¹³ and it is possible that, for his review, Heller worked from this very score. But it also is possible—since the publisher is not mentioned in Heller's review—that in July 1841 he had only Berlioz's autographs before his eyes.

The Autographs

The autographs of five of the six songs of *Les Nuits d'été* are preserved in the Fonds du Conservatoire of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.¹⁴ The autograph of the sixth was sold at Sotheby's in 1947 and is listed in the *New Berlioz Edition* as untraced.¹⁵ I was pleased to locate it in the little-explored music collection of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, in Coligny, near Geneva, Switzerland. These autographs, undated, tell us nothing of the moment of composition. But they do suggest something of the order of composition, and they do offer fascinating glimpses of the composer in the workshop. The Paris manuscripts are all of the same twenty-four-stave paper carrying the embossed octagonal emblem of Dantier *fils*, the man from whom Berlioz began purchasing materials in 1838. The Geneva manuscript—“Sur les lagunes,” the eventual third song of the cycle—is of larger, thirty-stave

paper, embossed with a somewhat different emblem from the same dealer. The Paris manuscripts (each a separate bifolium) are numbered at the tops of the first pages of their respective bifolia, and while the titles of the poems are written out, the name of the poet is not. The Geneva manuscript, on the other hand, is headed “Lamento / Paroles de Th. Gautier.” From this admittedly limited evidence, it is my supposition that the initial project included four songs: “Villanelle,” no. 1 (I follow the numbering of the Paris manuscripts); “Absence,” no. 2; “Le Spectre de la rose,” no. 3; and “Barcarolle” (“L’Île inconnue”), no. 4. “Au Cimetière” (“Clair de lune”) is numbered 6 in the Paris collection, but by a different hand, or at a different moment. The Geneva manuscript—without number, with the poet’s name—would seem originally, if only for a short while, to have been conceived for separate publication. It was not long, apparently, before Berlioz decided to make a six-song compilation, or *recueil*, as he later called it,¹⁶ keeping “Villanelle” as the overture, removing the coda, “Barcarolle,” from fourth to sixth position, and arranging the interior songs in what became their definitive order. Such rethinking, however rapid, provides strong evidence that the work, whose original version, let us not forget, was to be performed by a single singer, is logically viewed as a “cycle”—that is to say, as a gathering of songs which unfolds in a fashion that is to be heard as coherent from the point of view of both poetic discourse and musical continuity.¹⁷

In his authoritative catalogue of Berlioz’s autograph musical documents, D. Kern Holoman calls the Paris manuscripts “autograph fair copies.”¹⁸ My examination suggests, from placement and penmanship, that “Reinschrift” or “fair copy” is a fair description of “Le Spectre de la rose” and “Barcarolle”; but that the other manuscripts are “Urschriften,” carefully corrected working copies with paste-overs for subsequent use by the publisher. And—the point is unrelated—whereas the manuscript of “Le Spectre de la rose” is headed “Andante un poco lento e dolce assai,” a later album leaf with the opening nine bars of song is marked “Adagio.”¹⁹ The slower marking may well represent Berlioz’s definitive conception of the tempo after having heard the song in performance.

The Poets

In order to enter the mainstream of history, the poet Wilhelm Müller needed Franz Schubert, *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. In order to enter the poetical annals of his country, Théophile Gautier, however, needed no such

help from Berlioz. In fact Gautier rose to prominence on the shoulders of Victor Hugo, to whom he was introduced by Gérard de Nerval, in 1829, for whom he organized the claque at the famous premiere of *Hernani*, in 1830, and with whom he was closely associated, in the literary world, for more than forty years. It was most likely at the *bataille d'Hernani*, on February 25, 1830, or shortly thereafter, that the flamboyant nineteen-year-old poet, whose first publication, *Poésies*, went on sale on July 28 of that year, met the “enfant terrible” of the musical world, who was completing the winning Prix de Rome cantata at the Institut de France, at precisely the same moment, during what became known as *Les Trois Glorieuses*. Berlioz speaks little of Gautier in his letters; and in Gautier's *Correspondance générale*, there is similarly little mention of the composer of *Les Nuits d'été*. It is nonetheless apparent, from the letters which do exist, that the two had interests in common and that, while they had little occasion to correspond in writing, they saw each other frequently: two working journalists who found criticism exasperating while raising the genre to new levels of artistic accomplishment.

Gautier was probably among those who came to Berlioz's lodgings in Montmartre in 1835 for the celebration of his son Louis' first birthday. Louis' mother, Harriet Smithson Berlioz, was long admired by the young writer, and in his feuilletons that appeared regularly in Émile de Girardin's new, inexpensive, and thus for the first time widely circulating newspaper, *La Presse*, Gautier—with cues and clues from the composer—regularly praised Berlioz's concerts and compositions. When the popular song composer Hippolyte Monpou died suddenly in 1841, at the age of thirty-seven, Gautier praised him as “*Le Berlioz de la ballade*”; when the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire performed excerpts from *La Damnation de Faust*, on April 15, 1849, Gautier referred to the composer (in his column for *La Presse* of the following day) as “the only symphonist that we have in France”; and when Berlioz himself died, Gautier prepared a long and laudatory article that appeared on March 16, 1869, in the *Journal officiel*, and again in Gautier's celebrated *Histoire du Romantisme* of 1874. For Gautier, Berlioz was “the most literary musician in existence.” More famously, he formed, with Victor Hugo and Eugene Delacroix, “the great trinity of French Romantic art.”²⁰ For Berlioz, Gautier was a poet of moonlight, melancholy, and, to paraphrase Henry James, a clear and undiluted strain in the minor key. In 1844, when he was negotiating a new contract with Alexandre Dujarier, owner of *La Presse*, Gautier went so far as to style himself the journal's Jules Janin (drama critic), Étienne Delecluze (salon critic), and Hector Berlioz (music critic).²¹ In 1847, when Berlioz was engaged by the half-mad

impresario Louis-Antoine Jullien as conductor of the concerts at the Drury Lane Theatre, in London, he requested a new ballet scenario from Gautier, whose excellent reputation in the genre had been earlier created by *Giselle* (1841). Gautier prepared a scenario, based on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, but with the demise of Jullien's enterprise, the project—for which Berlioz was not going to compose the music—came to naught. Apart from this non-venture, their only artistic collaboration occurred with *Les Nuits d'été*.

Is “collaboration” the applicable word? Gautier left Paris for Spain on May 5, 1840, and returned to the French capital five months later, on October 7. He and Berlioz could have spoken about the settings before Gautier's departure, and I would assume they did. In August 1837, Victor Hugo wrote a note to Berlioz that introduces “some lovely verses which a young poet, my neighbor, has written for you and asked me to send along.” The neighbor in question was in all likelihood Gautier; the verses, some of those later set as *Les Nuits d'été*.²² But apart from this letter, we have no document that attests to Berlioz and Gautier having worked actively together. As to Gautier's way of working with musicians, however, documents there are. A number of his poems were written expressly for musical setting, including the “Barcarolle” that eventually became the finale of Berlioz's cycle. This poem, drafted in 1834 for the composer Allyre Bureau, was several times revised by Gautier before its definitive publication in *La Comédie de la mort*, which Louis Desessart brought out in Paris in 1838—a collection to which Berlioz would have been attracted by the irony of the title, and from which he would make his own selections in 1840. The title of the volume applies to the opening, two-part poem, “La Vie dans la mort,” and “La Mort dans la vie.” This is followed by fifty-seven separate and unnumbered poems, of which Berlioz selected nos. [27], “Le Spectre de la rose”; [28], “Lamento. La Chanson du pêcheur”; [38], “Absence”; [44], “Lamento; [45], “Barcarolle”; and [56], “Villanelle rythmique.”

Beyond “Barcarolle,” written for Bureau, published in 1834 as “Le Pays inconnu” and in 1835 as “Mirage (Barcarolle),” other songs, too, were drafted prior to 1840, as perhaps Berlioz was aware. “Le Spectre de la rose” appeared on May 7, 1837, in the magazine *Don Quixote*; “Villanelle rythmique,” written for Xavier Boisselot, also appeared in 1837;²³ so, too, did “Lamento,” as “Sur la mer.”²⁴ Berlioz's own selection from the complete publication includes two “pairs” of poems; and his final ordering, with many interstices, follows Gautier's, except for the removal of the “Villanelle” from last position to first. It is almost as though Berlioz warmed to the idea of

making musical settings as he read progressively through Gautier's collection and began to compose, as he did the music for *Les Troyens*, with a "scene" near the end that moved him the most.

For Allyre Bureau, the first musician with whom Gautier collaborated, the poet drafted what he called his "chanson" in two ways, with and without refrain; he told the composer to use the version he thought was best for musical setting.²⁵ Gautier was more explicit with his friend François Bazin (winner of the Prix de Rome in 1840), to whom he sent a poem with the following advice: "Treat my poetry as you wish; if something [in the text] displeases you, I shall change it. I am sending it in two versions, with and without refrain. You may choose. And write to me if you have any other particular musical idea to which my poetry might be adapted."²⁶ When he sent a poem to Meyerbeer, in the spring of 1839, Gautier went so far as to provide a *monstre*—a schematic outline indicating the scansion of the text, the separate poetic feet, and the long and short syllables of each—something rarely done in French poetics, where analysis is based on syllable count and on the rhythm and intensity of the line as a whole. To the German composer, Gautier added: "If you find this pattern acceptable, I shall try to improve the verses while maintaining the present form. If you would prefer some other meter, please let me know. I have maintained a rigorous symmetry in these lines; if they are not yet worth much as poetry, they are, I think, appropriate for musical setting."²⁷

From these examples—one could give more—it is clear that Gautier did not belong to that group of poets whom Berlioz considered completely lacking in musical sensibility. On one occasion, when he was assisting Louise Bertin in the preparation of her opera, *La Esmeralda*, mentioned in chapter 4, he wrote of the librettist, rather snarkily, that "[Victor] Hugo expects a great success. He judges music as do all the poets, which is to say that he is completely devoid of musical sensitivity."²⁸ Gautier, on the contrary, was aware of what he referred to as the "double exigencies of poetry and music," as he put it in a review of *Roméo et Juliette* in *La Presse* of December 11, 1839. He was willing to adapt his poetry to the needs of the musician. He seems to have preferred to do the adapting himself but would presumably have agreed with Berlioz that in some instances, "it is better to upset the progression of the poetry than it is to alter the musical continuity."²⁹ Unlike Goethe, who preferred music that in no way challenged the supremacy of his verse, Gautier appears to have viewed the *mélodie* as a mutually creative venture. It is for this reason, no doubt, that

so many composers, including Bizet, Fauré, and Duparc, found inspiration in the poems of *La Comédie de la mort*.

Of the fifty-seven poems in this collection, sixteen were sooner or later set by one or more composers during the nineteenth century. “Villanelle,” written for Boisselot, was set by Berlioz and at least twenty-three others; “Le Spectre de la rose” was set by eight others; “Sur les lagunes,” by twenty others; “Absence,” by sixteen others; “Au cimetière,” by only three others; “Barcarolle,” by eighteen others. Two further poems from *La Comédie de la mort*, “Romance” and “Les Papillons,” were set by eleven and twenty-one composers respectively.³⁰ These dry-as-dust statistics tell us that, except for “Au cimetière,” Berlioz chose poems that were already or soon became widely considered appropriate for musical setting. If we did not believe that his eventual song is a small miracle, we might be inclined to ask why, instead of setting “Au cimetière,” Berlioz did not set “Romance,” or even “Les Papillons”!

A partial answer is provided by our knowledge of Berlioz’s own thoughts about composing a *mélodie*, or romance, expressed succinctly in a letter to the editor of the *Journal des jeunes personnes*, a popular young women’s magazine, who had asked him to set a poem by the children’s book author Léon Guérin. Writing on October 10, 1834, to “Monsieur Duplessis” (I believe the man in question is Joseph Duplessy, editor of, among other things, a collection of writings by women),³¹ he declined the editor’s request, saying that “the character of each couplet [of the poem] would require a different music—something that would make the dimensions of the piece simply incompatible with those of a work appropriate to your journal.” “Furthermore,” he adds, “I am at the moment so busy that I simply do not see how I could find an entire day and devote it exclusively to this little composition.” And he concludes with a credo: “Such things ought really to be improvised, so to speak, and when one fails [to find the appropriate setting] on first encountering the poem, in my opinion, one really ought to abandon the effort.”³²

Here, then, is indirect evidence of Berlioz’s presumably immediate attraction to Gautier’s poetry. As for his title, perhaps he found “Les Nuits d’été” both euphonious and appropriate to the theme of melancholy longing that runs through the verse. “De belles nuits d’été” and other forms of that locution, including *Le Songe d’une nuit d’été*—Shakespeare’s play and Mendelssohn’s overture—are found on frequent occasion in the titles of the publications and in the pages of the press of the day. Considerations of euphony were obviously important to his choice of titles for the individual songs: Gautier’s “Villanelle rythmique” became Berlioz’s “Villanelle”; “Le

Spectre de la rose” remained unchanged by the composer; what for Gautier was “Lamento. La Chanson du pêcheur” became for Berlioz “Lamento” (in the Geneva manuscript) and “Sur les lagunes. Lamento” (in the printed edition); “Absence” remained unchanged; Gautier’s second “Lamento” was entitled by the composer “Au cimetière. Clair de lune,” although the second part of Berlioz’s title seems to have been an afterthought. For the final song, Berlioz used Gautier’s title, “Barcarolle,” in the manuscript, but adopted “L’Île inconnue” for the printed edition. It is furthermore possible—the point is of no small significance—that some of these emendations (“Sur les lagunes”; “Au cimetière”; “L’Île inconnue”) were made by the composer with a view toward inspiring the scenic imagination of the artist who might eventually be charged with making title-page illustrations: these, as the reviews of the day make abundantly clear, were objects of appreciation equal in importance to that of the songs themselves. Unfortunately, *Les Nuits d’été* appeared from Catelin, and later from Richault, with neither engraved portraits nor lithographed vignettes. Those by Louis Boulanger and Barathier that grace the Boieldieu *jeune* edition of Berlioz’s *Le Montagnard exilé* (1823) and the Schlesinger edition of *Neuf Mélodies* (1830), for example, to say nothing of the later ones by Frédéric Sorrieu and Georges Staal that decorate the Richault editions of Berlioz’s *La Captive* (1849) and *Sara la baigneuse* (1850), provide a treat for the eye that some might have found more tempting than the music inside.

The Reviews and the *Raison d’être*

I have earlier mentioned the review of *Les Nuits d’été* that appeared in July of 1841 in Maurice Schlesinger’s *Revue et Gazette musicale* over the signature of Stephen Heller. This is one of only two contemporary reviews of the collection that I have been able to find. The second, signed “F,” appeared in *La Quotidienne* on November 27, 1841. Nearly eleven years later, in the *Journal des débats* of July 1, 1852, Joseph d’Ortigue would write at length of Berlioz’s songs, on the occasion of the publication of *Tristia*. These reviews provide us with important information about the work and its *raison d’être*. From Heller’s article, a spirited defense of Berlioz’s work in general, I should like to quote only two sentences: “In effect,” wrote Heller, “could anything have been easier for Berlioz than to write some of those insipid and perfumed melodies sought out by singers who are ‘à la mode’ and their fashionable clientele?” (Heller uses the English word *fashionable*, which was fashionable in

French at the time.) “But Berlioz has never wanted to dishonor his art,” Heller goes on; “he venerates it as a sacred object, and with religious zeal pays it homage with his most profound thoughts.” From “E,” I quote one: “The composer of *Roméo et Juliette*, in the habit of masterfully commanding the many voices of the orchestra and used to customizing the gigantic contours of his admirable symphonies, has on this occasion determined to produce a work of exquisite finesse and serenity.” And, from d’Ortigue, a short paragraph: “Several of these melodies have been orchestrated, after the fact, by the composer. I say ‘after the fact’ and you can easily see why. Monsieur Berlioz’s musical imagination is constantly nourished by orchestral timbres. One will perhaps say to him, do for all what you have done for *Le Jeune Pâtre breton*, *La Captive*, *Sara la baigneuse*, and *Absence*. For my part, I would not be pleased, for I prefer the simplicity of the initial inspiration to the embellishment, though fully genuine, of the second thought. *Parvoque potentem*.” (D’Ortigue’s Latin quotation is from the *Aeneid*, 6:843; it has been rendered in French as “riche de peu” and may be taken to mean “and be a master through small things.”)

It is generally assumed that aside from “Absence,” orchestrated by Berlioz in 1843 for performance by his traveling companion, Marie Recio, the other five songs of *Les Nuits d’été* were orchestrated shortly prior to publication, in 1856. D’Ortigue’s remark allows for the possibility that one or two songs beyond “Absence” had been orchestrally “embellished” by 1852, if not before. When Berlioz penned a letter of candidacy for a chair at the Académie des Beaux-Arts, for example, on March 6, 1851, he mentioned the six songs for voice and piano of *Les Nuits d’été*, “several with orchestra.”³³ As for the thrust of d’Ortigue’s comment, that the voice and piano version has an inspirational freshness worth preserving, it is of course not to be underestimated, in spite of the historical appreciation with which Berlioz’s orchestration has been favored. Berlioz himself implied, as D. Kern Holoman puts it, “that the orchestration of a work occurred subsequent to what [he] believed to be its completion.”³⁴ In prompting d’Ortigue to write something about his collection of songs, Berlioz said that he wanted “only that their existence be known, that they are not shoddy goods, that [the composer] has in no way had sales in mind, and that these ‘petites compositions,’ which have nothing formally or stylistically in common with Schubert’s, require for proper execution singers and pianists—musicians—of consummate artistry.”³⁵ He would later commit the same notion to print:

The unfortunate thing about salon compositions such as these [praiseworthy songs by Jakob Rosenhain] is that to play the piano part you need a pianist,

and to sing the voice part you need a singer. And—what makes the composer's requirements even more obviously intolerable—both the pianist and the singer must be musicians.³⁶

For Berlioz, then, small-scale compositions required more than small-scale musicianship. *Parvoque potentem* indeed.

Are we to believe Berlioz when he says of his songs that they were not commercially inspired? Some publishers at the time—Catelin was one—seem to have existed on such publications; their stable of composers was presumably well fed by such staples of the repertory. What other reasons might Berlioz have had for departing from his passion for the grandiose and taking up a genre in miniature? Beyond Ian Kemp's suggestion that the work "must be regarded simply as a characteristic product of the Romantic temperament,"³⁷ there were surely specific reasons for Berlioz's undertaking *Les Nuits d'été* for voice and piano in the spring of 1840, all of them no doubt overlapping.

(1) *He wished to write something for a particular singer whom he admired.* As in literature, where so many fictional characters are modelled on friends and acquaintances of the author, here, too—and especially in vocal music, characteristic performers may be "inscribed" into the characteristics of a score. The Catelin publication of 1841 is marked for mezzo-soprano or tenor, but Berlioz—who describes himself as a "second-rate baritone" in chapter 12 of the *Mémoires* (in fact he was a practiced vocal coach, as we know from, among other documents, his account of tutoring the young French tenor Victor-Hippolyte Delahaye, a potential successor to Gilbert Duprez)³⁸—surely had a preference for the former: Marguerite, in *La Damnation de Faust*, is a mezzo; so, too, are his greatest heroines, Cassandra and Dido, in *Les Troyens*, to say nothing of Béatrice, in *Béatrice et Bénédicte*. In July 1840, Berlioz criticized the hiring practices of the management of the Opéra by saying that if the theater continued to hire "only super-high sopranos, with no medium or lower registers, then I think it will be necessary to give up passionate scenes and dramatic music altogether."³⁹ Gautier, too, favored the lower female voice, which he praised in his 1847 poem "Contralto," probably written for his long-time mistress, the contralto Ernesta Grisi. The Paris autographs of *Les Nuits d'été* specify no vocal type, but the Darmstadt fair copy of "Villanelle" is carefully marked "Mezzo-Soprano."

Berlioz's ideal mezzo was Pauline Viardot, who was only nineteen years old in 1840 but who was even then recognized by connoisseurs as an artist. Meyerbeer would soon suggest that she be engaged by the Opéra, and Berlioz (who in 1838 called her a "diva manqué," though more for her repertory than

for her vocal resources) would later consider her one of the greatest artists in the history of music. The reigning mezzo at the Opéra at the time was Rosine Stoltz, who created the role of Ascanio in the 1838 production of *Benvenuto Cellini* (and who created a stir after 1840 as the mistress of the new director of the Opéra, Leon Pillet). It may be that Berlioz's relations with Stoltz were on the wane at the time of *Les Nuits d'été*—and personal relationships, to say nothing of romantic attachments, were at the time (and continue to be) of no small consequence in the artistic world. Cornélie Falcon, who sang the first performance of the orchestral version of Berlioz's *La Captive*, in 1834, was also a leading mezzo of the period and, according to Berlioz, the repository of the current Opéra director's hopes for success.⁴⁰

We then come to what Annegret Fauser has called Berlioz's larger "autobiographical project,"⁴¹ to the young lady who became Berlioz's supportive mistress, and, in 1854, the singer who became his second wife. That so little is known about Marie Recio, that "devoted and intelligent woman" who, though ungraciously excluded from the *Mémoires*, shared over twenty years of the composer's life, "never for a day ceasing to lavish upon her husband the most tender and delicate attentions,"⁴² has been one of the real lacunae of modern Berlioz scholarship. Marie Recio appeared on the scene—in the Opéra—in 1841, after the composition of *Les Nuits d'été*. The archives indicate that she was hired at the Académie Royale de Musique on October 9, 1841; her contract was terminated on September 8, 1842, when she left Paris, with Berlioz, for Brussels. In those eleven months she sang in the house's productions of Rossini's *Comte Ory* and Donizetti's *La Favorite*.

Until recently, her pre-operatic life was a mystery. We now know that before adopting the stage name of Recio, Marie-Geneviève Martin appeared in concert as Marie Willès, her adopted name clearly a Frenchified version of the name of the Spanish woman, Marie Sotera de Villas, who gave birth to her, in the Parisian suburb of Châtenay (now Châtenay-Malabry), in June 1814, as the consort of her father, a French military officer, Joseph Martin.⁴³ (That other mezzo, Rosine Stolz, also appropriated for her stage name the maiden name of her mother.) As a singer, Marie Willès first appears in the press at the beginning of 1840, as the dedicatee of "Vive l'hiver," a *mélodie* published in *Le Ménestrel* on January 26, 1840, by the then much in view composer-voice-teacher Giuseppe Concone. It is not clear how Marie Willès came to the attention of Concone, who settled in Paris in 1837, but perhaps she was among his first students in the French capital. (When Berlioz mentioned Concone's new album in the *Journal des débats* of January 14, 1838, he noted that it had been recommended to him by "une grande musicienne,"

but did not name the woman in question.) Marie Willès next appears in the press in reviews of a *matinée musicale* held in the concert rooms of the piano-making Richter brothers on March 26, 1840—precisely three days after the date that Berlioz inscribed on the “Darmstadt” manuscript of “Villanelle.” One month later, in his article for the *Revue et Gazette musicale* of April 26, 1840, Berlioz himself mentions “Mademoiselle Willès” as having caused a sensation at the concert given by Adolf Schimon, the Vienna-born pianist who was studying at the Conservatoire and acting as accompanist in the voice classes of Davide Banderali:

This young woman has everything necessary to succeed in the theater and on the concert stage, once further practice has steadied her intonation, which is still sometimes insecure, and once further experience before the public has given her the poise and composure needed to master and project all of her vocal resources.

Several months later, in August 1840, Marie, accompanied by her mother and their chambermaid, joined the celebrated Norwegian violinist Ole Bull on his concert tour to Wiesbaden, Bad Ems, Mainz, and Baden-Baden, travelling by steamboat and rail. I have not found the *raison d'être* or the history of their partnership, and have found only one review, which appeared in *La Sylphide*:

Ole Bull was accompanied by a lovely young singer whom you heard on several occasions during the winter in the salons and in the concert rooms of Henri Herz. Mademoiselle Marie Willès very graciously enhanced the Norwegian violinist's program. Especially at Wiesbaden, she was warmly applauded in the grand aria from [Donizetti's 1838 opera] *Roberto Devereux*, and in a duet from [Donizetti's 1833 opera] *Torquato Tasso*. I must not forget to mention that, among the Russian and English visitors to the Duchy of Nassau, Marie Willès' *toilette* was appreciated nearly as much as her singing.⁴⁴

Writing to his French wife, Félicité, on August 10, 1840, Ole Bull mentioned that “les dames Willès” were valiantly weathering the storm of difficult travel and sent to her their warm greetings. On September 3, he wrote that “the Willès ladies are leaving for Paris,” that Marie and “her Spanish mother” hoped to see the Bulls' new baby, that Félicité would find them “very endearing.”⁴⁵

Berlioz—who, in 1840, it must be remembered, was troubled by a wife who was becoming increasingly dependent, isolated, prone to illness, sensitive,

frustrated, resentful, and demanding, to employ the terms used by her biographer⁴⁶—would continue to praise the artistic talents of Marie Willès, nowhere more fully than in his account of the concert she gave on February 9, 1841, which he reviewed at length in the *Journal des débats* of February 14:

Mademoiselle Willès, a student of Monsieur Banderali, who has already trained a number of skilled singers, possesses a soprano voice with a range slightly greater than two octaves, and a timbre that is pure, balanced, accurate, and capable of producing a great deal of power, especially in the upper register. She seems to be more attuned to broad, lyrical lines than to ornamental *roulades*, although, in the cadenzas that she was called upon to execute, she sang with assurance and precision.⁴⁷

One month later, we find Marie Willès participating in a concert at the Salle Pleyel, on March 23, 1841—*precisely one year* after the date marked on the “Darmstadt” manuscript of “Villanelle.” On this occasion, which featured the ten-year-old Russian virtuoso Anton Rubinstein, *La Sylphide* reported that “Mademoiselle Willès sang some *mélodies* by Berlioz with perfect understanding.”⁴⁸ Of the several reviews of this concert that I have located, only this one mentions the Berlioz. But this one is enough, it seems to me, to conclude a) that on March 23, 1841, Marie sang “Villanelle” and, probably, “Absence,” which Pierre-François Wartel had sung at Marie’s earlier concert of February 9, 1841, and which she would sing on tour with Berlioz in 1842–1843; and b) that the date on the “Darmstadt” manuscript of “Villanelle,” probably added in 1842, is an instance of Berlioz mis-remembering the year. What he intended, it seems to me, is to set down the date on which he had first heard Marie Recio sing the opening song of his cycle.

Berlioz was obviously aware of the celebrity of Marie’s teacher, Davide Banderali, who had begun his tenure at the Conservatoire in 1828, when Berlioz was still a student there. And he knew of Giuseppe Concone, as we have seen, who may earlier have worked with Marie. Now, in 1841, infatuated with her, he would have presumably wished to help one of Banderali’s “best students,” as he referred to Marie, to obtain a contract at the Opéra, especially as he was on good terms with the recently appointed director, Léon Pillet. We have no evidence of any such preferential treatment, but Berlioz was on record as decrying the institution’s lack of mezzo-sopranos. It is in the announcement of Marie’s appointment to the Opéra, in *Le Ménestrel* of October 24, 1841, that we first discover the proof of her dual identity: “Mlle Marie Recio (Willèz) [*sic*], déjà connue du public des concerts, vient d’obtenir un engagement de deux ans à l’Opéra”—“Mademoiselle Marie

Recio (Willèz), already known to the concert-going public, has just signed a two-year contract at the Opéra.” (We find further confirmation in a communication from Auguste Morel sent, after Berlioz’s death, to the editor of *Le Ménestrel*, in which he casually mentions that Berlioz married “Mademoiselle Willès [...] after the death of his first wife.”)⁴⁹ In fact Marie Recio’s contract was for only one year, not two, but the identification is unmistakable.

The title page of the original edition of *Les Nuits d’été* is also perfectly clear: the songs are for mezzo-soprano or tenor. In his first reviews, Berlioz speaks of Marie as a soprano. But when he published *La Belle Isabeau*, shortly thereafter, and dedicated it explicitly to Marie Recio, he indicated that it was for mezzo-soprano. As Julian Rushton has demonstrated in his study of Berlioz’s understanding of the mezzo-soprano voice, the distinction between “soprano” and “mezzo-soprano” is not as clear-cut as we might like it to be.⁵⁰ Still, the “pitch center of gravity” of “Villanelle”—to use Rushton’s ingenious measure of tessitura, and to take as an example the song that by the date on the “Darmstadt” manuscript must now be associated with Marie Recio—is *higher* than that of any other vocal number in Berlioz’s “mezzo-soprano” repertory. “Absence” lies high as well—and many singers transpose these songs down. But Marie presumably had no trouble singing “Villanelle” in its original key of A major. (The contemporary French soprano, Véronique Gens, sings it in A as well. The mezzo-sopranos Janet Baker and Anne Sofie von Otter, to mention only two, sing it in F.) We know, from a letter from 1843, that Marie sang “Absence,” and sang it well, in its original key of F-sharp major.⁵¹ (Baker and Otter sing it respectively in E and E-flat.)

(2) *He wished to write a work for a particular occasion.* In the *Revue et Gazette musicale* of October 25, 1840, we find the following notice: “In recent days, we have been very happy to hear Wartel rehearsing six new *mélodies* that M. Berlioz has just composed on poems selected from the Théophile Gautier’s delightful volume *La Comédie de la mort*. We do not hesitate to say that never before, in this musical genre, has a composer achieved such originality or such profundity and grace of expression—a perfect marriage of melody and accompaniment, the one brought richly to life by the other.” This is the paragraph, clearly penned by the composer himself, that offers the proof I mentioned above that the six songs were in fact *completed* by October 1840.

In the subsequent issue of the magazine, dated incorrectly as “jeudi 4 novembre 1840”—in fact Thursday of that week fell on the 5th—we find the program of the concert sponsored by the *Revue et Gazette musicale* that was to take place on the following Sunday, November 8, 1840. The seventh

of the ten items appears as “*Absence, Le Spectre de la rose, mélodies de Berlioz, paroles de Monsieur Théophile Gautier, chantées par Monsieur Wartel et accompagnées par Monsieur Gustave Collignon.*” But when the program was reprinted on the day of the concert, the items by Berlioz were nowhere to be found. It is probable that the tenor, Pierre-François Wartel, at the time singing demanding roles in the several works on the boards at the Opéra in that month, was simply unable to learn the songs to the satisfaction of the composer. Wartel, known for having introduced Schubert’s *Lieder* to French audiences, went on to a distinguished career in Paris and abroad as both singer and teacher. The scheduled pianist, Gustave Collignon, a first prize winner at the Conservatoire in 1837, is the man who accompanied Marie Willès in her début recital. He would pursue his career as a pianist, go into exile in September 1848, and become a mainstay of concert life in the American city of New Orleans: “Through the efforts of this one man, New Orleans experienced its first independent symphony orchestra, its first regular chamber and orchestral concert series, and its first systematic hearing of the greatest European instrumental works.”⁵²

It is clear, from what we read in the *Revue et Gazette musicale*, that Berlioz had completed the songs and rehearsed them with Wartel in preparation of their performance at the magazine’s concert of November 8, 1840. If he had conceived the songs with only Wartel’s voice in mind, Berlioz would presumably not have published them “for mezzo-soprano or tenor.” (Wartel would indeed sing “Villanelle” and “Absence” on Marie Willès’s concert of February 9, 1841.)

Beyond performance at a concert sponsored by the journal with which he had been associated since 1834, Berlioz surely hoped for performances of the new *mélodies* at other venues as well, possibly at one of the *soirées* offered at the Palais Royal by the Duc d’Orléans. Berlioz had had contacts with the Orléans family since the early eighteen-thirties, and like other artists of the day, including Théophile Gautier, he was especially fond of this Duke, Ferdinand-Philippe, King Louis-Philippe’s eldest son and the heir to the throne. Indeed, as outlined in chapter 5, the Duc d’Orléans attended the performance of Berlioz’s major work of the year 1840, the *Symphonie militaire* soon to become *funèbre et triomphale*, and shortly thereafter accepted the dedication of the published score. There were, of course, numerous chamber music concerts in 1840 in the salons of the piano makers Érard, Herz, Pape, Pleyel, Bernhardt, Richter, Petzold, Couder, and others who had the requisite room and riches. Such *soirées*, though he liked the beverage, were not Berlioz’s usual cup of tea.

(3) *He wished frankly to make some quick, cold cash.* Berlioz had lifelong financial problems. To the dismay and embarrassment of his middle-class family, these problems were sometimes emphasized by those who wrote about the composer in the daily and weekly press. In 1841, Berlioz wrote to his sister that “la grande musique” was ruining him.⁵³ Perhaps he wished to recoup his losses with some potentially remunerative music that was “petite.” But despite the marketability of the *romance* or *mélodie*, the publisher of *Les Nuits d'été*, Adolphe Catelin, was in marketing neither inventive nor aggressive. He went out of business only two years later. Furthermore, the Berlioz whom we know from the letters and the *Mémoires*, while always fearful of imminent bankruptcy, was never really in the music business for profit: his regard for the sanctity of art—explicitly mentioned in Stephen Heller’s review of the song cycle, which appeared on July 4, 1841, and which we have cited—was well known, and genuine.

Indeed, in the other contemporary review of the new *mélodies*, the anonymous critic praises the “exquisite finesse and serenity” of *Les Nuits d'été*, but, as concerns marketability, expresses genuine doubts. Because the author of the review, “E,” has wrestled closely with the new score, we quote his review at length.

The first *mélodie* is entitled “Villanelle,” and this one, for us, is the most perfect of them all. The words, by Monsieur Théophile Gautier, are rich in grace and charm. Two springtime lovers wander through a cool and shaded valley, walk softly upon the fresh grass, relish the joyous cries of the blackbirds in the bushes, and find around them nothing but peaceful delight. These delicate feelings, these sweet and rose-tinted colors, these gentle dreams, are all captured by the composer with rare perfection. The melody is ravishing, the accompaniment, diaphanous. If you close your eyes and let your imagination wander, you will find yourself placed in a picturesque landscape, seated at the edge of a fountain, inhaling the wildflowers’ intoxicatingly perfumed aromas.

The music Monsieur Berlioz has written for the second poem is of great beauty, although a certain indecisiveness haunts the melodic contours and harmonic designs as a result of the composer’s desire very closely to follow the poet’s train of thought. In fact, that train of thought is rather odd: the ghost of a rose (if you can believe it) returns late at night to dance upon the bedside table of a young lady still dreaming of earlier ballroom delights. The poor rose complains not at all; it asks for neither a requiem mass nor a confessional psalm; it is perfectly happy to have died earlier in the evening, stripped of its petals while lying upon the alabaster breast of the insouciant maiden, now solaced by arrival in paradise. Here, then, is a rose that knows how to compose a verse—and here is a conception that is truly bizarre.

For the third and fourth poems, wistful and forlorn, Monsieur Berlioz has found the perfect musical equivalents. The fifth poem, entitled “Au cimetière: Clair de lune,” leaves us mystified. No doubt for Monsieur Berlioz, these misty, nebulous, and uninterrupted harmonies and rhythms—which rise and fall, come and go, intersect and intertwine, disappear in a distant haze—make perfectly good sense. But we have not been able to grasp them. Perhaps an irreproachable performance would eradicate the confusion we have felt. We should like to believe as much, and we would be very happy to revise our opinion.

The concluding *mélodie*, finally, is a delightful and carefree fisherman’s song, a sibling whose lively demeanor contrasts vividly with the soft and tender features of her melancholic sisters.

If we have dwelled at length on the work of Monsieur Berlioz, it is because he is an estimable and important artist and deserves a serious review. The author of *Roméo et Juliette*, used to commanding with expertise the powerful voices of an orchestra and to creating admirable symphonies of colossal proportions, has in this case attempted to accomplish a work of serene and exquisite finesse.

Nevertheless, these *mélodies*, undeniably polished from an artistic point of view, are not without fault as concerns the likelihood of public success. By attending to the most minute details, by going over his finely shaped melodies with a microscope and a sharpened chisel, Monsieur Berlioz has produced a score of such meticulousness that it risks seeming ever so slightly aloof. Because the listener finds it rather difficult to follow the composer’s thinking in the midst of so many arabesques that entwine and enmesh the melodies in a kind of web. In this respect, without insisting on the precision of the comparison, Monsieur Berlioz reminds us of the medieval artist who manages to sculpt the various stages of the Passion around the base of an ivory reliquary that is only a few inches in diameter. Here we find thousands of infinitesimal images, each of which assumes a different posture and appears to express a different emotion. This is highly commendable, but it requires very close observation. In the end, is not all of this work rather frivolous, or futile?⁵⁴

The final word above is *puérilité*, which is not readily translated. Still, if for pecuniary reasons Berlioz wished to demonstrate that he was essentially a “normal” composer—normal, that is, in the sense of one prepared, not only to moderate his means, but also to submit to the supremacy of “words,” and in so doing, to recognize or acknowledge a desire to “entertain”—then it does indeed seem, if we take this essentially sympathetic reviewer’s comments to heart, that the composer failed to do so. For more than ten years, ever since the premieres of the overture to his first opera, *Les Francs-Juges*, in 1828, and of the *Symphonie fantastique*, in 1830 and 1832, Berlioz had been considered

an oddity, an exception, a fantastic extremist. Even his good friend Stephen Heller understood why Adolphe Adam, the composer of the ever-popular *Postillon de Longjumeau* and “a man who lacked neither intelligence nor talent, had not been able to see in Berlioz’s first symphony anything other than music from an insane asylum.”⁵⁵ Throughout his career, but particularly in the autumn of 1840, when he organized a “festival” at the Opéra, the first of its kind, Berlioz was reviewed in the press as a noise-maker and a madman. In October, the satirical *Charivari* launched repeated diatribes. And in November and December, the theoretically respectable *Revue des deux mondes* treated Berlioz to a no-holds-barred viciousness. Vindictive reviews and what we would consider to be libelous personal attacks were not limited to Berlioz, of course; Balzac, for one, suffered more than his fair share. Furthermore, in the same year, one of the most thoughtful contemporary journalistic analyses of any work by Berlioz appeared in the socialist newspaper, *La Phalange*, from the pen of the aforementioned Allyre Bureau, the violinist-composer who was one of Théophile Gautier’s close friends and who, after playing an active role in the Revolution of 1848 (as well as the violin at the Theatre-Italien), finished his days in the utopian socialist colony at Kellum Springs, Texas. Bureau wrote that Berlioz is a composer “whom France would do well to glorify rather than to have fun degrading and diminishing as much as possible. But I suppose,” he continued, “that we are waiting until after he is dead to discover that he just possibly had a touch of genius.”⁵⁶

These reviews, positive or negative, were often personally or politically inspired; they were prepared on the nudging of those who knew the critic (or the subject of his notice), and were in a position to tender thanks for services rendered; they were motivated by envy, by competition, by clique-ism. No opinion expressed in nineteenth-century French newspaper print was unprimed: “critics’ ideologies, and more specifically their political attitudes and personal acquaintances played a singularly important role in aligning them ‘for’ and ‘against’ an artist.”⁵⁷ This is one of the overmastering messages we receive from Berlioz’s *Correspondance générale* and from the letters of, among others, Théophile Gautier. It is the message Karl Gutzkow conveyed to German readers in his *Letters from Paris* of 1842, when he said that it is impossible for a critic in Paris “to be completely independent, or, what is the same thing, to be completely honest.”⁵⁸ And it is a message of which one is constantly reminded in the France of today as well. Life and culture have been politicized in France to a degree difficult for Americans to imagine, or to accept, because Americans until recently have tended to believe in the

myth of an “objective” press, and because in the United States the government’s contributions to culture have been minimal, while in France the great cultural philanthropist has from time immemorial been the government, the *Maison du Roi*, the *Maison de l’Empereur*, the administration, officialdom: indeed, it is not uncommon to see it remarked in the French press that “l’administration y fait toujours la pluie et le beau temps”—“it’s the administration that makes it rain or shine.” In the nineteenth century, it was not grants for the arts that the government was distributing, but rather subventions, indemnities, commissions, *encouragements*, administrative posts, and sinecures, as we have seen in previous chapters, that permitted a number of artists to work much, if not most, of the time for themselves. Alexandre Dumas, as I remarked here in the prologue, was librarian at the Palais Royal, as was Casimir Delavigne; Charles Nodier was librarian at the Arsenal; Alfred de Musset was librarian at the Ministry of the Interior; Berlioz was librarian at the Conservatoire; in 1868 Théophile Gautier became librarian for the Princess Mathilde. Filling out book orders and catalogue cards were for none of these men their primary occupation. Notices in the press, with the potential they offered of reaching “les dames du grand monde,” as Berlioz called them,⁵⁹ and others in high places, were crucial: the talked-about were on the road to success. We must thus read critical notices against a (loosely defined) political backdrop, and with political questions—the force of central authority and of those behind it—in mind.

With *Les Nuits d’été*, Berlioz’s detractors were in a sense asked to reconsider. Just as they had been asked to reconsider in 1830, with the publication of the *Neuf Mélodies*, which François-Joseph Fétis, Berlioz’s first important critic, aware of the composer’s principled independence and yet preciously alarmed by the composer’s inclination to grandiosity, greeted with encouragement:

We can only congratulate Monsieur Berlioz for taking up in this new work a method of composition far more melodious than that of his earlier compositions. There is a great deal of charm in this new collection of *mélodies*, and one sees clearly that Monsieur Berlioz need only *desire* to do so in order to enter upon a more natural path, the only path that can lead to success.⁶⁰

That principled independence is also evoked in Stephen Heller’s review—whose content may have been known beforehand to the composer. “Do not accuse Berlioz of conspiring against the rules of art,” wrote Heller. “He does not work according to a system; he is neither an abolitionist nor a blind slave

bound to ancient theories. Preeminent in his work is inspiration: he listens to what he thinks; he paints what he feels.”⁶¹ In a private conversation with Berlioz, Heller was rather more critical: “My dear friend,” Heller claims to have said to the composer, “you ask for too much, you want to have everything. You deride the people and yet you seek their admiration. You disdain the applause of the crowd, which is your absolute right as an artist of a noble and independent temperament, and yet you hunger for it nevertheless.”⁶²

The anonymous reviewer for *La Quotidienne*, whom we have quoted at length, opened his review with comments on the *romance*, whose commercial value, he recognized, was sadly opposite to its artistic merit. He went on—and this is crucial—to speak prophetically of the world’s greatest master of the *Lied*:

Fortunately, all rules have exceptions. Just as we were about to despair [about the prominence of the *romance*], there appeared in our midst, like a new and immense heavenly body, a great, indeed, immortal genius. Everyone now knows Schubert. Who amongst us does not revere *La Religieuse* [“Die Nonne”], *Le Roi des Aulnes* [“Der Erlkönig”], *L’Attente* [“Du bist die Ruh”], *Le Départ* [“Abschied”], and those other great masterpieces of truth and inspiration? In Schubert’s powerful hands, the *romance* has removed its borrowed apparel, it has stripped itself of its interminable series of couplets with their exasperatingly incessant repetitions, and it has become a kind of small-scale musical drama, in which all the poetic nuances and all of the poetic images are carefully replicated, now by melodic niceties, now by melancholic accents, here by soft and mysterious harmonies, there by graceful and delicate rhythms. It has become, in a word, a faithful mirror that reflects and embellishes the poet’s ideas, like the watery surface of a pond that reflects the dark silhouettes of the trees which lean over its shores.

Monsieur Berlioz’s six *mélodies* are written in the very same spirit, although by saying so I wish in no way to suggest that he is guilty of imitation or theft. For Monsieur Berlioz is above all else a proudly independent musician: he lends to some, but he borrows from none. If this spirit of originality, for which he has been frequently criticized, has sometimes led him astray, it has also led to the numerous wonders that abound in his works.

Despite what I have said about critics and their motives, I have unfortunately been unable to identify the writer of this notice. It is unlikely to have been penned by Berlioz’s friend and admirer, Joseph d’Ortigue, the regular music critic for *La Quotidienne*, who had earlier written a long piece on Berlioz, in *Le Temps* of January 6, 1835, in which he did compare Berlioz, as a melodist, to Schubert, because d’Ortigue seems almost always to have signed his

articles. In *La Quotidienne*, I have found eleven articles published in the column “Revue Musicale” under the initial “F” on the following dates: 1841 (January 12, March 24, May 5, November 12); 1842 (February 13, March 2, April 13, May 14, August 27); 1843 (March 26, May 14). *Monsieur F* reveals himself to be a learned musician, rigorous in his criticism of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, for example, and demanding in his expectations for singers. It is conceivable that he was Pier-Angelo Fiorentino, whose distinguished career as a music critic began at *La Presse* in the autumn of 1836, a few months after Émile de Girardin founded that newspaper, celebrated for its first-in-the-nation use of advertising that allowed a subscription price far lower than that of any Parisian newspaper up to that time. The principal critic at *La Presse*, and Fiorentino’s colleague in the early years, was Théophile Gautier—a reason for a possible association of Fiorentino with *Les Nuits d’été*. But we know that Berlioz’s friend Léon-Charles-François Kreutzer did for a time write for *La Quotidienne*,⁶³ and it may well be his “François” that led to the mysterious initial in the pages of the newspaper and that concealed his identity as the nephew of the famous violinist-composer Rodolphe Kreutzer.

In his later review, Joseph d’Ortigue opened his remarks on *Les Nuits d’été* with irony:

“What?” some will say, “Monsieur Berlioz has composed *mélodies*? How very odd!” Yes, Monsieur Berlioz has indeed composed *mélodies*, even *romances*, and they are polished, pure, tender, majestic, nostalgic; they express with truth and nobility a particular state of mind. [...] Whatever you may think of the poetic imagination of Monsieur Théophile Gautier, you certainly cannot deny the richness of his imagery or the assurance of his forms as they are manifested in a prodigiously instinctive vocabulary and a remarkable sense of color, the one reflected by the other. Nothing of this—the images, the colors, the forms, the reflections—has escaped the composer.⁶⁴

Such praise, for *mélodies* conceived in 1840, would befit the soon to be celebrated Heine *Lieder* of Robert Schumann, *Dichterliebe*, which in fact Berlioz was studying at the time: “I am looking right now at the settings that Monsieur Schumann has made of the poems of Heine,” Berlioz noted in his feuilleton for the *Journal des débats* of October 18, 1840, at precisely the time he was completing *Les Nuits d’été*. The year 1840 was, of course, Robert Schumann’s *Liederyahr* or “year of song,” motivated by the composer’s increasing confidence that a wedding with his long-beloved Clara Wieck would soon take place—which it did, on September 12, 1840. On a much

smaller scale, because Berlioz composed only six while Schumann composed over one hundred, 1840 was Berlioz's *Liederjahr* as well.

Lamento

Let us turn to one of the poems of Gautier set by Berlioz and test the validity of d'Ortigue's assertion regarding the closeness of the poetry and the music.

Lamento. La Chanson du pêcheur (Lament. Song of the Fisherman.)

Ma belle amie est morte:	La blanche créature	Sur moi la nuit immense
Je pleurerai toujours;	Est couchée au cercueil.	S'étend comme un linceul;
Sous la tombe elle emporte	Comme dans la nature	Je chante ma romance
Mon âme et mes amours.	Tout me paraît en deuil!	Que le ciel entend seul.
Dans le ciel, sans m'attendre,	La colombe oubliée	Ah ! comme elle était belle
Elle s'en retourna;	Pleure et songe à l'absent;	Et comme je l'aimais!
L'ange qui l'emmena	Mon âme pleure et sent	Je n'aimerai jamais
Ne voulut pas me prendre.	Qu'elle est dépareillée.	Une femme autant qu'elle.
Que mon sort est amer!	Que mon sort est amer!	Que mon sort est amer!
Ah! sans amour,	Ah ! sans amour,	Ah ! sans amour,
s'en aller sur la mer!	s'en aller sur la mer!	s'en aller sur la mer!

My beloved is deceased. I shall weep for her forever. Into the grave, she carries my soul and my love. To the heavens, without waiting for me, she has returned. The angel who led her there wished not to take me along. How my fate is forlorn! Ah, starved of love, to set out on the sea...

The white creature is lying in her coffin. As in nature, everything seems to me to be in mourning! The forgotten dove is weeping and dreaming of the one who has departed. My soul is weeping and aware that it has been diminished. How my fate is forlorn! Ah, starved of love, to set out on the sea...

Upon me, the immense night spreads like a shroud. I sing my *romance*, which heaven alone can hear. Ah, how beautiful she was! And how I loved her! I shall never love another woman as much as I loved her. How my fate is forlorn! Ah, starved of love, to set out on the sea...

Here we have a poem whose three stanzas are, in structure, absolutely identical—something Gautier seems in fact to have deemed necessary for musical setting; we have a poem, with the fashionable word “romance” in the third stanza, that literally invites musical reading. We find an eight-line verse with a rhyme scheme of *abab cddc* in which each line is of six syllables, with lines 2, 4, 6, and 7 as masculine, lines 1, 3, 5, and 8 as feminine. The mute *e* at the end of the line is not a “syllable,” but it is a “beat,” and must be sounded. The presence of the feminine endings is crucial to the musical conception: even as a neophyte, working in 1826 on an opera with his friend Léon Compaignon, Berlioz realized that three masculine rhymes in succession are impossible to set well.⁶⁵ The mute *e*, “singulière et irremplacable” in the words of Joël-Marie Fauquet,⁶⁶ is often taken for granted, but is of crucial importance to *la mélodie française*. Most notable here, however, in a text whose vocabulary is not self-consciously exotic and whose imagery is essentially transparent, is the refrain—two lines of six and ten syllables, of forceful masculine rhymes (“in music of power one must never conclude with a feminine rhyme”),⁶⁷ with the notably graceful assonance and alliteration of the *m* sounds of *amer*, *amour*, and *la mer*, and, more prominently, the *s* sounds of *sort*, *sans*, *s’en*, and *sur*. These were echoes and reverberations that gave flight to the composer’s imagination.

Berlioz’s song is through-composed. Parsing the melodic phrases is no simple matter, as it is, by contrast, in the contemporary setting of the poem by Félicien David (published in 1840 and listed in the *Bibliographie de la France* on January 2, 1841), where Gautier’s first four lines are set to two four-bar phrases of patently obvious symmetry. In the Berlioz, those four lines encompass fifteen bars: saying that they comprise phrase units of 4 + 4 + 7 fails to do justice to Berlioz’s always originally inflected rhythmic imagination. David does write *ad libitum* at the head of the refrain, he does set “Ah, sans amour, s’en aller sur la mer” in five bars rather than four, and he does choose an appropriately minor key, in this case G minor, for his setting as a whole. (The setting of the same poem by Charles Lenepveu, of 1870, is in F minor; the setting by Charles Gounod, of 1872, is in E minor.) Berlioz’s “Lamento,” too, is in a minor key: following on the heels of “Le Spectre de la rose,” in D major, G minor here can sound like the second member of a logical progression. But the sequence of the keys of the six songs—A, D, G minor, F-sharp, D, F—is hardly suggestive of a largescale tonal design. The unity of the “cycle,” such as it is, turns upon the poetic narrative and imagery, the vocal style that revolves around melodic recitative and lyrical arioso, and the presence of repeated musical gestures.

“Sur les lagunes” is built—this is its most outstanding feature—upon a recurring motive, a kind of ostinato, even a *leitmotif*, if I may use the term

loosely: a musical response to Gautier's haunting refrain, "Ah, sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer." The leitmotif occurs some fourteen times in the piano part; though it is echoed in the vocal line, it occurs there literally only twice—at "pleure, pleure" (bars 57–58), one of the few words of the original poem repeated by the composer, and at the final sigh, "Ah," another Berliozian textual addition and a dramatic touch that is both fitting and lovely. The linear half-step motif is initially presented (bars 1–2; 5–6) as a sustaining of the fifth degree of G minor briefly inflected by the flattened sixth. In the course of the song, the sustained D functions variously as the fifth, the third (major and minor) and the root of a triad. In bars 13–14, the D figures in an inversion of the harmony we now know as the "Tristan chord," although in this case Berlioz is concerned less by vertical simultaneities than by changing colors produced by the process of reiteration. Indeed, we have here one of a privileged group of movements, or moments, controlled by a systematically repeated gesture that by its very strictness calls attention to all that is free and imaginative in Berlioz. Such an expressive scenario is used to sublime effect in the septet in act 4 of *Les Troyens*, which is linked to the love duet that follows, in G-flat major, by the insistent oscillation of the fifth and flattened sixth degrees of F major. It was used by Berlioz as early as 1834, for the tolling of the evening bells in the "Pilgrims' March" of *Harold en Italie*; it was used again in the "Funeral March" of the dramatic symphony, *Roméo et Juliette*; and it was used in what is the true forerunner of the compositional procedure employed in "Sur les lagunes," the Offertorium of the *Requiem*, which won for Berlioz the "priceless approval" of Robert Schumann: "This Offertorium," said Schumann to the composer, "surpasses everything."⁶⁸

The choral psalmody in the *Requiem*, which Berlioz called a "chorus of souls in Purgatory,"⁶⁹ surely had a direct bearing on the significance, for the composer, of the ostinato in "Sur les lagunes." The significance would be identical to that of Juliet's "Convoi funèbre," whose ostinato Berlioz also called a psalmody: it is a spiritual significance, suggested by the "heavens" and "angels" of Gautier's poem, which adds the deity to the typically Romantic constellation of love, night, and death, that motivates this lamentation on the soul of the departed lover.

At the end of "Sur les lagunes" we are left poised on the dominant, longing until "infinity" for our "belle amie." Only on one other occasion did Berlioz end a movement with a similarly unresolved harmony, namely, in "La Harpe éolienne—Souvenirs," the single instrumental movement of *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*, the sequel to the *Symphonie fantastique*, as revised in 1855.⁷⁰ The poetic, or dramatic, circumstances there are similar, and there, as in the song,

Berlioz reworked the ending with particular care. Indeed, for “Sur les lagunes,” there are even slight differences between the corrected autograph and the first edition, suggesting further adjustments to the ending in proof.

Chopin and Schumann essayed unresolved endings in certain multisectional works (the *Prelude* in F major from op. 28, for example, and “Bittendes Kind” from *Kinderszenen*), and in this case, as in those, the technique of avoiding closure—in a sense the most obvious of all representational practices of the Romantic era in music—signals the composer’s larger structural conception. I earlier suggested, on the basis of differences among the Paris and Geneva manuscripts of *Les Nuits d’été*, that “Sur les lagunes” was separately composed and subsequently incorporated into the six-song collection published in 1841. It is on the one hand logical to assume that the decision to end this song on the dominant was a part of the larger determination to publish the six songs in what became their final, progressive arrangement as—there is no other word for it—a “cycle.” On the other hand, this ending on the dominant is not as expectant, or anticipatory, as others. The seventh degree of the final chord is not present. The chord, with the third in the tenor register, has a life of its own. Its “yes and no” quality, which I hear as a forerunner of the exquisite closing of the slow movement of Mahler’s Fourth Symphony, is as expressive as it is vague; its message could be one of irony, or of hope, or of despair.

Indistinct and ambiguous though it may be, there is nonetheless a message here, which filters through the works of artists as diverse as Carl Wilhelm Kolbe the Younger, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Lord Byron, Eugène Delacroix, Casimir Delavigne, and Gaetano Donizetti. Let me be precise. That lovely, incantatory line, the line that encapsulates the gloom of life in the shadow of death and thus a quintessential element of Gautier’s collection, “Ah, sans amour, s’en aller sur la mer,” did not simply come to Gautier from the recesses of his poetic imagination. It is in fact a translation of the first two lines of what is apparently an old Venetian verse:

Ah! Senza amare	Ah, without love
Andare sul mare,	to wander upon the sea,
Col sposo del mare,	with the spouse of the sea,
Non può consolare.	is no comfort to me.

This verse was inscribed on the golden frame of a painting by C. W. Kolbe that was exhibited in Berlin in 1816; the painting (the original is now lost) and the story it represents are the subjects of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s tale *Doge und Dogaressa* (*The doge and his lady*), first published in 1818 and

subsequently incorporated into *Die Serapions-Brüder* (1819). In French, the tale first appeared, in an anonymous translation, in the opening volume of the periodical *La Mode*, from December 1829.⁷¹ The doge in question is the historical figure of Marino Faliero, who is likewise the subject of the drama by Byron published in 1820 and played in Paris, in French, in 1821, at both the Théâtre-Français (in verse) and at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin (in prose). Byron's drama in turn inspired Delacroix's famous painting of 1826, *The Execution of Marino Faliero*, and it inspired the tragedy by Casimir Delavigne published in 1829 as *Marino Faliero* and played widely on the Parisian stage. Finally, the play by Delavigne served Emanuele Bidera when he prepared the libretto of the opera of that title by Gaetano Donizetti, premiered at the Théâtre-Italien, in Paris, in April 1835.

It is obvious, then, that the subject—the arrogant old doge who is executed for breaking with his patrician class and favoring “the people”; the aged aristocrat who is married to the young and beautiful daughter of one of his former comrades-in-arms—was in the air. The interrelationships and anxieties of influence among these iterations of the legend cannot long concern us here. For Byron and Delacroix, the high tragedy of the political actor is preeminent, and the youthful wife remains faithful. Indeed, Balzac, in *Les Martyrs ignorés* of 1837, has a character congratulate Byron for having her do so: “Lord Byron had a great idea in having her remain faithful to her husband.”⁷² For Delavigne, the youthful wife succumbs to a young lover, then later, before his execution, asks her husband's forgiveness. For Bidera and Donizetti, it is simply not clear whether the young lovers consummate their guilty passion.⁷³ For Hoffmann, the love intrigue takes precedence: the wife of the doge returns the affections of her youthful admirer but remains faithful to the old man until his demise. Then, in a kind of pre-Wagnerian “Liebestod,” the lovers are united—only to have their gondola swallowed up by a storm that arises in the aftermath of the execution of the doge. The lovers are drowned in revenge by what is, of course, the traditionally metaphorical wife of the doge—the sea itself.

It is earlier, while riding with the doge in the channel before St. Mark's Square, that the dogaressa hears “the notes of a soft male voice, gliding along the waves of the sea” and singing the verses we earlier learned were inscribed on the picture frame, “Ah! senza amare, andare sul mare”—“Ah, sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer.” In Hoffmann, these verses crystallize the young woman's emotions: upon hearing them, she feels the anguish of the lovelessness of her marriage to the doge and the temptation of lust for her handsome young admirer. More broadly, for the reviewer of the French translation, these verses capture

“the risk of the unequal marriage of youth and old age, the inevitable misery of the couple, the sadness of the bride, the apprehension of the groom.”⁷⁴

We know that Théophile Gautier was familiar with these verses from Hoffmann’s tale. In his novel *Les Deux Étoiles*, serialized in *La Presse* (from September 20 to October 15, 1848), he sets them down: “La chanson vénitienne, dans son admirable mélancolie, dit qu’il est triste de s’en aller sur la mer sans amour”—“The Venetian chanson, in its admirable melancholy, tells us how sad it is, without love, to set out upon the sea.”⁷⁵ We know that Berlioz devoured Hoffmann when the tales first appeared in French in 1829—the impact of Hoffmann is a major focus of Francesca Brittan’s *Music and Fantasy*—and that he was friendly with Pauline Richard, one of Hoffmann’s translators.⁷⁶ We know, furthermore, that Berlioz was familiar with the play by Byron. He might well have seen the Delacroix. And it would have been difficult for him not to have seen or known the Delavigne, as it saturated the theatrical press in 1829 and 1830. He reviewed the Donizetti in *Le Rénovateur* of March 29, 1835, and said of the subject that it was too well known to require retelling. The sea, finally, had always been the scene of his dreams: he qualified the *Mémoires* themselves as “le livre de loch de [son] pénible voyage”—the log, or log-book, of his arduous journey. We may safely assume, then, that Berlioz took up these verses—not only a tale of a doge and a dogaressa but an encapsulation of stressfully conflicting emotions to which at the time he was acutely sensitive—with a full awareness of their historical, poetic, and musical resonance.

In “Sur les lagunes,” with its musically open-ended conclusion and its ostinato so effortlessly demonstrating “the complex character and function” of only one note, achieving a myriad of expressive possibilities with a miraculous economy of means, Berlioz, in what I have called a privileged moment, reveals “something of the inner process of Romanticism itself.”⁷⁷ He begins with a text that calls itself a *romance*. But instead of doing with it what a “normal” composer might have done, and despite what might have been a fleeting reason for turning his attention to song in the spring and summer of 1840, namely a desire to show a certain public that in fact he was a “normal” composer, he rather applies to that text, as he does to the others of the collection, each in its own way, a compositional technique of both obvious premeditation and apparent spontaneity that leads us now to view putatively “normal” works in the shadows of *Les Nuits d’été*.

Chapter Seven

Berlioz, Delacroix, and *La Mort d'Ophélie*

*Oh! que ne puis-je la trouver, cette Juliette, cette Ophélie
que mon cœur appelle!*

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

On December 7, 1846, in his regular column for *La Presse*, Théophile Gautier concluded a review of *La Damnation de Faust*, Berlioz's new "légende dramatique" premiered the day before at the Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique, with the sentence we quoted in the previous chapter, the sentence now become famous: "Hector Berlioz nous paraît former, avec Victor Hugo et Eugène Delacroix, la trinité de l'art romantique"—"Hector Berlioz appears to us to form, with Victor Hugo and Eugène Delacroix, the trinity of Romantic art." It is not certain that the three artists would have read Gautier's anointment as a consecration. Hugo, celebrated well before the *bataille d'Hernani* of 1830, was already *pair de France*. Delacroix, risen to public notice from successes in the salons of the eighteen-twenties, was, as we have seen, well commissioned by the administration of Louis-Philippe. Berlioz, junior to Hugo by one year and to Delacroix by five, could likewise stake a claim as a paragon of French officialdom, having received several grand commissions for the celebrations of the creation of the *régime orléaniste*, namely the *Grande Messe des morts* of 1837, whose performance on the seventh anniversary of the July Revolution was canceled, and the *Symphonie militaire* of 1840, whose performance on the tenth, as we have seen in chapter 5, actually took place.

But musical success required imagination and intrigue in proportions that Berlioz was not always quick to master. The composer had thus to earn more of his living than he would have liked as a drudge, writing criticism for the daily and weekly press that was brilliant and much remarked upon, but that

made him neither venerated as a musician nor able to live high off the hog. Gautier's sentence was thus hortatory, it seems to me, and it was prescient.

Writers on Berlioz's relations with Hugo tend now to rely on the work of noted Hugo scholar Arnaud Laster, who in an original article speaks of the impact upon the *Symphonie fantastique* and *Le Retour à la vie* of the early works of the celebrated poet, of their mutual admiration for Shakespeare, and of their common associations with the Bertin family, owners of the *Journal des débats*.¹ That the composer and poet parted company on the occasion of Louis Napoléon's *coup d'état*—a “chef d'œuvre” for Berlioz, a metaphorical *casus belli* for Hugo—is not surprising. Hugo, the author of poetry and prose that Berlioz revered and devoured, held court in ways the composer long found excessive: to his friend Ferrand, as early as August 31, 1834, in a phrase difficult to capture in English, Berlioz wrote, “Hugo, je le vois rarement, il trône trop”—“I see Hugo on only rare occasion”; “he sermonizes [or moralizes, or preaches] too much.”² Berlioz said much the same thing eight years later. Writing to his sister Nanci, on February 5, 1842, he mentions that he had run into Hugo that afternoon: “While discussing his latest book, *Le Rhin*, he made me follow him along the banks of the Seine and up the Champs-Élysées for such a long time that I'm now exhausted!”³ For Hugo, however, in a comment apparently made in exile in Guernsey in 1853 and recorded in his twenty-three-year-old daughter Adèle's diary for that year, Berlioz was “a charming fellow”; “I have never found him to be anything but perfectly friendly.”⁴

On Berlioz and Delacroix, we turn to the more recent work of the *dela-crucien* Barthélémy Jobert, author of the one explicit study of the subject of the relations of the two artists.⁵ In this chapter, I shall consider and expand upon Jobert's findings, then further interrogate the relationship by turning briefly to the instructive example of the artists' revealing reactions to *La Mort d'Ophélie*.

Intersection

Professor Jobert begins his study with the sole letter we possess from Berlioz to the painter, an amusing document—entitled by one of its first editors “Berlioz the Fisherman”⁶—which, as it is not elsewhere printed in English, I include here:

My dear Delacroix,

I have been told that you are angry with me for having made you wait for me in vain for three days. You would surely forgive me if my absence were due to a very pressing matter, such as the completion of that famous *symphonie sauvage*, of which Meyerbeer has apparently been making sport even before hearing it. But there would be no truth to that excuse. Let Meyerbeer be reassured! I sacrificed you not upon the altar of some necessary music-making but rather upon the altar of some unnecessary merriment—a fishing trip cooked up by Scribe.

No longer knowing where to go to get away, Scribe had the unusual idea of taking me out along the banks of the Bièvre and there calmly to do some thinking on the pretext of spoiling those shores that are so dear to Hugo.

While he tore his hair out trying to come up with a *dénouement*, I tore my hair out trying to catch a bleak [a fresh-water fish]. My dear painter, I came back empty-handed. The fish were hiding. They had been warned about approaching human beings, apparently, as well as about approaching musicians.

J'ai même des jaloux au royaume des ondes [I even have foes in the world of the waves]!

I now stand before you with no excuse. But what is differed is not destroyed, for I am now more than ever committed never again to be tempted by some new amusement [such as catching fish] that is obviously impossible. All the more because I know that, except in music, all my attempts at novelty are doomed to fail. And when I say “except in music,” I’m exaggerating!

Again, please forgive me. See you soon,
H. Berlioz⁷

The shores dear to Hugo that Berlioz mentions (in a way that demonstrates his awareness of Scribe and Hugo’s dislike of one another)⁸ were indeed those of the Bièvre, a tributary of the Seine that flowed down through today’s thirteenth and fifth arrondissements from beyond the Château des Roches, the property of the Bertin family situated about fifteen kilometers from the center of Paris, in the commune of Bièvre, where the all-powerful Monsieur Bertin held a salon from the time of the Restoration until his death in 1841, and where Victor Hugo, among others, was a frequent visitor. (The river has been covered since 1912.) The line that I give in French is a perfect alexandrine. It is either a quotation from a source I have been unable to find, or, more likely, as I am encouraged to believe by the Scribe scholar Jean-Claude Yon,⁹ it is a parody of the pompous style of the Scribian libretto.

This letter, assigned to the spring or summer of 1840 by the editors of Berlioz’s *Correspondance générale*, could in fact belong to the summer of

1839, when Eugène Scribe and Berlioz do indeed seem to have begun to discuss various operatic subjects, when Berlioz was putting the finishing touches on *Roméo et Juliette* (whose genre Berlioz described as a “symphonie dramatique”), and when Meyerbeer would indeed have attended some of the rehearsals of that great work.¹⁰ It could also belong to the summer of 1838, as it was dated by the man who first published it,¹¹ perhaps with a quip of Heine’s in mind (and not Meyerbeer’s), about Berlioz’s “symphonie sauvage”—the *Fantastique*—having been inspired by his passion for Harriet Smithson. Heine’s account of Berlioz’s concert of December 9, 1832, was first published in the *Allgemeine Theaterrevue* of late December 1837, then in an anonymous French translation in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* of February 4, 1838—with a note from Heine that reveals his limited musical understanding: “This letter [the last of Heine’s ten ‘confidential letters’ on Paris, addressed to his friend August Lewald, the editor of the German periodical] was written in the early spring of 1837. Since that time Berlioz’s musical style has undergone a significant transformation, as we know from his far more gentle and *melodic* second symphony, and from his most recent composition, the *Requiem* (in honor of those killed during the sack of Constantine), whose style is quite different from that of his earlier works, and whose renown has echoed across Europe.”

In 1834, the expression “symphonie sauvage” was applied to the overture to *Les Francs-Juges*.¹² But the word *sauvage* in Berlioz’s letter would perhaps more logically pertain to the *Symphonie militaire*, which occupied Berlioz in the early summer of 1840 and which, as we earlier observed, soon became the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* (which Meyerbeer *did* hear at the Opéra on November 1, 1840.)¹³ The letter also seems to imply some sort of communication between Meyerbeer and Delacroix, but there is no reference to Delacroix in Meyerbeer’s diaries for these years. In Delacroix’s collected correspondence, however, the *single* mention of Berlioz regards his “symphonies en cuivres”: though plural, the reference, sardonic, is clearly to the original version of that *Symphonie militaire*, which is indeed scored uniquely for wind, brass, and percussion.¹⁴

The date of this letter—which we dwell upon because it is unique—cannot therefore be established with certainty, even if Berlioz’s witty and informal banter suggests a relationship with Delacroix rather more personal than the “purely formal” one adumbrated by Jobert.¹⁵ Curiously, Jobert neglects to speculate upon why, in the first place, Delacroix might have been waiting for Berlioz. Is it not logical to suppose, as did Jacques Barzun many years ago, that the painter had in mind a portrait of the musician?¹⁶ Delacroix did

make a painting of Chopin in 1838, and could, conceivably, have imagined a portrait of Berlioz at that time. If so, despite Berlioz's preposterous failure, a few years later, to appreciate the magnificent portrait by Courbet—even if what he saw was only its first version¹⁷—we would be in the presence of one of the great historical might-have-beens of Berlioz's career.

One final question about this letter, which was first published by the writer, translator, and theater critic Georges Duval, on June 21, 1884, in "Mon Carnet," his regular column for the Parisian newspaper *L'Événement*. Is it *authentic*? We do not possess the autograph manuscript. And we have no other record of the two artists having known each other prior to 1838, which is the date Georges Duval assigns to the letter. Did Duval see the autograph? The closing formula, "à bientôt," is one I find Berlioz using on only two other occasions. His overwhelmingly common closing, with acquaintances, is "tout à vous." Still, despite my misgivings, apparently not shared by Julian Tiersot, Jacques Barzun, Pierre Citron, or Jean-Claude Yon, the letter—perhaps because the rustic idea of Berlioz as a straw-hatted fisherman was so strikingly different from the romantic idea of Berlioz as an egg-headed composer—has been reprinted with exceptional frequency. We find the text from *L'Événement* reproduced in *Le Moniteur universel* of the same day, June 21, 1884; in the newspapers *La Justice* and *Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme* on the following day, June 22; in *Le Mémorial de la Loire* on June 24; in *Le Guide musical* (Brussels) in the issue dated August 7–14, 1884; in *Le Ménestrel* on August 10, 1884 (at which time there were several members of the editorial staff who had known Berlioz, among them Benoît Jouvin and Louis Bourgault-Ducoudray); in *Paris* on August 12, 1884; in *Le Rappel* on May 14, 1890; in *Le Monde artiste* on January 4, 1903; in *Le Figaro* on January 5, 1903; in Julian Tiersot's anthology of Berlioz's letters, *Les Années romantiques* (1904), where it is dated "summer 1841";¹⁸ in *Le Matin* on August 22, 1905; and yet again, because Arthur Pougin found it remarkable, in *Le Ménestrel*, on June 21, 1913. After printing the letter, in *L'Événement*, Georges Duval added a postscript: "Delacroix was surely not surprised by Berlioz's bad luck as a fisherman, because he himself had suffered a quite similar fate. I was told that, one day, fishing with Baron Gros [Antoine-Jean Gros, whose heroic canvases Delacroix admired], and catching nothing, Delacroix cried out, after three hours spent in vain: 'Je crois que mon genre les dégoûte' [I think that my style disgusts them]." The painter's *bon mot* turns on the double meaning of *genre* as "my style of fishing" and "my style of painting." Ha ha.

Delacroix's well-known admiration of Mozart was shared by Berlioz. But while the painter's love was unconditional, the composer's was reserved.¹⁹ Delacroix's now-celebrated *Journal* also reveals his enthusiasm for Spontini's *La Vestale*, one of the operas Berlioz treasured the most.²⁰ If such mutual approbation suggests artistic kinship, the text of a newly discovered letter, relating as it does to the painter's elevation to the Institut de France, suggests elective affinity. Like Berlioz, who failed five times, in 1839, 1842, 1851, 1853, and 1854, to penetrate the doors of the Académie des Beaux-Arts before finally entering that exclusive sanctuary, to his tremendous relief and satisfaction, on June 21, 1856, Delacroix was *seven* times denied entrance before gaining access. Berlioz knew the number and remarked upon it on several occasions.²¹ After a series of fruitless attempts that had begun in 1837, the painter submitted an eighth letter of candidacy to the then president of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, the sculptor Henri Lemaire, on December 26, 1856.²² Two weeks later, on January 10, 1857, he found himself elected to the much-caricatured yet much-coveted national honor society.²³ It is certain that one of those who voted in his favor was Berlioz, who already in December 1856 mentioned his hope for Delacroix's election to his confidante at the time, the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein.²⁴ A few days before the balloting, on January 6, 1857, Delacroix, apparently ill, yet nonetheless expected to make the rounds of visits to current members required of all aspirants to the academy, sent this note to the composer:

Cher Monsieur,

I have not come to see you as I would have been very happy to do, nor can I do so this week. They tell me that, if I go out, I might suffer a relapse. The visit with you would not have been not merely ceremonial but rather an occasion to shake your hand and to speak with you of my modest aspirations. To speak, alas, is precisely what I am not authorized to do. Please accept a thousand regrets and the expression of my sincere admiration and affection.

E. de Lacroix.²⁵

The letter, with its "Cher Monsieur," is considerably cooler than Berlioz's (another reason for my doubts about it), but its mention of "affection" does go beyond the forms of politeness common in such communications at the time.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere,²⁶ Berlioz was remarkably assiduous in attending meetings of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. When he was in town, he enjoyed walking down to the river, crossing the Pont des Arts, reading in the great library of the Vielle Dame du quai de Conti (as the building

was known), then signing the *feuille de présence* before the session began. These sheets served the paymaster who prepared the supplementary stipends for members who actually attended. Berlioz's assiduousness was such that when Jacques-Fromental Halévy died, on March 17, 1862, and the post of Secrétaire Perpétuel of the Académie des Beaux-Arts became vacant, colleagues at the Institut—apparently impressed by his oratory and his commitment to the organization, ostensibly persuaded of his ability to conduct the meetings, present the prizes, compose the eulogies, draft the reports—insisted that Berlioz propose his candidacy, which he did. On April 12, 1862, after several rounds of voting, the majority nonetheless settled upon the archeologist Charles-Ernest Beulé, an outsider, from the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Berlioz, whom Sainte-Beuve applauded at the time as a “high-minded artist and thinker,” albeit “somewhat dark and solitary,”²⁷ was busy with *Béatrice et Bénédict*, and expressed relief.

Delacroix, who knew Halévy and found him beleaguered by the work of Secrétaire Perpétuel, as he noted in his *Journal* on February 5, 1855, presumably wished to serve the Academy upon his election and thus to contribute to one of its great projects, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts*; the first volume—long after the birth of the project in 1806 and the new impetus given to it by Halévy after his own election in 1836—finally appeared in 1858. (Five more volumes, through the letter G, were published between 1868 and 1909.) It is surely no coincidence, however, that Delacroix began to think rigorously about his own *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts* in the immediate aftermath of his arrival at the Palais de l'Institut. The draft of his preface, dated March 7, 1857, is a theme with variations on the difference between a dictionary in the normal sense of the word—which the painter saw as a consensual gathering of intelligent interpretations of the meanings of words, a banal compendium, that is, of the sort upon which the Academy was industriously at work—and a dictionary of an entirely new kind, in which a single artist might immodestly express his own personal and pointed opinions.²⁸

In 1857, because of illness, Delacroix was unable regularly to attend the Saturday afternoon sessions of the fraternity of which he was the newest member. But he did appear at the meeting of March 21, and at nine further meetings before the end of the year.²⁹ Poor health, more pressing matters on Saturday afternoons, and perhaps persistent feelings of isolation from his peers, as suggested by the editor of his correspondence,³⁰ kept Delacroix's attendance over the years from being perfect. But as the signed attendance sheets demonstrate—these are catalogued in table 7.1 below—his attendance was not as sparse as some of the specialists have believed.

Table 7.1. Meetings of the Académie des Beaux-Arts attended by Eugène Delacroix

1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	1863
Mar 21 D	Jan 6 D*	Jan 15 D*	Jun 30 D*	Jan 5 D*	Jan 4 D	Jan 3 D*
Mar 28 D	Jan 23 D*	Feb 12 D	Jul 14 D*	Jan 12 D*	Jan 25 D*	Jan 10 D*
Apr 18 D*	Jan 30 D*	Feb 19 D	Aug 25 D	Jan 19 D*	Feb 1 D*	Jan 17 D*
Jul 11 D*	Feb 6 D*	Mar 5 D*	Sep 1 D*	Jan 26 D*	Feb 8 D*	Jan 24 D*
Oct 31 D	Feb 13 D	Mar 12 D*	Sep 8 D	Feb 2 D*	Feb 15 D*	Jan 31 D*
Nov 7 D*	Feb 20 D*	Apr 30 D	Sep 15 D*	Feb 9 D*	Mar 8 D*	Feb 7 D*
Nov 14 D*	Feb 27 D	May 7 D	Sep 20 D*	Feb 16 D*	Apr 5 D*	Feb 14 D*
Dec 5 D*	Mar 20 D	May 14 D	Sep 22 D*	Feb 23 D	Apr 12 D*	Feb 21 D*
Dec 12 D	Apr 10 D	May 21 D	Sep 29 D	Mar 2 D*	Apr 26 D*	Mar 7 D
Dec 26 D	Apr 17 D*	May 28 D*	Oct 3 D*	Mar 9 D*	May 3 D*	May 16 D*
-	May 1 D	May 30 D	Oct 5 D	Mar 16 D	May 10 D*	-
-	May 8 D*	Jun 4 D	Oct 13 D*	Mar 23 D*	May 17 D*	-
-	May 22 D	Jun 11 D*	Oct 20 D*	Apr 6 D*	May 31 D*	-
-	Sep 25 D*	Jun 18 D*	Oct 27 D*	Apr 13 D	Jun 14 D	-
-	Oct 9 D	Jun 25 D*	Nov 3 D*	Apr 20 D	Jul 26 D	-
-	Oct 16 D*	Jul 2 D*	Nov 10 D*	May 4 D*	Aug 2 D	-
-	Dec 18 D*	Jul 9 D*	Nov 17 D*	May 25 D*	Aug 9 D	-

—(continued)

Table 7.1—*concluded*

-	Dec 29 D	Jul 16 D*	Nov 24 D*	Jun 1 D	Aug 30 D*	-
-	-	Jul 23 D*	Dec 1 D*	Jun 15 D*	Sep 27 D*	-
-	-	Aug 6 D	Dec 8 D*	Jun 22 D*	Nov 8 D*	-
-	-	Sep 17 D*	Dec 15 D*	Jul 20 D*	Nov 15 D*	-
-	-	Sep 24 D*	Dec 22 D*	Aug 31 D	Nov 22 D*	-
-	-	Sep 28 D*	Dec 29 D*	Sep 14 D*	Dec 20 D*	-
-	-	Oct 8 D	-	Oct 19 D*	Dec 27 D*	-
-	-	Oct 15 D*	-	Nov 23 D*	-	-
-	-	Nov 25 D	-	Nov 30 D*	-	-
-	-	Dec 3 D*	-	Dec 14 D*	-	-
-	-	Dec 10 D*	-	Dec 21 D*	-	-
-	-	Dec 17 D	-	Dec 28 D*	-	-
-	-	Dec 24 D	-	-	-	-

Note: *The asterisks indicate the presence on those days of Hector Berlioz*

In his *Journal*, Delacroix first refers to Berlioz in an entry dated April 8, 1849—on which day, in a passage in which he seems to be explaining to himself what Chopin had told him about counterpoint, the painter sets down his frankly absurd yet oft-quoted criticism, “Berlioz plaque des accords, et remplit comme il peut les intervalles,” which, if it is to make sense, must be translated loosely as: “Berlioz strikes a series of chords, and fills the intervals between them as best he can.”³¹ On April 23, 1849, Berlioz, like Hugo, appears to the painter as a destructive or spurious “réformateur”; on February 19, 1850, Berlioz, like Beethoven, is said to be disjointed; on

February 15, 1852, Berlioz, like Mendelssohn, is said to lack musical ideas; on January 17, 1856, Berlioz is said to make a fool of himself by excoriating excessive vocal *fioriture*; and again on April 13, 1860, by having opposed the sounds of trombones [in the *Hostias* of the *Requiem*, though the work is not mentioned] to the sound of flutes.³² On January 22, 1858, when Berlioz made a public reading of the libretto of *Les Troyens*, at the home of his colleague at the Institut, the architect Jacques-Ignace Hittorf, Delacroix, a good friend of the host's, was in attendance. In the *Journal*, the painter merely takes note of the occasion; in a letter to his son, Berlioz reports that the reading was a grand and encouraging success.³³ Despite his censorious remarks, Delacroix must have interested himself in the opera because he found it preposterous that the leading role should be taken by Madame Carvalho, the wife of the impresario who had opened his new Théâtre-Lyrique to a performance of Berlioz's as yet unperformed opera. To his sister, in a letter dated September 29, 1859, Berlioz quoted the painter's *bon mot*: "Didon chantée par une mésange!"—"Dido sung by a chickadee!"³⁴ Indeed, that Delacroix often made sport with words is something Berlioz surely appreciated. At the time of the English Shakespeare company's arrival in 1827, which so astonished both of them, Delacroix, after seeing *Hamlet* and *Othello*, wrote with irony to Hugo: "Well! It's an invasion! [...] The Academy really ought to declare any such imported product incompatible with public morality. Good taste, good-bye!"³⁵

The notes in Delacroix's *Journal* reveal the workings of a mind long concerned with questions of artistic growth, appreciation, and value—a mind whose "conservatism," if that is the appropriate word, would be demonstrated by his condemnation as illusory both Berlioz's "fiery and impetuous genius" and the "progress," after the mid-century revolutions, that brought the French nation to "edge of the abyss."³⁶ The difficulty of such an easy association of art and politics is that Berlioz, too, radical though Delacroix may have perceived him to be, was as appalled as was the painter, if not more so, by the uprisings and the aftermaths of February and June 1848, as I have had too frequent occasion to mention in this book. Looking across the channel from London, on March 21, 1848, Berlioz wrote in the preface to his *Mémoires* that "the art of music, long since dragging itself about in the throes of dying," was now "stone dead."³⁷ It is for this reason that Berlioz greeted Louis-Napoléon's *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851, as a "coup de maître," and as a "chef d'œuvre complet."³⁸ He soon recognized that the Emperor "hated music as much as ten Turks," as he put it, and suffered from "harmonophobia";³⁹ but he nonetheless remained a loyal

subject and went so far as to hang a lithographic portrait of the Emperor on his living room wall.

Delacroix's notes also tell us, I would suggest, that an unconstrained giant in the world of art can, in the world of music, be a man of unexceptional stature. Writing on April 23, 1863, Delacroix mentions a conversation about music that he has had with the poet and critic Antony Deschamps, who happens to have been one of Berlioz's close friends in the eighteen-thirties, a great admirer of the composer's journalism, and the author of the words sung by the optional chorus in the *Apothéose* that forms the final movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*. Deschamps is the only man with whom Delacroix enjoys discussing music because, writes the artist, "he loves Cimarosa as much as I do." (Berlioz once quipped that he would like to see "Cimarosa's lone and eternal *Secret Marriage* go to hell," because he found the opera "almost as boring as the *Marriage of Figaro*, without being nearly so musical"!)⁴⁰ "I told [Deschamps]," Delacroix goes on, "that the main problem with music is the absence of *the unexpected* once one has come to know a piece."⁴¹ Now, the "unexpected" is precisely the quality of his own music that Berlioz prized the most: "The overmastering qualities of my music," he wrote in the post-scriptum of his *Mémoires*, "are passionate expression, interior ardor, rhythmic momentum, and the unexpected"⁴²—"l'imprévu"—the very word, with all of its implications for Romantic aesthetics, that Delacroix had used. Delacroix's point concerns *rehearing* music, of course, and it is profound. But had he been as sincerely devoted to the unforeseen and the unpredictable in music as he was to those qualities in painting, he would presumably have been somewhat more understanding of Berlioz's. Michèle Hannoosh has pointed out that, privately, Delacroix could be drawn to those of whose work he was sometimes publicly critical, citing in particular the cases of Byron and Baudelaire.⁴³ And there is indeed some reason to believe that this could be the case for Berlioz as well. Nonetheless, a professional musician would not be wrong to suggest that, for Delacroix, music—despite his close friendship with Chopin, his relations with other musicians of distinction, his sincere curiosity, and his prodigious intelligence—was no more and no less than a "violon d'Ingres."

Painting, for Berlioz, was no such "serious pastime" (as was violin playing for Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres). His second wife, Marie Recio, dabbled in the art, but he, beyond music, was far more a reader than a viewer—with one notable exception. In the quintet that marks the beginning of the end of act 4 of *Les Troyens*—*Quintette, Septuor, Duo*, fifteen minutes of the most sublime and inspired music that Berlioz ever composed—we find the

following stage direction: “With Dido’s left arm draped over his shoulder such that her hand hangs before the child’s breast, Ascanius, smiling, draws from the queen’s finger Sichæus’s ring [the ring of her husband, Sichæus, murdered for his wealth by her brother, Pygmalion], which Dido distractedly takes back from him and then, rising, leaves upon the couch.”⁴⁴ In the libretto, Anna, Dido’s sister, explicitly mentions this pantomime to Narbal, Dido’s Prime Minister, and to Iopas, her bard. The scene, of a wit more Shakespearean than Virgilian, derives explicitly from the painting completed in 1815 by the neoclassical painter Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *Énée racontant à Didon les malheurs de la ville de Troie*. An expert might have guessed as much, but no guessing is needed, for Berlioz—who surely knew that Guérin was Delacroix’s teacher, and who surly knew the painting from the version hanging in the Louvre (another version from 1819 now hangs in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux)—actually reveals his source, albeit in a private letter, when writing to his sister, on March 12, 1856.⁴⁵

On one other occasion, in a letter to Liszt of January 14, 1853, Berlioz expressed unusual enthusiasm for a painting by another of Guérin’s pupils, Delacroix’s friend and contemporary Ary Scheffer. Of Scheffer’s now famous tableau, *Paolo et Francesca*, which first appeared in 1835, Berlioz exclaimed simply: “Dieu que c’est beau!”⁴⁶ (He had been looking at the original tableau, returned to Scheffer for cleaning and repair by its then owner, Prince Anatole Demidoff.)⁴⁷ One may be permitted to wonder if an admirer of Scheffer’s highly polished surface, which features one of the most sensuous Francescas that we have, could be equally attracted to the more pungent style of Delacroix, whose nudes, with rare exception, exhibit what Victor Hugo uncharitably called “une laideur exquise”—“an exquisite ugliness.”⁴⁸ Berlioz himself, in his first Rome Prize Cantata, *La Mort d’Orphée*, painted what he called a “tableau musical,” an unexpected instrumental coda that depicts the calm after the storm of the Bacchantes’ murder of their tormentor. A note in the score tells us that “one can no longer hear the sound of their steps, the wind moans sadly and causes the strings of Orpheus’s largely destroyed lyre to resonate. In the distance, a Thracian mountain shepherd, recalling Orpheus’s earlier song, attempts to reproduce it on his flute. Little by little the wind dies down, the music it carried disappears, the lyre emits nothing more than a few incoherent vibrations.”⁴⁹ This could be a description of an Orpheus painting that Berlioz might have seen—by Titian, or Poussin, or even Delacroix himself—but nothing we have found quite fits.

Over the years, Berlioz and Delacroix composed out many of the same themes. As I mentioned in chapter 1, their concern with the wars of Greek

independence led to such works as Delacroix's *Massacre de Scio* (1824) and Berlioz's cantata on *La Révolution grecque* (1826). Their infatuation with Goethe's *Faust* led to the seventeen lithographs that Delacroix published with the second edition of Albert Stapfer's translation in 1828 and the *Huit Scènes de Faust* that Berlioz published in the following year, inspired as he was by the 1828 translation by Gérard de Nerval. The enthusiasm for Walter Scott that they shared with others of the generation of 1820 led to Delacroix's *Self-Portrait as Ravenswood* (1821) and *Rebecca and the Wounded Ivanhoe* (1823), among other tableaux, and to Berlioz's first independent concert overture, *Waverley* (begun in 1826), as well as to his later *Intrata di Rob-Roy MacGregor* (1831). Their common love of Byron led to Delacroix's great *Mort de Sardanapale* of 1827 and, albeit indirectly, to Berlioz's *Sardanapale*, the cantata for the 1830 competition that secured for him the Prix de Rome. In July 1830, Berlioz was sufficiently stirred by the bravery of those who overthrew Charles X to make a setting for double chorus and orchestra of Rouget de Lisle's *Hymne des Marseillais*. That same courage led to Delacroix's contemporary and eternal monument to freedom, *La Liberté guidant le peuple*.

Such mutual interests strike us today as the stuff of a potentially special friendship. At the time, however, the two artists were hardly unique in responding to contemporary literature and current events. Now, the legends of their greatness, which make the "real" Berlioz and Delacroix difficult to see, have perhaps intensified their apparent correspondence. We do, of course, have the autobiographical documents of crucial interest—Delacroix's *Journal*; Berlioz's *Mémoires*—but these are not factual narratives, nor are they writings of the same kind. Berlioz's book—a mosaic of anecdotes and critiques, of tiny stories and travel pieces, of selected episodes in the life of the artist in roughly chronological order—was, at the beginning, as we shall detail in chapter 13, intended only for posthumous publication. Desire to let the cat out of the bag, and fear that his heirs might refashion the final product (which is a portrait of the artist as he wished to be remembered) led Berlioz to have excerpts printed in the weekly press, and to oversee the printing of twelve hundred copies, in 1865, of which he then gave two dozen to family and friends before depositing the rest in his office at the Conservatoire for postmortem recovery. The story of Delacroix's diary is considerably more complex: the *Journal* advances an aesthetic doctrine, while Berlioz eschewed the mere word "aesthetics"; the *Journal* proceeds in a free and sometimes circuitous order, while the *Mémoires* move sequentially; and although neither book was intended for publication during the author's lifetime, Delacroix's

did not appear until some thirty years after his death, while Berlioz's was formally published one year after the funeral.⁵⁰

As men of letters and broad general culture, Delacroix and Berlioz had in common the profession of writing (which both said they did with difficulty) and the production of prose of liveliness and exactitude. Berlioz, of course, set down not only *Mémoires* but nearly a thousand newspaper articles (the modern edition fills ten substantial volumes), three collections of articles and stories old and new, and a treatise on orchestration that is the first important work of its kind. Both artists, Jobert reminds us, were prolific correspondents.⁵¹ In fact Delacroix's published correspondence gives us "only" several hundred letters, while Berlioz's, with new letters continuing to appear, gives us well over three thousand. As men of character, Delacroix was "always distant and reserved," while Berlioz, for Jobert, was "too enthusiastic or too easily carried away."⁵² Berlioz was of course a man of many moods, as this touching recollection from the poet Auguste Barbier, who stood with Berlioz at the burial of a mutual friend, would suggest:

During the entire service and at the graveside, the composer remained solemn, and silent. At the gates of the cemetery, he said to me: "I'm going home, come along with me, we'll read a few pages of Shakespeare." "With pleasure." We went upstairs and, once settled in, he read the scene from *Hamlet* at Ophelia's tomb. He became extremely wound up and streams of tears poured from his eyes. Aesthetic emotion provoked the catharsis that real loss had been unable to do.⁵³

From this mention of Hamlet and Ophelia, persons as real to Berlioz as members of his own family, let us turn to a particular work as one small example of the intersection of the romantic musician and the romantic painter whom Gautier saw as two-thirds of the *trinité romantique*.

Coincidence

A letter that the young Delacroix wrote in English, in 1820, to his friend Charles Soulier, demonstrates that at twenty-two he had a command of the language that was perhaps not literary but that was perfectly coherent.⁵⁴ Of Delacroix's ability to read and hear the plays in English, particularly after his stay in England from May to August 1825, there can be no doubt. By contrast, when Berlioz saw and heard *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* at the Odéon, in 1827, in the productions starring Charles Kemble and Harriet

Smithson, his English was that of a beginner. Six years later, now engaged to marry the actress, Berlioz wrote to his sister: "I can't speak English and her French is very poor; she cannot articulate half her thoughts, and she often doesn't understand me at all."⁵⁵ By the time of his first visit to England, however, in the fall of 1847, his understanding had improved; he was able to say what he needed to say.⁵⁶

All of Berlioz's writings—the private letters, the newspaper criticism, the collections of articles, and the *Mémoires*—are colored by quotations from Shakespeare in both English and French, as I have elsewhere demonstrated in detail.⁵⁷ No play more affected him than *Hamlet*, as we shall see again in chapter 11. In May 1834, he was optimistic about a commission for an opera on the subject, but this failed to materialize. Beyond the Hamlet-like moments in various works, the only explicit music he set down for the play is the surprising *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet*, completed in 1844 for performance during a production of the verse translation by his old friend Léon de Wailly, one of the librettists of *Benvenuto Cellini*, and the song, *La Mort d'Ophélie*, which—because Delacroix, too, was at least four times concerned with the subject—we shall consider here.

Berlioz's autograph score, for voice and piano, is a setting of a "ballade imitée de Shakespeare" by his friend the dramatist Ernest Legouvé. Dated May 7, 1842, the song did not appear in print until 1848, both as an item in the *Album de chant* that came out on January 1, 1848, as a supplement to the weekly *Revue et Gazette musicale* now published in Paris by Louis Brandus, and as a separate issue from the same house. These printings follow the manuscript in being dedicated to Marie d'Agoult, Liszt's longtime companion and the mother of the virtuoso pianist's three children. On July 4, 1848, Berlioz, at the time in London, completed an orchestral version of the song, with the vocal part now set for a small chorus of sopranos and contraltos. This version—identical to the original in form and content—was published four years later, in 1852, as the second of the three items that comprise the collection known as *Tristia*. (A piano reduction of the orchestral setting appeared at the same time.) For publishers, piano scores were more practical and more profitable than orchestral scores; for critics, Berlioz's piano writing seemed to cry out for instrumentation. In this case we know that an orchestral setting was his goal from the beginning: on May 8, 1842, one day after dating the autograph, Berlioz said to Legouvé that "if you like this music, I shall rewrite the piano part for a charming little orchestra and shall be able to perform the whole thing at one of my forthcoming concerts."⁵⁸

This small space is not the place to consider the constellation of beauty and madness and gender that post-Shakespearean representations of Ophelia bring to the fore, especially among feminist theoreticians, of whom the most cited is Elaine Showalter.⁵⁹ But it is relevant to mention that Ernest Legouvé, author of plays in which women's roles are conspicuously strong, and drawn as we see here to Ophelia, was one of the early and important male feminists in France in the nineteenth century: the course that he was invited to give at the Collège de France, in 1849, for example, appeared as a book later that year under the title of *Histoire morale des femmes*, in which he shows himself to be an advocate of equal rights for women.⁶⁰

Delacroix's *Journal* is rich with references to Shakespeare, but the collected correspondence contains very few. The artist nonetheless painted and illustrated themes and characters from five of the plays, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and, of course, *Hamlet*, of which we need here itemize only four representations of *La Mort d'Ophélie*. The first, now in the Neue Pinakothek, Munich, was completed in 1838 (see figure 7.1, below). With its broad strokes, vaporous lines, and darkly suggestive colors, it would appear to be a preparatory version of the painting now in the Oskar Reinhart Collection (see figure 7.3). The second (see figure 7.2) came to fruition in Delacroix's series of thirteen *Hamlet* images lithographed by Édouard-Auguste Villain and published by Michel-Ange Gihaut in 1843–1844 (to which three more lithographs, purchased posthumously, were added in 1864).⁶¹ The quotation at the bottom of the meticulously drawn panorama—"ses vêtements appesantis et trempés d'eau ont entraîné la pauvre malheureuse" (not shown here)—derives from Gertrude's description of the drowning in act 4, scene 7 ("But it could not be / Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, / pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay / To muddy death") in the translation by Letourneur as revised by François Guizot and Amédée Pichot.⁶² Beyond the precision of the image, Ophelia's head, in the lithograph, is parallel to her torso, and not falling toward the water, as though the neck muscles (our impression from figures 7.1 and 7.3) could no longer support the weight.

The third representation (from the Oskar Reinhart Collection; figure 7.3) is a polished version of the first (in Munich): the pose is the same, but the brushstrokes are now veiled, the left foot is visible, the flowers are fresh, the leaves are vivid, the erotic aspect is intensified. The flesh, despite the nearness of death, is alive. Once thought to have been painted in 1844, the Winterthur painting has recently been reassigned to 1853⁶³—the same year in which Delacroix seems to have completed his best-known rendering of

the drowning Ophelia, now preserved at the Louvre (see figure 7.4), with Ophelia clinging to the branch not with the left hand, but with the right. In all four pictures, the subject seems to levitate above the surface—this, Delacroix's take on Gertrude's explanatory line: "Her clothes spread wide, / And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up."



Figure 7.1 Eugène Delacroix, *Der Tod de Ophelia* [*La Mort d'Ophélie*] (1838), oil on canvas; 37.9 x 45.9 cm. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen - Neue Pinakothek, Munich. CC BY-SA 4.0



Figure 7.2. Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Ophelia* [*La Mort d'Ophélie*] (1843); lithograph, from the series "Hamlet," 18.1 x 25.5 cm. René-Gabriel Ojeda. Musée national Eugène Delacroix, Paris, France. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 7.3. Eugène Delacroix, *La Mort d'Ophélie* (1853?), oil on canvas, 55.0 x 64.0 cm. Collection Oskar Reinhart, "Am Römerholz," Winterthur.



Figure 7.4. Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Ophelia* [*La Mort d'Ophélie*] (1853?), oil on canvas, 23.0 x 30.4 cm. Inv. RF1393. Photo: Gérard Blot. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

Harriet Smithson, Berlioz's wife of not quite twenty-one years, died at home, in Montmartre, on March 3, 1854. The composer, who despite living elsewhere for more than a decade had always provided for her, was heart-broken: "We could neither live together nor leave one another," he told his sister; "she enabled me to understand Shakespeare and great dramatic art."⁶⁴ In a nostalgic recollection of his musician friend's wife, Jules Janin set down these gentle words, which Berlioz later quoted in the *Mémoires*:

She was called Juliet; she was called Ophelia. *She inspired Eugène Delacroix himself*, when he drew his touching picture of Ophelia. She is falling; one hand, slipping, still clings to the branch; the other clasps to her lovely bosom her last tender garland; the hem of her dress is already in the grip of the rising current; the landscape is sad and lugubrious; in the distance we see the rapidly approaching waters that will engulf her; "her garments, heavy with their drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death."⁶⁵

The final words of the paragraph are those drawn from the translation most commonly read at the time, as we have seen, and those inscribed on the

lithograph of 1843 (figure 7.2)—the “touching picture,” we may therefore be sure, that Janin had in mind. His description is accurate, and perhaps purposefully omits a detail that is rendered in the official description of the *painting* of 1853: “Floating on the waters of a brook, Ophelia attempts to suspend from the branch of the weeping willow the garland of flowers she clutches to her breast.”⁶⁶ This description, alluding to the tradition of the forsaken maiden hanging a wreath on a branch of that mournful tree, derives less from Delacroix’s painting than it does from earlier lines in Gertrude’s speech in act 4, scene 7: “There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds / Clamb’ring to hang, an envious sliver broke, / When down her weedy trophies and herself / Fell in the weeping brook.”

What is of particular interest here is Janin’s constellation of Berlioz, Smithson, Ophelia, and Delacroix. Like Berlioz, Delacroix had seen Harriet Smithson as Ophelia in the productions of *Hamlet* given by the English theater in 1827 and 1828, but neither did he fall head-over-heels in love with the actress, nor did he spend five years of his life in quest of her hand. When he made his first Ophelia painting (figure 7.1), apparently at Frédéric Villot’s villa at Champrosay, in 1838,⁶⁷ he was encumbered by no breakdown of psychical distance and by no anguished craving for the living incarnation of Shakespeare’s deceived princess. He was drawn to the subject, according to the editor of his *Selected Letters*, by recollections of Smithson’s acting, including, perhaps, the freely swaying movements of her arms.⁶⁸ The art historians, who have debated the dates of Delacroix’s four renderings, seem rarely to have asked the naïve question that has long occurred to me: Did Smithson’s *face and figure* serve as Delacroix’s distant models? Is that the meaning of Janin’s remark? We know that Delacroix worked from life, we would not be rash in assuming that, for certain aspects of the 1838 tableau, he would have employed a model, even had he had in mind earlier artists’ renderings of the subject, and even if he felt, later on, that artists ought equally to rely upon their imaginations.⁶⁹ Like a modern specialist, who has closely examined Delacroix’s four representations,⁷⁰ I cannot claim to see in the faces of Delacroix’s portraits a clear reflection of the woman who became Berlioz’s wife. But in the shapes of the head, the mouth, the nose, and even the body, there does seem to me to be a resemblance.

When Berlioz turned to the subject of the death of Ophelia, in May 1842, not quite nine years into his marriage with Harriet, he had to feel nostalgia for her glory days of an earlier decade. For Berlioz’s greatest modern biographer, the song, for soprano or tenor and piano, unmistakably “marks the symbolic end” of the composer’s marital bond.⁷¹ It is true that by 1840,

long unable to practice her art, Smithson had entered into what became a long physical and mental decline. As we discussed in chapter 6, Berlioz took up with Marie Recio, a soprano eleven years his junior (Smithson was three years older than he), and at the end of 1842 he and Marie left on a European tour that did indeed mark the material end of the composer's star-crossed union with the Anglo-Irish actress.

Such autobiographical interpretation, always tempting to the music historian, whose dreary alternative is speechifying about harmony and counterpoint, is particularly compelling in the case of Berlioz, of whose life we know many intimate details. How could this gently melancholic work—punctuated after the first and last stanzas with *vocalises* on the syllable “ah” that seem to render Ophelia herself *present*, as Heather Hadlock has nicely put it, in what is otherwise a recitation, not by a queen, but by an anonymous narrator—not be autobiographical?⁷²

Legouvé's poem—*imité de Shakespeare*, it is worth repeating, and not a translation, as some of the program writers wrongly have it—is in four stanzas, each consisting of seven octosyllabic lines with a strictly maintained rhyme scheme of *ababccb*. Knowing that Berlioz's setting extends to one hundred sixty bars, you might think that the regularity of the poetic model would have caused him to compose four like stanzas in periods of forty bars each. Not so. The four segments are irregular (of forty-eight, thirty-seven, twenty-eight, and forty-seven bars)—and, while each stanza begins in the tonic key of B-flat major, each ends upon the different and more or less distant harmonic plateaus of, respectively, F minor, D minor, G minor, and the dominant of C minor. It is the *vocalise*, or the implied *vocalise* (because, after the second and third stanzas, the piano alone renders the chromatically inflected line of the first), which each time returns us to B-flat major.

This skeletal analysis tells us something, not about Berlioz's emotional autobiography, but about his musical persona: that he was allergic to regularity and predictability and addicted to originality in the service of the central idea he wished to express. Ophelia's tragedy—her suffering, our compassion—is here embodied in the carefully regulated tonal migration, and in the tiny but affecting *appoggiatura* for the first “ah,” from the note F, which does not belong to the local harmony and thus resolves quickly down to the note E, which does, and in all of its subsequent iterations in the song.

By Delacroix, Ophelia's tragedy is conveyed by her acquiescent facial expression, especially poignant in the lithograph of 1843—which is different from the other “Hamlet” lithographs, as one specialist has noted,⁷³ for having abandoned the visual convention of an imagined stage, although it

is to be remembered that the scene pictured never in fact takes place on the real stage. Ophelia's tragedy is furthermore conveyed by the exaggerated tilt of her head in the gloomy grisaille of the first painting of 1838, as well as in its more subtly tinted and polished version of 1853 (if the Hannoosh dating of the Winterthur painting is to be accepted), where the forest shadows and Ophelia's fair skin are in sharp contrast, and where her now more openly bared breasts heighten the painting's emanation of "erotic trance" that Elaine Showalter attributes to the lithograph.⁷⁴ The small canvas in the Louvre seems less sexual and more objectified: the colors have been brightened, the left breast is now concealed by the garland, and the head (as in the lithograph) is now rendered parallel to the surface of the water. In the Munich and Winterthur images, Ophelia's head hangs sadly and frailly downwards, perfuming the atmosphere with the imminence of death. That in the Louvre painting Ophelia's position is reversed such that she now drifts leftward, grasping the branch in her right hand rather than in her left, is perhaps due, although I cannot prove it, to the potential function of these small paintings as preparation for, or further developments from, lithography, where the image on the stone is reversed in the print.

Correspondences

To the question of whether there is anything *musical* about Delacroix's Ophelia images—in the play she does sing mad songs and die chanting "snatches of old lauds"?—or if there is anything *painterly* about Berlioz's musical settings, I would reply as follows: Berlioz was as aware of the existence of visual representations of *Hamlet* as was Delacroix of musical settings deriving from the play. But in creating their versions of *La Mort d'Ophélie*, Berlioz made music, Delacroix made images, and both artists employed the same professional techniques of melody and harmony and line and color that they employed elsewhere and every day. That is to say that the words *melody* and *harmony*, like the words *line* and *color*, are metaphors in one medium and realities in the other. Barthélémy Jobert's formulation—that the true coincidence of the artists may be found "beyond strict historical reality," in some sort of "posthumous encounter" of the two spirits, who were perhaps closer in nature than either wished or knew how to admit⁷⁵—sails well upon the sea of theory that permeates the question of the interrelationship of the arts, but doesn't float my pedestrian boat. Baudelaire, the man who opened

the locks, put it this way: "In music, as in painting [...], there is always a void that is filled by the percipient's imagination."⁷⁶

In fact, Baudelaire, aware of Delacroix's particular affection for Shakespeare, gives us what is perhaps the best view of these images, noting (as did Hugo) that the painter generally refrains from painting beautiful women. "Almost all of them are sickly, and glow with a certain interior beauty. It is not only suffering that Delacroix knows how to express, but especially—and this is the most exquisitely mysterious aspect of his painting—moral suffering. Such serious and elevated melancholy vibrates with overwhelming gloom, especially from the colors, broad, simple, rich in harmonic mass like that of all the great colorists, but equally plaintive and profound, like a melody by Weber."⁷⁷ If only he had said "a melody by Berlioz," our mission would be accomplished.

In a later age, when Claude Debussy imagined the works that became the *Nocturnes* (*Fêtes*, *Nuages*, and *Sirènes*), he spoke of the "impressions" and of the "lumières spéciales" that that word implies. "Whistler's *nocturnes* acted by suggestion upon Debussy," the American-born painter's first biographer wrote, "in such a way as to have led him to produce his own."⁷⁸ But even in this more compelling case of inner interaction between a music-loving painter who, at some of Mallarmé's Tuesday evening *soirées*, would have enjoyed the company of the visually inspired composer of the *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune*, the best case that can be made is that, in the works by both, a shadowy and indistinct atmosphere envelopes the lines that provide the underlying continuity.⁷⁹ This is hardly synesthesia.

Like Debussy, who in the end smiled with irony at the notion that he was "the Whistler of music,"⁸⁰ Berlioz, too, was surely an agnostic in Gautier's Trinitarian church of romanticism, and an atheist in the temple of the alliance of the arts. "I no longer believe in those various theories that would have us imprison the art of sound," he wrote in response to a speculative dissertation submitted for review to the Académie des Beaux-Arts and Académie des Sciences. "La musique est libre; elle fait ce qu'elle veut, et sans permission" — "Music is free; it does what it wants—and without permission!"⁸¹

Chapter Eight

Berlioz's "Mission" to Germany

A Revealing Document Recovered

Quel est cet orchestre idéal qui chante en dedans de moi?

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

In his magisterial *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, Jacques Barzun spoke of the composer's first voyage to Germany in 1842–1843 as a "musical mission" designed essentially to substantiate the development of dramatic music "on Shakespearean lines" and to demonstrate his own conception of a new "genre instrumental expressif"—a genre derived from the commanding models now established as classic by the composer of the Ninth Symphony.¹ Barzun's use of the word "mission" echoes that of Léon Kreutzer, who, concluding his review of the first concert of Berlioz's new Société Philharmonique de Paris, in 1850, offered this tribute:

If my identity were less humble and my influence more worthy, I would in the name of art address to the Société Philharmonique an expression of profound gratitude. Indeed, others more powerful than I will do so, of that I am quite sure. They will confirm that the creation of this Society marks a milestone in the history of music. They will observe that, as from this day, the battle for progress has been won, that the emancipation of music has arrived, that the spirit of independence has overtaken the reliance upon, and the shackling by, everything that is routine. They will render homage to Monsieur Berlioz and to all of those who have assisted him in accomplishing his important *mission*.²

Kreutzer and Barzun employ the crucial word to indicate something not religious but rather philosophical, something that relates to the promulgation of not a "faith" but a new aesthetic ideal. One might even wish to call it a "*mission civilisatrice*" of a musical sort: this would perhaps amuse Berlioz, but I fear it would have the opposite effect upon those of a later day who are aware of the role of that expression in the expansion of French colonialism.

For the voyage to Germany, however, Barzun could have used the word in its more parochial sense of a trip designed for a specific practical purpose. That is the significance of the document I published for the first time in French, some years ago, and which I publish here for the first time in English. Because Berlioz was in fact compensated by the administration to undertake the voyage, not in the form of a supplementary *encouragement*, as payments to artists were styled, but in the form of the maintaining of his salary at the Conservatoire, where, since February 9, 1839, he had been associate librarian, and where his annual compensation would come to a mere fifteen hundred francs.

Berlioz seems to have written to the Minister of the Interior toward the middle of the month of November 1842 to request a several-month leave of absence during which he would continue to enjoy his regular monthly salary. The man in charge, Charles-Marie Tanneguy Duchâtel, had been Interior Minister from May 12, 1839, to May 1, 1840. He had resumed his post on October 29, 1840, and he would remain in office until the demise of the July Monarchy in the winter of 1848. Berlioz no doubt suggested to him that, on this trip, he would be able to gather information that might be useful to those in the administration who dealt regularly with the fine arts. That, at any rate, is what we conclude from the text of the letter, dated November 28, 1842, which Duchâtel sent to the director of the Conservatoire, Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, the newly appointed successor to the eighty-one-year-old Luigi Cherubini, who had resigned on February 4, 1842, and had died, not quite six weeks later, on March 15, 1842:

Monsieur le Directeur,

I have the honor to inform you that I have accorded to Monsieur Berlioz, associate librarian at the Conservatoire, a leave of three months to commence on the first of December of this year. Because Monsieur Berlioz has been charged with procuring information that will be useful to the administration, I have decided that there shall be no interruption in the payment of his salary. Yours truly...³

It needs to be mentioned that Berlioz himself had hoped to assume both Cherubini's chair at the Académie des Beaux-Arts and, more important,

Cherubini's post as director of the Conservatoire. The internecine tensions that led to Auber's selection are not known, but for Berlioz, Auber had operated a kind of shady "sleight of hand": "You have heard of the 'escamotage' of the directorship of the Conservatoire by Auber," he wrote to his friend and mentor Gaspare Spontini, on March 19, 1842; "I thus have nothing more to report to you on that subject."⁴ Be this as it may, this request to take a leave of absence *with pay* would be the first of many that Berlioz would make during his tenure at the library. As far as I can tell, these requests were always granted, a favor, considering Berlioz's subsequent stature in the musical world, that speaks well of the artistic understanding of the French administration and in particular of Count Duchâtel, to whom Berlioz would later lament (in a long and emotional letter of February 26, 1844) that he did "not have the time to compose," and thus that he was doing "practically nothing in the area in which [he] was most capable."⁵ We have always assumed that the lack of time Berlioz mentions was due to his obligations as a journalist. But in the library, too, he did have potentially time-consuming duties, as Dominique Hausfater has pointed out: in principle, Berlioz was entrusted with keeping the library catalogue up to date, with maintaining an inventory of the collection and a register of acquisitions and administrative actions, and with supervising the library staff, including the clerks and the copyists. He was not charged with keeping track of circulation, of course, because this was not a lending library: books and scores remained on the premises except in extraordinary circumstances, when permission to borrow could be granted, not by the associate librarian, but only by the librarian-in-chief.⁶

Although Duchâtel's experience was primarily in journalism and the law, he was a worldly fellow (his father had been a Napoleonic administrator and his mother, it was rumored, had been a Napoleonic mistress), and was apparently interested in developments in both the sciences and the arts. As Minister of the Interior he was responsible for supporting several missions to England and to the United States to study the new systems of electric telegraphy that were crucial to France's expanding colonial empire, in particular those of the celebrated American inventor Samuel Morse, who would eventually be awarded the Légion d'honneur by the Emperor Napoléon III. Duchâtel's interest in the fine arts led to his election to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, on November 21, 1846, as what was known as a "membre libre," of whom there were ten. This allowed him to attend the sessions and participate in the deliberations of the Academy as an honorary member, but not to vote for or against a "regular" candidate—as Berlioz was and would be in 1839, 1842, 1851, 1853, 1854, and 1856. As a private citizen, Duchâtel

amassed a large collection of paintings and saw to it in his will that some of his *chefs-d'œuvres* be given to the Louvre with the proviso that they be displayed in a room specifically reserved for that purpose.⁷

Berlioz did have connections to the Ministry of the Interior in the persons of his old friend Stéphen de La Madeleine, for example, who worked there as a "rédacteur-expéditionnaire,"⁸ a drafter and transmitter of documents, and of course Armand Bertin, editor of the *Journal des débats*, who seems to have intervened in Berlioz's behalf, at the Ministry, at the time of the composer's proposed festival for the international industrial exhibition of August 1844. Other friends and acquaintances at the Ministry included Alfred de Musset, librarian, and Baron Taylor, who in October 1838 had been named inspector-general of the various fine-arts organizations which depended for funding upon that branch of the administration.⁹

We do not know if Count Duchâtel found useful or reacted to any of the observations in the long report that Berlioz would submit to him at the end of 1843, although he did thank the composer for his diligence. On February 14, 1844, in a letter the draft of which has been preserved, the Minister acknowledged receipt in the following terms:

Monsieur Berlioz,

I have received the report you have made to me on musical institutions in Germany, and on the schools and operatic theaters of that country. I should like to thank you for the enlightened enthusiasm that you have brought to this assignment, and I am especially pleased to have given you this occasion to employ in a way so beneficial to the arts your profound knowledge in this area.

Yours truly, etc....¹⁰

Berlioz's official report to the Minister remained hidden in an archival dossier for well over a century. But another report saw the light relatively soon after the composer's return to France in early June 1843. This was the series of ten articles, or "letters," for the *Journal des débats* (published in 1843 on August 3, 20, and 28; September 3, 12, and 23; October 8 and 21; and November 8; and, in 1844, on January 9), in which Berlioz recounted in minute detail the travels in Germany that he would subsequently publish in book form, in July 1844, as the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie*. The publisher was Jules Labitte; the counter-chronological order of the two small volumes (the Italian travels had occurred a dozen years earlier) was characteristic of a man to whom linear logic, when concocting stories, was less important than it was when contriving scores. These ten letters, admittedly self-promotional

but no less brilliantly descriptive, found a third home in the central portion of the *Mémoires*, after chapter 51.

In my edition of the *Mémoires*, for ease of reference, I number those letters as subchapters; in Berlioz's edition, ease of reference, as we shall see in chapter 13, was not a primary concern. In my edition, I also take account of some of the principal differences between the texts as they appear in the book of 1844 and in the *Mémoires* of 1865. A more detailed study of the *three* versions of these texts would more closely demonstrate the author's habits of mind as he revised his prose from the newspaper articles to the mid-career volumes to the composer-in-retirement's autobiographical memoir. We now have thoroughly annotated editions of Berlioz's correspondence, books, and criticism. I have not believed that an annotated version of the mid-career publication is necessary—we are speaking about very minor differences indeed—because Berlioz himself, after incorporating the travelogue into the *Mémoires*, never again thought about the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie* of 1844. Indeed, when preparing the manuscript of the *Mémoires*, he actually removed small-format printed pages from a copy of the *Voyage musical en Allemagne* (martyrizing books in this way was more common than you might imagine),¹¹ glued them to the larger sheets used for the autograph text, made corrections and modifications in the margins, and sent the lot, printed and manuscript, to the printers.

The text of the report to the Minister of the Interior, dated December 23, 1843, is thus in no way a draft of what appeared in the *Voyage musical en Allemagne*. It is rather a condensation of the first nine letters that Berlioz published in the *Journal des débats*, a condensation for official purposes that leaves out the charming conversations and ironic asides that make Berlioz the writer... Berlioz the writer. It is a condensation set down in haste, Berlioz confesses, and one that lacks not local color but some literary finesse. The twenty-three-page manuscript itself, begun in Berlioz's chiseled and calligraphic hand (see figure 8.1, below), carries a number of revisions and corrections that in more formal circumstances would have constrained the writer to make a new, fair copy for transmission to the administration. (Because the document was discovered in the national archives, we may be certain that it is the copy that was actually sent to the Ministry.) It opens with reference to the trip he has *just made* to Germany ("le voyage que je viens de faire"), which would suggest a date of mid-June 1843, since the composer had returned to Paris at the beginning of that month. And yet the date that appears below Berlioz's signature is that of December 28, 1843 (see figure 8.2).

à son excellence monseigneur le ministre de l'Intérieur

Monsieur le Ministre

Vous avez bien voulu me confier le
soin d'examiner les institutions musicales de
~~l'Allemagne~~ l'Allemagne, pendant le
séjour que je venais de faire en ce
pays, et de m'en rendre compte par le
rapport que j'ai l'honneur de vous adresser
ce jour-ci. Je suis persuadé que
vous serez satisfait de mon travail.

Figure 8.1. First page of Berlioz's Report to the Minister of the Interior (AnF F²¹ 1282)

ce que je crois sincèrement
avoir vu en Allemagne, et
rien que votre excellence puisse
savoir, que ce soit mon unique
objet à me adresser par
le présent de votre rapport, mais sans
aucun intérêt de flatterie ni
d'indulgence pour moi-même.

Je suis avec un profond respect
Monsieur le Ministre
Votre très humble serviteur
H. Berlioz
Paris le 28 Janvier 1846

Figure 8.2. Last page of Berlioz's Report to the Minister of the Interior (AnF F²¹ 1282)

It may be that the document was not prepared in one fell swoop, that the composer began his draft shortly after returning to Paris, set it aside, then returned to it, in haste, at the end of the year. Haste is suggested in particular by what seems to be the beginning of the end—“Voilà, Monsieur le Ministre, la somme des observations qu’il m’a été, grâce à vous, permis de faire dans ce rapide voyage dans le nord de l’Allemagne” (“Here, then, Monsieur le Ministre, you have the sum total of the observations that, thanks to you, I was able to make during my hurried travels in the northern part of Germany”)—which is followed, surprisingly, and almost as an afterthought, by three further pages of specific comments. The telegraphic style of the latter (difficulty rendered in translation), the many corrections and crossings-out, and even the signature of “H. Berlioz” rather than “Hector Berlioz,” which, on formal occasions the composer usually prefers, suggest to me that Berlioz was writing to a man with whom he felt he had at least something of a personal relationship.

What emerges from this report is Berlioz’s critical but fundamentally positive attitude toward musical conditions in France. This will stand in vivid contrast to the situation that Berlioz observed four and a half years later, on May 26, 1848, when he wrote from London to his friend Louis-Joseph Duc, the architect of the Column of the Bastille, that “you have to have the tricolored flag over your eyes not to see that now, in France, music is dead.”¹² The composer is of course referring to the February Revolution that brought to an end the régime of Louis-Philippe, and that indirectly caused him, in March, to change the title of the newly published *Apothéose* from the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, arranged by Berlioz for voice, chorus, and piano: Thomas Frederick Beale, Berlioz’s London publisher, fearing mention of anything at all that smacked of revolution, refused to print “Composé pour l’inauguration de la colonne de la Bastille,” and “Dédié à M. Duc, architecte de la colonne de la Bastille,” and rather insisted upon “À mon ami Duc,” and “Chant héroïque extrait du final de la *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*.”

Here, in 1843, Berlioz notes that whatever musical conditions may prevail elsewhere, in France, and in particular in Paris, one can do better: “on peut à Paris faire mieux.” In his report, he does point to the advantages offered by the various court orchestras spread throughout the German lands, many of which were of excellent quality, and to the rewards of having chapel masters who were at once performers, composers, and conductors. Indeed, the existence of many small states in the territories of the Holy Roman and Hapsburg Empires was responsible, in large measure, for the region’s famous

musical productivity: numerous courts led to numerous demands for musical services and to numerous creative opportunities for singers, players, and composers. German disunity, Berlioz sensed, was good for music.¹³ The technical remarks he includes in the report (these are more copious in the newspaper accounts) reveal the expertise in instrumentation and orchestration he had lately demonstrated in his treatise on the subject, which he published as a series of sixteen articles for the *Revue et Gazette musicale* between November 1841 and July 1842, and which he had drafted in book form immediately before leaving for Germany. Indeed, only five days before submitting his report to Count Duchâtel, Berlioz sent two copies of the freshly printed *Traité d'instrumentation* to Giacomo Meyerbeer and to the Berlin Academy, as we know from his letter to Meyerbeer of December 23, 1843, which tells us, incidentally, that he now felt that the first printing of the treatise (of which he had sent earlier copies to Stephen Heller and Gaspare Spontini) was ready to be put on the market.¹⁴

One area in which the Germans were clearly superior to the French, Berlioz is at pains to emphasize, was in the constitution of military bands and orchestras: these employed musicians who were well trained and instruments that in France were generally neglected, especially the tuba, which Berlioz, who did not always embrace the newest wind and brass, now found superior to the ophicleide. He also found the repertory of the German military ensembles less trivial than that of their French counterparts, and thus able to educate a certain public by music of a value unparalleled in France.

Berlioz attributes the German people's broad understanding of melody and harmony to the development of public and private choral singing that dated back to the time of Martin Luther and the Reformation. He is struck by the musical interest manifest by even those of the lower classes, to whose musical tastes, normally, Berlioz was indifferent. However, after the death of Guillaume-Louis Boquillon-Wilhem, the founder of the Orphéon movement in France and attached, after 1835, to the administration of the city of Paris as a supervisor of music education, Berlioz did attempt, as we saw in chapter 5, to obtain Wilhem's post of inspector of the singing schools of the capital. This is one of the many posts that, for "political" reasons, Berlioz failed to obtain.

It is a small irony that, in his report, Berlioz singles out for praise the composer Carl Friedrich Zelter and the singing academy of Berlin, for it was that same Zelter who, on June 21, 1829, had written, of the *Huit Scènes de Faust* which Berlioz sent to Goethe in April of that year (the copy now lies in the archives of the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin), that "certain persons can express

themselves only by snoring or coughing, by spitting or squawking; Monsieur Berlioz seems to belong to their number.”¹⁵ Berlioz never became aware of Zelter’s comments, although he does seem to have been disappointed that Goethe failed to respond to what had been a thoughtful offering. Speaking of Weimar, where Berlioz was moved by the surroundings that breathed the spirit of Goethe and Schiller, and where, on January 25, 1843, he gave a concert that featured the *Symphonie fantastique* and songs with piano and with orchestra, he used in his report to the Minister of the Interior some Zelterian language of his own, saying with brutal honesty that the quality of the chorus there was “execrable” and “impossible to enjoy.”

Berlioz makes special mention of the system of artists’ pensions that was available in the German-speaking lands, a system better organized and more generous than what was available in France, where there was support for certain players and singers employed by the royal theaters and by the Conservatoire, but not for composers. (The reason he does so here is that the Department of the Fine Arts in the eighteen-thirties and forties—whose archives overflow with letters from musicians asking for first pensions or augmentations of earlier ones—functioned under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior.) And he underlines the security of employment enjoyed by the chapel masters, thanks to the patronage of their employers, noting that those composers need not compose in order to live, they rather need to live in order to compose. (He will emphasize this point in his report from Dresden, on Richard Wagner, as we will see in chapter 9.) That Berlioz excuses himself for not having reported on the conservatories in Germany is a sign that the Minister (who had lately approved the nomination of Auber as director of the Conservatoire in Paris) had explicitly asked him to do so. Berlioz seems likewise to have been asked to seek out singers who might potentially be valuable additions to the vocal stable at the Opéra, in Paris, which every administration since time immemorial had burnished as a beacon of French artistic excellence to be seen from around the world.

Berlioz’s manuscript is formatted in accordance with ministerial decorum: the space between the salutation and the text is large, and one side of the page—usually the left, sometimes the right—is blank (as in figures 8.1 and 8.2). My translation here, as elsewhere in this book, is in no way literal: I have attempted to set down Berlioz’s points in the English he might have written had he been a native speaker living in the twenty-first century. I have included the first names of persons whom Berlioz identifies only by their surnames and have corrected without comment Berlioz’s sometimes phonetic

spelling in order that interested readers, should they so desire, might look elsewhere for further details.

[Paris, December 28, 1843]

À son excellence Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur

Monsieur le Ministre,

You kindly entrusted me with examining the musical institutions of Germany during the excursion that I have just made to that country, which is justly celebrated by dint of the many men of genius whom it has produced.

I should admit at the outset, Monsieur le Ministre, that Germany's celebrity in this regard, and the currently deplorable state of some of our own institutions devoted to the development of the art of music, had engendered in me certain prejudicial notions in favor of our neighbors across the Rhine, notions that, after my experience on the ground and much reflection, have proven not fully justified.

Germany is the classic land of music; Germany is far superior to France in terms of its musical institutions and in terms of the musical sensibilities of its various peoples: these truths are as unquestionable as they are unquestioned. But it is especially, indeed I should say solely, by the wide dissemination of knowledge about the art of sounds in the country as a whole, and not by the *quality* but by the prodigious *quantity* of musicians who inhabit it, that Germany has acquired its superiority. *In Paris, one can do better* than in any other place in the world, of this I am certain, once we determine how and when we might wisely employ the resources that are buried here in our capital.

Unfortunately, this is precisely what we neither know nor desire. Alas, for all of France, we have only the capital of Paris, as opposed to other foreign countries, where, as in Germany, for example, because of the many political subdivisions of the nation, they have a large number of capitals, of greater or lesser importance, each one of which becomes a kind of center of artistic activity. There is no lesser prince, no grand duke, and no king who does not have his own "chapel," or musical establishment, for the word "chapel," in Germany, quite precisely *means* musical establishment. These chapels, consisting of a more or less great number of singers and instrumentalists, are all placed under the direction of a highly capable musician, almost always a composer of a certain renown. The chapel master is charged with directing the rehearsals and the performances of the main works in the repertory. Consequently, he must possess both the knowledge of a composer and the ability of a conductor. During some twenty-two years, [Gaspard] Spontini stood at the head of the King of Prussia's chapel, which is now under the direction of [Giacomo] Meyerbeer. The chapel at Hanover is under the direction of [Heinrich] Marschner. [Gaetano] Donizetti is chapel master at Vienna, [Carl Gottlieb] Reissiger and [Richard] Wagner direct the chapel at Dresden. [Felix]

Mendelssohn, who was for many years chapel master at the Gewandhaus, in Leipzig, that grand and magnificent singing academy to which he joined an excellent orchestra, has now been succeeded by [Ferdinand] Hiller. Even the smallest chapels are sometimes directed by eminent composers. For example, the chapel of the prince of Hechingen-Hohenzollern now performs under the direction of [Thomas] Täglichsbeck, whose symphonies have often been successfully performed in Paris by the orchestra at the Conservatoire. And our compatriot [André-Hippolyte] Chélard is charged with the direction of the chapel at Weimar.

Each of these chapel masters is served by a concert master whose responsibilities are to conduct the small-scale operas, to conduct the ballets, and to lead the first violin section when the chapel master himself is conducting the ensemble. The concert master also very usefully serves as the liaison between the conductor and the players, transmitting to the latter the orders and explanations given by the former, demonstrating to the players the desired approach to certain passages, and making certain that all material needs are in place. We have no such analogous situation in Paris. When the associate conductor at the Opéra is not conducting, he neither sits in the violin section of the orchestra nor assists the principal conductor in any way.

In Germany, the concert masters are chosen from a select group of violinist-composers. They include such men as [Anton] Bohrer, [Vincent] Lachner, [Karol] Lipinski, [Anton] Schubert, Charles Müller, [Wilhelm] Ganz, [Johann Christian] Lobe, [Hubert] Ries, [Ferdinand] David, [Wilhelm Bernhard] Molique, [Louis] Schlösser, etc., all of whom know how to compose, to perform, and to conduct.

The orchestras are for the most part fully staffed, but, except for those of the several large capital cities, they consist of a small number of players and are lacking players of certain instruments that are often required by the modern masters, such as the English horn, the ophicleide, and the harp.

The orchestra of the grand opera in Berlin is simply magnificent, and more richly endowed with string instruments (twenty-eight violins) than even that of the Opéra de Paris. In Berlin, on occasions of particular importance, most of the winds are doubled. A happy result of such doubling of the flutes, oboes, and clarinets is that the mass of the brass instruments becomes thereby softened; the equilibrium of the diverse groups of the orchestra becomes reestablished.

But that is a brilliant exception to the rule. The other orchestras, in Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar, Hanover, Brunswick, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Darmstadt, and even Hamburg, are all of them similar, more or less, in terms of their numbers and make-up. They are comprised of about eight first violins, eight second violins, four violas, four cellos, four double basses, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, and one

timpanist. This is the size of the Mozartian orchestra; these are the forces, that is, that were usually employed by that great master. The violinists and cellists are, generally speaking, technically proficient and excellent musicians. The violas, as in France, are often second-rate violinists; very few of them actually know how to play the viola. The double basses are talented, but not as talented as the Germans believe they are when they suggest that three of their bassists can outperform six of ours. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, six ordinary French double bass players produce an *effect* that is superior to that of three German double bass players, even when two of those three are the instrumental virtuosos [August] Schmidt and [August] Müller.

The partisans of the "economic" system that consists in measuring the power of an orchestra by measuring the power of the sound produced by certain instrumentalists, and in basing the composition of the ensemble on that calculation, are strangely mistaken in doing so. They forget that the projection of the sound of an orchestra is determined less by the force of any particular player than it is by the relative brilliance of the sonority, the number of unisons, and the number of points of sonic departure. They forget that twenty ordinary violins are always more powerful than a single violin, even one so enormous as to produce a sound equal to that of twenty violins of its kind.

The wind instruments of the German opera theater orchestras are adequate, especially as regards the oboes and clarinets. Less satisfactory are the flutes, the horns, and the trombones. Most of the bassoonists play out of tune, the reason being that the instruments they have at their disposal are of poor quality. Nowhere in Germany does anyone play the flute or the horn as well as they are played in Paris. Nowhere did I encounter a group of wind players *in the theater orchestras* comparable to those of the Opéra or Théâtre-Italien in Paris.

However, the German military bands are incontestably and immensely superior to ours. Even those of the smaller towns, such as Darmstadt, for example, carry the day against most of our own. In fact, we have no idea of the glorious results the Prince of Prussia has achieved, in this genre, in Berlin.

All of the Prussian regiments have an orchestra composed of a greater or lesser number of wind instruments, and all are under the supervision of a single inspector, Monsieur [Wilhelm Friedrich] Wieprecht, who is responsible for their formation, maintenance, and proper performance. This inspector sees to it that the musicians are furnished with high-quality instruments, that they are seated in their units only after achieving a certain level of expertise, and that they are educated in music and in the technique of their instruments on strictly rational grounds. He also sees to it that the bands, even the smallest ensembles, are harmoniously constituted: that the upper voices are proportionate to the lower voices, and that the middle voices can be heard. Furthermore, he supervises and conducts the rehearsals of the larger ensembles, when, for

certain formal ceremonies, the bands of several different regiments are brought together.

It was in these circumstances that I saw Wieprecht conducting the united bands from seven different regiments that formed together a mass of some three hundred twenty men. Their intonation was irrefragable, their ensemble, perfect, their effect, tremendous.

The military bands from the northern part of Germany are possessed of several instruments that our bands have not yet decided to use. These include the tuba—the king of the low brass instruments in terms of its power, timbre, and range; the cylinder or valved trumpet (the *Ventil-Trompeten*), and the small cylinder cornet. The ophicleide is no longer in use. And both because of the extraordinary difficulty of playing this instrument in tune, and because of the superior timbre of the tuba that has replaced it, we should no doubt regard this evolution as a step in the right direction.

One of the further and important responsibilities of the inspector is selecting the repertory that the bands are to perform. Wieprecht almost always makes judicious choices, and thus manages to avoid the miserably insipid rhapsodies that in France poison our military orchestras and reduce them to the level of the outfits that play in the cabarets on the outskirts of town. This is a more serious failing than you might think, because it significantly diminishes the development of our countrymen's musical understanding by accustoming them to everything that is trivial and vile.

Indeed, if the German people possess elevated musical taste and understanding of melodic and harmonic style, the reason surely lies in the lasting influence of Martin Luther, who introduced polyphonic choral singing into the divine service, with the voices of all the congregants participating, and who himself composed many of those dignified and imposing chorales. The desire to sing and to sing well in the church chorale led to the development of musical education in the schools, and thus to the extraordinarily wide diffusion of musical sensibilities that I spoke of at the outset of this report. A large number of the men and women, come to the temple from all classes of society, hold in their hands hymnals that contain all the words of the religious service, the canticles, and the several-voiced chorales. Each congregant reads and sings in the register that suits him or her the best. The effect of these immense choirs, formed effortlessly by the uniting of several thousand singers in the great churches, is of exceptional majesty. This procedure and its ramifications are due solely to the great leader of the reformation [Martin Luther].

The enjoyment of choral singing on the part of so many Germans has led them to create an almost unimaginable number of singing schools and choral societies, to which they have given the name "Liedertafeln." The latter consist exclusively of men. They meet, usually in the evening, and, while seated around long tables, they sing four-part choruses typically composed of

very short stanzas. Women are admitted to these meetings as listeners only. Sometimes five or six wind instruments, horns or bugles, support the voices, but usually the Lieder are sung without accompaniment. These institutions are present even in the most obscure villages of the country.

Amateur singing academies can exist only in the cities. They are composed of a very large number of persons of both sexes, rather good sight-readers, and possessed of well-cultivated voices capable of adequately performing the works composed by masters of the elevated style. Some professional singers are admitted to these academies, but the members are overwhelmingly amateurs belonging to the wealthier classes of society. Before the rehearsals, each member is required to study at home the part that he or she has been assigned, punctually to attend the rehearsals conducted by the chapel master, and every year to pay a small fee designed to cover the cost of the meetings. In other words, rather than being paid, these choristers pay to sing. This explains why it is so easy to compose choruses for the festivals that take place every year in the various German cities. The neighboring towns send to the musical metropolises the singers from their singing academies and the most gifted members of their *Liedertafeln*. Because the festival programs are selected well in advance, the different groups of singers have more than adequate time to study the parts of the works that comprise them. In this way, when they join together to form a chorus of six hundred or eight hundred or even a thousand voices, they are in need of only two further combined rehearsals in order to perform with all necessary proficiency.

The singing academies of Leipzig and Berlin are the most remarkable ensembles that I encountered. The latter in particular, comprised of almost all of the elite amateur men and women of Berlin's upper classes, was at one time directed by the celebrated [Karl Friedrich] Zelter, who had brought the group to a level of perfection that the current director, Monsieur [Karl Friedrich] Rungenhagen, has been able to maintain to this day.

However, one would be sadly mistaken to conclude, from what I have just said, that the theater choruses perform at the same high level. For here the situation is reversed: the singers do not pay but are rather paid to sing, which, as concerns the choruses, leads the directors to economize as much as possible. With the exception of the theater at Berlin, which employs a chorus of sixty for regular performances and twice that many for special occasions, all the other German theaters that I visited employ a rather small number of performers. The choruses never number more than forty-five, and rarely reach even that figure. Some of these small choirs are adequate and even rather good; others are very weak indeed: the chorus at Weimar is execrable and impossible to listen to!

At Brunswick, I had to remove from my program a *Sanctus* [from the *Requiem*] that had been performed without difficulty in both Paris and

Dresden, because the women of the chorus claimed it was beyond their capabilities. At Darmstadt, in similar circumstances, a chorus, or, more accurately, a song for double men's chorus, even though rehearsed for some eight days, produced at the concert a vocal disaster that caused me much regret and the conductor much embarrassment.

The problem is that these very small choirs would require, for success, singers far more experienced than the soldiers and workers often employed by the German theater directors. The fewer the voices, the more apparent the problems of intonation and ensemble. And the good voices of certain choristers, blended into a mass of singers whose ability is hardly superior to their own, become themselves highly unpleasant when the ensemble is small, in which case they sound isolated and separated from the group.

The voices of German choral singers are generally fresher and better modulated than those of French choral singers. They are not all good sight-readers, however, far from it—with the exception, again, of those in Berlin, even though the number of good readers in the chorus at the Opéra in Paris is far greater than the number at the theater in Berlin. Still, the *quality* of the voices of the French singers is inferior.

A system of pensions for artists has been established at all of the German courts, and this is what leads to the assiduity and ardor of those who serve in the musical establishments. Both instrumentalists and singers find that their salaries cover the necessities of their existence, and enjoy a knowledge of a secure future that, for our musicians, is totally lacking. The composer-chapel master is free to imagine and produce his works without fear of financial distress. He does not compose in order to live: the sovereign upon whom he depends allows him rather to live in order to compose. It is thanks to the advantages he was offered by the Court of Saxony that [Carl Maria von] Weber was able to compose *Der Freischütz*, *Oberon*, and *Euryanthe*. The Prince of Esterhazy was the veritable progenitor of Haydn and his innumerable symphonies. Most of the German chapel masters continue to enjoy conditions such as these. And if they do not produce masterpieces, as did their predecessors, it is only because they are lacking in genius or in imagination.

Here, then, Monsieur le Ministre, you have the sum total of the observations that, thanks to you, I was able to make during my hurried travels in the northern part of Germany. I'm afraid that I found no time to report upon even a single conservatory, having gone neither to Prague nor to Vienna. (The conservatory in Berlin is not yet fully organized.) Be that as it may, I would find it difficult to believe, by comparison, that the establishments of this nature that are to be found in the capitals of Austria and Bohemia could hold a candle to our conservatory in Paris—even though our conservatory has yet to reach the level to which it could and should strive to attain.

I must say that I found no particularly outstanding singers among the principal artists of the German opera companies, with the exception of three basses, [Joseph] Reichel, currently in Darmstadt, and [Louis] Bötticher and [August] Zschiesche, in Berlin; and two excellent baritones, [Johann Michael] Wächter, in Dresden, and [Johann Baptist] Pischek, in Frankfurt. Not one of these five actors speaks French. The only tenor who seemed to me to offer something of value is [Joseph Aloys] Tichatschek, in Dresden, although he is not a stylish singer and often sings flat.

Only two sopranos struck me as having real merit, neither of whose names have reached Paris: Mademoiselle [Elisa] Capitain, in Frankfurt, and Mademoiselle [Léopoldine] Tuczek, in Berlin. Despite the fact that her virtues are still extolled in parts of Germany, Madame [Wilhelmine Schroeder-] Devrient's voice is now worn out, her style of singing, detestable. Mademoiselle [Pauline] Marx, currently in Berlin, studied music and singing in Paris. When I heard her five years ago, she was a young woman of brilliant promise. She has now realized some of that promise, but her voice is fading and I fear that in a few years she will no longer be able to sing.

To resume: there is in Germany an almost total absence of singer-actors of superior ability; most of the opera choruses are mediocre; the singing academies are wonderful; the military bands are magnificent; new compositions of quality are extremely rare; there is a multitude of excellent orchestras of which *none* is comparable, in any respect whatsoever, to the orchestra of the Conservatoire de Paris; the musical hierarchy is well-conceived and well-respected; a wide swath of the population enjoys a basic musical education; and the political and religious institutions exercise a highly favorable influence on the arts.

These are the things, Monsieur le Ministre, that I have honestly and sincerely observed in Germany. I should like to hope that Your Excellency will find useful or at least interesting the portrait that I have had to paint in haste, but in which I have attempted to represent the model objectively, with neither flattery nor disparagement.

I am, with profound respect, Monsieur le Ministre, your very humble servant,

H. Berlioz, Paris, December 28, 1843.

Between December 1842 and May 1843 Berlioz had visited the cities, some more than once, of Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hechingen, Carlsruhe, Mannheim, Weimar, Leipzig, Dresden, Brunswick, Hamburg, Berlin, Magdeburg, and Hanover. "Here I am, home from my long travels throughout Germany," he reported to his father, on June 5, 1843:

I am still exhausted, as I would have been even had my efforts been less demanding, because in five months I directed fourteen concerts and forty-three rehearsals. Fortunately, the results of my labors were simply magnificent in terms of my musical reputation, and perfectly satisfactory in terms of my financial gains, which could not under the best of circumstances have been overly great in view of the enormous expenses entailed by such a venture—one without precedent in the history of art. This musical journey created a tremendous stir in the German press and, as a result, in the French, English, and Italian presses as well. A composer traveling across Germany to mount and to direct by himself a series of concerts devoted exclusively to the performance of his own works is something that has simply never before been seen.¹⁶

Berlioz then added a note characteristic of such communications to his family, suggesting epigrammatically an artistic, financial, and political creed:

If I had been born in Germany, if I were a Saxon, or a Prussian, I would by now have a post guaranteed for life with a salary of ten or twelve thousand francs and a pension that would, after my demise, satisfy the needs of my family... In France, I have ... a liberal constitution, whose liberality does not go so far as to take care of those who might bring honor to their country, or to prevent those who might be materially useful to it from dying of starvation.¹⁷

At this moment, in June 1843, it seems reasonable to conclude that Berlioz was still feeling the loss of his protector, the Duc d'Orléans, Louis-Philippe's eldest son and the heir to the throne, who had been killed the year before in an accident that deprived the country of a widely admired successor. Because, as we have seen in his report to the Minister of the Interior, signed at the end of the year, Berlioz again voiced a concern for the welfare of the artist, but perhaps less cynically, by accentuating the positive aspects of what he had just observed, and by suggesting that in France, one could, conceivably, do better.

At the head of this chapter, I might have used as an epigraph the fond farewell to Germany that Berlioz appended to the final letter that constituted his *Premier Voyage en Allemagne* in the series of articles for the *Journal des débats* and in the *Mémoires*: “Vale, Germania, alma parens”—“Farewell, Germany, nurturing mother.” Berlioz would have seen that expression as a boy reading with his father the story of Dido and Aeneas, in book 2 of the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas refers to his mother, Venus, as “alma parens.” He might have said “alma mater,” which for most of us is the more familiar expression. But “parens” refers to a mother *or* a father: Berlioz was bidding adieu not

to some sort of metaphorical mother, as though he were in some sense suggesting that he would have wished to have been born a German (a notion parroted by some biographers, partly on the basis of the letter cited above, but one that is in my mind absurd), he was rather bidding adieu to “la terre classique de la musique,” as he put it at the opening of the report we have translated here (“the motherland of classical music,” we might wish to say today), and expressing the hope, I think, that something of what he had found on the far side of the Rhine—should his report have some influence on the powerful Minister of the Interior who commissioned it, as we learn here for the first time—might make its way back to Paris.

Chapter Nine

Berlioz and Wagner

Épisodes de la vie des artistes

Vivre!... mais vivre, pour moi, c'est souffrir!

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

“Au grand et cher auteur de *Roméo et Juliette*, l’auteur reconnaissant de *Tristan et Isolde*”—so reads the handsome dedication on the copy of the full score of *Tristan* that Wagner sent to Berlioz,¹ on January 21, 1860, with a brief and touching letter:

Cher Berlioz,

Je suis ravi de vous pouvoir offrir le premier exemplaire de mon *Tristan*.

Acceptez-le et gardez-le d’amitié pour moi.

À vous.

Richard Wagner

“I am delighted to be able to offer you the first copy of my *Tristan*,” writes Wagner; “please accept the score as a token of my friendship.” Such attentiveness is a small indication, I think, that even as a mature composer nearing his forty-seventh birthday, Wagner continued to regard Berlioz, then fifty-six, as a senior and by no means conventionally benevolent colleague.² In fact the gift was one of extraordinary generosity, both because this was indeed a first, and rare, pre-publication copy, sent by the publishers to Wagner only one week earlier, and because it was a costly item, whose list price of thirty-five thalers, equivalent to one hundred forty-four francs, was comparable at the time to the monthly income of many a professor, government functionary, itinerant musician. What led Wagner to bestow such bounty upon Berlioz? And why, for Wagner, was the Frenchman still the “grand and dear author of

Roméo et Juliette—the now more than twenty-year-old dramatic symphony of 1839?

It may be because French Wagnerianism flourished in the period immediately following Berlioz's death—in remarkable counterpoint with French Germanophobia—that subsequent generations have tended to pair Berlioz and Wagner as they have Bach and Handel (who were born in the same year) and Haydn and Mozart (who reached compositional maturity in the same decade). But apart from their differing views of the world, which led the younger man regularly to promulgate aesthetic doctrines while the older man continued to eschew “theory,” the nature of the relations between the composer of *Roméo et Juliette* and the composer of *Tristan und Isolde* are best understood in light of the dissimilar landscapes of their youthful experiences and the different trajectories of their professional careers.

Early Impressions

It is logical to assume that Wagner knew the name Berlioz well before arriving in Paris in 1839. If the winner of the Academy's Prix de Rome in 1830 was not mentioned in the vivid accounts of the July Revolution that made history “come alive” for the seventeen-year-old German reading the *Leipziger Zeitung*, he *was* mentioned in reports from Paris carried by such music journals as Leipzig's celebrated *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, where Berlioz's name occurs as early as December 1829, and later, in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, where, in July and August of 1835, Robert Schumann published his astonishing review of the *Symphonie fantastique* that remains revelatory even today. Berlioz's overture to *Les Francs-Juges* was played in Leipzig in November 1836, but by then Wagner had left his native city for Königsberg, there to make preparations for his marriage to Minna Planner.

Three years later, Wagner arrived in Paris, in the autumn of 1839, with letters of introduction provided by Meyerbeer to some of the city's musical luminaries. He seems first to have encountered Berlioz at Maurice Schlesinger's shop, at 97, rue de Richelieu, a meeting place and gossip mill for musicians both foreign and domestic,³ and just up the road from the Paris branch of the Brockhaus bookstore, at 60, rue de Richelieu, where the proprietor was Eduard Avenarius—codirector, with Friedrich and Heinrich Brockhaus, of the printing house (known, especially in Leipzig, for its biographies and encyclopedias), and fiancé, in 1839, of Wagner's sister Cäcilie. Near the end of that year, Wagner attended one of the three successive performances of

Berlioz's new dramatic symphony—probably the first, because his name figures on the list of *invités*,⁴ and because he was at the time frequently in the company of Meyerbeer, who did attend the première, on November 24, 1839.⁵ On page 64 of the autograph score of *Roméo et Juliette*, there is a note in Berlioz's hand that reads: "M^r Wagner / rue Montmartre." Some have been tempted to suppose that Richard Wagner made himself known to Berlioz at a time when the composer, who conducted from the manuscript, had this score in hand. But the reference is almost certainly to Jean Wagner, a well-regarded clockmaker whose shop was in fact located in the rue Montmartre, and whose talents included the making of superior *métronomes de Maelzel*, as they were called, no doubt authorized to do so by the inventor of the device, who himself had lived in Paris at the beginning of the Restoration.

Roméo et Juliette, to date the greatest success of his career, was the first work of Berlioz's to be heard by Richard Wagner. The German composer tells us that he experienced an epiphany in Paris on hearing the first three movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as rehearsed by the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire during the first two weeks of December 1839—perhaps on the 7th, when the celebrated conductor, François-Antoine Habeneck, rehearsed something of Wagner's as well. But it is likely that that revelation was enhanced by hearing, at almost precisely the same time, Berlioz's own take on Beethoven's choral symphony, *Roméo et Juliette*.

Further works by Berlioz that were performed during Wagner's stay in Paris from 1839 to 1842 include the *Symphonie fantastique*, *Harold en Italie*, the overture and Teresa's cavatina from *Benvenuto Cellini*, excerpts from the *Requiem*, the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, *Sara la baigneuse*, *Le Cinq Mai*, the recitatives for *Der Freischütz* along with the orchestration (for the ballet) of Weber's *L'Invitation à la valse*, and the *Rêverie et Caprice*. In his three years in the French capital, therefore, Wagner came into possession of almost the entirety of the repertory of Berlioz's most fertile decade. When he left the city, on April 7, 1842, it was to prepare performances of the two operas he had miraculously managed to complete during what had been a period of such urgent financial need that he had had to seek meager employment as a chorister in a popular theater on the boulevard: "I came off worse than Berlioz when he was in a similar predicament," he later told Edward Dannreuther, possibly parroting the anecdote that Berlioz had recounted in, among other places, chapter 12 of the *Mémoires*. "The conductor who tested my abilities discovered that I could not sing at all, and pronounced me a hopeless case all around."⁶ *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer* soon secured

for their composer a brilliant reputation of his own, however, and a secure position as Kapellmeister, in Dresden, at the court of the King of Saxony.

By curious coincidence, Berlioz, too, departed from Paris in 1842, in an official capacity, to investigate and report upon musical conditions in Germany, with assistance from the Ministry of the Interior, and in an unofficial capacity, to seek acceptance for his own brand of dramatically expressive instrumental music, to establish his reputation abroad, and thereby to improve his standing at home. With Berlioz's long-held view of the advantages of princely support of the arts in mind—we have seen it in the document discussed in chapter 8—we may better read the specific account he gives of his visit to Dresden, where he spent twelve days, from February 7 to February 19, 1843, where he found resources richer than those available in many of the other German towns, where he conducted eight rehearsals and two concerts of his own music, and, finally, where he encountered Richard Wagner—now considerably less vulnerable than he was during his years in Paris. On the 7th, Berlioz heard the fourth Dresden performance of *Der fliegende Holländer*, under Wagner's direction; on the 19th, he heard *Rienzi*, under the baton of the senior Kapellmeister, Carl Gottlieb Reissiger. In fact, what he heard was *Rienzi's Fall*—the last three acts of the original opera—which, like *Les Troyens* at a later date, was considered too long for one evening's entertainment and had thus to be hewn in half.

Berlioz's report from Dresden first appeared as an open letter in the *Journal des débats* of September 12, 1843: the public recipient was Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, the German violinist whom Berlioz had known in Paris for some ten years. This letter was soon incorporated into the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie* (1844), with small changes, and was later entered into the *Mémoires*. In it, Berlioz speaks of Wagner in some detail, for the latter's first official duties had been to assist the visiting Frenchman with his rehearsals—something Wagner did, Berlioz tells us, “with enthusiasm and excellent good will.” Berlioz describes Wagner's pleasure and “glowing satisfaction” when he was formally installed as associate master of the chapel, and goes on to speak of his work:

Having endured in France a thousand hardships and the abject indignation of surviving as nothing more than an obscure artist, Richard Wagner, now back in his native Saxony, had the audacity to embark upon, and the great satisfaction of completing, the composition of both the words and music of a five-act opera, *Rienzi*. This work had a brilliant success in Dresden. Soon after, there followed *Le Vaisseau hollandais*, a two-act opera whose theme is the same as that of *Le Vaisseau fantôme* (given two years ago at the Opéra de Paris), and

for which he again wrote both words and music. Whatever your view might be of the value of these works, you simply have to admit that the number of those capable of twice accomplishing a double feat of this kind, literary and musical, is not large, and thus that Monsieur Wagner has given evidence of his artistic competence more than sufficient to focus interest and attention upon himself. This is precisely what the King of Saxony has well understood. And on the day that he gave to his senior Kapellmeister a colleague in the person of Richard Wagner, thus offering to the latter the guarantee of an honorable livelihood, the lovers of art ought to have pronounced to His Majesty the very words that Jean Bart pronounced to Louis XIV when the King informed the intrepid old sea-dog that he had appointed him squadron commander: “Sire, you have done well.”⁷

Here Berlioz underlines the still striking fact that the librettos of *Rienzi*, premiered in Dresden on October 20, 1842, and *Der fliegende Holländer*, premiered there on January 2, 1843, one month before Berlioz’s arrival, are among the first written by *any* composer of the music. Wagner was already, of course, the “double” author of *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot*. Berlioz was as yet the double author of only the “libretto” of *Le Retour à la vie*, although he would soon play a role in the composition of the text of *La Damnation de Faust* (and would later compose the librettos of *L’Enfance du Christ*, *Les Troyens*, and *Béatrice et Bénédict*). He refers to Wagner’s latest opera in French, as *Le Vaisseau hollandais*, even though Wagner himself originally spoke more literally of *Le Hollandais volant*. (That title did not endure, and rightly so, because in French it sounds absurd.) *Le Vaisseau fantôme* is of course the title of the opera by Pierre-Louis Dietsch that was commissioned by the director of the Opéra, Léon Pillet, who in 1841 had purchased Wagner’s scenario for a work on the theme of the ill-fated Dutchman. The Dietsch, premiered on October 28, 1842, with a libretto by Paul Foucher and Henri Révoil that makes little use of Wagner’s outline, quickly faded into obscurity. Its title, applied to the Wagner, lives on.

More importantly, in his report from Dresden, Berlioz underscores and praises the action of Friedrich August II, King of Saxony from 1836 to 1854, to whom he returns in the following paragraph: “We must honor the enlightened King who, by according [Wagner] his active and total protection, has effectively saved a young artist of rare talents.” Wagner himself, aware of the possible servitude to which such a position might condemn him, and alert to the psychological distance between campestrial Dresden and cosmopolitan Paris, had at first been fearful of accepting it. But three months after having done so, he would write proudly to his friend Samuel Lehrs, in Paris,

that “I now have tenure for life with a handsome salary [of 1,500 thalers, or roughly 5,550 francs per annum] that will most probably continue to rise, and I enjoy a sphere of influence such as has been granted to few men.”⁸ In the same letter (of April 7, 1843), Wagner speaks of King Friedrich August as “an honest man with none of the usual airs and graces, but totally sincere in his approach to everything,” and as taking in his new Kapellmeister “a genuine and good-natured delight.” Thus, when he likened Friedrich August’s promotion of Wagner to Louis XIV’s promotion of the celebrated seaman Jean Bart—whose disarmingly simple manners had so charmed the King and his court at Versailles that he was able to use without offense the now celebrated phrase, “Sire, vous avez bien fait”—Berlioz was on point. In fact Berlioz enjoyed likening *himself* to Jean Bart: he did so, for example, when he invited the Duc d’Orléans to his concert of November 25, 1838,⁹ and he did so again, in 1853, when he imagined what he would have said to Napoléon I had the Emperor required a command performance of the *Requiem*—which is, he told Franz Liszt on February 23, what “Jean Bart replied to Louis XIV: ‘Sire, vous avez raison.’” Berlioz’s leitmotivic use of the saying is a sign of his awareness, I think, that in 1845 a cantata in honor of Jean Bart was commissioned for the inauguration of the statue in the Atlantic city of Dunkerque that to this day speaks of Jean Bart as its “glorious son.” More broadly, it is a sign of his lifelong respect and desire for enlightened aristocratic patronage.

It may seem odd that Berlioz’s writerly account of his encounter with Wagner is nowhere prefigured in his private correspondence immediately contemporary with the visit to Dresden. But he was busy with rehearsals in Leipzig and even found it necessary to take the morning train to Dresden (on February 2, 1843), to make concert arrangements there, and to return to Leipzig on the same afternoon: “Puissance des chemins de fer!” he exclaimed to his father on March 14, impressed as he was by the new rail line that, since 1839, spanned those now diminished seventy miles. He was also under surveillance by his traveling companion, Marie Recio, with whom relations were mercurial and public appearances dicey. Correspondence of the period is in any event somewhat cautious and restrained.

Eleven years later, Berlioz flirted seriously with an invitation to become Kapellmeister in “Wagner’s” Dresden, in the spring of 1854, when he gave four concerts there and planned a revival of *Benvenuto Cellini*. The opera was not performed, however, and Berlioz did not become master of the chapel. Wagner’s senior Kapellmeister was still in office, and Berlioz—whose high regard for Reissiger stands in stark contrast to Wagner’s carping estimation of the talent of his superior officer—presumably wished neither to encroach

upon Reissiger's territory nor to accept a position of subordinate status. Furthermore, Dresden was still a relatively undeveloped backwater, despite Berlioz's assertions of the excellence of its musical establishment, and a sufficiently generous offer may not have materialized after the accidental death of the King: like Berlioz's earlier patron, the Duc d'Orléans, Friedrich August II, too, was killed in a fall from a carriage, on August 9, 1854. For Berlioz, this was "a fatality worthy of the ancients."¹⁰

There is no indication that the composer pursued the matter with Johann, Friedrich August's brother, who now became King of Saxony. Marie Recio, Berlioz's wife since October 19, 1854, and her mother, the Frenchified Spaniard whose company Berlioz would later come to appreciate, were probably little inclined to expatriate. And Berlioz's election to the Académie des Beaux-Arts two years later made the question of any such emigration academic, for regular members of the Institut de France had to reside in France. Still, because of his attraction to monarchical authority, it may well be that Berlioz, in the eighteen-fifties, was temperamentally more suited to become a court musician than had been Wagner, in the eighteen-forties. How odd that Wagner, in the eighteen-sixties, should become the God-sent "child of Heaven" to the twenty-year-old King of Bavaria.¹¹

Artistic Rapports

To trace the impact of Berlioz on Wagner, it would seem appropriate to start with the scores the German composer was drafting when he first encountered the Frenchman's music in the winter of 1839—the overture on Goethe's *Faust* (completed on January 12, 1840), and the operas *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer*. Of these much-written-about works let me set down here only some suggestions I have not seen elsewhere. The overture to *Rienzi* begins quite remarkably with a single note from the trumpet, the fifth of the triad on D that is the tonic of the work as a whole. The only prior instances of this surprising procedure that I am aware of occur in Weber's *Oberon* Overture (1826), and in Berlioz's own *Waverley* Overture (1828), the latter having been published in Paris in the autumn of 1839, which probably came to Wagner's notice when he was working on *Rienzi*. The decorative turns with which the strings punctuate the presentation by wind and brass of the *Rienzi* Overture's principal D-major theme (bars 50–65) might furthermore have been suggested by the passage in the first movement of *Harold en Italie*

(given contemporaneously in Paris, on February 6, 1840) in which Berlioz's orchestra for the first time takes up the soloist's *idée fixe* (in bars 73–84).

It is for employing such *idées fixes* (tranquilly in *Harold*, obsessively in the *Fantastique*) that Berlioz was already celebrated, in 1839, and some have proposed that therein lie the origins of the emblem of Wagner's larger aesthetic experiment, the leitmotif. But the French composer was even more satisfied, I think, by the deployment, at moments of dramatic intensity, of a combination of two earlier, vital tunes, which he troubled to label as a *réunion*. In the finale of the *Fantastique*, for example, we see the explicit notation "Dies Irae et Ronde du Sabbat *ensemble*." (Reinhold Brinkmann heard this as an ironic take on the union of "Freude schöner Götterfunken" and "Seid umschlungen Millionen" in the finale of Beethoven's Ninth!)¹² In the finale of the second tableau of *Benvenuto Cellini*, we hear three separately announced ideas openly and artfully combined in the following delightful episode;¹³ and in the second movement of *Roméo et Juliette* (at bar 226), we see the principal melody of the *Fête chez Capulet* combined with an earlier conspicuous melody of leisurely pace into an unabashed "réunion des deux thèmes, du Larghetto et de l'Allegro."

For act 5 of *Rienzi*, Wagner sketched a similar *réunion des thèmes* that consisted of the melody of Rienzi's Prayer, at the opening of the first scene (used in the overture) and a version of the opening melody of the subsequent duet between the title character and his sister, Irene. Wagner abandoned the sketch, as John Deathridge has shown, because he could not bring these tunes into harmonious unity.¹⁴ He did manage an effective superimposition in act 3 of *Der fliegende Holländer*, when the Norwegian sailors attempt to drown in sound the Dutchman's motley crew. By thus transforming an exercise in academic counterpoint into a moment of dramatic expression, was Wagner paying homage to Berlioz? The Frenchman was famously antipathetic to schoolmasterish rules, yet filled his scores with fugue and fugato. Wagner, too, later wrestled overtly with the question of musical law and liberty in what became *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

For many observers, Berlioz's most obvious role as a model for Wagner was as a student of novel and expressive instrumental sonorities and (in Berlioz's words) as a "player of the orchestra." The one hundred musicians of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* ensemble, in 1839, with its eight harps, off-stage choirs, and other spatial effects, could not have failed to impress Wagner, whose previous experience was with orchestral groupings of classical proportion. The expansion of the orchestra that we witness in *Der fliegende Holländer* was, for Eduard Hanslick, an imitation of "the gaudiest achievements of

Meyerbeer and Berlioz.”¹⁵ But for Richard Strauss, revising the *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* and in a position to know, Berlioz's orchestration was “full of ingenious visions [...] whose realization by Richard Wagner is obvious to every connoisseur.”

Interrogating Berlioz's musical “influence” upon Wagner is to be recommended as non-addictive and potentially edifying, with any results being absolutely unprovable. Seeking Berlioz's literary influence upon Wagner is equally entertaining and unverifiable. In Wagner's first fictional essay, *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven*, which initially appeared in French as *Une Visite à Beethoven* in November and December of 1840, readers of Maurice Schlesinger's *Revue et Gazette musicale* would probably have recognized the explicitly Berliozian resonance of Wagner's subtitle—*Épisode de la vie d'un musicien allemand*—echoing that of Berlioz's first symphony, *Épisode de la vie d'un artiste*. In *Ein Ende in Paris*, which initially appeared in French as *Un Musicien étranger à Paris*, readers might also have heard a Berliozian resonance in the protagonist's principled refusal to write music for money—something for which Wagner explicitly complimented Berlioz in his nonfictional report from Paris for the Dresden *Abendzeitung* of May 5, 1841.

Social Calls

Wagner later saw Berlioz on visits to Paris in 1849, 1850, 1853, and 1860, and Berlioz, after Dresden, heard much about Wagner during his various visits to Weimar in the eighteen-fifties. They exchanged few letters, but their communications with Franz Liszt made it inevitable that the one always knew what the other was up to. Wagner and Liszt spoke of Berlioz on more than two dozen occasions in the decade after 1851, and Liszt did not hesitate to quote from Berlioz's letters in his correspondence with his German colleague.¹⁶

It was in London, in the spring of 1855, when Berlioz was engaged as conductor to the New Philharmonic Society, and Wagner to the Old, that they had their closest meeting of minds. Writing on the day before Wagner's final concert, which took place on Monday, June 25, 1855, the Frenchman told their mutual friend that he was deeply moved by even Wagner's passionate outbursts (“ses violences”),¹⁷ while his own gift for self-dramatization was usually more apparent in writing. Wagner tended to take his vantage point at the top of the mountain; Berlioz, at the edge of the grave. After that last concert, on that very Monday evening, Berlioz, Marie, and five other

friends went to see the German master in his rooms in London. All seem to have engaged in lively conversation, drunk plenty of champagne punch, and eventually departed, after effusive embraces all around, at three o'clock in the morning.

How did the *maestri* converse? One witness, Ferdinand Praeger—whose book on Wagner remains controversial but whose observations on this occasion ring true (Wagner confirmed Praeger's presence at the *soirée* in a letter to his wife),¹⁸ tells us that "Berlioz was reserved, self-possessed, and dignified," and that his "clear, transparent delivery was as the rhythmic cadence of a fountain," while "Wagner was boisterous, effusive, and his words leaped forth as the rushing of a mountain torrent."¹⁹ Wagner's gift for self-dramatization was clearly manifest in person, and Berlioz found him full of enthusiasm, warmth, and heartfelt emotion. When Wagner, in London, was presented to Queen Victoria, he spoke to her, and she to him, in German. In Berlioz's company, he obviously spoke French.

What did they talk about on that Monday evening in London? Women? In the presence of Marie Recio and Madame Praeger, this is unlikely. Furthermore, Wagner was or would become in this arena what one would have to call a connoisseur, while Berlioz would remain an amateur. Birds? Like Flaubert and Courbet, Berlioz had a pet parrot at one time or another, and so, too, did Wagner.²⁰ (Later, in 1878, Wagner chose "Berlioz" as the name of a pet rooster.)²¹ Critics? Berlioz pilloried the leading Parisian critic of the eighteen-twenties and thirties, F.-J. Fétis, in his *mélologue*, *Le Retour à la vie*; Wagner lampooned the leading Viennese critic of the eighteen-sixties, Eduard Hanslick, in a (not-final) version of the libretto of *Die Meistersinger*. Both composers did so under the rubric of comic relief, but both critics reacted with whatever is the opposite of good humor.

Did they talk about Jews? Among others, Dieter Borchmeyer has argued that Wagner's anti-Jewish sentiments were in origin French, not German, and were conspicuously stirred during his first, celebratedly miserable sojourn in Paris by the sometimes open hostility expressed by such friends of Berlioz as Vigny and Balzac, and by the writings of some of the early socialists, among them Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, whose *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* Wagner is known to have read.²² Berlioz, who was never tempted by antisemitism, would presumably hear nothing of Wagner's animadversions *contra* Meyerbeer, with whom the French composer long remained on perfectly cordial terms, to say nothing of other Jewish artists, such as Heine and Mendelssohn, whom Berlioz unfailingly admired. Wagner's most heinous essay, *Das Judentum in der Musik*, first published in Franz Brendel's

Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, in September 1850, appeared almost immediately in French translation, in *La France musicale*, of which we know Berlioz was a reader: the editors, Léon and Marie Escudier, regularly publicized and reviewed his concerts in around mid-century. It is not impossible that Berlioz saw the essay, here entitled “Les Juifs musiciens,” but it is unlikely that he would have known the identity of the author, who long remained anonymous.²³

Did they talk about conducting? This is a point of critical importance, for the two men’s opposite approaches set the stage for much future interpretive debate (Wagner conducted from memory, freely; Berlioz conducted from score, strictly—although, if Ferdinand Hiller is to be believed, with enormous, even excessive, energy).²⁴ The young pianist-conductor Karl Klindworth, among the guests, would have lent an ear to such a discussion, but in the competitive circumstances that prevailed in London in 1855, when the principal critics, James William Davison of *the Times* and Henry Chorley of *the Athenaeum*, were more in Berlioz’s camp than in Wagner’s, the subject was probably too hot to handle. The treatise on conducting that Wagner began in the year of Berlioz’s death and published first in installments, in the press, in 1870, makes no mention of the French composer, but *Über das Dirigieren* surely owes something to the Berliozian model, the *Grand Traité d’instrumentation et d’orchestration modernes*, likewise first published in installments, in the press, in 1841–1842, and many years later “Wagnerized” by that great Wagnerian who was Richard Strauss. Had Berlioz and Wagner spoken about orchestration itself, the French composer would surely have emphasized, as he does in the *Mémoires*, that of that art, his teachers, Jean-François Lesueur and Anton Reicha, taught him nothing at all.²⁵ Wagner might conceivably have admitted, by that time, that he had learned a thing or two from... Berlioz.

Did they talk about violinists? Wagner’s host and concertmaster, Prosper Sainton, was of the company. Perhaps they talked about *tremolo*, which both composers were accused of abusing. Or about oboe players! This is not as silly as it sounds, for Wagner’s former oboist in Dresden, Rudolf Hiebendahl, was at precisely that moment applying legal pressure to obtain repayment of a loan he had made to the composer some ten years earlier.²⁶ Berlioz could not have forgotten this fellow, for it was he who had spoiled the *Scène aux champs*, by adding trills and grace-notes to the off-stage solo that opens the third movement of the *Fantastique*, when Berlioz gave the work in Dresden in 1843. Warned against executing such melodic niceties, Hiebendahl refrained from doing so at the rehearsals, but let loose again at the concert,

knowing that in the presence of the King, Berlioz could not punish such perfidiousness.²⁷

Did they talk about the piano? Berlioz seems always to have had one—he had purchased a spinet in his student days in the eighteen-twenties, and we long thought, because of the composer's effusive but imprecise thanks, that Pierre Érard had made to him the gift a rosewood grand piano, in 1851.²⁸ (Madame Érard bestowed such a gift upon Wagner, in 1858.) In fact, Marie Recio had purchased an Érard grand piano, in 1847, and that is presumably the piano that Berlioz enjoyed until the end of his life. Neither Berlioz nor Wagner composed at the instrument. Berlioz was no pianist—he appears to have withdrawn his candidacy for the post of professor of harmony at the Conservatoire, in 1838, on learning that the teaching of practical keyboard accompaniment was a *sine qua non*²⁹—although he sometimes plunked out a few notes. Wagner was no soloist, but he did use the piano to test what he had composed at his desk.³⁰

Did they talk about books? Both men were avid readers: Berlioz seems to have preferred literature; Wagner, history and philosophy. To understand the sources of Wagner's inspiration we must read Feuerbach and Schopenhauer; to plumb the wellsprings of Berlioz's imagination, we must plunge into Chateaubriand, Hugo, and Vigny, to say nothing of Virgil and Molière, whose work he knew by heart. One book is certain to have popped into the conversation, *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, because on June 23, 1855, Berlioz wrote to his publisher, Michel Lévy, to ask that he send a copy of that book, now in its third printing, to Wagner's address in Zurich.³¹ Years later, Cosima and Richard mentioned the book when chattering, in Wahnfried, on March 24, 1879.³²

We can be fairly sure that Berlioz and Wagner talked about Beethoven—hoping individually to gain by the comparison—and we can be sure that they talked about Liszt, that great mid-century friend and advocate of both. A reading of Berlioz's letter to Liszt of June 25, 1855, and of Wagner's letter to Liszt of July 5 of that year, offers proof that the two mighty artists had had a truly gratifying exchange. Berlioz writes that “on his word of honor” (as though in some way hoping to reassure Liszt), “I believe that [Wagner] loves you every bit as much as I do, myself.” Wagner, reporting ten days later, admits that he had discovered a Berlioz quite different from the one he had earlier imagined—a veritable “Leidensgefährte,” a companion in misfortune.

Late Reflections

In the ensuing years, as Wagner developed from an extraordinary composer of romantic opera into the unparalleled creator of music drama, and from a wandering fugitive into the eventual “savior” of the Bavarian monarch, relations with Berlioz inevitably cooled. The Frenchman’s later years were clouded by ill health and ill fortune for *Les Troyens*, which ought to have crowned his career. And yet when Berlioz died, on March 8, 1869, Wagner (who appears to have received the news on the 11th) felt compelled to memorialize the occasion. On March 14, 1869, Cosima noted in her diary that the obituaries they had read were embarrassed, or confused (“verlegen”). Possibly perusing a copy of the *Mémoires* given to her by the French writer Édouard Schuré, an admirer of Berlioz and a great champion of Wagner, she wrote on April 7, 1869, that Wagner “is quite unable *now* to write about Berlioz. He would have liked to do it, and the impact of such an essay would perhaps have been good, but nobody should expect it of him.”³³

Cosima’s emphasis on the word *jetzt* suggests that Wagner had begun but failed to realize a substantial necrology. Of this we have only what appears to be the prologue—undated, but presumably written in April 1869. It is a tortured piece of writing in the original German, and it is equally convoluted in William Ashton Ellis’s translation. I offer a paraphrase of the first, full-to-bursting sentence:

Even if, during his lifetime, a person has been discussed in generally negative terms, it is still our sacred duty, after his death, to speak about him in a positive manner. And yet, to ensure that posterity not be misled, we must also assume the distressing obligation of exposing as false some of the flattering images of the man, which he, himself, had done much to encourage.³⁴

This is followed by a straight-forward thought: Were the true worth of an artist easy to assess, the making of a proper judgment would be unproblematical. But the making of a proper judgment is especially difficult when the *impact* of an artist is dubious, or suspicious (“zweifelhaft”)—even when certain qualities of his work are beyond question (“unzweifelhaft”). Wagner underlines the tendency of posterity to inflate previous appraisals, and urges those who wish to behold what is beautiful and significant in purely human terms to make judgments without the constraints of *any* particular historical period. “We choose Hector Berlioz,” he writes, “to try to gain from

his example the kind of disinterested judgment that transcends time and circumstance.”

Here ends the fragment. Was this in fact to be an obituary? Or, as one might gather from the “we choose” phraseology, was it to be a treatise on the philosophy of criticism? In either case, it is a prolegomenon to something conflicted and bittersweet. Wagner had always found “uneasiness,” “chaos,” “confusion,” and “mistakes” in the work of Berlioz, and yet now—as on September 8, 1852, when he told Liszt: “Glaub’ mir—ich *liebe* Berlioz, mag er sich auch mißtrauisch und eigensinnig von mir entfernt halten: er *kennt* mich nicht, —aber *ich* kenne *ihn*” (“Believe me, I *love* Berlioz, even though he distrustfully and obstinately refuses to come near me: he does not *know* me, but *I* know *him*”)³⁵—now, in 1869, he was clearly drawn to the French composer. The modern translators whom I cite offer “like” for “*liebe*,” but I believe the exuberant German intended to say “love.” In May of that year, Wagner read Berlioz’s *Mémoires* with considerable sympathy, and told his companion that the book had “strengthened his resolve never again to have anything to do with Paris.”³⁶ Six months later, as we have mentioned, Wagner was writing his treatise on conducting—the first of any importance since Berlioz’s *L’Art du chef d’orchestre*, the appendix to the second edition of the orchestration treatise of 1855. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the French musician’s conspicuous absence from *Über das Dirigieren* is a paradoxical sign of his presence in Wagner’s imagination. For years thereafter, Berlioz was a topic of conversation between Richard and Cosima: the latter’s diaries are filled with fascinating *aperçus*—complimentary, critical, contradictory—regarding both the man and his music.

That music, Wagner knew well. It was presumably during his years in Dresden, when he amassed a considerable library, that Wagner began purchasing Berlioz’s published scores. By the end of his life, he possessed an impressive collection of first editions, as we know from the current Berlioz holdings in the Wagner museum at Wahnfried, which include the *Symphonie fantastique*, *Harold en Italie*, the *Requiem*, *Roméo et Juliette* (in both full score and in Théodore Ritter’s piano reduction), the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, *La Damnation de Faust*, the *Te Deum*, and the overtures *Le Roi Lear*, *Benvenuto Cellini* (in both full score and in Adolfo Fumagalli’s piano arrangement), and *Le Carnaval romain*. Wagner also possessed the Witzendorf edition of Liszt’s arrangement of the *Symphonie fantastique*, a first edition of the *Mémoires* (as we have seen), and the orchestration treatise translated by Alfred Dörffel and published in Leipzig in 1864 as Berlioz’s *Instrumentationslehre*.

The precise contents of Berlioz's library have never come to light. The only works by Wagner that we may be certain were in his possession are *Lohengrin*, published in Leipzig in 1852 and offered to Berlioz in the following year, by the Polish Count Thadeus Tyszkiewicz, with a touching dedication—

Offert à Monsieur Hector Berlioz en souvenir de son passage par Francfort et comme témoignage de l'admiration la plus sincère et du plus profond respect.
—Thadée C^{te} Tyszkiewicz, 29.VIII.1853.³⁷

—and *Tristan*, with which we opened this chapter. In Paris in 1860 Wagner offered the spanking new edition to Berlioz as a tribute to his colleague and rival whose work he had attempted to transcend and in the hope of winning both the French composer's private affection and public approval of a radically new musical style. But Berlioz's approval could never be purchased, not even by the gift of that priceless score. While he reacted in many favorable ways to parts of *Rienzi*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, whose overture he considered a *chef-d'œuvre*, Berlioz could not find it in his heart—because he could not find it in his *ear*—to lavish praise upon *Tristan*, whose prelude, played at Wagner's three concerts by the augmented orchestra of the Théâtre-Italien at the sale Ventadour, soon to become the most intensely scrutinized hundred measures in the entire musical canon, Berlioz simply failed to grasp.

What Berlioz wrote in reaction to the prelude—"I have read and reread this curious page; I have listened to it with scrupulous attention and with a sincere desire to discover its meaning; but alas, I must admit that I do not yet have the slightest idea of what the author was attempting to do"—has more than any other comment caused him to become known as one of Wagner's detractors. But if we read and reread this sentence, we see that it is not mere disparagement, for the crucial words *pas encore* ("not yet") suggest that Berlioz understood the possibility that the deficiency was, not Wagner's, but *his*. It is well to remember that the dissonances at the opening of the finale of the Ninth Symphony—hardly a work that the French composer abhorred—caused Berlioz to use a quite similar formula: "I have long sought the reason for this idea, but I am compelled to admit that it remains to me inexplicable."³⁸ The balance of the article on Wagner deals with the so-called "music of the future." Here, too, Berlioz's objections, read coolly, are directed not so much at Wagner as at the "religion" of *la musique de l'avenir*, to whose prophets he would say *non credo*. Like Rossini, whose music Berlioz respected but whose proselytes he reproached, Wagner was for Berlioz a man to be

reckoned with, the Wagnerians, men to be rebuffed. Furthermore, Berlioz would sometimes think of Wagner as a man more “of theory” than “of experience.” Like Edmund Burke, who because of their abstract theories objected to the leaders of the French Revolution,³⁹ Berlioz, too, was by nature skeptical of theoretical programs—political as well as artistic.

Of the many aspects of this multidimensional relationship—almost all of the stories you might wish to tell can be told along with the story of Berlioz and Wagner—let me reiterate one that brings both artists together. This concerns the phenomenon that so impressed Berlioz on his initial encounter with *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer*—Wagner’s twofold authorship of the text and the music. The encounter surely added fuel to the fire that eventually led Berlioz, too, to compose his own librettos. In this way Berlioz was able to give his music “the first and final say,” as Katherine Kolb has persuasively written, “while simultaneously declaring the text so crucial that the composer alone could be relied on to do it justice.”⁴⁰ Would Richard Wagner have put it this way? In the eternal debate over the primacy of the one or the other, Wagner tended, at least in theory, to exclaim *prima la parole, dopo la musica*. He diagnosed Berlioz’s problem as advocating the opposite, as we see in his letter to Liszt of September 8, 1852, with its analysis of the weakness of Berlioz’s *Benvenuto Cellini* couched in explicit sexual imagery that a “new” musicologist might wish to pursue:

If ever a *musician* needed a *poet*, it is Berlioz, and it is his misfortune that he always adapts his poet according to his own musical whim, arranging now Shakespeare, now Goethe, to suit his own purpose. He needs a poet to fill him through and through, a poet who is driven by ecstasy to violate him, and who is to him what man is to woman.⁴¹

It is true that the libretto of *Benvenuto Cellini*, like those of the dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette* and the dramatic legend *La Damnation de Faust*, fails to rise to Goethean or Shakespearean heights. (*Les Troyens* and *Béatrice et Bénédicte* were not yet written.) What is striking is Wagner’s “solution” to Berlioz’s “difficulty”: that he take over Wagner’s *own* prose outline of the story of *Wieland der Schmied*, the three-act mythical-legendary-Germanic-heroic opera sketched in the winter of 1849–1850 and abandoned by the Meister in favor of the Nibelungs. We may find this ludicrously self-centered, because Berlioz, who contemplated setting many tales, was unlikely to warm to such a subject. But Wagner was perfectly serious. More droll, Wagner suggests that the French libretto of *Wieland* be

prepared by, of all persons, Henri Blaze. Now, it is not clear whether Wagner refers to Berlioz's predecessor at the *Journal des débats*, the critic known as Castil-Blaze, or to his son, Henri Blaze de Bury. For Berlioz, both were incarnations of all that was wrong with French musical life—the former because of his arrangements of Mozart and Weber, which for Berlioz were *dérangements* and *castilblazades*; the latter because of his “De l'école fantastique de M. Berlioz,”⁴² a misguided essay that itemized Berlioz's “faults” in an insidious way that misinformed an entire generation. Wagner may have liked Berlioz, he may have admired and felt sympathy for him, but he did not *know* him, contrary to what he explicitly claimed to Liszt, for no one who knew him could possibly have suggested that he traffic with a Blaze. Furthermore, *Wieland der Schmied*, as Jean-Jacques Nattiez has it, is an illustration of the thesis of Wagner's *The Artwork of the Future* regarding the relative importance of music and poetry in opera.⁴³ Such a philosophical notion, to Berlioz, would have been unsuited for musical setting. None other than Adolf Hitler, however, believing himself skilled in music after a few months of piano lessons, thought otherwise.⁴⁴ In fact a few of Hitler's sketches for the opera, including a musical sketch set down by his friend August Kubizek, went on display at the Museum Niederösterreich Haus der Geschichte, in Sankt Pölten, near Vienna, in February 2020.

Wagner's diagnosis of Berlioz's operatic problem is not absurd, and it is regrettable, one might say with historical distance, that the two were unable to debate the issue in detail. “How unfortunate for me that you do not understand German,” Wagner wrote to Berlioz on September 6, 1855, recognizing that on that account he would always remain a stranger to the French composer. Throughout his lifetime Wagner was consumed with the question of “Was ist deutsch.” And because he saw his own music as “merely an illustration” of the German poem and the underlying poetic concept—the “poetische Entwürfe”—he assumed that Berlioz would always be estranged from his music as well. Berlioz replied sympathetically, with humor, without linguistic chauvinism, without philosophical baggage: “In *true* music, there are accents that require their particular words, and there are words that require their particular accents. To separate the one from the other, to give equivalents that are merely approximate, is to have a puppy suckled by a goat and vice versa.”⁴⁵

Afterword

Near the end of the love scene in act 2, Tristan and Isolde entreat the love-night (*Liebesnacht*) to bring about their love-death (*Liebestod*)—the desired fruit of their love-passion (*Liebeslust*—the last word of the scene). Because German loves *Liebes*-compounds, let us choose *Liebesangst* to represent Wagner's feelings about Berlioz. The gift of *Tristan* was no doubt a display of affection. But it is also possible to see it as a demonstration of anxiety, which he earlier expressed candidly to Liszt, and which resulted in part from what he perceived as his linguistic inadequacy: "I am afraid of Berlioz; with my horrible French, I am simply lost."⁴⁶ The psychological state in which Wagner encountered Berlioz was manifest in his larger encounter with the French nation, which now he would adopt, now he would defeat. (A recent doctoral dissertation studies the encounter at length and in detail.)⁴⁷ How curious that, unlike Berlioz's later reception (warm abroad, mixed in France, everywhere free from ideological excess), Wagner's afterlife—from the time of Nietzsche to the time of the Holocaust and beyond—should become an incarnation of *Liebesangst* itself.

Was Berlioz anxious about the rise of Wagner? In her own highly imaginative study of the relationship I have discussed here, Katherine Kolb demonstrated how much of Berlioz's later criticism, especially that included in his final compendium, *À travers chants*, is overtly or covertly directed at Wagner.⁴⁸ The French composer resented his displacement at the Opéra by Wagner and *Tannhäuser*, he reproved the chromaticism of *Tristan*, he rejected excessive theorizing, he never doubted the rightness of his own cause: "Music is free" (I quoted Berlioz's dictum in chapter 7); "it does what it wants—and without permission."⁴⁹ He could not have known, in the eighteen-sixties, that that excessive theorist, who most of the time believed that his music was the servant of his words, would for a century and beyond loom over the musical world, a burning object of both worship and worry, as "the most widely influential figure in the history of music."⁵⁰

Chapter Ten

Imperialism and the Ending of *Les Troyens*

Capitaine nous te suivons, nous sommes prêts! Allons! À la montagne!

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

It is a strange and curious phenomenon, I think, that Berlioz's musical politics, generally speaking, have received far less attention than have those of his younger German contemporary, Richard Wagner. I have made no precise accounting, but there is little doubt that political interpretations of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* are as common to the Wagner literature as political interpretations of *Les Troyens*, in writings on Berlioz, are rare. In chapter 5, I mentioned that, in 2000, when the renowned Salzburg Festival was preparing to honor the two-hundredth anniversary of Berlioz's birth with a star-spangled performance of *Les Troyens*, Richard Wagner's great-grandson, Gottfried Wagner (son of Wolfgang, grandson of Siegfried), objected to a European-wide telecast of the opera because of its "imperialistic ideology" glorifying a "so-called providential ruler who would found a supposedly imperishable world order."¹ Gottfried Wagner is a supersensitive political observer, for reasons that are obvious—he finds direct parallels in *Das Judentum in der Musik* and *Mein Kampf*; he feels certain (though the matter is hardly decided) that the music dramas of his celebrated forebear are intentionally charged with anti-Semitism; he condemns his famed family for failing fully to confront their Hitlerian past²—but his point is well directed, it seems to me, calling attention as it does to the central ideological issue as it pertains both to Berlioz and to Virgil.

Even the literary critic Edward Said, not a musicologist but not unknowledgeable about music, argued that Berlioz "used *Les Troyens* as an artistic vehicle for paralleling in music the contemporary expansion of the French

empire in North Africa, which is where the second half of the work is set.” Said, familiar with only the final version of the opera, specifically retreats from labeling Berlioz an imperialist and *Les Troyens* as “crudely ideological,” but nevertheless believes that the opera “is incomprehensible as a great work of art without some account of the heady grandeur it shares both with Virgil as the poet of empire and with the imperial France in and *for which* it was written.”³

The reasons for the plethora of political interpretations in the case of Wagner and the paucity of them in the case of Berlioz are linked to the trajectory of the careers of the artists and, more particularly, to the historical waters that flowed beneath the dam in the aftermath of their demise. Berlioz found no patron such as Ludwig II of Bavaria, founded no such festival as the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, and fascinated neither a “Führer” nor the foremost novelist of his time, Thomas Mann, whose writings wove Wagner into the literary and political history of the twentieth century. Berlioz would have been pleased to have as his patron the Emperor Napoléon III, even though his reign, in some ways progressive, was marked by the trappings of what has been called a police state: executions, deportations, and the severe repression of dissent.⁴ Indeed, the composer’s own vision of a musical utopia, set out in his novella, *Euphonia*, is not without troublingly despotic and sadistic components of the sort that persons associated with the similarly utopic village of Bayreuth would later endorse, among them the philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain: “The spiritual sword that we wield,” Hitler would famously write, “was forged in Bayreuth, first by the Master himself, then by Chamberlain.”⁵

Unlike Wagner, the French composer did not himself actively dabble in politics. Nor was it necessary for the scholar who more than all others revived Berlioz in the twentieth century to write an essay of both admiration and admonition, as Thomas Mann did in *Die Leiden und Grösse Richard Wagners*—where Mann proclaimed that no spirit of brutal regression should claim Wagner for its own—because no one in France took Berlioz’s work as an anthem to a modern party of racial hatred and world domination. That, of course, is how Joseph Goebbels and the Nazis approached Wagner’s work, in 1933, and that is what Thomas Mann wished to contest.⁶ The scholar of whom I speak, Jacques Barzun, was not a German who went into exile in the United States, as did Mann, but a Frenchman who as a boy was sent to America to recover from psychological damage suffered during the First World War and to pursue the American university education that his father thought superior to the French. Barzun, whose work on Berlioz we shall consider in the final chapter of this book, made the acquaintance of Mann in the nineteen-forties, when the two men crossed paths in the intellectual crucible

of New York City. Mann, the Wagnerian, had earlier tried to present himself as an apolitical artist, publishing a substantial monograph on *The Reflections of a Non-Political Man*,⁷ but he was soon drawn into the public sphere, first, as a defender of the fledgling Weimar Republic, later as an outspoken opponent of the Third Reich. Barzun, the Berliozian, not a novelist but a historian, was the more likely nonpolitical man in the sense that his essentially Gallic reasonableness led to admiration from both the right and the left. His relative disinterest in Berlioz's political associations, something I felt firsthand during our four decades of regular correspondence, has carried over into the work of several generations of his followers.

It has therefore happened that when we seek the meaning of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Wagner's most ambitious undertaking, we consider, among other things, the *original* ending of the drama—in which Brünnhilde delivers Siegfried to Wotan, in Walhall, in order that Wotan, now free from guilt, reestablish his rule; and we wonder, for example, if it ought to be associated with the pamphlet Wagner published in the *Dresdener Anzeiger* on June 14, 1848, on the relationship between contemporary republican efforts and the monarchy, “Wie verhalten sich republikanische Bestrebungen dem Königtum gegenüber,” in which it is suggested that aristocratic privilege should be abolished, that a king should rule, but only as the first among *republicans*. In his brilliant monograph on *Wagner's Music Dramas*, Carl Dahlhaus comments on no fewer than *six* different versions of Brünnhilde's final lines and on the political implications of each, from republican satisfaction to the advantages of anarchy, from Schopenhauerian resignation to the optimism of rebirth.⁸ On the last point, as a small example, Wagner himself, in 1872, associated the musical motif that we hear high in the sky, at the end of the symphonic peroration of *Götterdämmerung*, with the birth of his own daughter, Isolde, six years earlier, in 1865.⁹ (The motif is first heard at “O hehrstes Wunder,” in *Die Walküre*, when Sieglinde becomes aware that motherhood, for her, is imminent.)

Should we not lavish similar attention upon the ending of Berlioz's epic opera, which was significantly revised for reasons that were variously artistic, practical, philosophical, and, yes, political? The ending of act 5, when Berlioz completed work in April 1858, did not encompass the thirty-five bars of what is now number 52 as we have it in Hugh Macdonald's great score for the *New Berlioz Edition*, and as we have it in almost all recorded performances. It rather encompassed the two hundred fifty-one bars found in the appendix to the *NBE*, based on the autograph of the score preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. (It should be noted that some *collettes* or paste-overs in the autograph have been lifted since Macdonald completed his

work, and the vocal score prepared by Berlioz between April 1858 and June 1859, of which only a fragment was known to Macdonald, has now been recovered. These documents need renewed study, but do not fundamentally alter the picture we already have.) The *NBE* score is also based on the autograph copy of the libretto, preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, which Berlioz presumably wrote out before or during the composition of the opera, between 1856 and 1858. The latter is inscribed with the date of August 12, 1859, on which day Berlioz gave it to the celebrated mezzo-soprano Rosine Stoltz, with a flowery but potentially wounding dedication: "À la Cassandre inspirée, à la noble Didon, à l'aiglonne du chant dramatique, à Rosine Stoltz, je donne ce manuscrit autographe pour qu'elle le garde toute sa vie avec le souvenir de mon affection profonde"—"to that inspired Cassandra, that noble Dido, that commanding eagle of dramatic singing, to Rosine Stoltz, I give this autograph manuscript in order that she keep it for the rest of her life along with a remembrance of my profound affection."¹⁰ By the late eighteenth-fifties, Rosine Stolz no longer possessed the powerful mezzo-soprano voice of her youth, to which Berlioz refers with the word *aiglonne*, which he used to compliment her in his feuilleton of October 5, 1854. Although she would have liked to take one of the roles, she would sing neither Cassandre nor Didon. Berlioz surely wished her to understand that, in an earlier time, she would have been the ideal interpreter of his two Virgilian heroines. Believing herself still in the fullness of her career, however, she was unmoved by his flattery. As Berlioz explained to his son on January 26, 1864: "Madame Stolz has written to me. She is here and is still totally furious. So many people out in the world are simply out of their minds!"¹¹ In fact, as reported in the press, for the role of Cassandre, Berlioz had chosen a young and little-known mezzo-soprano, Irma Morio, whose brief career unfolded primarily in the provincial theaters of Bordeaux, Marseille, and Rouen.¹² Needless to say, when he was compelled to abandon the first two acts of his grand opera, on June 4, 1863, he was compelled as well to abandon both Cassandre and Mademoiselle Morio, who had in fact been engaged for the role.

Let me take a moment to describe the ending of *Les Troyens* that we have in the first version of the score—the ending that Berlioz sketched in January 1858, shortly before writing to Hans von Bülow, on the 20th, that he had just added "an ending to the drama, an ending considerably more grandiose and conclusive than the one [he has] had in mind until now. The audience will now see how Aeneas has completed his mission [...]. There is in all of this a great deal of musical pomp and circumstance, which I do not now have time to explain to you in detail."¹³ After Dido has stabbed herself and fallen

on her bed, a rainbow appears to stretch over the funeral pyre and to touch her nearly lifeless body. Berlioz notes, with Newtonian precision, that we see “un rayon solaire décomposé présentant les sept couleurs primitives”—“a decomposed ray of sunlight presenting the seven primary colors.” The Grand Prêtre takes notice of Iris, goddess of the multicolored rainbow, who has appeared above the dying Queen, and who leads the assembly in a chant-like responsorial prayer of deliverance on a solemn C-major chord. (Berlioz here follows the end of book 4, where Iris appears—her role in the *Aeneid*, Berlioz seems to realize, is crucial¹⁴—in order to free Dido from the agony of death.) Two pizzicato strokes, V to I in E minor, mark the precise moment of the Queen’s demise. (In the revised version, Dido, with her dying breath, both imagines the fall of Carthage and, rather precipitously, the rise of Rome.) The Carthaginian flag is placed upon the pyre such that it waves above Dido’s inanimate frame. The Carthaginians, in a furious D-major chorus (music that no one has ever heard in performance), swear their eternal hatred of the race of Aeneas, “Haine éternelle à la race d’Énée,” the very text that Berlioz later fitted to the strains of the Trojan March—a maneuver that is ingenious but incongruous. You would presumably not sing “God Save the South,” the text of the would-be anthem of the Confederacy, to the music of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” even if the slave-owning Francis Scott Key’s poem makes troubling reference to “the hireling and slave.” The Trojan March does not execrate the Trojans, it exalts them! The D-major chorus to which I refer is marked “coupé” in the autograph, but it is not crossed out. This is a sign, I believe, that Berlioz was reserving the right to use it at a later date: when he wished to make a permanent cancellation, he *obliterated* the notes or the words.

The curtain now falls to indicate the “passage of time,” this being one of the principal themes of the *Aeneid* itself.¹⁵ The stage direction reads: “Une toile d’avant-scène s’abaisse, représentant le Temps suivi du cortège des heures, dont douze sont vêtues de tuniques blanches et roses et douze de tuniques noires étoilés d’or.” (“A downstage curtain falls representing Time followed by the procession of the Hours, twelve outfitted in pink and white tunics, twelve, in black tunics spangled with golden stars.”) Berlioz’s phrase, with the capital *t* of “Temps,” suggests the presence of an image—perhaps the traditional allegorical figure of a shriveled old man—but this is not certain. Nor is it clear if his mention of the Hours—Greco-Roman divinities (Horae) personifying the seasons or, more literally, the twenty-four hours of the day—refers to a procession illustrated on the curtain or enacted on the stage. It is not impossible that the composer was relying upon the elaborate

descriptions of the garb of the hours as specified in John Murray's 1833 commentary on Pope's *Homer* and Dryden's *Aeneid*.¹⁶ Or that he had in mind a painting such as Poussin's *Danse de la musique du Temps*, whose purchase by Lord Hertford, in 1845, was noted at the time in all the Parisian papers, and whose subject has been viewed as "a reflection on the passage of time";¹⁷ or even Guido Reni's Roman masterpiece, *L'Aurora*, whose virtues would be later extolled by Berlioz's good friend, the art critic Francis Wey.¹⁸

The new section, marked *Épilogue*, begins with a mysteriously modulating orchestral murmur, forty-two bars that do indeed suggest the passage of time and, conceivably, a pantomime of some solemnity. The curtain then rises anew to reveal the Capitol in Rome with, to one side, Clio, the muse of History, and, next to her, "une Renommée," a winged allegorical representation of a transmitter of extraordinary events based, we may presume, on Virgil's "Fama," a god or goddess of "rumor" who, in the *Aeneid*, brings to Dido, in a dream, the news of Aeneas' imminent departure.¹⁹ We hear again the Trojan March, "handed down by tradition and now become the triumphal hymn of the Romans." We see parading in front of the Capitol an armed warrior leading a Roman legion, and we hear Clio singing in Latin the praises of Scipio Africanus, the Roman General who defeated Hannibal of Carthage in 202 BC; we see a second warrior leading a second Roman legion, as Clio sings "glory to Julius Caesar" (these four bars are carefully crossed out in the manuscript but, again, remain fully legible); and we see "an Emperor," as Berlioz puts it, "surrounded by poets and artists," while Clio sings "glory to the Emperor Augustus and to the Divine Virgil." As this ultimate, extended version of the march comes to an end, Clio intones, and two distant voices echo, the words "Fuit Troja, Stat Roma"—"What was once Troy is now Rome!" Beneath the final bars of the score, the composer sets down a line from the *Aeneid*: "Quidquid erit, superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est"—the advice given to Aeneas by old counselor Nautus, a favorite pupil of Pallas, who appears only in book 5 of Virgil's epic poem—which Berlioz translates as "Quoi qu'il arrive, on doit vaincre le sort en supportant ses coups," and which we may wish loosely to render as "we must endure whatever befalls us."

Hugh Macdonald has concluded that this is "an uncompromisingly idealistic plan, whose aim was lofty enough: to transmute the ultimate purpose of the *Aeneid* into operatic form."²⁰ But what *is* the ultimate purpose of the *Aeneid*? Gottfried Wagner had an answer to that question, as we have seen, as did Edward Said; and Mitchell Cohen, in *The Politics of Opera*, has proposed something similar: "Hector Berlioz returned to Virgil, Dido, and Aeneas; *Les*

Troyens (1856–1858) announces the imperatives of founding or reconstructing a national home (or, perhaps, a renewed empire).²¹ “I simply must have the right to set down on the title page of the score,” Berlioz exclaimed to his brother-in-law on November 2, 1859, “the words that Clio sings in the Epilogue: ‘Stat Roma!’”²²

The ultimate purpose of the Virgilian epic remains a matter of considerable dispute. The scholarly literature on the subject is, to mix a metaphor, Wagnerian. Most specialists agree that Virgil’s epic celebrates the achievements, and offers mythical and divine justification of the authority, of Augustus—the first Roman Emperor, the adoptive son of Julius Caesar, the worthy descendent of Aeneas, the founder of the Roman people. Some, associated with what has been called the Harvard School, finding aspects of Aeneas’ behavior to be “disturbing,” offer pessimistic readings of the poem and its hero: “a perjurer and a worshipper of false gods, a seducer and a traitor, a warrior who repeatedly gives in to an anger that is incompatible with true courage.”²³ These experts, however, may be fairly accused of applying current norms to ancient civilizations.²⁴ Berlioz, too, in the *Mémoires*, apostrophizes Aeneas as perfidious and hypocritical;²⁵ he seems to feel from the *Aeneid* the sad similarity, indeed the near equality, of the victors and the vanquished, as Sainte-Beuve would put it in his *Étude sur Virgile*.²⁶

The reference to Sainte-Beuve occurs in a thoughtful reading of *Les Troyens* by William Fitzgerald, who deals wisely with the relationship between the opera and Virgil’s epic, but who rather offhandedly sets aside the original, bloated finale, which I have described, as so much “imperial phantasmagoria, inspired by passages in books 6 and 8 of the *Aeneid*.”²⁷ But it is precisely that unquestioning “imperial phantasmagoria” that interests me, because, whatever the reasons for its eventual excision, the phantasmagoria “compatible with a triumphalist reading” of the poem, in Fitzgerald’s words, is basic to Berlioz’s original design. The subsequent draconian shortening of the finale eliminates much of the fanfare, including the once much-desired “Stat Roma,” and in the process eliminates a fully satisfying *plagal* cadence at the end, replacing it with ten ultimately tiresome bars of unrelieved B-flat major.

It seems to me logical, not only to study the original ending, in its expansive entirety, but also to see it as cast in the mold of the ancient *tragédies en musique* of Lully, whose prologues were encomia to Louis XIV: “In no other artistic form was Louis’ image of grandeur and power more effectively projected to the court and to the public than in the music-dramas whose subjects were selected personally by him and whose texts were imaginative encomiums of his exploits. Thus the fine arts, their support, protection, and

control, were the business of the state.”²⁸ Robert Isherwood’s may be a one-dimensional view of what is in fact a multifaceted musical and dramatic reality, as Olivia Bloechl has demonstrated in her recent study,²⁹ but it cannot be denied that the use of the principal theater of the capital as an instrument of the prestige of the régime has been an aspect of the Académie Royale (Impériale, Nationale) de Musique since its very foundation. Berlioz was no fan of Lully, but he did idolize Gluck, who renewed the tradition of the *tragédie en musique* when he came to Paris, in 1773, only one year after the arrival there of his former singing pupil, Marie Antoinette. From the seventeenth through the twentieth century and beyond, the prestige of the Opéra in Paris has always echoed the power of the administration. That this is still the case is well recounted in *Le Syndrome de L’Opéra*, where it is pointed out, among other things, that the choice of black for the color of the seats in the modern Opéra de la Bastille was made by none other than President François Mitterrand.³⁰ More recently, the choice of Alexander Neef as director of the Opéra, in July 2019, was made, to no one’s surprise, by President Emmanuel Macron.

Now, to show that Berlioz was a lifelong admirer of royalism and authoritarianism is not difficult, as we have demonstrated in earlier chapters. His public and private writings are rich with statements and allusions that directly and indirectly express esteem for Napoléon I, for Louis-Philippe, for his son the Duc d’Orléans, for the various German and Russian Kings and potentates he encountered during his European travels, and of course for Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who became Président de la République for what was intended to be a singular four-year mandate and for what became a term of Emperor for life. Those writings—which, as David Cairns has observed in an essay that wisely reminds us of what we know and what we *do not know* of Berlioz’s thinking³¹—are equally marked by statements that excoriate the republican and representative forms of government that in France manifested themselves during Berlioz’s maturity. What he says in the 1848 *Préface* to the *Mémoires*—“As I write, republicanism is steamrolling its way across the European continent. The art of music, which for a long time has been everywhere gasping for life, is at this hour quite dead. It is about to be buried, or rather thrown upon the dung-heap”—is only the most talked-about of a number of such comments, like those found in letters of 1849, where Berlioz speaks of “this time of liberty, fraternity and equality, and *obscenity and improbity and stupidity*, [when] people are only interested in what fills the stomach;”³² and where he says, of the protestors in the streets: “We are in a forest full of bandits, who threaten us, and yet we reason with them rather than shooting them like the wolves they are.”³³

We are not surprised, therefore, to hear him say, on December 9, 1851, one week after Louis-Napoléon's *coup d'état*, and five days after the arrest of twenty-five thousand citizens and the shooting of some four hundred demonstrators, that "this *coup d'état* is a stroke of genius, an utter masterpiece."³⁴ Such a reaction was precisely opposite to that of Richard Wagner, for whom the *coup d'état* represented a continuing sign of the rotting corpse of European civilization and a setback to his hopes for revolutionary change.³⁵ For Berlioz, who was by no means alone, the rot was republican. In what is a purely fortuitous coincidence, an apparently left-leaning critic of the 1851 salon, François Sabatier-Unger, viewing Courbet's new, magisterial portrait of the French composer, noted in March of that year that "the falcon has become an eagle."³⁶ Berlioz, acutely aware of the symbolic value of the eagle in the Roman and Napoleonic Empires, would surely have appreciated the remark.

In 1852 Berlioz hoped, but in vain, to have his newly composed *Te Deum* performed at an imperial coronation and at an imperial marriage. Indeed, Frank Heidlberger has interpreted the *Te Deum* itself as inspired by Berlioz's nostalgia for Napoléon I and, in the aftermath of the death of his own father, as a representation symbolic of the very idea of authority.³⁷ Furthermore, in the new Napoleonic era, Berlioz would soon prepare a detailed program for the organization of a renewed and grandiose Imperial Chapel. And he would send to the Emperor a copy of his new book, *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, whose crowning tale, the novella *Euphonia*, which I mentioned earlier, has been convincingly interpreted by Katherine Kolb as Berlioz's sermon of "early allegiance" to the emergent Second Empire.³⁸

In the spring of 1853, Berlioz busily prepared *Benvenuto Cellini* for performance in London: there were rumors of the possibility of a conspiracy to spoil the première—presumably not politically inspired—but Berlioz felt reassured by the knowledge that among those in attendance would be a number of royals, including Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the King and Queen of Hanover, and Grand Duke Carl Alexander of Weimar.³⁹ Alas, the presence of so many dignitaries failed to quell the cabal that took place, and the cabal probably quashed whatever thought Berlioz might have had, given his tenuous position in France, of seeking temporary refuge in the kingdom across the channel.

Later in 1853—I mention this because I have mentioned the end of *The Ring*—Berlioz joined Liszt and Wagner in Paris at the home of the governess of Liszt's children, the formidable Madame Patersi de Fossombroni, just as Wagner was reading to the three teenagers the libretto of what was still at that time *Siegfried's Tod*. (The title of *Götterdämmerung* was not fixed until

1856.) Berlioz, “who behaved with admirable forbearance in the face of this misfortune,” Wagner noted with irony in *Mein Leben*,⁴⁰ would have understood nothing at all! But surely, in subsequent conversation, the German composer-librettist would have attempted some kind of explanation to the non-German-speaking Frenchman.

In 1854, Berlioz composed a *Cantate Impériale*, as he announced to Liszt on July 2 of that year,⁴¹ which he hoped to have performed on August 15, the birthday of the first Napoléon, whom Berlioz had of course always admired from afar. That title—identical to contemporary works by Édouard Deldevez and Adolphe Adam, and similar to others by Jérôme Devey, Alfred Chaubet, and Aimé Cornier,⁴² may have replaced Berlioz’s original title of *Le Dix Décembre*, the date of Louis-Napoléon’s election to the presidency, December 10, 1848, although which title came first is not clear. In early 1856, Berlioz published the cantata with a dedication to Napoléon III, and in late August of that year, he was pleased to receive acknowledgement of the dedication in the form of a gold medal with the engraved portrait of the sovereign and the words “L’Empereur Napoléon III à M. Hector Berlioz.”⁴³

The year 1856 is the one in which, after five previous attempts, Berlioz was finally elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Institut de France—an honor that he much appreciated in part, although he would never say so explicitly, because it refurbished his rank in the cultural establishment, and led to occasional intercourse with the Emperor. On January 16, 1858, for example, two days after Felice Orsini’s failed attempt to assassinate the Emperor on the steps of the Opéra, Berlioz, shaken by the event, went to the Palais des Tuileries to inscribe his name on the list of those expressing their sympathy, and joined three colleagues to draft for the Académie des Beaux-Arts an official letter of confidence and concern.⁴⁴ The year 1856 is of course the year in which Berlioz began work on *Les Troyens*, telling his uncle that he had “superstitiously begun to set down the poem on the glorious date of the fifth of May”—that being the date of the death, as Berlioz presumed everyone knew, of Napoléon I.⁴⁵ (One of the first things Berlioz did with his new title was to write “Membre de l’Institut” beneath his name on the title page of the in-progress autograph of *Les Troyens*.) Berlioz was well aware that Napoléon III was not musically inclined: “[The Emperor] abominates music like ten Turks,” he wrote in 1856; “You won’t believe it, this harmonophobia,” he joked in 1857.⁴⁶ And yet we know from copious correspondence that, throughout the gestation of *Les Troyens*, he was hoping to receive imperial support for a performance of the work at the Académie Impériale de Musique.

Under the weight of so much correspondence, and so much imperial approbation, it seems to me inconceivable that, while composing the grandiose finale that we have described above, for the opera house that was christened *impériale* after 1852, Berlioz did not have in the back of his mind an encomium to the Emperor Napoléon III, who would himself, like his illustrious uncle, associate the glory of his empire with the glory of ancient Rome. In Berlioz's *L'Impériale*, the obsequious text goes so far as to sing the praises of the Napoleonic "race"—the "race auguste de nos Césars." Like Berlioz, the poet Achille-Louis Lafon was well aware of the Emperor's "césarisme," something explicitly demonstrated in his two-volume *Histoire de Jules César* (1865), about which Berlioz would remark, before he had seen it: "The public is extremely interested in this book. I'll bet that it is really fine. He has been working on it for at least a dozen years."⁴⁷ Émile Zola, who penned a long review, and who read as obviously self-serving the French Emperor's glorious portrait of the Roman Emperor, admitted that its documentation was thorough and useful in and of itself.⁴⁸

In a more specific area, as a member of the staff at the *Journal des débats* and a colleague of among others the political writer Xavier Raymond, an ardent Catholic with his own concerns for the welfare of the home of the papacy, Berlioz would surely have been aware of Napoléon's project to expel Austria from Italy and to free the Italian peninsula, especially since a part of that plan was the arranged marriage of Prince Napoléon (the second son of Jérôme Bonaparte, the first Napoléon's youngest brother, and a close adviser to Napoléon III), whom Berlioz knew personally, and Princess Marie-Clotilde, the daughter of King Victor Emmanuel. Indeed, in his later review of the first performance of *Les Troyens*, Auguste de Gasperini seems to associate Aeneas's anguished Roman destiny with Napoléon's desire for the liberation of Italy: "We have heard all of them, all of those mysterious voices that tear us away from terrestrial enjoyments in order to remind us that Italy is before us."⁴⁹ Another reviewer, ridiculing Berlioz's decision to have Dido expire upon her vision of "Rome immortelle," asked sardonically why the composer had not included a final scene picturing the Battle of Solferino, with Victor Emmanuel riding to victory on the plains of Rome to the strains of the *Marche troyenne*, with Garibaldi to his right and Cialdini to his left.⁵⁰

When Berlioz for the second time used the word *aiglonne* to describe Rosine Stoltz, in 1859, as we have seen, he may have been letting us in on this thinking: "L'aiglon," the young eagle, was the name that Victor Hugo had applied to the first Napoléon's son, Napoléon II, who lived for only the short period of 1811 to 1832. At the boy's birth, Napoléon I gave his son,

the heir apparent to the French Empire, the title of His Majesty, the King of Rome. That Berlioz chose to compliment Stoltz with an “aiglonne” of Napoleonic resonance is one more sign—ironic, perhaps Freudian—of the association of his opera with the symbol and the fate of the First and Second Empires. As I have said, both Emperors made much use of eagles for signs and symbols. Be this as it may, to read an opera celebrating a new Roman civilization destined to dominate the universe as flattering to an Emperor who wished to stand as a champion of Order in the eternal city of Rome, in the various parts of the expanding empire, and *primus inter pares* in the French capital, is, at the end of the day, to take a relatively small interpretive step. As Annegret Fauser has it in a recent study of *Les Troyens*: “That Berlioz connected his opera to current politics is played out repeatedly in his plot.”⁵¹ This is something that becomes notably apparent *ex post facto*, I hasten to add, because none of the reviewers praises or pillories Berlioz for having explicitly exalted the Emperor Napoléon III.

We must now ask, after mentioning some of the adjustments he made to the score and to the libretto: Why—in late 1859 and early 1860, presuming that this is fact when it took place—did Berlioz delete that original 200-bar ending, the ending, that is, which seems purposefully to overwhelm the tragedy of Dido’s death with its inflated glorification of empire and its near-incarnation of a new national pride? The first answer that suggests itself is that he was counseled to do so by his friend and mentor, Pauline Viardot, singer, pianist, composer, *musicienne extraordinaire*. In Baden-Baden, during the summer of 1859, according to Viardot (who in this case is our primary source, although the composer’s letters to her at this time are, even for him, exceptionally loving and flirtatious), Berlioz, ill and unhappy, had fallen in love with her. This is credible, considering not only the tenor of his letters but also his allusions elsewhere to his overcharged emotional state: “Not a day goes by, not an hour,” he wrote to Adolphe Samuel, on January 29, 1860, “when I am not ready to risk my life, to make a most dramatic decision. I repeat, I live in my thoughts, in immense emotions, far from reality... *I can’t tell you anything more.*”⁵² Berlioz was so much on edge that he was unable to appreciate Camille Saint-Saëns’s silly but hilarious sendup of the composer’s frequent use of “ma sœur” in the dialogues of Dido and her sister in acts 4 and 5. Smack in the middle of a rehearsal, Saint-Saëns, the *répétiteur*, blurted out “Dis-donc ma sœur!” In English, “Dis-donc” is “hey!” or “say!” The all-purpose expression rhymes precisely with “Didon”—which is why Saint-Saëns’s remark is funny! (Having to explain it, of course, renders it leaden.) Equally amusing (with historical distance) is Berlioz’s reaction:

“What a way to make music! To break into the middle of a phrase to laugh at such an inanity! That is what is going on, that is what upsets me, that is what gets on my nerves, that is what exasperates me! And that is also how one rehearses in the opera house. Or rather that is how one does *not* rehearse, I would suggest, when one wishes to work on our opera. I am no longer able to stomach such infantile behavior.”⁵³

Beyond his love of Viardot, Berlioz had great respect for the great singer’s musical judgment—she “liked and admired what [he] liked in music, in literature, in all matters of the intellect,” he had told his sister in January 1859⁵⁴—and as he began with pleasure to arrange Gluck’s *Orphée* for her contralto voice, in September of that year, she began, to his profound satisfaction, to look closely at the score of *Les Troyens*. For the next *seven months*, through March 1860, Pauline Viardot acted as Berlioz’s musical adviser, one might even say collaborator, as he continued to rework the score of his monumental five-act opera. In the first two acts, apparently delighted by the role of Cassandra, which Berlioz had at one time hoped she would assume, Viardot nonetheless found certain passages “shockingly bizarre and out of place.” On October 11, 1859, Berlioz sent to Viardot the entire piano-vocal score of *Les Troyens*, with a copy of the libretto, promising soon to bring her the orchestral score of act 4 in order that she prepare a piano reduction of one number.⁵⁵ On October 24, with Berlioz’s young friend Théodore Ritter at the piano, Viardot sang Dido’s farewell from the end of act 5: “I had never heard it,” wrote Berlioz, “and I was quite overwhelmed.”⁵⁶ On October 30, she apparently returned the manuscripts to the composer, with her comments marked in the margins. Slightly misquoting Victor Hugo, he told her that, coming from her, they were like flags returning from battle, “plus beaux quand ils sont mutilés”—“all the more beautiful for being mutilated.” (Hugo’s word, in the seventeenth of the *Odes et Ballades*, was not “mutilés,” but “déchirés”—“torn.”)⁵⁷

On November 17, 1859, Berlioz sent the finale to Viardot: “Here, dear critic, is the fifth act, corrected.”⁵⁸ And at same time he told her: “You have made me *demolish* a lot of things. I sincerely regret that, quite often, you are exactly right. I would perhaps regret it even more if you were wrong! Because I prefer it when we are in agreement.”⁵⁹ On December 29, in a rare moment of relief from the constant pain he suffered from Crohn’s disease, Berlioz told his sister: “I have revised a bad bit of my score, I think I have succeeded in making it better. This evening I’m dining with some excellent friends. I’m feeling confident and happy about everything.”⁶⁰ (Here I must pause to explain my translation of the previous sentence, a loose English version

of Berlioz's clever, revealing, and culture-bound play on words, "L'Empereur n'est pas mon parrain." Berlioz starts with the expression "le roi n'est pas mon cousin"—which means that at this moment I am happier than even the King has the right to be, that I am so proud, and so happy, that even the King would at this time be my unworthy cousin. He then substitutes the word *empereur* for *roi*, as befits his imperial times, and, for the word *cousin*, he adroitly substitutes the rhyming word *parrain*—godfather. He is thus happier than even the Emperor has the right to be; the Emperor, his godfather, could not possibly be happier than he.)

We cannot be sure whether the words *corrigé* and *refait* in these letters to Viardot and others, to say nothing of *déchiré* or *mutilé*, refer to the removal of the final two hundred bars and their replacement by a new, condensed finale. However, in Berlioz's letter to Viardot of January 25, 1860, we find this: "Yesterday I worked hard on my score. It became necessary to take an axe to the finale, where you had made only tentative suggestions, and to set it afire. I think it goes really well now. How can I possibly thank you for calling my attention to so many grave imperfections."⁶¹ It may be that my translation is excessively free (Berlioz writes "il a fallu porter le feu et la cognée dans le final où vous n'aviez fait que de timides remarques," and he speaks of "tant de défauts graves"), but his forceful language does indeed suggest more than polite pruning. Was Viardot troubled by the long-windedness of the original finale, with its implied veneration of the Napoleonic dynasty? Her reaction to the 1848 Revolution, like that of her friend George Sand, was opposite to that of Berlioz; later, in 1863, "stified by the political repression of Napoléon III,"⁶² she and her husband Louis Viardot went into exile in Baden-Baden, returning to France only after the fall of the Emperor.

It could be, of course, that by "défauts graves" Berlioz refers primarily to matters of harmonic progression and structural detail, or perhaps to matters of text-setting and prosody of the sort that he himself was concerned about in Viardot's performance of Gluck's *Orphée*, when he told her how to avoid—in the line "Ah, je te suis, tendre objet de ma foi" from the recitative in act 1 that follows the aria "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice"—"a ghastly verse of eleven feet and an abominable *hiatus*" (an unpleasant juxtaposition of unlike vowels).⁶³ Four days later, on January 29, 1860, in a letter to his friend Adolphe Samuel, Berlioz again quotes the line from Virgil that he wrote at the end of the original finale: "Quidquid erit," etc.⁶⁴ Was the original finale still intact? Or was the main work now essentially finished. (The composer set down the line again on the proofs of the piano-vocal score that he gave to Georges Kastner in February 1862.)⁶⁵

Berlioz continued to polish the score of *Les Troyens* through March 1860, telling his uncle Félix Marmion, on April 4, that “my opera is finished—retouched, revised, twice corrected.”⁶⁶ The printing of the vocal score began in September 1860: Berlioz would be correcting the proofs from November of that year through February 1861.⁶⁷ During this period, the composer’s correspondence becomes sparse, and, in particular, the flood of letters to Pauline Viardot dries up: there is an eleven-month gap between the last of a series, set down on July 13, 1860, and a new letter, of June 1861. It is possible that this *refroidissement* resulted from the fact that, in March 1860, for political reasons of his own, Napoléon III ordered that a production of *Tannhäuser* be scheduled at the Opéra, and the fact that Pauline Viardot was becoming friendly with its composer: Viardot was the first person he had met, wrote Wagner, “who, quite spontaneously, surprised [him] by her truly magnificent understanding of the position [he] was in.”⁶⁸

On New Year’s Day, 1861, Berlioz went to the Palais des Tuileries to see the Emperor and to advocate for *Les Troyens*. “Such strange things are happening in our world of art at the present moment,” he wrote the next day. “At the Opéra there is nothing but rehearsal for Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*, and at the Opéra-Comique there is a new work in three acts [*Barkouff*] by Offenbach (yet another German!), who has Monsieur de Morny as his sponsor.”⁶⁹ In a letter to his son, dated February 14, 1861, Berlioz expressed increasing exasperation at Wagner’s apparent success: “Public opinion is becoming more and more indignant at seeing me shut out of the Opéra while the Austrian ambassador’s protection has readily let in Wagner.”⁷⁰ Meanwhile, because of his doubts about a production at the Opéra, Berlioz had been meditating a possible performance at what would be a newly constructed and larger Théâtre-Lyrique. On January 16, 1860, he signed a contract with the director, Léon Carvalho,⁷¹ and made every effort with his friends in positions of authority—Baron Haussmann, Prince Napoléon, Prince Poniatowski—to speed the construction of Carvalho’s new theater in the place du Châtelet.

And yet as late as January 1863, Berlioz was still hoping for performance at the Opéra: to proceed with the Théâtre-Lyrique, he wrote, “does not seem to me politically wise [‘pas d’une bonne politique’], while the fate of *Les Troyens* is still in the balance at the Opéra.”⁷² The suspense was finally ended on February 15, 1863, when Berlioz broke definitively with the Opéra and signed a new contract with the Théâtre-Lyrique. Two months later, in April, when Berlioz was in Weimar, Grand Duke Carl Alexander attempted indirectly to convince Napoléon III to order a performance of *Les Troyens*: “Poor Grand Duke,” wrote Berlioz, “he simply cannot believe it possible that

a sovereign should not be interested in the arts..."⁷³ Shortly thereafter, when the Théâtre-Italien, in the person of its new director, Prosper Bagier, had relinquished its request for a government subvention, and urged on by the representative from the Loiret, Nogent Saint-Laurens (a lawyer who was a friend of the composer's), the legislature approved the notion of transferring its one-hundred-thousand-franc subvention from the Italiens to the Théâtre-Lyrique: the matter remained unresolved for two months, but was finally adjudicated in mid-June, when Count Walewski, in one of his final acts before resigning as *Ministre d'État*, authorized the subvention for the Théâtre-Lyrique. This allowed Léon Carvalho fully to pay to its owners—the city of Paris—the annual cost of renting the theater.⁷⁴



It is surely the case that Berlioz, like Alexis de Tocqueville, was an advocate more of *liberté* than of *égalité*. But even the “liberté” he admired was not for all. As the father of modern conducting, Berlioz was a firm believer in musical *order*: conducting is an “obvious expression of power,” Elias Canetti suggests in *Masse und Macht*; and the conductor is “the ruler of the world.”⁷⁵ At one point, Berlioz’s friend, the horn player Eugène Vivier, no doubt following the expression applied to the composer-conductor in the newspapers, went so far as to address Berlioz as “Général.”⁷⁶ Indeed, Berlioz’s treatise on *L’Art du chef d’orchestre* is nothing if not a tract on absolute authority. It is no doubt his penchant for absolutism that, more than all the rest, attracted him to Napoléon III. Does that somehow take away from the grandeur of his own music? Does Igor Stravinsky’s admiration for Mussolini (“I don’t believe that anyone venerates Mussolini more than I do. To me he is the one man who counts nowadays in the whole world. [...] He is the savior of Italy and—let us hope—of Europe”)⁷⁷ take away from the grandeur of his? This is not the place to enter into the larger debate (of which the centerpiece is always Wagner’s antisemitism). But it is relevant to note that, absolutist though he was, Napoléon III practiced what the historians—I rely here primarily on the work of Jean-Claude Yon⁷⁸—have called “*democratic Caesarism*,” in which the voice of “the people” was, theoretically, the ultimate authority. In the midst of completing his “imperial” opera, Berlioz, too, made a gesture we may read as on behalf of the “people,” as he gave his personal collection of scores and parts to the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, the one more or less “democratic” institution then extant on the French musical landscape.⁷⁹

Like the Olympic games of 1936 in Berlin, which were precisely what Joseph Goebbels called them, “a victory for the German cause,” and like those that took place in Beijing in 2008, which were as much an exercise in Chinese propaganda as they were a demonstration of “the Olympic spirit,” so, too, were the grand operatic ventures of the nineteenth century inextricably linked to the political circumstances of their creation and performance. To tell the story of the opera without them is to tell only half the story. Berlioz’s gods—Gluck and Beethoven, Shakespeare and Goethe, the early Victor Hugo with his *contemptuousness* of others that our composer particularly admired⁸⁰—“the fathers of his musical destiny,”⁸¹ always played a larger-than-life role in his creative enterprise, an enterprise marked by sympathy for authoritarian rule and antipathy to republicanism. “When the populace starts meddling in public debate,” the composer would presumably have agreed with Voltaire, “all is lost.”⁸²

Now, history tells us that authoritarians have *feared* the power of music and have concomitantly attempted to *use it* for propaganda: Hitler (who during the war sent the troops to the Bayreuth Wagner Festival for moral fortification) and Stalin (who posed as chief music critic for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) are only the most obvious modern cases in point. Others include Mussolini, Salazar, Franco, and Khomeini.⁸³ In an article for the *New York Times*, Richard Taruskin criticized John Adams’s *Death of Klinghoffer* for what he took to be its ideological bias: “Art is not blameless. Art can inflict harm. The Taliban know that. It’s about time we learned.”⁸⁴ In devising *Les Troyens*, Berlioz linked his mature musical talents to his cherished Latin epic; he also linked his faith in Virgil to his loyalty to the Emperor Napoléon III. To those of us who believe that Berlioz’s opera is not harmful, and deserved a destiny less dark, it is regrettable that Napoléon III was indifferent to the promise of great music and unresponsive to Berlioz and *Les Troyens*: had he examined the original ending, he might have wished (I say, indulging my own wishful thinking) to make propagandistic use of Berlioz’s grand opera. He might have wished to associate himself with a remark, uttered on the occasion of the première, by a republican, Auguste de Gasperini, who nonetheless regretted the commercialization of contemporary music and the absence of the dignity art once enjoyed in absolutist days of yore: Berlioz’s opera “does honor to the country. We owe an immense debt of gratitude to the man who, despite predictions of disaster, took control of his own destiny”⁸⁵—and completed the work.

Chapter Eleven

Berlioz's "To be or not to be"

Hamlet!... profonde et désolante conception!... que de mal tu m'as fait!

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

This little poem—

And as Juliet dies with her Romeo near,
Disregard Letourneur with his French deeply marred,
Look to Berlioz now for the key to Shakespeare,
It is he who gives truth to the words of the Bard.

—slightly less silly in the original French—

*Avec son Roméo quand Juliette expire
Évitez Letourneur et son français banal,
Avec Berlioz seul vous comprendrez Shakespeare
Le traducteur est grand comme l'original.*

—was improvised by a rhymester at an after-concert party in Baden-Baden, where the mid-nineteenth-century's international smart set took the summer waters and amused themselves with conversation, gaming, and music. Joseph Méry's lines were preserved for posterity when the photographer Étienne Carjat printed them beneath one of the four delightful drawings he made of the controversial French composer (see figure 11.1). Usually portrayed as a beak-nosed, big-haired bird of prey (see figure 11.2), as by Émile Planat, known as Marcelin, in a drawing of 1863, Berlioz, in Carjat's rendering, appears almost gentle, kindly, *sympathique*.

The ditty tells us something important: that by that time, August 1858, when *Madame Bovary* was new, when *Tristan und Isolde* was *in utero*, when Napoléon III was in full bloom, Hector Berlioz was known not only as the composer of the *Symphonie fantastique*, not only as the peripatetic conductor



Figure 11.1 Étienne Carjat, Caricature of Berlioz (1858), charcoal, heightened with white, on yellow paper, 47.7 x 31.6 cm. RF39015R. Photo: Franck Raux. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY



Figure 11.2. Emile Planat ("Marcelin"), Caricature of Berlioz, woodcut, 33.7 x 26.0 cm. *La Vie parisienne*, 47 (November 21, 1863) [NBE 26, 248]

who for well over a decade had been promoting his music from London to Moscow, and not only as the sharp-tongued music critic for the *Journal des débats*, but also as the voice of authority among those in the know who cared to read and interpret Shakespeare.

Berlioz and the Bard is a long story. The composer's final opera, *Béatrice et Bénédict* (1862), a version of *Much Ado About Nothing*, is the subject of the following chapter. *La Mort d'Ophélie* (1842), which we studied in chapter 7, is a heart-breaking setting of the tale of Ophelia's demise as encapsulated in a text "imité de [that is, based upon] Shakespeare" by the composer's playwright friend Ernest Legouvé. The dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette* (1839) is arguably the composer's most avant-garde work. A sequel that he earlier wrote for the *Fantastique*—*Le Retour à la vie* (1832)—is a miscellany of musical numbers (including a fantasy on *The Tempest*) and monologues recited by a musician who, ailing with Hamlet's angst and in the throes of artistic and amorous despair, considers suicide, only to decide that he must live on for the sake of his art. Berlioz's remaining Shakespearean

music includes a programmatic overture on *King Lear* (1831), an astonishing *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet* (1844), and a duet in his grand Virgilian opera *Les Troyens* (1858) whose words, “par une telle nuit” (“on such a night”), are lifted literally from the love scene in act 5 of *The Merchant of Venice*. The greatest might-have-been of Berlioz’s career is an opera on *Hamlet*, for which a commission was promised but, alas, never proffered. Even Berlioz’s reaction to Goethe’s *Faust*, which he discovered in the 1828 translation by Gérard de Nerval, was imbued with Shakespeare: not only is each of his *Huit Scènes de Faust* (1829) graced with a quotation from *Hamlet* or *Romeo and Juliet*, but the delightfully ironical text of last of them, the *Sérénade de Méphistophélès*—Goethe’s lines 3682–3697, Nerval’s *Une Nuit, devant la porte de Marguérite*—is freely adapted from Ophelia’s mad scene, “Quoth she, before you tumbled me, / You promised me to wed: / So would I ha’ done, by yonder sun, / An thou hadst not come to my bed” (act 4, scene 5), as Goethe himself, likening Gretchen to Hamlet’s would-be wife, acknowledged to his friend Johann Peter Eckermann.¹

For Joseph Méry, then, the Berlioz who translated the poet was the *composer*. And indeed, in the music there is much that may be heard as Shakespearean, because the marriage of “contrastes et oppositions” (as he called them) that engendered the scores is the counterpart of the mixing of genres that Berlioz admired in the plays. But there is more, much more, because the composer was also a reader, going round in the later years to recite the plays aloud, in French, to friends and acquaintances whom he wished to infuse with his enthusiasm. And he was an advocate, joining in 1864 such luminaries as George Sand, Alexandre Dumas, and Théophile Gautier, as a member of the local committee formed to celebrate the quarter-century of Shakespeare’s birth. From Guernsey, Victor Hugo assumed the honorary presidency of the group, something that caused such trepidation in the Emperor (in protest of whose ascendancy Hugo had gone into exile) that he canceled the party. For Berlioz, birthdays were never terribly important, particularly his own, but Shakespeare’s provided an occasion to honor in public the quiet voice which long accompanied his writing and enlightened his life. Indeed, it is his unbroken forty-year fascination with the plays that sets Berlioz apart from his contemporaries as a Shakespearean-of-conspicuous note.

My purpose here is the small one of setting down an appreciation of the composer’s parody of Hamlet’s most famous monologue, and of registering Berlioz as a player in the nineteenth-century’s elevation of the Elizabethan writer to the status of a god. To do so requires preliminaries of various kinds,

because we need to know something of Berlioz's ability to read Shakespeare in English, and we need to know something of Shakespeare's standing in France. When, on March 13, 1861, Berlioz published the parody in the *Journal des débats*, the leading newspaper of the French capital, he knew that it could function as parody because the soliloquy was now nothing if not a familiar tune. Despite his long war with Shakespeare, Voltaire, in 1734, had offered an adaptation of the "to be" speech, in rhymed alexandrines, in the eighteenth of the *Lettres philosophiques*. And Jean-François Ducis, in 1769, completed an adaptation of the entire play, no matter its distance from the original, which became the daily bread of the Comédie-Française until well into the nineteenth century. All of those who felt constricted by the canons of classicism, the knowledgeable and the newcomers in the age we call Romantic, adopted Shakespeare as the exemplar of freedom.

Berlioz cannot be said to have been gifted at languages other than his own, of which he became a master. As a boy in the Isère, in the eighteen-aughts (the noughties, our British friends would say), he was tutored in Latin by his demanding father, a learned country doctor. Virgil became the composer's lifelong companion (ergo *Les Troyens*). Berlioz spent two years in Italy in his late twenties and picked up conversational Italian as do our students on their junior years abroad. He travelled extensively in Germany in his forties and learned nary a word. He twice visited Russia and there spoke exclusively French. He went five times to England between 1847 and 1855 and did on the first occasion mention to his father that he found himself able, to his surprise, to say what he needed to say. His love of Shakespeare derived, however, from no such practical experience. It rather developed—this is one of those things that cause us to see Berlioz as *fanatique* and *excentrique*—from love itself. Love for the Anglo-Irish actress Harriet Smithson, that is, who came to Paris when Berlioz was in his second year at the Conservatoire, and who, during an intensive but short-lived craze for Shakespeare in English, revealed the depths of the dramas and captivated the French public with her performances of leading roles in *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Richard III*.

All of the French Romantics were smitten by Smithson—Hugo and Gautier, Dumas and Delacroix, the list goes on—but only Berlioz made it his business relentlessly to pursue the actress, as we have seen in previous chapters, and eventually to persuade her, after a courtship whose vicissitudes forever confirm that truth is stranger than fiction, to become his wife. He could barely communicate with his *Henriette*, as he called her (to aspirate the *h* of Harriet, for a Frenchman, is hard); her French was nearly nil; and

prurient, he would discover, she was not. The vogue of viewing the plays in English came to an end well before the marriage was celebrated, in October 1833, and her career became fatally foreshortened. Five and six years earlier, the vivid pantomime and posturing of the English actors, with their striking voices and intonations, had brilliantly enlivened Shakespeare on the stage. Now, amateurs in France would prefer to pursue their enthusiasm for Shakespeare on the page.

This meant dealing with printings in English of uncertain authority and translations in French whose relationship to the originals was unsure. Pierre Letourneur, the target of Méry's admonitory alexandrines, published his renderings of the plays over a period of six years, from 1776 to 1782. His original edition (now rare) was reissued in 1821 in a version revised and reworked by the remarkably prolific historian and politician François Guizot, whose very championing of Shakespeare—seen in France as a breaker of rules—matched his opposition to the authoritarianism of the last of the Bourbons, Charles X, and his subsequent support of the more liberal Louis-Philippe, enthroned by the Revolution of 1830. By “Letourneur,” Joseph Méry and Berlioz and the others clearly meant “Guizot.” His thirteen volumes of Shakespeare went essentially unchallenged in the nineteenth century until Victor Hugo's son François-Victor embarked upon another translation of the complete works: the first of the scion's eighteen volumes appeared in 1859, the last in 1866.

Later I will offer a tiny sample from those and other competing editions, but let me now say who, in the minds of the opinion makers, was deemed competent to judge them. Of the members of the Shakespeare anniversary committee mentioned earlier, “I count only two,” wrote a reporter for *Le Figaro* on April 21, 1864, “who are capable of reading Shakespeare in his own language.” One was François-Victor Hugo himself. The other was Berlioz. The journalist, one Benoît Jouvin, thinking of the forthcoming banquet (Napoléon III had yet to order its nullification), then told a little story:

Two years ago, Hector Berlioz, Paul de Saint-Victor [the essayist and literary critic], and I found ourselves dining at the same table. In the mind of the author of *Les Troyens*, neither Beethoven nor Gluck occupies a greater place than Shakespeare. As the conversation gently drifted from music to poetry, we came to speak of the translation by François-Victor Hugo, and I asked Berlioz his opinion of it, since he knows the great English poet by heart. He gave it to us, directly and decisively, despite Paul de Saint-Victor's mild objections. If Hector Berlioz is thinking of expressing this opinion as a part of the toast he is preparing to offer to Shakespeare, the banquet on April 23rd might well end as did the banquet of the marriage of Pirithous: in inevitable *lapithating*.²

Let me explain. In Greek mythology, at the marriage of Pirithous, King of the Lapiths, in Thessaly, a grand battle broke out between the Lapiths and their drunken cousins the Centaurs. Rape, murder, mayhem, lapidation. Thinking of the Lapiths, Jouvin changed "*lapider*" (to stone) to "*lapither*." Whence my "lapithating." (I know...) Again, a bit of phonic fun hides a fact: Berlioz was dissatisfied with François-Victor Hugo's new Shakespeare. Like *arrangements* in music, which he called *dérangements*, translations, too, were nefarious falsifications.

And yet, with reluctance, Berlioz needed them. "I have three editions of Shakespeare," he wrote in 1856, "two in English, and one in French—a TRANSLATION," the capital letters dripping with disdain.³ The first two were probably *The Dramatic works of W. Shakspeare [sic] from the text of Johnson, Stevens and Reed, with a biographical memoir and summary remarks on each play*, published in Paris, by Baudry, in the late eighteen-twenties and early eighteen-thirties; and the one-volume *Works of William Shakspeare [sic], containing his plays and poems*, edited by Charles Knight and published in London, by George Cox, in the late eighteen-forties and early eighteen-fifties. The translation was by Benjamin Laroche, in the *Œuvres dramatiques de Shakspeare [sic]* first published in Paris, by Marchant, in 1839 (volume 1) and 1840 (volume 2). "The translators are such asses!" Berlioz wrote in the letter of October 28, 1864, which I quoted in chapter 2. "I have corrected in my edition I don't know how many absurdities by Monsieur Benjamin Laroche, and yet he is the most faithful and least ignorant of the lot."⁴

Such exasperation is characteristic of much of Berlioz's criticism. He earned his living as a writer, I remind you, working out of necessity (because his concerts rarely reaped what it cost to put them on) as a correspondent for the small-circulation musical press and as chief music critic for the large-circulation *Journal des débats*, producing a weekly column or *feuilleton* from the mid-eighteen-thirties to the mid-eighteen-sixties. He later published four collections of his journalistic writings, adjusting them to new surroundings and adding stories and yarns; he published a treatise on orchestration that was the first of its kind and that, as an aesthetics textbook, remains in contention; and he published a volume of *Mémoires* which, among the musical autobiographies, is unequivocally the best of the lot. He was a crusader for integrity and an opponent of fluff: vocal embellishment and vainglorious virtuosity were his *bêtes noires*. And when his emotions were high, when his hackles were raised—I come now to the point—he would typically cite Shakespeare. Confiding to his sister his frustration at having to live among so many souls simply incapable of appreciating the genius of his heroes, he

writes: “To know those Gods”—Beethoven and Shakespeare in this instance (and most of the time)—“and yet to have to live among so many miserable animals who grovel about in the real world!” Everywhere nothing but “anti-music” and “anti-poetry”; “everywhere the opposite of the beautiful and the true, everywhere the effrontery of the ugly and the absurd.” He adds: “Ah, qu’Hamlet a raison! *qui voudrait rester en ce monde si l’on savait quels seront nos songes dans cette contrée inconnue d’où nul voyageur ne revient!*” —“Ah, how right was Hamlet! *Who would want to remain in this world if he knew what will be our dreams in that unknown country whence no traveler returns.*”⁵

This sounds familiar. Perhaps I should have translated by using what Shakespeare actually wrote in act 3, scene 1—

Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will...

—for that is what Berlioz *meant*. What remained in his mind was the metaphor for death. Are those words (“*cette contrée inconnue d’où nul voyageur ne revient*”) *his* words? Here we have a small example of the larger problem of tackling this subject. Did Berlioz understand words that give us pause, *fardels* and *bourn*, as deriving from the Old French? Was he translating himself, or rather mouthing what he knew from the extant translations? This question concerned us in chapter 2; it will concern us, again, in chapter 12.

In Laroche, Berlioz would have found a more prosaic formulation, with the uncommon *contrée* replaced by *pays*, and the emphatic *nul* become the commonplace *aucun*. In Letourneur he would have seen “*cette contrée inconnue des bords de laquelle nul voyageur ne revient,*” adding the not inappropriate notion of banks (“bords”) to Shakespeare’s *bourn*, which (for the *OED*) means “stream.” Three different translations from the mid-eighteen-thirties offered three different alternatives: “*cette contrée inconnue, d’où ne revient aucun voyageur*”; “*cette contrée ignorée dont nul voyageur ne revient*”; and “*cette contrée inconnue de laquelle ne revient nul voyageur.*” In fact Berlioz was quoting the version that he came to know first, and best—the one issued at the time of those thrilling Smithson performances, the iPhone-sized libretto printed in two languages by the publisher Madame Vergne, in the Place de l’Odéon, in 1827.

A full accounting shows that Berlioz knew and quoted from twenty-three of the thirty-eight plays, including ten of the twelve tragedies. That is a more than honorable score for even a professor of English literature. The one he cited, loved, and identified with the most was *Hamlet*. He saw the play in London, in 1848, and in a letter set down what he took it to mean:

Shakespeare wished to paint the nothingness of life, the futility of human endeavor, the tyranny of good fortune, and the utter indifference of fate, or of God, to what we call virtue and crime, beauty and ugliness, love and hate, genius and stupidity. And he cruelly succeeded. On this occasion they deigned to give us *Hamlet* more or less as it was written, almost in its entirety, something that is extremely rare in this country, where there are so many people who are superior to Shakespeare that most of the plays are expanded and corrected by the likes of Cibber and Dryden and other rascals who in fact merit only a public spanking!⁶

Again, the admiration is tinged with ire. "Life's but a walking shadow" was the story of *his* life, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." The quotation from *Macbeth* appears on the last page of Berlioz's *Mémoires*, in the poet's English, and, on the first page, in the composer's French: you need no translation to take in "La vie n'est qu'une ombre qui passe; un pauvre comédien qui, pendant son heure, se pavane et s'agite sur le théâtre, et qu'après on n'entend plus; c'est un conte récité par un idiot, plein de fracas et de furie, et qui n'a aucun sens." As his career played out, the ecstasy of victory was invariably followed by the agony of defeat. He won the Prix de Rome in the summer of 1830, and six months later lost his fiancée to a man far richer and more powerful than he. He scored a success with the *Requiem*—a government commission—in 1837, and a failure with *Benvenuto Cellini*—at the government sponsored opera house—in 1838; the premiere of *La Damnation de Faust*, in 1846, was a grand artistic accomplishment—and an unmitigated financial disaster. Despite ill health, he brought to completion what many see as his crowning artistic achievement, *Les Troyens*, in 1858, only to see it mutilated, five years later, in a partial performance that was diminished by administrative parsimony and theatrical inadequacies of the usual kind.

And yet, through it all, Berlioz maintained a certain distance, a certain irony, a certain humor. We see it in his word play, in his banter with friends, and in this article from the *Journal des débats* of March 13, 1861, which was theoretically a review of a forgettable and now forgotten opéra-comique, but which led off with the far more important "paraphrase," as he called it, of

what would become the most parodied, pirated, parroted, and even pantomimed passage in all of English literature.

How, in French, do you say “to be, or not to be”—*that is the question!* In 1734, Voltaire, claiming that the letter kills and that only spirit gives life, worried not a whit about the original construction, writing simply (that is, not simply), “Demeure; il faut choisir, et passer à l’instant / De la vie à la mort, ou de l’être au néant” (“But wait, we must choose, and must at once pass from life to death, or from being to nothingness”). In 1769, Ducis, too, sacrificed Shakespeare’s two infinitives to the twelve syllables of the alexandrine: “Je ne sais que résoudre... immobile et troublé... / C’est rester trop longtemps de mon doute accablé” (“I know not what to resolve... Yet to remain unsettled and frozen is to remain too long stricken by doubt”). The infinitive construction reappeared in 1821, when Guizot, following Letourneur, wrote “Être ou n’être pas, *c’est* la question” (which sounds like “*that’s* the question”). In 1827, the anonymous translator for Madame Vergne’s pocket publication wrote “Être ou n’être pas, *telle* est la question” (“*such* is the question”). In 1839, Benjamin Laroche, whose version Berlioz acquired and assailed, set down “Être ou n’être pas, *voilà* la question” (“*there’s* the question”). In 1865, when he got around to *Hamlet*, François-Victor Hugo decided upon “Être ou n’être pas, voilà *le problème*”—“there’s the *dilemma*,” or, as Hamlet says a moment later, “there’s the *rub*.”

On the matter of denoting *not*, I am put in mind of what Jacques Barzun wrote, with characteristic mirth and economy, in his remarkable *Essay on French Verse for Readers of English Poetry* (which I cited in chapter 2): “No two languages are closer and farther apart than English and French.”⁷ While the English infinitive requires two words, the French one, the English *negation* requires one word, the French two. “Not to be,” in English, is the only possibility; “to *not* be” is... to err. (Let us not be concerned with the *zero* infinitive—the base, without *to*. Shakespeare did not, after all, write “to be or *not be*,” although that is... a question.) French offers both “n’être pas,” which these translators adopted, and “ne pas être,” which became Berlioz’s choice. The difference would seem to reflect the translator’s sense of what the question *is*. But the Académie Française admitted, and continues to admit, the validity of both.

Here, if I may, is what Shakespeare wrote:

To be or not to be, that is the question—
 Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.

Here is the opening of the monologue in the prose translation by Benjamin Laroche:

Être ou n'être pas, voilà la question! —Une âme courageuse doit-elle supporter les coups poignants de la fortune cruelle, ou s'armer contre un déluge de douleurs, et, en les combattant, y mettre un terme?

And here is the opening of the "paraphrase" by Berlioz:

Être ou ne pas être, voilà la question. —Une âme courageuse doit-elle supporter les méchants opéras, les concerts ridicules, les virtuoses médiocres, les compositeurs enragés, ou s'armer contre ce torrent de maux, et, en le combattant, y mettre un terme?

Which means:

To be, or not to be, that is the question. —Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of second-rate operas, ridiculous concerts, mediocre virtuosos, mad composers, or to take arms against this sea of troubles and by opposing end them.

Berlioz's words originate in Laroche's; his additions, in his sufferings as a critic.

Shakespeare goes on:

To die, to sleep—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to— 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub [...]

Laroche continues:

—Mourir, —dormir, rien de plus; et dire que par ce sommeil nous mettons fin aux souffrances du cœur et aux mille douleurs léguées par la nature à notre chair mortelle, —c'est là un résultat qu'on doit appeler de tous ses vœux. Mourir, —dormir, —dormir! rêver peut-être, —oui, voilà la difficulté [...]

Berlioz paraphrases:

—Mourir, —dormir, rien de plus; et dire que par ce sommeil nous mettons fin aux déchirements de l'oreille, aux souffrances du cœur et de la raison, aux mille douleurs imposées par l'exercice de la critique à notre intelligence et à nos sens! —C'est là un résultat qu'on doit appeler de tous ses vœux. —Mourir, —dormir, —dormir, —avoir le cauchemar peut-être, —oui, voilà le point embarrassant.

That is:

To die, to sleep, no more. And by a sleep to say we end the ear-ache, heart-ache, head-ache, and the thousand natural shocks to our senses and intelligence that the métier of the critic is subject to. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep, to sleep, perchance to have a nightmare. Ay, there's the rub.

Shakespeare's next three lines—

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.

—are inflated by Berlioz to more:

For in that sleep of death, what torturous dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, what absurd theories may come to be judged, what discordant scores to be heard, what fools to be flattered, what indignities inflicted upon masterpieces to be endorsed, what extravagances to be exalted, what dwarves to be extolled as giants? —This must give us pause. This is the stuff that swells the numbers of *feuilletons* and that prolongs the lives of the poor fools who write them.

And at these verses—

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

—Berlioz reaches a climax:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of a senseless world, the spectacle of its delirium, the disdain and illusion of its ignorance, the injustice of its laws, the glacial indifference of its heads of state? Who would bear the cyclone of the most reprehensible passions and the most petty interests hiding behind the name of love of art? Who would wish to debase himself in order to discuss the absurd, to dare as a soldier to demonstrate maneuvers to the commanding general, to guide as a tourist the guide himself (who will nonetheless get lost) —when, to put an end to such humiliation, he himself might his quietus make with a bare flask of chloroform or with a steel-tipped bullet?

Benjamin Laroche knew that a “bodkin” was a dagger (a *poignard*), but the scientifically trained Berlioz (who had spent some years in medical school before giving in to the urge to become a composer) was chemically alert to chloroform, among other hallucinatory drugs, and knew what it could do. As for those steel-tipped bullets: Berlioz himself owned of a pair of pistols, and more than once thought of using them, in premarital frustration, to blow his brains out.

When his eyes fall upon Ophelia—

Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! —Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

—Berlioz is less ambiguous than Hamlet: “Allons, il n’est pas même permis de méditer pendant quelques instants; voici la jeune cantatrice Ophélie, armée d’une partition et grimaçant un sourire”—“Leave off! It is not even permissible to meditate for a few minutes! Here comes the young singer Ophelia, armed with a *score* and forcing a smile.” Shakespeare’s Ophelia wishes to return Hamlet’s gifts (“remembrances”); Berlioz’s, to return a musical manuscript!

The conversation, as the composer gives it, is close to the original:

Hamlet: Ha, ha! Are you compassionate?

Ophelia: My lord?

Hamlet: And are you a singer?

Ophelia: What means your lordship?

Hamlet: That if you be compassionate and a singer, you should admit no discourse between the singer and the compassionate woman.

Ophelia: Could the voice have better commerce than with compassion?

Hamlet: Ay, truly; for the power of a voice such as thine will sooner pervert the most compassionate impulses of the heart than those impulses would ennoble the merciless aspirations of talent. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.

If Shakespeare's point is that the chaste Ophelia should keep away from those who would corrupt her beauty (Shakespeare's point is of course much disputed by the scholars), then Berlioz's point is that the virtuous singer (which he knew as a vanishing breed) should keep away from those who would exploit her voice. The paradox, for Berlioz, *could be* that while a woman's beautiful voice might lead to an assault upon her purity (as the beauty of Hamlet's mother led to her commission of adultery), purity by itself cannot lead to a beautiful voice.

After the powerful line "Get thee to a nunnery"—the word *cloître*, which the French translators used, does not obviously carry *nunnery's* double sense of "convent" and "brothel"—Berlioz adds a riff: "Get thee to a nunnery. What wouldst thou want? A famous name, a lot of money, the applause of the mob, a titled husband, the rank of duchess? Yes, yes, they all dream of marrying a prince."

Hamlet's tirade against Ophelia continues with pointed visual imagery:

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig, you amble, and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath made me mad. I say we will have no more marriage. Those that are married already, all but one shall live, the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

Berlioz had a field day transforming the visual to the musical and the diatribe against women into a diatribe against sopranos:

I have heard of your vocal flirtations, your enticing pretentions, your ridiculous vanity. God hath given you one voice, and you make yourself another. He hath entrusted you with a masterpiece, and you defile it, you mutilate it, you alter its character, you adorn it with shoddy ornaments, you amputate it with insolent cuts; you append to it horrible roulades, preposterous arpeggios, and ludicrous

trills; you insult the composer, persons of taste, art, and common sense. Go to, I'll no more on it. To a nunnery, go.

On that line Hamlet makes his exit, leaving Ophelia to exclaim, "Oh what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" This provokes from Berlioz a final comment:

Young Ophelia is not entirely wrong. Hamlet has indeed gone a little crazy. But this will not be observed in our musical world, where everyone these days is totally mad. Besides, this poor prince of Denmark does have moments of lucidity. He is but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly he knows a hawk from a handsaw.

As he does elsewhere, Berlioz here, too, proves he knows, not only the famous soliloquy, but the play as a whole. For it is before welcoming the players, in act 2, that Hamlet confides to Guildenstern that he is demented only some of the time, and that he can nonetheless distinguish a "hawk from a handsaw." For Berlioz the distinction was between *une buse* and *un aigle*, a hawk and an *eagle*. He sees that the prince could still be sharp, but hears not the alliteration and sarcasm that promoted Hamlet's expression to a proverb.



We know that Berlioz felt in full the tragedy of Hamlet's death. The march that he wrote for that ultimate theatrical moment—at the head of whose score, in both French and English, we find the full text of Fortinbras' final speech, "Let four captains bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage [...]"—constitutes some of the most dark and dignified funeral music we have between Beethoven's *Eroica* and Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. Impractical and thus rarely played—an offstage chorus is required merely to punctuate the proceedings with several sorrowful vocables ("ah!"), and a gun crew (farther away) is needed to fire the "peal of ordnance" bidden by the final stage direction of the play—Berlioz's *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet* is a descendant of the slow movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, employing the same obsessive rhythm (a dactyl followed by a spondee) and the same minor key.

More tender and more touching is the music Berlioz wrote for the death of Ophelia, which we have touched upon in chapter 7: a setting of Ernest Legouvé's lyrical summation of the tale in four strictly constructed stanzas, as the poet assumed the music would require, each with seven octosyllabic lines, each with a rhyme scheme of *ababccb*. The first reads as follows:

Au bord d'un torrent, Ophélie
 Cueillait tout en suivant le bord,
 Dans sa douce et tendre folie,
 Des pervenches, des boutons d'or,
 Des iris aux couleurs d'opale,
 Et de ces fleurs d'un rose pâle,
 Qu'on appelle des doigts de mort.

“Following along the banks of the mountain stream,” he writes, in imitation of Gertrude’s accounting of the death at the end of act 4, “Ophelia, sweetly and gently mad, was gathering periwinkles, buttercups, opalescent irises, and those ‘long purples’ [to use Gertrude’s word] that one calls dead men’s fingers.” To the “long purples,” Gertrude exclaims, “liberal shepherds give a grosser name.” If this is an un-queenly allusion to bawdiness, neither Legouvé’s unemancipated poem nor Berlioz’s more free-flowing score suggests anything other than the sincere sadness of loss.

Indeed, Shakespeare’s bawdy was inevitably lost in translation. One specialist has asserted that Pierre Letourneur, François Guizot, and after them Benjamin Laroche “completely obliterated any trace of ribald pun.”⁸ When Ophelia resists his request to lie in her lap, Hamlet asks, in a famously vulgar pun, if she thought he meant “country matters.” In French, the question is whether she thought he was employing a boorish expression—“un propos de manant.” Her reply—“I think nothing my lord”—also contains a word then generally understood to refer to *pudenda femina*. In French, “rien” carries no such implication. Berlioz and his countrymen may have been deprived of such lascivious word play, but they took no less delight in the essence of the Shakespearean line: verbal contrast on the microlevel and inexorable intermingling of the comic and the sublime. At the approach of the tragic separation of Dido and Aeneas, for example, in the final act of Berlioz’s epic opera, prior to the departure of the Trojan hero and the self-immolation of the Carthaginian Queen, we find ourselves momentarily in the company of two Trojan soldiers perfectly content to remain on the Mediterranean shore and perfectly happy to forsake founding Rome. “To my pretty Carthaginian, I can already speak Phoenician,” sings the one, to an intentionally waggish tune; “Mine obeys me with devotion,” sings the other, “and speaks a little Trojan.” The moment is nothing if not Shakespearean. Like the gravedigger scene in *Hamlet*, it delivers the wisdom of simpler souls; it offers humble realities, not tragic harangues. A tiny two-minute march, a walking, pizzicato bass beneath two chuckling clarinets and two chortling bassoons, with two

sentries trudging back and forth and muttering, to paraphrase, "to leave, or not to leave..."



Berlioz's "to be or not to be" filled three of the six columns of his front-page article—six columns that occupied, as did all such artistic and scientific and otherwise nonpolitical articles at the time, the "sous-sol" ("basement") or bottom third of the first and second pages of the four-page newspaper (of which the last was devoted to advertising). The paraphrase thus represented about five percent of the "news." That is not nothing, but about it much ado has never been made. The Shakespeare parody in chapter 21 of *Huckleberry Finn* is surely better known:

To be, or not to be; that is the bare bodkin
 That makes calamity of so long life;
 For who would fardels bear, till Birnam Wood do come to Dunsinane,
 But that the fear of something after death
 Murders the innocent sleep,
 Great nature's second course,
 And makes us rather sling the arrows of outrageous fortune
 Than fly to others that we know not of.

Like Berlioz's of twenty-four years earlier, Mark Twain's burlesque assumes the reader's familiarity with the soliloquy if not his ability to parse the mish-mash of lines from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Richard III*. The American author, here speaking over the head of Huck, as it were (because Huck is impressed by the speech), pokes fun at the pomposity of the characters of the King and the Duke and at the culture of the public that attends their shows: that scrambled soliloquy, we read in the same chapter, "always fetches the house."

The French composer wishes rather to air—and not for the first time, for it was the *idée fixe* of his career as a critic—the frustrations of his fate. In the "to be" paraphrase, he derides the abuses of the star system, still young but fast growing. Elsewhere, long before Twain, he deplores the benightedness of the public. At the scene in the tomb, the most imaginative moment of his own dramatic symphony, *Roméo et Juliette*, a note in the score says it all: "The public has no imagination. Works addressed solely to the imagination, therefore, have no public." He urges that the scene be played only when the audience is replete with sensitive listeners and readers of the play. That is to say, "it ought to be omitted ninety-nine times out of a hundred."

In one of his earliest efforts at journalism, a three-part biography of Beethoven based on popular anecdotes, press reports, and the recollections of his teachers and friends, Berlioz attempted to explain how to come to grips with what many now take to be the greatest of the “late” works, the String Quartet in C-sharp minor, op. 131—at that time regarded, on the rare occasions of its performance, as the product of a deranged mind. “You have to be of a mindset in sympathy with that of the composer,” wrote Berlioz; “you have to have experienced the kinds of feelings that this music embodies; you have to have felt the devastation that Shakespeare speaks about [quoting now in English]: ‘The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely, the pangs of despised love, the law’s delay, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.’”⁹

That was written in 1829. The paraphrase we have examined came thirty-two years later. *Hamlet* accompanied the composer throughout his mature existence, acting in the darker days as a beacon of hope. “Vivons donc,” he cries, as the alter-ego of the hero of *The Return to Life*, resuscitated from the execution he suffered in the *Fantastique* and determined now to carry on: “que l’art sublime auquel je dois les rares éclairs de bonheur qui ont brillé sur ma sombre existence, me console et me guide dans le triste désert qui me reste à parcourir”—“Let us live, then, and may the sublime art to which I owe the rare moments of happiness that have brightened my gloomy existence console me and guide me upon that sad desert that it remains for me to traverse.” Berlioz, an atheist, concludes with a prayer to the singular divinity he worshipped: “May Shakespeare protect me”—“Que Shakespeare me protège.”

Chapter Twelve

Berlioz, *Béatrice*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*

O Shakespeare! Shakespeare! ... que tu es peu compris!

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

Much Ado About Nothing, the play upon which Berlioz based his lone opéra-comique, *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, carries a title that is singularly ambiguous: the noun “nothing,” which, for most of us signifies “not anything,” or “no single thing,” or “zero,” to use the terms of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, did not mean those things only in and around the year 1599, the probable date of the completion of Shakespeare’s play.¹ At the time, the word may well have been pronounced “noting,” with a long *o*, which word we now use to describe the behavior of one taking, or setting down, *notes*, as would a spy—or a composer. In act 2, scene 3 of the play, at lines 54–56, Don Pedro and Balthasar meditate explicitly upon these various possibilities: “Note this before my notes: There’s not a note of mine that’s worth the noting.” The scholars have used this line, and hundreds of others, to construct a discourse upon the significance of this conspicuously explosive word in the Shakespearean canon. And, as in many comedies of the Bard, music, above and beyond *noting*, plays a fundamental role in *Much Ado About Nothing*, something that becomes pointedly ironic when one insists upon the title in French, *Beaucoup de bruit pour rien*, where “ado” simply becomes “noise.”

Among the possible meanings of “nothing,” in the Elizabethan era, as adolescents are sometimes delighted to discover, is the sex of the woman, the vagina, as we have seen in the previous chapter, in the quotation from act 3, scene 2 of *Hamlet*:

Hamlet: Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Ophelia: No, my lord.

Hamlet: I mean, my head upon your lap.

Ophelia: Aye, my lord.

Hamlet: Do you think I meant country matters?

Ophelia: I think nothing, my lord.

Female sexuality is of course one of the principal themes of *Much Ado*, in which the obviously most fascinating character is Beatrice. That Berlioz felt as much is clear from the grand second-act *scena* he devised for her, the work's most "musically adventurous" page, carefully tailored to the voice of the star of the show, Anne Charton-Demeur, and comprising, as a recent critic has well said, "a last desperate cry of a woman who holds the convention of marriage to be a meaningless sham, even as she prepares to yield to it."² And she does. The celebrated critic Harold Bloom, musing on the crucial word of the play's title, suggests that "all of [Shakespeare's] deceptions and machinations, though important in their moment, will ultimately amount to *nothing*."³ But Berlioz's opera does cause us to wonder anew about the relative merits of human freedom and social convention.

The first question that I asked myself in undertaking this study is *not* how Berlioz reduced the action of Shakespeare's play to the mischief and trickery of Beatrice and Benedict. One might think, considering his excoriation of *I Montecchi ed i Capuleti*, even based as it was on the erroneous assumption that the Italian composer's opera derived from Shakespeare, that such a reduction was unlikely. "What a terrible disappointment," he wrote, on seeing Bellini's opera in Florence in February 1832: "In the libretto there is no Capulets' ball, no Mercutio, no gossipy nurse, no wise and solemn hermit, no balcony scene, no sublime monologue for Juliet as she accepts hermit's potion, no duet in the cell between the banished Romeo and the dismayed hermit, no Shakespeare, no *anything*, merely a botched and mutilated endeavor, an *arrangement*."⁴ (Berlioz, who refers to Friar Lawrence as the "hermit," even though the word is not found in Shakespeare, always used the French word "arrangement" as an expletive.) Despite this tirade, it seems obvious to me, in the case of *Much Ado*, that the composer found little apt for *operatic setting* in the plot directed by Don John against the love of Hero and Claudio.

Indeed, of Richard III and Macbeth, if not Don John, he asserted explicitly that such individuals, sullied by ambition and intrigue, cannot find a place in an opera “without yielding the principal character traits that Shakespeare gave to them, or without hopelessly tormenting the art of music by requiring of it a kind of expression it does not possess.”⁵

The question I rather asked myself, then, is how Berlioz actually understood the *language* of the play; how he felt and interpreted the subtleties of the English text—the precipitous repartee, the delicate rhymes and rhythms, the careful opposition of free and rhymed verse and of poetry and prose, the improprieties, the ambiguities, the *doubles entendres*, the overlapping literal and figurative senses of the words, the *music* of the speech; the question, in other words, of how he perceived and sensed the *style*. Before turning to that issue, however, I had to ask which versions of *Much Ado* Berlioz had before him in the early years and when he came back to the play at the time of *Les Troyens*, and how he made use of them when he determined to set down the libretto himself.

Berlioz and Shakespeare

The history of Berlioz’s discovery of Shakespeare is resumed with brevity and poetry at the opening of chapter 3 of the *Mémoires*, whose title alone tells much of the story: “Apparition de Shakespeare. Miss Smithson. Mortel amour”—“The Appearance of Shakespeare. Miss Smithson. Fatal Attraction”: “The effect her prodigious talent upon my imagination and upon my heart,” writes Berlioz, of the then celebrated actress, in words that he considered confessional (as we know from their exclusion from the excerpts that appeared in the press), “or, more precisely, the effect of her dramatic genius, is comparable only to the cataclysm wreaked upon me by the poet of whom she was the admirable interpreter. I am unable to say anything more.”⁶ The reference is of course to the arrival in Paris of the English acting troupe, in September 1827, for a series of performances of which the first seven took place over the span of a fortnight: September 11: *Hamlet*; September 13: *Hamlet*; September 15: *Romeo and Juliet*; September 18: *Othello*; September 20: *Romeo and Juliet*; September 22: *Hamlet*; September 25: *Othello*.

Harriet Smithson, at the time twenty-seven years old, took the roles of Ophelia, Juliet, and Desdemona. She would later play Cordelia in *King Lear*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III*, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*. Charles Kemble, at the time fifty-two, played

Hamlet, Romeo, and Othello. Berlioz tells us explicitly that he saw *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, the two plays that, for the next forty years, would most mark his career as a writer. In his books and articles, quotations from Shakespeare abound, as I have said earlier in this book. But *Romeo and Juliet* led to one of his most avant-garde compositions, the “dramatic symphony” *Roméo et Juliette*; and *Hamlet*, as I noted in the previous chapter, marks *Le Retour à la vie*, the *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d’Hamlet*, and *La Mort d’Ophélie*. *Othello*, too, had a profound impact on his life and work, not so much by jealousy as by a fascination with revenge. He does not speak of *Othello* in this context, but it is probable that, in 1827, he saw *Othello* as well.⁷ In a letter dated January 25, 1829, François-Guillaume Andrieux—who had just become Secrétaire Perpétuel of the Académie Française and whose literature course at the Collège de France Berlioz was enthusiastically auditing at the time—spoke to Rouget de Lisle of an opera libretto based on *Othello* that Rouget, perhaps on Andrieux’s recommendation, hoped would be set by Berlioz.⁸

The Shakespearean tragedies themselves, with their antitheses of gravitas and jest, provoked a new war in Paris between the classicists and romantics, something first treated in detail in the still vital *Le Théâtre anglais à Paris* by Joseph-Léopold Borgerhoff. At the time, the French public, including the *crème de la crème* of the writers and poets, was especially impressed by the natural, life-like performances of the English actors, and by their pantomimic gestures, which seemed exaggerated in comparison to those of the French tradition. Harriet Smithson’s comportment was even compared favorably with that of the newly celebrated diva, Marie Malibran, who was making her début at the same time: both women played Desdemona (in Shakespeare and Rossini, respectively), one played Juliet and one played Romeo (in the opera by Zingarelli). The “spontaneity,” “inspiration,” “excesses,” and even the “convulsions” of both, as Céline Frigau Manning has written, were remarked upon at the time by various observers.⁹ For Smithson, the review of the opening performance of *Hamlet* in the *Journal des débats* of September 13, 1827, is representative of many:

Miss Smithson is an Ophelia as affecting as she is lovely. She weeps and she causes one to weep. The very sound of her voice, her pantomime, her facial expressions, everything about her is in perfect harmony. With Charles Kemble, she shared the honors of the evening.

Like other classicists of his generation, the author of this article points to a certain lack of unity in the drama, but he fully appreciates Hamlet's famous monologue, "imprinted with a disturbing and depressing philosophy," as he puts it, as well as the "entire role of Ophelia," even if this role "distorts" the action while simultaneously "embellishing it." Whatever their intention, these words were set down by a man who signs only "C" in the newspaper: he was Pierre Duvicquet, a lawyer and man of letters, the successor of Jullien-Louis Geoffroy as drama critic at the *Débats* and the predecessor on that beat of Jules Janin, who became one of Berlioz's great friends.¹⁰

On the other hand, Lady Granville—the wife of the British ambassador in Paris and a well-bred society matron whose ancient and aristocratic family later produced such celebrities as Winston Churchill and Diana, Princess of Wales—found Smithson's accent and habits of speech rather vulgar. This matter is taken up by today's authority on the subject, Peter Raby, who affirms that the actress's articulation was surely not that of the British upper classes in the early decades of the new century.¹¹ Is this something that was available to Duvicquet, or to Berlioz, at the time? In the touching obituary for Smithson that he wrote in the *Journal des débats* on March 20, 1854, Jules Janin recalled explicitly her "voix d'or" —her "golden voice"—evidence that for the Frenchman, Harriet's expression was just fine.

Along with the exceptional comedy of *The Merchant of Venice*, played six times in 1828 by Smithson and her English partners, the plays that Berlioz knew best, and that encapsulated for him the double *idée fixe* of Smithson and Shakespeare, were the *tragedies*. If *Much Ado About Nothing* was played in France during Berlioz's lifetime, the performance has left no trace. The character of Beatrice was the object of a brilliant analysis of the play by the fanatically royalist writer Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat, in *La Quotidienne* of August 29, 1838, in his series on "Les Femmes de Shakespeare," and Berlioz might well have seen it. Poujoulat's description of the banter of the two principals, minimizing the nefarious role of Don John, could easily serve as a résumé of Berlioz's opera. Otherwise, on the literally hundreds of occasions that the title of the play is found in the newspapers from the eighteenth-twenties through the eighteen-sixties, "beaucoup de bruit pour rien" serves invariably to signify precisely what you might think: a lot of hubbub, usually political, of the useless and unnecessary kind!

As for the separate publication of the play, as early as February 4, 1823, *Le Miroir des spectacles* announced that "a six-person committee of translators has for some time been attempting to enrich the French language with the Shakespearean tragedy [*sic*] of *Much Ado About Nothing* [the title is given first

in English, then in French].” The committee’s efforts seem to have been in vain; no separate edition appeared, not even in the series (mentioned in the previous chapter) published in English or French or bilingually by Madame Vergne, in the Place de l’Odéon, between September 1827 and February 1828: this included *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Richard III*, all of the texts conforming to those recited by the English players led by Smithson and Kemble. In the eighteen-twenties, then, the only French version of *Much Ado* that would have been available was the one included in volume 7 of the *Œuvres complètes de Shakespeare, traduites de l’anglais par Letourneur* (1776–1783) in the edition newly revised by François Guizot and Amédée Pichot and published in thirteen volumes printed in Paris, by Ladvocat, in 1821.

In order to consult the original English text, something I believe he wished to do, Berlioz would presumably have taken up volume 2 of the best-known edition of the era, *The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare* edited by George Stevens and published in London, in nine volumes, by Josiah Boydell and George Nicol. The preface to this edition by Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson is dated 1803. After 1835—because we know that, in May of that year, one of the composer’s admirer’s offered him a one-volume English edition of the plays,¹² no doubt *The Dramatic Works of W. Shakspeare* [sic] that I mentioned in the previous chapter, published in Paris by Baudry in 1829, 1830, and again in 1835—Berlioz would have been able to read *Much Ado*, not in a library or reading room, but at home. Years later, after July 1855—when John Ella gave to Berlioz another one-volume English edition of the plays,¹³ no doubt *The Works of William Shakspeare* [sic] that I also mentioned earlier, published in London by George Cox in 1849, 1852, and again in 1854—Berlioz would have had an *embarras du choix*. The Knight version, with textual explanations at the bottom of each page, was the most popular mid-century edition.

It is in his letter to his friend Joseph d’Ortigue of January 19, 1833, that, out of the blue, and with ironic alacrity, Berlioz mentions *Much Ado* for the first time: “À propos”—he has just said that he is roasting in the fires of hell because of his infernal obsession with Miss Smithson—“I intend to compose a charming and delightful Italian opera based on Shakespeare’s comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*. This time, I should like to ask you to *lend me the volume* that contains this play.”¹⁴ D’Ortigue had just published the first authorized biography of Berlioz in the *Revue de Paris* of December 23, 1832, based upon the detailed notes that the composer had supplied. That biography mentioned nothing at all about a forthcoming Italian opera.

Four days later, in a letter to his sister Adèle of January 23, 1833, Berlioz again mentions his new project: “I intend to make my début at the Théâtre-Italien, with whose administration I am on very good terms. [...] I have just now gone over there with the outline of a libretto that I have drafted myself. Those fellows will read it and, if it suits them, they will immediately put me in touch with an Italian poet who will write the verses under my close supervision.”¹⁵

From these messages we learn that between the 19th and 23rd of January, Berlioz sketched a libretto based on *Much Ado About Nothing*, a play with which he was already familiar, and that, on the 23rd, he gave the sketch to “ces monsieurs,” that is, to the directors of the Théâtre-Italien, Édouard Robert and Carlo Severini, whom we met in chapter 4. Berlioz does indeed seem to have been on friendly terms with these gentlemen. During the summer of 1833, he was hoping for an Italian translation of his earlier opera, *Les Francs-Juges*, “if Severini decides to take the risk.”¹⁶ Two years later, in a review of *L’Éclair* for *Le Rénovateur* of December 23, 1835, Berlioz would indulge in some rather lengthy wordplay on the surname Robert—the Joseph-Alexandre Robert who had lately invented a breech-loading rifle—the so-called “fusil Robert,” which figures in Halévy’s comic opera—and the Édouard Robert who was in charge of the Théâtre-Italien:

—Ah, Monsieur Robert makes rifles, you will say! I thought he made only Italian operas! —No, we are talking here not about the great Robert, do not be confused! We are talking about the simple gunsmith, who has the audacity to call himself by the same name! This fellow has made neither a *Cenerentola* nor a *Gazza ladra* nor a *Semiramide* nor a *Barbieri* nor a *Pirata* nor a *Sonnambula* nor a *Puritani* nor a *Bravo*, and not even a *Norma*! I repeat, he makes nothing other than rifles! But they are rifles that never fail to fire, that never fizzle out, that have a long range—something that cannot always be said of the operas made by his namesake!¹⁷

This suggests to me a kind of *entente cordiale* between the youthful composer and the director of one of the most exalted theaters of the capital. Berlioz’s principal biographers do not dwell on the point,¹⁸ but the fact that he was “on good terms” with the administration of the Théâtre-Italien, in January 1833, is surely the reason that he and his new wife were able, nine months later, to organize there a grand dramatico-musical entertainment that included appearances by the actors Firmin (the creator of the role of Hernani) and Madame Dorval (who rose to prominence as Amélie in Ducange and Dinaux’s *Trente Ans ou La Vie d’un joueur* of 1827, a popular

melodrama which, in 1830, Berlioz preferred to *Hernani*),¹⁹ along with the celebrated musicians Alexis Dupont and Franz Liszt. More important, even earlier, on April 2, 1833, the Théâtre-Italien was the scene of a benefit concert for Harriet Smithson that also featured such stars as Chopin and Liszt. Is it not logical to suppose, then, that it was Harriet, at the time playing Lady Teazle in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, who had suggested to Berlioz, in January of that year, that he interest himself in *Much Ado*? After all, in that very month, Berlioz was feverish and exhilarated because of his newfound relationship with the English actress. We do not know what the two of them discussed during those early weeks of love made known, each searching for words in the other's language, but of all possible subjects, Shakespeare was clearly the most obvious. Perhaps Harriet found in Hector the incarnation of a frantic French Benedict, suddenly surprised to find himself loved by a heretofore distant and disbelieving Beatrice!

Be this as it may, the project of an Italian opera on *Much Ado* did not come to fruition in 1833. Nor did it see the light of day in 1852, when Berlioz, in London, sketched out a new libretto distantly based on the play,²⁰ perhaps encouraged by the impresario John Mitchell, the then director of St. James's Theatre, to whom Berlioz entrusted an English translation of his new book, *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*.²¹ Six years later, in May 1858, Berlioz spoke to Édouard Bénazet, the director of the casino in Baden-Baden, about "a small opera designed for the opening of a theater, which he is in the process of building, and which will be inaugurated in August 1860."²² Berlioz had met Bénazet many years earlier, in 1844, when the impresario, in Paris at the time in order to bid on the newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* (which was soon sold to Louis Véron),²³ had asked him to prepare a "festivalesque" concert in Baden-Baden in the latter part of August 1844.²⁴ Berlioz accepted the invitation, but had to renege when preparations for his own festival concert—for the great Paris industrial exhibition, on August 1, 1844—took precedence. It would not be until August 1853, by which time Édouard Bénazet had been the King of the Baden "Conversation House" for some seven years (his father, Jacques, having died in 1848) that Berlioz would there give a concert.

In 1858, Bénazet, whom Berlioz would now regard with sincere admiration, asked that the composer make a setting of a libretto by Offenbach's regular collaborator, the poet and dramatist Édouard Plouvier, whom Berlioz had known since the eighteen-forties.²⁵ The subject was to be a *Légende du diable qui pleure* based on an episode from the Thirty Years' War. At first attracted to the tale, Berlioz gradually became disenchanted, as he told a friend on October 2, 1858.²⁶ He decided firmly against it at the end of

1859: “No, I shall not set Plouvier’s *Légende*,” he told Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, on December 2, “I have just written to him to release me from my obligation to do so.”²⁷ The libretto was eventually set by Henri Litolff, as *Nabel*, and premiered in Baden-Baden on August 10, 1863. On September 3, in the *Débats*, Berlioz praised the work of the poet and the composer as “vast and profound.”

At what moment, very precisely, did Berlioz turn back to *Much Ado About Nothing*? In March 1858, in a review of Halévy’s *La Magicienne* that appeared in the *Débats* on the 24th, Berlioz describes the action of act 3, in which the protagonist, René, is persuaded to believe in the infidelity of his fiancée, Blanche, by a mystification involving an impersonator who wears Blanche’s clothing. Berlioz observes that the bit is based on act 3, scene 3 of *Much Ado*, where Borachio, a follower of the evil Don John, impersonates the principal character, Claudio, and announces his love, not to Claudio’s fiancée, Hero, but to Margaret, Hero’s lady-in-waiting. Borachio knows, of course, as the real Claudio does not, that Margaret is dressed in Hero’s clothing.²⁸ That Berlioz mentions “la scène du troisième acte” suggests that he has recently had the play in hand. Still, not until October 23, 1860, in a letter to his son, does Berlioz speak decisively of the new work: “Yesterday, I worked for some seven hours on the little one-act opera I have undertaken; *I cannot recall* if I have mentioned this to you.” “I cannot recall” suggests that he had been at work for some time, perhaps eight months, perhaps more. He goes on about the new composition: “It is very pretty, but very difficult to get right. I still have a good deal of work to do on the libretto; I rarely have the time to concentrate on it. The music will come along in due time.”²⁹

It is possible that Berlioz had begun work in March 1860, when he accepted the Dutch composer Edouard Silas’ offer of the dedication of his new oratorio, *Joash*. Silas had also asked Berlioz to serve as godfather to his son, whom he wished to name Hector.³⁰

But your son must not have a godfather who is so far away; this would only be an illusion. Furthermore, I neither believe in nor practice the Catholic faith, I even *protest* my non-belief, which means in this case that I am a *protestant*. In point of fact I am a Nothingist, as are so many honest Americans. Except that my Nothingism is not at all a religion.³¹

Now, Berlioz here would seem to be bantering about the xenophobic and anti-Catholic political party that briefly rose to prominence in the United States in the eighteen-fifties, under the ridiculous name of “Know-Nothings.”

But it does occur to me, considering his forthcoming work on the opera, that he might already at this time have been reflecting upon the pregnant “nothing” of *Much Ado*. One month later, on April 4, 1860, while explaining to his uncle Marmion that *Les Troyens* was “finished, revised, polished, and twice corrected,” that he was exhausted and desirous only of sleep, he added: “Fort heureusement je n’ai rien en train dans ce moment”—“At this moment, fortunately, I have nothing on my plate.”³² My loose translation suggests a *double entendre* regarding Shakespeare’s great title that may, I admit, not have occurred to the composer.

If, as I have suggested, it was Harriet Smithson who called Berlioz’s attention to *Much Ado* in 1833, then perhaps it was another artist who pointed him back to the play in 1860. In addition to Pauline Viardot, whom he saw frequently in that year, and who later attended the rehearsals of *Béatrice et Bénédict* in Baden-Baden at the time of the première, Richard Wagner, too, was swimming in Berlioz’s ken at the time. Reading Wagner’s letter to Berlioz of May 22, 1860, in which the German composer thanks Berlioz for his articles on *Fidelio*, which had appeared in the *Débats* of May 19 and May 22, one has the distinct impression that his admiration for the Frenchman’s artistry is profound and sincere, something verified in Wagner’s letter to Liszt of the same day.³³ Berlioz’s reply, too—in which, with the frankness of a friend, he told the German master not to address him as “cher maître”: “cela m’agace” (“that drives me nuts!”)³⁴—suggests genuine, if not lasting, amity. Only a few weeks later, when Wagner and Viardot sang excerpts from *Tristan*, with Karl Klindworth at the piano, the sole persons in attendance were Wagner’s future patron, Maria Kalergis (it is to her that he dedicated the second edition of his infamous *Das Judentum in der Musik*), and Berlioz. Is it conceivable that the two men discussed *Much Ado About Nothing* at the time? Wagner’s *Das Liebesverbot* is founded on another comedy, *Measure for Measure*, whose free and easy manner, Wagner had mentioned to Meyerbeer in 1837, ought to appeal more readily to French sensibilities than it does to German *Geschmack*,³⁵ and whose substance, he admitted, he had “robbed,” as did Berlioz *Much Ado*, “of its “prevailing earnestness.”³⁶ This is what renders it conceivable that the author of *Tannhäuser*, who admired Beethoven and Shakespeare no less than the French composer, and who had earlier not hesitated to suggest to Berlioz the subject of an opera,³⁷ might have encouraged Berlioz to adapt *Much Ado About Nothing*: we know, from Cosima Wagner’s diaries, that the play is one that Richard Wagner knew well and much admired.³⁸

From Berlioz's correspondence, beginning in the autumn of 1860, we can follow his day-by-day work on *Béatrice et Bénédict*. I have mentioned the letter to his son of October 23, in which he speaks of how much writing remained to be done. Less than three weeks later, on November 10, he reported that he had made great headway: "I have now completed the little opera I told you about based on Shakespeare's play *Much ADO About Nothing*. It's called *Bénédict et Béatrice* [sic]. It's very lighthearted and very pretty, as you shall see. The music is now coming to me so rapidly that I cannot decide which bit to do first. I've just completed two numbers in only a couple of days. But please say nothing about this to anyone, because it is very easy for someone to steal your ideas."³⁹ What thief could Berlioz have been thinking about? Gounod, whose *Faust* came along thirteen years after his own, and whose *Roméo et Juliette* was seven years down the line?

On November 12, Berlioz made another progress report to his son:

I can hardly keep up with the musical numbers of my little opera, because the music comes to me so quickly! And each number seems to want to take precedence over the next. Sometimes I take up a new one even before the previous one is finished. At this point, I have completed four numbers, and have five more to do. You ask me how I managed to reduce Shakespeare's five-act play into a one-act opéra-comique. In fact I took only the principal theme from the play; the rest is of my own devising. The action consists purely and simply of persuading Béatrice and Bénédict, who loathe each other, that in fact the one is drawn to the other, and thus to persuade both that they are truly in love. It's a perfect little comedy, as you shall see. And I have added some tomfoolery of my own and some musical baggage as well, which is too involved to explain to you here.⁴⁰

Let me more succinctly resume what came next in 1860. On November 27: "I *am finishing* a one-act opera on a subject I borrowed from Shakespeare." November 28: "I *am completing* a one-act opera." November 29: "I am finalizing the music."

Then, in 1861. January 2: "[Bénazet] has engaged me for Baden-Baden." January 28: "My little opera *Béatrice et Bénédict* is moving along." February 14: "I went to read the libretto to Monsieur Bénazet." June 2: "I have not yet completed the score of *Béatrice*." June 8: "I have added a new scene." July 6: "Little by little I am finishing a one-act opera for the new theater in Baden-Baden, whose construction is just now coming to an end. I have based this one act on Shakespeare's tragi-comedy entitled *Beaucoup de bruit pour rien*. Prudently, however, my opera is entitled *Béatrice et Bénédict*."

November 4: "While waiting [for news of *Les Troyens*], I work on the opera that Bénazet commissioned." December 7: "I have just completed a *two-act* opera designed for the new theater at Baden-Baden. I have only the overture to finish."⁴¹

Then, again, in 1862. February 4: "[The opera] will be played next August, on the 5th or 6th." February 6: "*Béatrice et Bénédict* will appear in Baden-Baden on August 6." March 16: "Every Tuesday, we rehearse *Béatrice*." April 9: "The day before yesterday, during a *soirée* with many people in attendance, we performed two numbers, a duet and an aria." June 12: "[The opera] will be played in Baden-Baden on August 9." June 20: "We rehearse on Monday [June 23] at half-past noon." June 30: "It's impossible for me to leave Paris because of the rehearsals." July 12: "Yesterday, we rehearsed at the Opéra-Comique." July 22: "It took me quite a while to train the singers. Now, I must face the difficult task of training the orchestra, *car c'est un caprice écrit avec la pointe d'une aiguille et qui exige un excessive délicatesse d'exécution*."⁴² The French phrase is perhaps familiar: it is cited at every hearing of the opera, live and recorded. What Berlioz means is that the work, "written with a crystalline pen, is a whimsical entertainment whose performance requires exceptional delicacy." He speaks as one who knows his musicians, and who knows the difficulty of convincing them to play *vivo*, *leggiero*, and *pianissimo*.

The new opera was given in Baden-Baden on August 9 and 11. Despite his anxiety and his continuing poor health, Berlioz was entirely satisfied by the result. None other than Charles Gounod wrote of the work that is "absolutely perfect and lovely."⁴³ At the end of August, Berlioz added to what had become a second act (in November 1861) a trio for the women, Héro, Béatrice, and Ursula (Berlioz's transformation of Shakespeare's Margaret). Here, in "Je vais d'un cœur d'amant," Berlioz, always ready with a quotation, amused himself by adding to Ursula's part a line from act 3, scene 3 of *Othello*, "la jalousie, ce monster aux yeux verts"—a phrase deriving from Iago's warning: "O beware, my lord, of jealousy, *it is the green-eyed monster* which doth mock the meet it feeds on." Berlioz also added a chorus, "Viens! Viens, de l'hymnée," which serves to put Béatrice into the amorous mood that will soon lead to her acceptance of Bénédict's offer of marriage, "despite herself," and only in order "to save his life"! The score, naturally dedicated to Bénazet, was published in Paris, by Brandus et Dufour, in January 1863.

Berlioz's *Much Ado*

The after-the-fact addition of two numbers is evidence of Berlioz's desire to polish the structure of the whole by rendering it audibly symmetrical and arched, with the keystone being what has become the most celebrated number, the Duo-Nocturne, "Nuit paisible et sereine." The arch rises, one might say, with a promise of peace, in the first chorus, "Le More est en fuite," which is followed by the first jousting of the principals. And the arch falls, in the final duet, with the principals' metaphorical promise of war, "Nous redeviendrons ennemis demain," followed by the chorus's promise of marital bliss. This text, as we know from a much marked-up copy of the libretto,⁴⁴ was intended to be sung to the same music as the introductory chorus. Indeed, the syllable count of the first six lines of the later text (8 + 8 + 6 + 5 + 12 + 8) is identical to that of the first six lines of the earlier "Le More est en fuite." In the revised version, the Scherzo-Duetto closes the opera in G major. Had Berlioz followed his initial plan of repeating the chorus, he would presumably have returned to its earlier key, B-flat major: like *Les Troyens*, then, *Béatrice et Bénédicte* would have begun in G (Berlioz's favorite key) and ended in B-flat.

The central Duo-Nocturne itself, seen from afar and setting aside the incidental numbers, is surrounded by two duets sung by the principals and two trios sung respectively by the three men and the three women. Such large-scale symmetries, as Hervé Lacombe has pointed out, are characteristic of the classic superstructure of the opéra-comique.⁴⁵

What do we know of the *translation* of the play that Berlioz had before him as he constructed his drama? "I own three editions of Shakespeare," he wrote in October 1856, "two in English," which we have identified above, "and one in French: a *translation*,"⁴⁶ which word, as I noted in chapter 11, he sets down in sarcastic capital letters. This was the work of Benjamin Laroche (1797–1852), a poet, journalist, abolitionist, professor of French and English, editor of the periodical *Le Bon Sens*, and translator of several major English writers, most prominently Lord Byron. The Laroche edition of the *Œuvres dramatiques de Shakespeare*, despite the appearance in the eighteen-sixties of a new printing of the Letourneur translation as revised by Guizot, despite the appearance of a new translation by François-Victor Hugo, and despite the feelings of some critics that prose translations cannot possibly bring poetry to life,⁴⁷ saw at least ten subsequent printings before the century came to an end. Berlioz's indebtedness to the Laroche translation, which, despite its shortcomings, he favored over the others, is noteworthy indeed.

It is at the outset of the play that we first savor the mockery of Beatrice and Benedict. “I pray you, is Signor Mountanto returned from the wars or no?” (1.1.23). How, I wonder, did Berlioz read this question? One must suppose that he was satisfied with the Laroche because he adopts it: “Veuillez me dire, je vous prie, si le seigneur Matamore est de retour, ou non, de la guerre?” A *matamore* in French would be a warrior proud of his exploits carried out against the Moors. But a *mountanto*, in English, or a *montanto*, as we find the word in the Stevens edition of 1802, is a fencing term for an upright thrust, a term that carried phallic implications and that was even spoken as “mount onto,” as a stallion would mount a mere. In his translation, François Guizot retained the word *montanto* and added an explanatory footnote: “an ancient fencing term applied to a ‘fier-à-bras’ [a ‘braggart’], to a ‘bravache’ [a ‘swaggerer’ or ‘wise-guy’].” In the more modern translation by François-Victor Hugo, we find the appellation “Tranche-Montagne,” a synonym for *matamore* and *fanfaron*, both meaning “show-off” or “egotist.” Only Guizot seems to have understood the sexual allusion: in his introduction to the play, Guizot admits to being struck by the sometimes “excessive liberty” of Beatrice’s speech. In the opening salvo of the play, I am not certain that Berlioz, who in these matters, I have always felt, was usually more straight-laced than lubricious, caught Beatrice’s clearly sexual drift.

Berlioz’s attitude toward the translators is well known. “I’ve corrected in my copy I don’t know how many silly errors of Monsieur Benjamin Laroche,” he wrote to his friend Humbert Ferrand, in a letter I quoted in chapter 2, “and yet it is he who is the most faithful and least ignorant of the lot.”⁴⁸ It is more than a shame that we do not possess Berlioz’s copy of the Laroche Shakespeare, because it would give us an object lesson in Berlioz’s understanding of Shakespeare’s English. With only a few exceptions, the books that were on his shelves at the end of his life disappeared with the rest of his mostly dilapidated possessions. But in this letter to Ferrand, from October 28, 1864, what is in question is not *Much Ado*, although Berlioz does mention a potential performance, in Stuttgart, of *Béatrice et Bénédict*, but rather *Othello*. Indeed, unlike his practice with *Hamlet* and *Othello*, among others, Berlioz seems never to quote from *Much Ado* in English.

To weigh Berlioz’s dependence on the Laroche translation, let us look closely at several excerpts from the composer’s libretto. First, the dialogue found in act 1, scene 3 of the opera, where Berlioz’s text is nearly but not absolutely identical to Laroche’s. This dialogue marks the opening of the play. In the opera, it is “scene 3” because scene 1 comprises the opening chorus, “Le More est en fuite,” and scene 2, a brief discussion among Héro, Béatrice,

and Léonato (the governor of Messina, the scene of the play), whose text, of Berlioz's invention, announces the arrival of the illustrious general don Pedro. Laroche spells the name with an accent; Berlioz does not.

Shakespeare	Laroche	Berlioz
<i>Leonato</i> : I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.	<i>Léonato</i> : Cette lettre m'annonce que don Pédro d'Aragon arrive ce soir à Messine.	<i>The conversation in scene 2 carries out the fonction of Leonato's remark. At the end of scene 2, Berlioz has Leonato exclaim:</i> Au reste, nous allons avoir des détails, on m'annonce un message.
<i>Messenger</i> : He is very near by this, he was not three leagues off when I left him.	<i>Le Messenger</i> : Il doit être bien près de cette ville au moment où je parle; quand je l'ai quitté, il n'en était qu'à trois lieues.	<i>Le Messenger</i> : Monseigneur, je vous annonce l'arrivée du général. Quand je l'ai quitté, il n'était qu'à trois lieues de Messine.

Berlioz has here altered Laroche in order to speak aloud "Messine," the site of the action. Berlioz's next several interventions are identical to those of Laroche. Then:

<i>Leonato</i> : I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.	<i>Léonato</i> : Je vois par cette lettre que don Pédro a conféré d'éclatants témoignages de satisfaction à un jeune Florentin nommé Claudio.	<i>Léonato</i> : Je vois par cette lettre que Don Pedro a conféré d'éclatants témoignages de satisfaction au jeune Claudio.
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Berlioz has already introduced Claudio, in scene 2, as Don Pedro's "right-hand man"; he thus removes the identifying tag of "young Florentine." At the mention of Claudio, Berlioz has Hero exclaim "Dieu!"—"Thank God!" Shakespeare gives her no reaction. Then, of the honor Don Pedro has bestowed upon him:

Shakespeare

Messenger: Much deserved on his part, and equally remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion: he hath indeed better bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.

Laroche

Le Messenger: Il les a mérités par une conduite à laquelle Don Pédro a rendu justice, et il a été au-delà de ce que promettait son âge. C'est un agneau qui s'est conduit comme un lion. Il a dépassé toutes les espérances à un point que je ne saurais vous exprimer.

Laroche well rendered the meaning of the comment; Berlioz followed him with exactitude, but *removed the final sentence*, with its sonorous “better bettered,” perhaps because he recognized the impossibility of finding an alliterative equivalent. (In the anthologies, because of that alliteration, the Messenger’s remark is usually reduced to only: “he hath indeed better bettered expectation.”) More likely, Berlioz was simply reducing the dialogue to its essentials: he now leaves out several further lines and jumps to Beatrice’s question, which we have discussed, regarding the return of “seigneur Matamore.” Berlioz echoes Laroche to the point of the Messenger’s comment on Benedict’s military service:

Messenger: And a good soldier too, lady.

Beatrice: And a good soldier to a lady; but what is he to a lord?

Messenger: A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honourable virtues.

Le Messenger: C'est un vaillant guerrier, madame.

Béatrice: Vaillant auprès d'une dame, mais qu'est-il en face d'un guerrier?

Le Messenger: Brave devant un brave, et homme en face d'un homme; il est rempli de qualités honorables.

Le Messenger: C'est encore un vaillant.

Béatrice: Vaillant auprès d'une dame; mais qu'est-il en face d'un guerrier?

Le Messenger: Brave devant un brave, et homme en face d'un homme. Lui aussi a, dans cette guerre, rendu d'importants services.

Beatrice: It is so indeed, he is no less than a stuffed man; but for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal.

Béatrice: Il en est rembourré; si on lui ôtait la bourre factice dont il est plein; mais nous sommes tous mortels.

Béatrice: Vous aviez des vivres avariés, et il vous a aidés à les consommer. C'est un intrépide gastronome, il a un excellent estomac.

Here Berlioz has rearranged Beatrice's remarks to include what she had said, in Shakespeare, moments before: "You had a musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it: he is a very valiant trencher-man; he hath an excellent stomach." Berlioz has followed the Laroche translation, as he does for the next few lines, until Beatrice asks the identity of "his companion now," because Benedick "hath every month a new sworn brother."

Messenger: Is't possible?

Le Messenger: Est-il possible?

Le Messenger: Est-il possible?

Beatrice: Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat, it ever changes with the next block.

Béatrice: Très aisément possible; ses affections changent comme la forme de son chapeau à chaque mode nouvelle.

Béatrice: Très possible. Ses affections changent, comme la forme de sa toque, à chaque mode nouvelle.

Why, for *hat*, did Berlioz choose *toque* rather than *chapeau*? Did he wish to imitate the sound of the English word *block*? Did *toque* better render the true meaning of *block*—the mold upon which the hat is shaped? A moment later, Beatrice jokes that if Claudio has "caught the Benedick," by which she seems to mean a fever of madness, then, for a cure, it will cost him "a thousand pound." Laroche translated "mille livres sterling"; Berlioz, tuning his words to the sound of Messina, set down "six mille *ducats*." I do not know what conversion table he was using, but the sum in any currency is enormous.

The remaining lines of the scene, until the arrival of Don Pédro, are identical in Berlioz and Laroche. Berlioz avoids "Voici don Pédro" ("Don Pedro is approached") because, desirous of musical symmetry, he rather introduces the return of the opening chorus, and thus has the messenger say: "Je vais au-devant du general" ("I shall go meet the general"). Here, Berlioz has reduced the text, altered a few words, but changed nothing of substance.

Now let us look elsewhere, at the text of a part of the trio found in act 1, scene 9 of the opera, which is based on lines from act 1, scene 1 of the play.

Shakespeare

Benedick:

That a woman
conceived me, I thank
her: that she brought
me up, I likewise give
her most humble
thanks: but that I will
have a recheat winded
in my forehead, or
hang my bugle in an
invisible baldrick, all
women shall pardon
me. Because I will not
do them the wrong
to mistrust any, I will
do myself the right to
trust none: and the fine
is, for the which I may
go the finer, I will live
a bachelor.

Laroche

Bénédict:

Qu'une femme m'ait
conçu, je l'en remercie;
qu'elle m'ait élevé, je
lui en suis pareillement
on ne peut plus
reconnaissant; mais
que je ne me soucie
pas d'avoir des cornes
au front, ou de
suspendre mon cor de
chasse à un baudrier
invisible, c'est ce que
toutes les femmes me
pardonneront. Ne
voulant pas leur faire
l'injure de me défier
de toutes, je prends la
liberté de ne me fier à
aucune: la conclusion
de tout ceci, et je ne
m'en porterai que
mieux, c'est que je veux
vivre garçon.

Berlioz

Bénédict:

D'une femme il est
vrai que je reçus
la vie;
Elle m'éleva, je l'en
remercie;
Mais si, malgré tout,
je ne me soucie
Que fort peu de
porter de hauts
bois sur le front,
Les femmes me
pardonneront.
Par ma défiance,
de toutes les blesser,
je n'ai pas le
vouloir,
Je ne saurais pourtant
avoir
En l'une d'elles
confiance,
Et ma conclusion,
C'est que je veux
mourir garçon!

The meaning of the Shakespeare's prose is accurately rendered in Laroche's. Indeed, Laroche is less obscure than Shakespeare: "have a recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick" is hilarious but by no means straightforward. Convinced as he is that no woman can remain faithful—the unlikeliness of female fidelity being one of the themes of the play (cuckoldry being another)—Benedick does not wish to risk the sounding from his forehead of a "recheat" (a call for hunting dogs who have lost the scent of their prey), that is, the wearing of the horns of a cuckold, which, *ipso facto*, is the garb of the married man.

For his musical setting, Berlioz turns the lines into poetry, well rhythmicized, well rhymed, but hardly conventional. In the bit we have quoted (the central section of the trio), he distributes three alexandrines (lines 1, 4, and 7) among lines of 10, 10, 8, 5, 8, 8, 5, and 8 syllables. The rhyme scheme,

too (*aaabbcddccb*), is original. The vocabulary, however, fully depends on Laroche, from whom Berlioz borrows the words *remercier*, *éleva*, *soucie*, *pardonneront*, *defiance*, *conclusion*, and *garçon*. For Shakespeare's notion of freedom, "I will live a bachelor" ("je veux vivre garçon"), Berlioz substitutes an intensifier: "je veux mourir garçon" ("I will die a bachelor"). But the composer's nicest invention is the replacement of the ill-mannered expression *porter des cornes*, that is, "wear horns," or "be victimized by infidelity," with *porter des hauts bois*—literally "wear high woods," but figuratively "wear oboes"! A lesser composer would have had the oboes quack at this moment of the proceedings.

Let us look, finally, at scenes 11, 12, and 13 of act 1, in which Berlioz introduces the asinine character of Somarone, loosely based upon Shakespeare's Dogberry, who will introduce diatonic music into the action, and who will assert later in the play (act 4, scene 1): "remember that I am an ass"! Somarone's name, derived by Berlioz from the Italian word *somaro* ("ass"), is also based on Shakespeare's Balthasar, a singer in Don Pedro's entourage. While Dogberry exaggerates his own talents as an officer and wise man, Balthasar rather modestly claims, in act 2, scene 3 (as we have seen), that "there's not a note of mine that's worth the noting." Shakespeare's Balthasar would thus not say, of his new composition, as Berlioz's Somarone does: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the work you are about to have the honor to perform is a masterpiece!" In fact, this self-aggrandizing spoof is yet another Berliozian quotation: in his letter to Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein of March 10, 1859, Berlioz repeats what he had been told that Spontini said at the final rehearsal of his opera of 1819: "Messieurs, *Olympie* est un chef d'œuvre! Commençons!"—"Gentleman, *Olympie* is a masterpiece! Let us begin!"⁴⁹

The true model for Somarone, however, as Joël-Marie Fauquet has discovered,⁵⁰ is the chapel master found in an obscure opéra-comique by Ferdinando Paër, *Le Maître de chapelle*, first performed in 1821, seen by Berlioz in a shortened version on July 23, 1834, and reviewed by him in *Le Rénovateur*: "In our opinion, the role of the chapel master is, like others of its kind, extremely silly. A musician who comes on stage in order to share with us the intimate secrets of his compositional talent—saying, for example, 'here I desire the sound of the fluuuute' (and the flute in the orchestra will toot a tune), 'then I desire a solo for the bassoon' (and the bassoon will groan in its turn), 'and a canon' (ra-ta-tat-tat), as in [Stanislas Champein's] *La Mélomanie* [1781]—such a person may amuse the folks in the rue Charlot, relatives of those in [Alexis Wafflard and Fulgence de Bury's] *Le Voyageur à*

Dieppe [1821], but for everyone else he is nothing but a ridiculous *Pasquin* [a zany and ridiculous servant], dramatically untrue, and irritatingly inane to the point of giving you a headache.”⁵¹

“Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,” the poem sung by Balthasar, in act 2, scene 3, when Shakespeare uses music to press upon women the inevitability of male matrimonial deception, has, in the setting by R. J. S. Stevens, become something of a hit tune. Not so the two couplets of Somarone’s nuptial serenade, the *Épithalame grotesque*, in scene 11 of the opera, which encourage the youthful fiancés to forget the drudgery of daily existence and to indulge in the “infinite ecstasy” of love. “Mourez, tendres époux” (“Die, young lovers”) makes obvious use of the erotic cliché. More subtle is Berlioz’s reuse of the phrase “extase infinie,” extracted from the sublime love duet in act 4 of *Les Troyens*, “Nuit d’ivresse et d’extase infinie,” a borrowing not unlike Wagner’s, of the *Tristan* motif, in act 3, scene 3 of *Die Meistersinger*, but unlikely to be noticed by Berlioz’s listeners of 1862 in as much as *Les Troyens*, completed for some time, would not be performed until the following year.

Between the couplets of the *Épithalame*, as Somarone makes changes to his score, Bénédicte and Claudio engage in a lively conversation, whose text is yet again beholden to Laroche. Somarone’s interjections, however, are Berlioz’s own:

Shakespeare	Laroche	Berlioz
<i>Benedick</i> : I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shall follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love:	<i>Bénédict</i> : Je ne conçois pas qu’un homme qui voit combien est insensé celui qui se soumet à l’empire de l’amour, puisse en devenant amoureux, tomber dans l’insigne folie qu’il a ridiculisée dans autrui, et s’offrir en butte à ses propres sarcasmes: [Somarone: Wait a moment! I must make a change in the second ritornello.]	<i>Bénédict</i> : Je ne conçois pas qu’un homme qui voit combien est insensé celui qui se soumet à l’empire de l’amour, puisse en devenant amoureux, tomber dans l’insigne folie qu’il a ridiculisée dans autrui, et s’offrir en butte à ses propres sarcasmes: Somarone: Un instant! je veux changer quelque chose à la seconde ritournelle.

and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe. I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour, and now will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet.

[Berlioz removes seven or eight lines.]

But I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool.

[Berlioz removes several lines.]

et cependant tel est Claudio. J'ai vu un temps où l'harmonie la plus délicieuse à son oreille, c'était le son du fifre et du tambour; et maintenant il leur préfère le tambourin et le chalumeau; j'ai vu un temps où il aurait fait dix lieues à pied pour voir une bonne armure; et à présent, il passera dix nuits à combiner la coupe d'un nouveau pourpoint.

Mais ce que je puis affirmer, c'est que jusqu'à ce qu'il ait fait de moi une huitre, il ne fera pas de moi un sot de ce calibre.

[Somarone: Try this out!]

[Bénédict: Ah, the musicians! A rehearsal! Let us listen!]

[Somarone: Very good. Amazing! And at sight! Oh, you're quite a fellow! I'll be sure to include a pretty saltarello for you in my new mass.]

et cependant tel est Claudio! J'ai vu un temps où l'harmonie la plus délicieuse à son oreille, c'était le son du fifre et du tambour, et maintenant il leur préfère de langoureuses mélodies! J'ai vu un temps où il eût fait dix lieues à pied pour voir une bonne armure; à présent, il passera dix nuits à combiner la coupe d'un nouveau pourpoint.

Du diable si l'amour fait jamais de moi un sot de ce calibre!

Somarone: Essai-moi cela!

Bénédict: Ah! Des musiciens! Une répétition! Écoutez!

Somarone: Très bien! Peste! à première vue! Oh! tu es un gaillard! J'écrirai pour toi un joli saltarello dans ma nouvelle messe.

We see that Berlioz preserves as much of the original as possible, but that Somarone's intrusions necessarily lead him away from Shakespeare. The

substitution of “langorous melodies” for “the tabor and the pipe” represents Berlioz’s escalation of Bénédict’s mockery of Claudio for surrendering his military bearing and succumbing to the wiles of femininity. Shakespeare includes musical jokes (“By my troth, a good song,” notes Don Pedro; “And an ill singer, my lord,” replies Balthasar), but nothing as patently absurd as Berlioz’s notion of a *saltarello* (a lively medieval dance of Tuscan, not Sicilian, origin) inserted into a solemn mass!

These several examples suggest that while sketching the libretto of *Beatrice et Bénédict*, Berlioz had on his desk, not only the volume prepared by Benjamin Laroche, but also a version of the English text. Offering advice to the Berlin publishers Bote & Bock, who would bring out a German edition of the piano-vocal score, Berlioz wrote: “I shall send to you the French dialogues so that, in Berlin, you can personally supervise the translation into German. With the assistance of the Schlegel translation of the Shakespeare play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, the translator will in many places be able simply to copy out the words; that should take no more than three days.”⁵²

Julian Rushton, in an earlier more comprehensive study of the work, has taken account of the differences between the texts of Laroche and Berlioz and has in one instance praised the latter for having avoided the former’s “translationese”.⁵³ “Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick?” asks Beatrice in act 1, scene 1. Writes Laroche: “Comment le dédain pourrait-il mourir, lorsqu’il trouve un aliment aussi inépuisable que le seigneur Bénédict?” In Shakespeare, *disdain* is feminine—the word is the literal personification of Beatrice—and *food* and *feed* are amusingly alliterative. But Laroche’s *aliment aussi inépuisable*, with three successive vowels, is not without its charm. That particular formulation—is it “translationese”?—is found in the original Le Tourneur version of the seventeen-eighties and in François Guizot’s reedition of Le Tourneur of the eighteen-twenties, both of which rather spoil the matter of personification: “Et comment la Dédiagneuse mourrait-elle, lorsqu’elle trouve à ses dédains un aliment aussi inépuisable que le seigneur Bénédict.” In his later, widely admired translation, François-Victor Hugo employed a capital letter to underline the personification—but kept the original alimentary articulation: “Est-il possible que Dédain meure, ayant pour se nourrir *un aliment aussi inépuisable* que le signor Bénédict?”

Berlioz had felt free to cut the play in half, to take over the sentences and the structures provided by Laroche, and to modify the words as he saw fit, because he knew, it is perhaps too obvious to say, that the essence of his reincarnation of the Shakespearean comedy was in the music—which had

come to him, as he told his son, in an outpouring of inspiration. The quality of the jolly war between Béatrice et Bénédicte, and here I conclude with only a single example, is manifest most charmingly in the number that gave rise to the overture and that best exemplifies the “*pointe d’une aiguille*,” the sparkling clarity with which he set down the score. I speak of the Scherzo-Duettino that closes the opera, whose character, as Berlioz himself wrote to the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, “encapsulates that of the two principals, and whose effect is quite special.”⁵⁴ Berlioz then quotes the full text, of which we give the first four lines:

Bénédicte: L’amour est un flambeau.

Béatrice: L’amour est une flamme,

Bénédicte: Un feu follet, qui vient on ne sait d’où,

Béatrice: Qui brille et disparaît pour égarer notre âme,

Bénédicte: Attire à lui le sot et le rend fou.

(Love is a torch / Love is a flame / A will-o’-the-wisp that comes from one
knows not where / Which sparkles and disappears and troubles our senses /
Which draws to it the dupe and renders him daft.)

The words are of Berlioz’s own invention, they are not to be found in the Laroche translation. In act 2, scene 1, Beatrice does cynically compare love and marriage to a Scotch jig that leads to wobbly legs and exhaustion, but mockery of marriage here is of course the point of the play. It is conceivable, however, because “*l’amour est un flambeau*” is a rarely found phrase, that rattling round in Berlioz’s remarkable memory was a satirical epigram that he might have seen in a Sunday magazine published in Lyon: “*L’amour est un flambeau qui éclaire une partie de la vie de l’homme. Quand il a assez vu, il se marie. L’hymen est l’éteignoir de l’amour*”—“Love is a torch that illuminates a part of a man’s life. When he has seen enough, he gets married. Marriage is the asphyxiator of love.”⁵⁵ The epigram is anonymous, but it could have come from Benedick.

The first phrase of the Scherzo-Duettino consists of four bars of which the fourth is “empty” (it is “nothing”!). That is to say, the fourth bar is present because of the traditional expectation, as it were, that phrases be constructed in bar-groupings of two and four. These four bars, functioning as “antecedent,” lead us to expect a subsequent phrase of four bars, functioning as “consequent.” Berlioz does indeed give us a second four-bar phrase of which the fourth, again, is “empty.” However, this phrase confounds our rhythmic expectations by the imitation in the winds of the principal melody (in the

strings)—an imitation that removes the strong accent of the three-beat melody from the first beat, where it generally lies in ternary meter, to the second. The confusion results, to belabor the point, from the uncertain meaning of the first beat of the tune: is it in fact a downbeat, or is it perhaps an upbeat? Think of the word *harassment*—appropriate to the play in question!—which is sometimes accented on the first syllable (making “ha-” a downbeat), sometimes accented on the second (making “ha-” an upbeat). Berlioz continues the fun over the next eighteen bars, delightfully suggesting that the downbeat is now the first beat of the bar, now the second, now (on one occasion) the third. When Bénédict first sings “l’amour est,” the downbeat falls on the *-mour* of *l’a-mour*. When Béatrice first sings “l’amour est,” the downbeat falls on *est*. The musical bantering between the lines—ambiguous, changing, barbed—is what a literary scholar might call the “objective correlative” of the verbal bantering between the principals. From the music, and from the text, we feel something of the fabric of the characters’ emotions.

In the post-scriptum of the *Mémoires*, Berlioz enumerates the four preeminent qualities of his music: “passionate expression, inner fire, rhythmic momentum, unexpectedness.” Passionate expression and inner fire are of course among the preeminent qualities of the Shakespearean canon. But Shakespeare’s language, like ours, is attached to its time and place of origin. That it does not fully and faithfully carry over in translation—French or other—is self-evident. But the rhythmic momentum and unexpectedness of Berlioz’s *score*, in particular the score of the Scherzo-Duetto, seems to me to be convincing evidence of his expert understanding of the discernment, deception, and distrust manifested by Shakespeare’s principals, Beatrice and Benedick, the most extraordinary characters in the play: “More than any characters in high comedy, they rise above verbal wit and pit mind against mind in dialogue that *surprises* in sense, image, and *cadence*.”⁵⁶

Chapter Thirteen

Berlioz Writing the Life of Berlioz

*Pourquoi réfléchir?... je n'ai pas de plus mortelle ennemie
que la réflexion...*

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

He was slender and, in the images we have, seems to have been concerned about his appearance, being well if not always stylishly dressed. But he had few of the attributes that Baudelaire famously attributed to the “dandy,” in particular that “air of frigidity that results from his unshakeable resolve never ever to be moved,” for Berlioz was nothing if not passionately demonstrative of his likes and dislikes.¹ Nor did he possess the family income enjoyed by many members of the advantaged class. But when, in a moment of sobriety during a period of woe, he wrote to his friend Humbert Ferrand, on June 12, 1833, that “my life is a novel that greatly interests me,”² he was embodying the dandy’s characteristically defensive psychological strategy as it was later described by Oscar Wilde in chapter 9 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: “To become the spectator of one’s own life [...] is to escape the suffering of life.”³

In his account of himself, what we might have liked to discover is... sex. Not the undressed reality, not the inconsiderate revelation, but perhaps the confessional intimation, the confidential admission of what is being withheld. What we do discover, and in spades, is love. And humor. And truthfulness, elegance, magnanimity, modesty, brilliance, perceptiveness about himself and others, and countless further virtues that Jacques Barzun well catalogued in his great book of many years ago.⁴ But is it not curious that the *Mémoires*—of a man born in the same year as the creator of Carmen, of a man close to such connoisseurs of women as Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and Alexandre Dumas *père* and *fils*, of a man on intimate terms with

the great *séducteur* who was Franz Liszt—should remain almost speechless in the theaters of eroticism and lust?

Missing

That Berlioz was a man of passion there is no doubt. That he chose to portray himself absent the tones of the flesh speaks to... chastity? diffidence? discomfiture? The right word, I think, is *discretion*. Like his music, which can be tempestuous, asymmetrical, unpredictable, but never unpremeditated, Berlioz's *Mémoires*—enthusiastic, selective, heterogeneous—always remain *composed*. They are a counterpoint of sound and silence. "I have nothing to say, and I am saying it," quipped John Cage in a poem Berlioz might have liked. Yes, Berlioz does refer to "the frenzied enthusiasm of the whores" in his famous description of Paris in the immediate aftermath of the July Revolution.⁵ Yes, he does give a recipe to awaken the desires of Italian chamber maids—"a melancholy expression and white trousers"—in a comment on the life of the prize winner in Rome.⁶ And yes, as we observed in chapter 3, he does mention his wife's virginity, to Liszt, in the immediate aftermath of his long-delayed wedding to Harriet Smithson. But of Berlioz's indulgence with an inamorata in Nice, which put an end to an unnecessary fidelity to an unworthy fiancée, of his liaisons in London, which caused Edouard Silas to diagnose the composer with "petticoat fever,"⁷ and of his affairs with chorus girls—one whom fate had thrown into his arms when, he told Humbert Ferrand, in frustration over Harriet Smithson's hesitancy to marry, he planned abruptly to leave Paris for Berlin; one whom he took as a mistress sometime after the first performance of the *Requiem* in 1837 (if my suspicion is correct about the identity of the "Mademoiselle Martin" in the chorus—Marie Geneviève Martin, the daughter of Joseph Martin, would at that time have used her father's surname before adopting the stage names of Marie Willès and Marie Recio); one whom he pursued in Saint Petersburg, in the spring of 1847, when his love of love got the better of him—of these women, in the *Mémoires*, we hear little or nothing at all.⁸

Much more of importance—to the life, to the work—is simply left out. A recent scholarly biography of Beethoven *opens* with "The Death of Beethoven's Mother," taking the event as one of far-reaching consequence.⁹ The death of Berlioz's mother, and for that matter the death at nineteen of his younger brother, must have affected the mature composer, but the former, in the *Mémoires*, is mentioned only in passing; the latter is mentioned nowhere

at all. What Berlioz does offer in the book that ensures his lasting literary reputation is a series of episodes and anecdotes, observations and assessments, that he knew would act to shape the future's memory and knowledge of the man he was and hoped to be. This objective, usually unspoken, is one most autobiographers share. Berlioz went so far as to articulate it, at least indirectly, by seeing to it that the book was printed—precisely as he had written it—before and not after his death.

The *Mémoires* have been much written about. They are aptly seen—for he was a critic, an arbiter of taste, a conductor of opinion—as the composer's ultimate effort to shape his legacy. They are frequently quoted for their delightfully ironic takes on French and European musical life in the romantic era. Their author was usually able to convey the image of what he saw along with an awareness of the lens through which he saw it. Still, certain facts need amplification, certain questions and themes need more air. Such are the goals of this chapter.

Particulars

Writing to his sister of his arduous work on *Les Troyens*, Berlioz explains that his musical identity is quite different from his identity as her brother: “Le *moi* musicien est bien différent du *moi* que tu connais.”¹⁰ The title of this chapter attempts to put distance between the author of the *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*, his “*moi* écrivain,” and the subject of that book. Serving as it has for one hundred fifty years as a primary source for the particulars of his life, Berlioz's final masterpiece is nonetheless best regarded as a work of art. Facts it contains, of course, most of them accurate. But more essential truths about the man and the musician emerge from the means he employs to spin the tales he wishes to tell. Memories (and thus *mémoires*) transform reality, as Berlioz knew and did not fear. He trusted his extraordinary memory because the reality he was after did not really depend on exact numbers and particular dates.

The particulars of the printing of the book, generally known for years, were not set down with the kind of precision that modern scholarship requires until the publication of my edition in 2019. As most people know it, this is the work of which we speak:

*MÉMOIRES / DE / HECTOR BERLIOZ / MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT DE
FRANCE / COMPRENANT / SES VOYAGES EN ITALIE, EN ALLEMAGNE,*

EN RUSSIE / ET EN ANGLETERRE / 1803–1865 / Avec un beau portrait de l'Auteur / M.L. / PARIS / MICHEL LÉVY FRÈRES, ÉDITEURS / RUE VIVIENNE, 2 BIS, ET BOULEVARD DES ITALIENS, 15 / À LA LIBRARIE NOUVELLE / MDCCCLXX.

This is the title of the book as it was issued approximately twelve months after the composer's death, in March 1870, at a price of twelve francs, by the firm of Michel Lévy frères, the still prominent Parisian publishers now styled Calmann-Lévy.¹¹ Michel Lévy, Calmann's younger brother, with whom Berlioz had had cordial business relations since 1852, when he brought out *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, had in fact suggested to Berlioz, in 1855, when he learned of their existence, that his firm be charged with the publication of the *Mémoires*. Indeed, on May 10, 1855, Berlioz told Franz Liszt, at the time in possession of the manuscript, that in the event of his death, Liszt should arrange publication with Michel Lévy, "who proposed it."¹²

Lévy's title emphasizes three points: first, Berlioz's identity as a member of the Institut de France—an institution he had frequently mocked but profoundly appreciated when he finally joined its ranks in 1856; second, the importance of his travels abroad—which, representative of the always popular literary genre of the *voyage* or travel narrative, provide the content of at least thirty-five of the book's seventy-nine chapters (the latter number arrived at by this editor, not by the author, who was unfussy about such things as chapter numbers); third, the portrait of the artist—the work of François-Marie-Louis-Alexandre Godinet de Villecholle, a photographer of some importance in the early era of photographic portraiture, who was known simply as Franck. Berlioz sat for this portrait at some point after August 15, 1864—as we gather from the rosette of Officier de la Légion d'honneur in his lapel, awarded to him on that date, another honor, as correspondence recently published suggests, of which he was understandably quite proud—and before the book was finally produced, in the spring of 1865.¹³

When the book was first advertised, in *Le Ménestrel* of March 27, 1870, Lévy added a phrase to the title: *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz / comprenant: / ses voyages en Italie, en Allemagne, en Russie / et en Angleterre (1803–1865) / Souvenirs, Impressions, Anecdotes / Un beau volume grand in-8°, 12 fr. (envoi franco) / avec portrait de l'auteur*. I cannot discover if "Souvenirs, Impressions, Anecdotes," which we find nowhere else, helped early sales. In fact sales, and the impact of the book as a whole, were immediately compromised by the clouds of war. Four months after the volume became available for purchase, trickery on the part of Otto von Bismarck and overconfidence on the part of

Napoléon III led to the outbreak, in July, of a ten-month conflict that would prove disastrous for both the Emperor and for the nation of France.

The front wrapper of the book as Berlioz sent it to the printers in 1865 reads as follows:

MÉMOIRES / D'HECTOR BERLIOZ / MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE / CORRESPONDANT / DE L'ACADÉMIE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERLIN, DE CELLE DE SAINTE-CÉCILE DE ROME / OFFICIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR / CHEVALIER DE PLUSIEURS ORDRES ÉTRANGERS, ETC., ETC. / PARIS / CHEZ TOUS LES LIBRAIRES / MDCCCLXV

Here we find attention drawn, not to the travels, but to the tributes of which the mature composer was a frequent recipient. (He notes his honorary memberships in musical organizations in Berlin and Rome; he could also have included those in Grenoble, Hechingen, Leipzig, London, Rio de Janeiro, Rotterdam, Saint Petersburg, Stuttgart, and Vienna.) As half-title, in that 1865 publication, we find:

MÉMOIRES / D'HECTOR BERLIOZ / DE 1803 À 1865 / ET SES VOYAGES EN ITALIE, EN ALLEMAGNE, EN RUSSIE ET EN ANGLETERRE / ÉCRITS PAR LUI-MÊME

Apart from “d’Hector”—which is correct (the *h* of Hector, like the *h* of other Latinate names, is *mu*et, and requires elision), and which differs from the “de Hector” that results uniquely from a later designer’s time-honored decision to set the preposition on a separate line—what we notice, what was removed from the publication in 1870, are the words *écrits par lui-même*—“written by himself.” Berlioz was too careful a writer to set down a silly tautology; he rather wished doubly to emphasize the fact that no other cook had spoiled the stew. The locution was conventional: the *Mémoires de Voltaire, écrits par lui-même* went through dozens of editions in the mid-nineteenth century; Alexandre Dumas, in 1849–1850, edited the *Mémoires de Talma, écrits par lui-même*; and Jules Michelet, in 1854, published the *Mémoires de Luther, écrits par lui-même*. What may have sparked Berlioz’s use of the expression was the publication, in 1844, of the *Mémoires de Benvenuto Cellini, écrits par lui-même*, which appeared from Jules Labitte, the publishers in that very year of Berlioz’s *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie*. In 1903, when J. M. Dent brought out Katharine Boulton’s abridged English translation of the *Mémoires*, they, too, used the title of *The Life of Hector Berlioz, as written by himself*. The curious absence of “écrits par lui-même” on the outer wrapper

of Berlioz's 1865 book led me to adopt as the title of my own edition the wording of Berlioz's half-title cited above. For this editorial decision, I was debunked by the distinguished German Berliozian Klaus Kohrs.¹⁴

Berlioz's 1865 "edition" is technically the first *printing* of the volume that Berlioz himself had produced, privately, by a nearby print shop. In fact, as we learn from slight differences among the three copies of the 1865 book now preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, there were several *tirages* (impressions) of the original text, something that was perfectly normal, since first impressions served as proofs. (The same process may be observed in the case of the *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*: the first impressions were made in 1843, the definitive impressions in 1844. To which year should we assign the treatise?) It may be that what we call the half-title (found on p. [3] of the pristine copy in the Macnutt Collection, at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) was originally set down for the outer wrapper and only later removed to an inner page. The title page of that copy, on p. [5], has a text that is identical to that of the outer wrapper but with the date marked as "1865," not "MDCCCLXV." Here, as at the heads of certain chapters, Berlioz hesitated between using Roman and Arabic numerals. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essay on *Self-Reliance*, of 1841 (seven years before Berlioz began to set down the *Mémoires*), wrote famously that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." The composer would agree: consistency, foolish or other, was clearly less important to Berlioz than it is to the prose mavens of the present.

This first printing, of some twelve hundred copies, was set in type by compositors at the Imprimerie Valée in the rue Bréda—a short walk from Berlioz's domicile in the rue de Calais—at a cost, he told his son Louis on July 18, 1865, of forty-eight hundred francs.¹⁵ It was the author's intention, we know, to keep all twelve hundred volumes in his office in the library at the Conservatoire until his death. In fact, he was unable to resist sending copies to various members of his family and friends, first among them Estelle Fournier, who, Berlioz tells us, was his first and last love. Others who appear to have received the first printing include Estelle's daughter-in-law, Suzanne Fournier, whom Berlioz came to know and admire; the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, Berlioz's *confidante* during the years around *Les Troyens*; Humbert Ferrand, Berlioz's oldest and dearest friend; the Grand-Duchess Yelena Pavlovna, who persuaded Berlioz to make his second and final voyage to Russia; Ernest Reyer, Berlioz's colleague and successor at the *Journal des débats*; and a number of others whom I identify in my edition.¹⁶

It had been his earlier plan, we are entitled to presume, that the *Mémoires* be published posthumously under the supervision of *his son*: as early as May 10, 1858, Berlioz explained to his sister Adèle that, for safekeeping, he was about to send the autograph of the book to her husband, Marc Suat, and that he anticipated bequeathing it to his son, Louis, with the request that Louis publish all “three volumes” *as is* (“tels qu’ils sont”), with no modification whatsoever.¹⁷ Nine years later, in a hospital in Havana, which Caribbean port of call, as a marine captain, he had come to know well, Louis Berlioz died of the yellow fever, shortly before his thirty-third birthday, on June 5, 1867. In the wake of the tragedy, which nearly broke his will to live, Berlioz wrote out a last will and testament urging his heirs and executors to bring out the *Mémoires*—now printed and stockpiled in his office—“by selling the rights to only the first [extant] edition, or by selling the rights to the work in their entirety, to a bookseller in Paris: Monsieur Michel Lévy, or Monsieur Hachette, or someone else.”¹⁸

It is curious that Berlioz mentions Louis Hachette, who founded his publishing house in 1846 and who was, by the eighteen-sixties, one of the major publishers of the capital; perhaps he did so because, as one who liked to take the train, Berlioz was aware of Hachette’s celebrity as the founder of a highly successful chain of railroad-station bookstores. It was nonetheless with Michel Lévy frères that, on January 31, 1870, the representatives of Berlioz’s family—Édouard Alexandre, the executor of the composer’s estate, and Maurice-Edmond Masson, the notary acting in behalf of the heirs—signed the contract that gave to those publishers the rights in their entirety to the *Mémoires*. In fact, the contract, for six thousand francs, gave to Michel Lévy frères the rights to *all* of Berlioz’s published writings (“tous les volumes et feuilletons publiés par Hector Berlioz”), demonstrating the publishers’ long-term plan to enjoy the benefits of Berlioz’s literary *œuvres complètes*, including *Les Soirées de l’orchestre*, Lévy’s first transaction with Berlioz, of 1852. In 1870, however, Michel Lévy frères contented themselves with issuing only the *Mémoires*: this they did by taking possession of the copies of the book that Berlioz had stored away, by removing Berlioz’s title page and replacing it with one of their own, and by putting the volume on sale in March, a full year after the composer’s death—a delay that, for Ernest Reyer, was unconscionable.¹⁹ Oddly enough, Lévy included at the back of the book the same printed *errata* that Berlioz had had inserted in the summer of 1865. Only in 1878, when they reset the text in two volumes, did Michel Lévy frères incorporate into the main text the *errata* noted by Berlioz himself. Calmann-Lévy continued to advertise the one-volume publication from time to time,

but the two-volume set became the standard edition. In the Berlioz dossiers of the publisher's archives, which I visited in 1994, we find the print runs of those two volumes as follows: March 1878 (1,500); May 1881 (1,000); March 1887 (1,000); September 1896 (1,000); February 1904 (1,000); March 1919 (500); June 1921 (1,000); June 1926 (750); November 1930 (1,000). A note tells us that the book went out of print after 1938. (The original two-volume edition is available online.) The first modern edition, in one volume, was published in Paris by Flammarion in 1991, with learned editorial commentary and notes by Pierre Citron. I am guilty of presenting the first "critical" edition—based on all extant manuscript and printed sources, showing variants, and freighted with copious annotations and a lengthy introduction—which was published in Paris, by J. Vrin, in 2019.

In his last will and testament, Berlioz stipulated that a German translation be negotiated with the Leipzig publishers Gustav Heinze, who in 1863–1864 had brought out Richard Pohl's long-delayed translations of Berlioz's *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, *Les Grotesques de la musique*, and *À travers chants* in a four-volume *Gesammelte Schriften*. (Heinze furthermore brought out Alfred Dörrfel's translation of the *Traité d'instrumentation*, in 1864, and, in 1866, a piano-vocal score of Gluck's *Orphée* that conforms to the version Berlioz prepared in 1859 for the Théâtre-Lyrique.) In keeping with his lifelong desire to publish what he wrote *as he wrote it*, Berlioz insists that the translation of the *Mémoires* not be undertaken by Pohl, whose volumes "fourmillent de contre-sens"—"crawl with absurdities"—as Berlioz, who did not speak German, seems to have learned shortly after their publication. As early as 1855, Pohl had told Berlioz that he would be happy to translate the *Mémoires*, but apart from publishing excerpts in translation, he never completed the task. Fearful of Pohl's limitations, Berlioz told Liszt that the *Mémoires* were saturated with words, allusions, and locutions that would be utterly unintelligible to his German friend, and asked that Liszt explain them to the would-be translator.²⁰ In the will, Berlioz rather urges that the translation be undertaken by the sister of the man who had been his most faithful German translator, Peter Cornelius.²¹ Now, Cornelius had two sisters, Auguste and Susanne, but in view of her subsequent publication of a series of excerpts from the *Mémoires*, Auguste Cornelius would seem to be the sister Berlioz had in mind.²² The first complete German translation, by Elly Ellès, was not published until 1903, when the first of ten volumes of Berlioz's *Literarische Werke* appeared in Leipzig, from Breitkopf und Härtel, in a series completed in 1912. A second translation, by Hans Scholz, was published in 1914, in Munich, by C. H. Beck. Of the latter, my colleague Gunther Braam

issued a modern edition, in 2007, with comprehensive notes and commentary that are elsewhere unavailable.²³

The prepublication story of the *Mémoires*, the composition and recomposition of texts old and new, is equally complex and, for those who feed on such facts, fascinating. Dating the pieces of the puzzle is no easy matter: some chapters are dated with precision; others were written and revised at moments we cannot specify. Only for chapters 2, 4–31, 54, 57, and [62], in whole or in part, do we have autograph manuscripts. The number in square brackets represents my editorial numbering of the final part of the book, which includes the *Post-Scriptum* [60], the *Postface* [61], and the *Voyage en Dauphiné* [62]. For ease of reference, I have also numbered (in editorial brackets) the separate letters that comprise Berlioz's *voyages musicaux*: in today's world, Berlioz's charming habit of numbering some sections and only naming others is, to me, disconcerting, although I recognize that others more diplomatic than I think that we ought to allow the original text to stand untouched. In the *Traité d'orchestration*, Berlioz numbered the first six chapters and left the numbering of the next sixty or so to us. When he published excerpts from the *Mémoires* in *Le Monde illustré*, Berlioz included under "chapter 55" bits from four different chapters of the actual book. One wonders if this casual attitude is an overblown reaction to the maniacal orderliness of his nemesis, Cherubini, who, in a surprising portrait of the old man by Berlioz's young friend Ferdinand Hiller, is said to have numbered even his handkerchiefs!²⁴

For many chapters of the *Mémoires*, we have versions printed in the daily, weekly, and monthly press. These sources, in addition to the publication of the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie*, in 1844, invite the gathering of significant variants. On January 24, 1854, Berlioz told Liszt that he had not sent him the autograph manuscript of the *Mémoires* because he "did not *yet* have a copy of this voluminous manuscript."²⁵ That *copy*, if it was actually made, would, with the variants we have, help to provide better answers to the questions of precisely What was written When.

When reusing previously published material, Berlioz's usual procedure—with the important exception of the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie*—was to copy the text into the autograph manuscript of the *Mémoires*, and to revise as he carried out what was otherwise a mechanical process. This may be seen in a striking way in chapter 24, where, in the autograph, we find the text of the anecdote first published in the *Journal des débats* of October 7, 1846: "Le Droit de jouer en *fa* dans une symphonie en *ré*" ("The Right to Play in F in a Symphony in D"). Readers familiar with Berlioz's books will

recognize this as the title of the first regular chapter of *Les Grotesques de la musique*. Berlioz originally intended to include the anecdote in the *Mémoires*; he changed his mind in late 1858 or early 1859 when assembling materials for *Les Grotesques*, which appeared in March 1859. We cannot be certain, because we do not possess autographs for all chapters of the *Mémoires*, but it is reasonable to assume that other chapters of *Les Grotesques* were likewise selected from texts at first designed for inclusion in what became Berlioz's ultimate book.

Recopying is always inexact; the "scribal errors" that mesmerize musicologists are not limited to the *lapsus memoriae* of medieval monks. When reusing material from his *voyages musicaux*, however, Berlioz tried to minimize the problem by pasting pages from the earlier publication onto the larger pages of the manuscript, as I mentioned in chapter 8, and by making marginal corrections by hand. It is almost tautological to say that the small changes we observe among the versions of the chapters of the *Mémoires* give evidence of Berlioz's lifelong concern for the melody and pace of his prose.

Secrets

We know that Berlioz wished to cast a veil of secrecy over the existence of his *Mémoires*. The day before he sent the text to Liszt, May 21, 1855, he told his friend to acknowledge receipt of only the *package*, not the *manuscript*: "I will know what that means."²⁶ Three years later, in May 1858, he told his sister Adèle, with whom his second wife was in occasional contact, that in her letters she should *never* speak of the *Mémoires*—"ne me parle jamais de cela dans tes lettres."²⁷ And yet excerpts from the book had already begun to appear in *Le Monde illustré*: the first of thirty-five selections came out on February 13, 1858, the last, on September 10, 1859. The existence of Berlioz's *Mémoires* was thus known to all with an interest in music.

Earlier, excerpts from what in the *Mémoires* became the *Voyage en Russie* were published in the monthly *Magasin des demoiselles*, from November 25, 1855, to April 25, 1856, although the latter articles, which I shall mention below, were not identified as constituting parts of the author's autobiography. Years earlier, however, when *Les Soirées de l'orchestre* went on sale, in late November 1852, the publishers did include an explanatory note at the foot of the first page of *Le Premier Opéra*, the tale recounted in the first *soirée*. Here we learn that that story was originally published in the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie* (of 1844), that that book was out of print, and that

the author had refused to permit a second edition because “all of the *autobiographical* material of this *voyage*” would be “used and completed by him in another, more important book” upon which he was “currently at work.”²⁸ It would not have taken a rocket scientist to discern that the “more important book” was an autobiography. Furthermore, when Berlioz’s even earlier communication to John Ella of May 15, 1852, regarding the mysterious composition of *La Fuite en Égypte*, was published in *The Musical Union*, on May 18, 1852, and reprinted in *Le Ménestrel* on May 30, 1852, the editor announced that that boutade (explaining Berlioz’s proclamation of *La Fuite* as a product of a renaissance composer) was “a page torn from his previous life, a page borrowed from his future *Mémoires*.”²⁹ In the end, this “page” appeared, not in *Mémoires* but, like “Le Droit de jouer en *fa*,” in *Les Grottesques de la musique*. Still, already in the spring of 1852, the secret existence of the *Mémoires* was not really a secret at all.

In chapter 51 [5], the fifth letter of the first *Voyage musical en Allemagne* that bisects the *Mémoires*, Berlioz speaks in detail of the concert he gave in Dresden on February 10, 1843. After praising the accomplished singing of Joseph Tichatschek, the great tenor who would create the roles of Rienzi and Tannhäuser, Berlioz tells of the difficulties he had in finding a proper singer for “Entre l’amour et le devoir,” Teresa’s cavatina from the *premier tableau* of *Benvenuto Cellini*: Maschinka Schubert came to the rescue and performed admirably. In the original version of this chapter, which appeared in the *Journal des débats* on September 12, 1843, we read—between the comment on Tichatschek and the comment on *Cellini*—another sentence: “Mademoiselle Recio, who *happened to be in Dresden at the time*, very graciously also consented to sing two *romances* with orchestra [*Le Jeune Père breton* and *La Belle voyageuse*], for which the public gallantly paid her tribute.” This sentence also appears in Berlioz’s 1844 book, the *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie*. By the time of the *Mémoires*, when the woman who “happened to be in Dresden” had become his second wife, Berlioz preferred entirely to exclude what had earlier been a playful deception.

The secrecy mentioned above is usually seen as designed to prevent Marie from learning of the existence of the book. In my view, this secrecy—which we also find in the letters that encompass the gestation of *Les Troyens*, and which is a natural product of any artist’s fear that the creative fire might be extinguished by the light of day—was designed rather more to prevent Marie from becoming exaggeratedly desirous of reading it. The female protagonists whose stories structure so much of the text—Estelle Dubeuf, who inspired the tales of his youth and old age; Harriet Smithson, who inflamed

his passion for Shakespeare—left little place for Berlioz’s second wife. Marie was practical: she became Berlioz’s “homme d’affaires,” or business manager, at a time when it was important that he have one; yet, like Minna Wagner, Marie was criticized, with stereotypical misogyny, for being a hindrance to the “master.”³⁰ Marie was also musically educated: the Dresden audience’s “galant” applause rewarded singing that was perhaps unexceptional but certainly not unprofessional. I have elsewhere defended Marie Recio against the negative press she has had for generations.³¹ She was present at the creation of *Les Nuits d’été*, as we have seen in chapter 6, and, at the beginning of her promising career as Marie Willès, she may well have acted as the composer’s muse. Still, her faithful companionship, which surely included her love of travel and adventure, never elicited from Berlioz the poetic prose in which he composed the tales of love and adventure that make up the *Mémoires*. Marie would have resented, not the book’s emotional account of Estelle in her teens and Harriet in her twenties, but the absence of any such page devoted to her. How I would love to discover *Les Mémoires de Marie Recio, écrits par elle-même!*

Politics

Milan Kundera, in *Le Rideau*, a collection of essays, writes that there are now so many writers at work that literature itself is committing a kind of suicide. Only literature that is essential should be published. He goes on:

But there are not only authors, hundreds, thousands of authors, there are also scholars, armies of scholars, who, guided by some opposite principle, accumulate everything they can possibly find in order to present the Totality, their supreme goal. The Totality, that is, an additional mountain of drafts, of crossed-out paragraphs, of chapters rejected by the author but published by the scholars in editions called “critical” under the perfidious name of “variants”—which means, if words still have meaning, that everything written by the author would be valuable and would be equally approved by him.³²

Here Kundera, almost always right, is magnificently wrong. Few scholars take the list of readings for *das Ding an sich*. And if space is not an issue—it is in *this* book but not in *every* book—then why not show what we can of the compositional process?

In chapter 51 [5] of the *Mémoires*, in Berlioz’s account of his encounter in Dresden with Richard Wagner, the Frenchman admires the German

composer, who was ten years his junior, but reserves his keenest accolade for the King of Saxony, who has munificently ensured the existence of a deserving artist of “précieuses facultés.” In the original version of this text, the following sentence occurs after those two words: “Richard Wagner, above and beyond his dual literary and musical talents, is also a gifted conductor. I saw him direct his operas with uncommon energy and precision.”³³ For Berlioz, in 1843, Wagner was not yet *Wagner*. But in the eighteen-fifties and -sixties, when Berlioz was revisiting and revising the *Mémoires*, Wagner’s star was rising in ways that neither man could have predicted: Berlioz’s deletion of that sentence—Milan Kundera’s vilification of variants to the contrary notwithstanding—suggests in a small way the heat of competition; it suggests the politics of art.

At the end of chapter 8, Berlioz interrupts the narrative of his youth in order to express revulsion over the consequences of the 1848 revolution in Paris, which include the suicide of his once wealthy and lately ruined friend, Augustin de Pons, the man who, in July 1825, had lent him twenty-five hundred francs to cover the cost of the performance of the *Messe solennelle*. That sad turn of events leads Berlioz to lament: “Oh! malheureux! pauvres abandonnés artistes! République de crocheteurs et de chiffonniers!”—“Oh, unhappy, wretched, abandoned artists! [Damn this] republic of pickpockets and scandalmongers!” Presumably because of their potentially inflammatory nature, Berlioz or his editor removed these words, and other comments regarding Paris in the aftermath of the June days, before the text appeared, on November 6, 1858, in *Le Monde illustré*. In fact the aftermath of the June days fills the pages of Berlioz’s writings from 1848, especially the *Voyage musical en France*—which he might have included in the *Mémoires* but eventually transferred to *Les Grottesques de la musique*—and two lesser-known tirades on the *droit des pauvres*, “that tax on pleasure for the benefit of the poor”³⁴ against which Berlioz railed for decades, and on the impoverished state of the art of music in France.³⁵ The *Mémoires* might, in other words, have been an even more politically charged book.

But politics was not the point. Indeed, it is pleasant to mention one moment in the *Mémoires* in which, my overemphasis on Berlioz’s antirepublicanism notwithstanding, the composer sets down what is a non-negative remark about the 1848 government, on the page he devoted to Pierre-Jules Hetzel, the celebrated publisher of Balzac, Hugo, and George Sand, who served in the ministry of foreign affairs during the Cavaignac administration (June–December 1848). On the eve of the composer’s departure for Russia, in late March 1847, Hetzel mentioned the cost of such a trip to Berlioz and

offered him a gift, or a loan, of a thousand francs, hoping in return to receive from Berlioz a piece for his new *Revue comique à l'usage des gens sérieux*. Introducing this anecdote in chapter 54 of the *Mémoires*, Berlioz notes in passing, and without a sneer, that Hetzel played a “very honorable role in the republican government.”³⁶ The Cavaignac government (whose foreign minister was Alphonse de Lamartine) is remembered for its violent suppression, in June 1848, of the revolt of the workers and the radical republicans. Berlioz would have had no patience for the extremists who staged that revolt, but he seems also to have had little regard for Cavaignac, the moderate republican, who was the candidate favored to win the presidential elections scheduled for December of that year. When Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was elected to the presidency, on December 10, 1848, Berlioz wrote delightedly to his sister, employing one of his most original (and untranslatable) neologisms: “Paris est en fête, il est ravi d’être dénationalisé, désencanaillé, désencavaignaque” — “All Paris is celebrating, simply thrilled to be denationalized, de-gangsterized, and de-Cavaignacked!”³⁷

In the excerpts of the *Mémoires* that appeared in *Le Monde illustré*, we find a number of “political” suppressions, such as that of the final lines of chapter 24, where Berlioz sarcastically explains the delights of living in France: “Comme l’esprit y pétille! Comme on y danse sur la phrase! Comme on y *blague* royalement et républicainement!... Cette dernière manière est la moins divertissante...” (“How sparkling our ingenuity! How brilliant our way with words! How *royally* we poke fun, and how *republicanly* we do so, although the latter manner is hardly amusing”).³⁸ The last sentence, its invented adverb seething with contempt, occurs only in the *Mémoires*.

Suggesting the opposite tendency—approval of the July Revolution—is the richly textured description, in chapter 29, of *Les Trois Glorieuses*:

I shall never forget the physiognomy of Paris during those much celebrated days: the fanatical bravery of the teenagers, the enthusiasm of the adults, the frenzied excitement of the whores, the grim resignation of the Swiss and the Royal Guard, the curious pride of the factory workers in being, as they said, the masters of Paris yet stealing nothing; and the preposterous braggadocio of some of the young men who, having manifested genuine courage, managed—by dint of exaggerated recitation and exaggerated ornamentation engarlanding the truth—to make that courage seem ludicrous.³⁹

Was Berlioz thrilled by the events of that summer? We have earlier noted his later reference to the “little heroes of July.” And in his distant recollections of his friendship with Berlioz, Ferdinand Hiller emphasized Berlioz’s explicit

avoidance of expressing platitudes about freedom.⁴⁰ In *Le Monde illustré*, the text of the paragraph quoted above is more sober: the passage from “fanatical bravery” to “stealing nothing” and the remark about the whores have been removed.

The publication in the *Magasin des demoiselles* in 1855–1856 of what in the *Mémoires* became the *Voyage en Russie* (chapters 55, 56, and [57], the last-mentioned numbered by me because Berlioz neglected to do so) is a story in itself, for it raises questions of *genre*—what is this travelogue doing in a fashion magazine otherwise concerned with young women’s conduct and personal hygiene?—as well as of politics: we are in the midst of the Crimean War, France, in a struggle against Russia, is allied with England for the first time in a thousand years, but of the “enemy” Berlioz has only good things to say. His introductory letter to the editor of the *Magasin des demoiselles*, which appeared in the issue of November 25, 1855, has provoked little attention:

To the Editor:

Monsieur,

You have asked me for an article about the trip I made to Russia eight years ago, and you suppose that such a narration, different from the subjects you usually treat, might interest your gentle readers. May God will that it be so! As for myself, I find it difficult to believe. If we are highly preoccupied by the Russians at this hour, interest in “harmony” has absolutely nothing to do with that preoccupation. Indeed, it may even be inappropriate for a Frenchman to speak of the Russians without malice. And yet, far from wanting to speak ill of the Russians—something, you must admit, that would at this moment be crudely platitudinous—I must in fact express to them my gratitude for the cordial and heartwarming reception which they offered me during my sojourn.

But you wish to have my piece... Thus, if I offend the patriotism of your youthful subscribers, if I fail to interest them and rather bore them to death, if my recitation is neither tasteful nor graceful nor in the least bit appealing, *you* shall be the truly guilty party—and I shall do my best to pardon you.⁴¹

To whom is this letter addressed? The *de facto* editors of the *Magasin des demoiselles* were quite appropriately two women: Joséphine Desrez and Caroline Genevay. But by French law, the *de jure* editors had to have been their husbands, Eugène-Louis Desrez, the director of the *Journal des connaissances utiles*, and Antoine-Joseph Genevay, the journalist, critic, and early feminist who had earlier edited a *Journal de femmes*.⁴² Berlioz knew Genevay as a fellow member of the Association des Artistes-Musiciens. Given the

composer's gentle sarcasm, it is presumably Genevay who is the "Monsieur" of Berlioz's salutation.

By the time of the last installment of Berlioz's Russian series, which appeared in the *Magasin des demoiselles* on April 25, 1856, the Treaty of Paris had concluded the business of a conflict that had never been popular in France, most historians agree,⁴³ in part because photographic journalism had for the first time graphically demonstrated the true horrors of war. Still, instead of concluding the series in the way it appears in chapter 56 [1] of the *Mémoires*, with a remark about the King of Prussia, Friedrich-Wilhelm IV—"The King of Prussia is no longer the sole European sovereign interested in music. There are two others: the young King of Hanover [George V], and the Grand-Duke of Weimar [Carl Alexander]. In all, three!"—Berlioz rather concluded with what we might regard as a profession of faith:

There you have, Monsieur le Directeur, everything I can say of my travels in Russia. And yet, if, since my return to France, I have often reflected nostalgically upon that ardent and intelligent public, upon those splendid musical *soirées*, upon those grandiose performances in Saint Petersburg, and upon the gracious hospitality of the Russian people, you must believe me when I say that I am no less a patriot than you, and that I am proud to be French.⁴⁴

Berlioz made no secret of his admiration for Russian cultural life. It is not surprising that Meyerbeer, when asked about potential candidates for the directorship of a not-yet-established conservatory in Saint Petersburg, wrote in 1858 to the Russian diplomat Count Vladimir Sollohub—in Paris to study the question—to recommend François-Joseph Fétis, Jacques-Fromental Halévy, and Hector Berlioz.⁴⁵

Discretion

If Berlioz's assertion of his patriotism did not find its way into the *Mémoires*, other differences between the serialized articles and the definitive text show the former as more circumspect than the latter—something that is of course to be expected in a book designed to appear only after its author had gone to a place eternally shielded from the reprisals and the reviews. In chapter 2, for example, we read of Doctor Berlioz's probity and independent spirit. We also read of his attempted suicide: "A few years ago, demoralized by excruciating pain, he swallowed at once thirty-two grains of opium. 'I assure you,' he later

told me on recounting the story, ‘that that was not designed to make me well.’” This paragraph never appeared in *Le Monde illustré*.

In chapter 14, Berlioz mentions the very serious case of tonsillitis he suffered as a student in Paris, in 1827, when he would have liked his then roommate, Antoine Charbonnel, to bring him something to eat. Nothing doing, Charbonnel was out chasing girls, or, as Berlioz puts it, “Antoine courait les grisettes.”⁴⁶ The word *grisettes* was too risqué for the editors of *Le Monde illustré*—it refers to working class women with morals of low altitude—so there we read that Charbonnel “courait les aventures.” In chapter 55, we come to Berlioz’s post-Roman career as a composer in Paris: “To finish paying off my wife’s debts, I once more set about the laborious business of arranging a benefit, and after a great deal of exhausting effort succeeded in organizing a joint theatrical and musical evening at the Théâtre-Italien.” Berlioz was forever worried about money, as becomes pointedly evident in his private correspondence. Members of his family, who had objected to his marriage to Harriet Smithson in part because she was penniless, were embarrassed by the slightest public hint that he was in financial distress. It was doubly valorous of Berlioz to excise from *Le Monde illustré* the offending phrase concerning “les dettes de ma femme.”⁴⁷

When Berlioz met the violinist and conductor Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Guhr, in Frankfurt, in late 1842, he was amused by Guhr’s constant habit of swearing, “Sacré nom de Dieu!” As Guhr pronounced the words, with his particular German accent, Berlioz heard “sacré nom te Tieu,” which appeared in the *Journal des débats*, and again in chapter 51 [1] of the *Mémoires*, as “S.N.T.T.” However, when Berlioz was preparing his travel pieces for publication in book form, in 1844, he seems to have wished to intensify the joke by signing his *own* letter to Guhr, not with “S.N.T.T.,” but with “adieu, adieu, S.N.D.D.” This irreligious profanity was complicated by Johann Christian Lobe’s German translation of Guhr’s expletive as “S.N.Z.T.,” which, because it is repeated, cannot be a misprint. “Sackerment nochmal, zum Teufel!”⁴⁸

Malice?

“The remarkable thing,” wrote David Cairns in 1968, is that Berlioz’s volume “is not more bitter.”⁴⁹ Indeed, those who shaped the Berlioz renaissance of the twentieth century have tended to see the composer’s behavior, in extremely difficult circumstances, as having been admirable in the extreme. In general, as Cairns put it in 1999, “he was courteous and conscientious to

a fault.”⁵⁰ Even lofty men have their lowlier attributes, however, and some of these become magnified on looking closely at the texts of the *Mémoires*.

The famous portrait of Luigi Cherubini that emerges from Berlioz’s last book is anything but complimentary. Here in particular the author succeeded in casting an enduring shadow upon the reputation of a man who, apart from his accomplishments as a composer, was of singular importance in establishing the Paris Conservatoire as the leading music school in Europe. When, in *Le Monde illustré* of November 6, 1858, Berlioz first published his hilarious if admittedly cruel description of being chased from the Conservatoire library by the director and his assistant, he modified the autograph manuscript, before sending it to the editor of the magazine, such that all of the words distorted in order to imitate Cherubini’s sputtering expression now appeared in unsullied French. In the posthumous publication, of course, the imitation of the Italian accent becomes the crucial comedic element. From beyond the grave Berlioz had no compunctions about lampooning one of those who, he was certain, had inhibited his early success. In fact we find in the autograph of the *Mémoires* that Berlioz’s original intention was to address Cherubini as “vieux maniaque, vieux fou!” and to include at the end of that discourteous outburst the following sarcastic note:

No, no, calm thy spirits, O ye respectful admirers of this Father of the Church of Music; it is the thrust of my narrative that made me set down such irreverent words. I slander myself. I never called Cherubini an old fool or lunatic, although it frankly surprises me that I did not do so, because I was at that time, as Philip of Macedon dubs them, one of those foul-mouthed fellows who calls everything by its rightful name.⁵¹

These remarks did not find their way into the 1865 printing. I hope it does not spoil the fun to point out that this celebrated *contretemps* was provoked by Cherubini’s true-to-life edict, which ordered the women to enter and to exit the Conservatoire in the rue Bergère, the men, in the rue du Faubourg Poissonnière. The document—dated May 1, 1822, only ten days after the great Italian composer took office as director—is preserved in the archives, along with another, dated June 21, 1822, which reiterates the point in such a way as to make it pertain in particular to our composer: “The male students at the school are expressly prohibited from entering and exiting this door [in the rue Bergère], whether for the purpose of attending classes *or on the pretext of going this way to the library*. The officer at this door is specifically charged with enforcing this edict with exactitude and with escorting to the security office anyone who would disobey.”⁵² It is thus that we learn not only

of the truth of Berlioz's anecdote, but also the date of his crime. Cherubini's negative appreciation of Berlioz's bibliographical industry (he had gone to the library, you will recall, to study the scores of Gluck) may have led him, at a later date, to place the young man into the music theory course of Anton Reicha, whose teaching Cherubini found less efficacious than that of François-Joseph Fétis (as we know from a letter preserved in Fétis's file in the archives of the Conservatoire).⁵³ Of the many "what if's" of Berlioz's career, this one—Berlioz as a student of Fétis—is especially suggestive. For Fétis, librarian at the Conservatoire as well as professor of counterpoint and fugue, tended to promote his students with conspicuous generosity. Fétis was initially supportive of Berlioz's incipient career. When he became chapel master to the King of Belgium and director the Brussels Conservatoire, in 1833, he might have offered to Berlioz something of the musical run of the realm—had it not been, of course, for the unpleasantness of 1832, when, in the freshly squeezed sequel to the *Symphonie fantastique*, premiered on December 9, 1832, Berlioz openly satirized the self-assured professor for having taken it upon himself to "correct" the musical language of Beethoven. This public humiliation is what led Fétis to shout, in the *Revue musicale* of December 15, 1832, that Berlioz represented a most singular phenomenon in the history of music: "an artist who has caught a fleeting glimpse of original ideas he is himself incapable of bringing to fruition, for want of knowing precisely what it is that he wishes to do; a creative fellow whose conceptions lead inevitably to abortion, not birth; a man, finally, whose impotence betrays his desires."⁵⁴ Berlioz did not forget the sexual allusions in Fétis's attack when he revised the text of *Le Retour à la vie*: in 1832 he excoriated the professors as "*moderates*, who want to reconcile everything, who believe they are thinking *rationally* about the arts because they speak of them with composure"; in 1855, when the work was newly baptized *Lélio*, he spoke of those professors as "fossilized *libertines*, of whatever age, who insist that music divert them, *caress* them, never admitting that the *chaste* muse might in fact have in mind a more noble mission."⁵⁵ It is not inconceivable that the erotic electricity of the initial exchange resulted from Fétis's prurient interest in the prodigious pianist who became Berlioz's momentary fiancée in the autumn of 1830.

The portrait of Camille Moke, painted in chapter 28, where we meet the fiery young woman, and in chapter 34, where we learn of her betrayal, is also skewed and selective, partly because the remarkable pianist in question—who certainly earned the composer's animosity—became one of the great virtuosos of her generation. Berlioz tells of yielding to her sexual advances by inventing a verb—"je finis par me laisser *Putipharder*"—that resists

literal translation. “At the end of the day I allowed myself to be *Potifered*” would mean that he finally ceased to “play Joseph to her Potiphar’s wife,” as David Cairns has decorously put it. In the autograph manuscript, the biblical personage is also mentioned in chapter 31, where Berlioz explains in a note his reason for wanting to profit from his Prix-de-Rome stipend in Paris: “Mademoiselle Putifar [*sic*] me rendait fort agréable le séjour de Paris”—“Mademoiselle Potiphar rendered my life in Paris highly satisfying.” The note (in which it suited Berlioz to use “Putifar” rather than “Potifar” because “Putifar” includes the offensive syllable *pute*—“whore”) was never printed. But Berlioz did fictionalize his revenge upon Camille, as Katherine Kolb shows, in such stories as *Le Suicide par enthousiasme* (1834), *Le Premier Opéra* (1837), and especially in the utopian tale of *Euphonia* (1844).⁵⁶ He may even have urged his friends to pursue his reprisal. In 1849, in a review of her concert of April 28 of that year, *La France musicale* demoted her from “Queen of the piano” to “President of the piano”: “what glacial indifference you must have felt around you, in front of you, in back of you! Oh, the public forgets very quickly, does it not, *Madame la Présidente*?” This was an obvious allusion to a well-known courtesan, Apollonie Sabbatier, whose sobriquet, apparently invented by Théophile Gautier, alluded to the many suitors, admirers, and lovers over whose attentions she *presided*. Camille herself, now celebrated as Madame Pleyel (though separated from Pleyel since 1835), was not secretive about her incendiary nature: she signed her letters to Gautier, for example, as “your phosphorous!”⁵⁷

A less-celebrated personage whose portrait is darkened in the *Mémoires* is Narcisse Girard, who became Habeneck’s successor as conductor of the orchestra at the Conservatoire in October 1848. A good friend of Berlioz’s in the earlier eighteen-thirties, Girard seems to have fallen from grace for having on several occasions poorly conducted *Harold en Italie*, thus deciding the composer thereafter to conduct his works himself. In chapter 59, speaking of one of the rare occasions on which his music was performed by the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, Berlioz writes that Girard had “very clumsily and very prosaically conducted the performance” (“fort maladroitement et fort platement dirigé l’exécution”). Yet in a letter to his sister Nanci of April 25, 1849, ten days after that very concert, Berlioz said the opposite: Girard “had done a very good job” (“s’en est bien tiré”).⁵⁸ Berlioz himself may have given us the reason for the sour public version when he spoke revealingly to Juliette Adam about Wagner: “Wagner bitterly hates everyone who has humiliated him by rendering him a service. *I know something about*

that myself."⁵⁹ The comment in the *Mémoires* simply continues the downward sweep of the book's account of the talents of maestro Girard.

Indeed, a downward sweep may be said to characterize much of Berlioz's narration: most of the comical scenes occur in the earlier part of the book, while the original ending (at chapter LIX) was bitter indeed: "As for you, maniacs and dim-witted bulls and bulldogs, and you, my Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns, my Iagos, my little Osrics, snakes, and pests of every kind: *farewell, my... friends*; I despise you! And I hope not to die before having eradicated you from my memory."⁶⁰ When we read such vituperation, now, we smile: its intensity seems more literary than real. In its own day, however, such artifice produced little cozy amusement. Philarète Chasles' commentary rings true: "It is quite specifically polemics—fiery, violent, acid-tipped, vengeful, militant, stark and striking; it is partiality; it is the use of the newspaper as an offensive and defensive weapon; it is epigram, satire, irony—it is all of these things that weakened and undermined Berlioz."⁶¹ "Everything hurt the great artist, poor fellow, everything irritated him," wrote another French reviewer. "At every turn, for the slightest wrong note, he called for the executioner or the hitman!"⁶² An English critic was even less sympathetic: Berlioz told his life "with such an agony of self-exaltation that it is impossible to withhold pity, akin though that be to contempt."⁶³ Nor was his private behavior regarded as eternally scintillating. Even in his thirties, Berlioz was rarely warm and fuzzy: describing Sainte-Beuve's efforts to engage Berlioz in conversation, Marie d'Agoult wrote to Liszt, November 18, 1839, that this was "something difficult, something impossible! All you get out of him is a boar's growl."⁶⁴

Is there the hint of a scowl in the photograph that Berlioz affixed to the first edition of the *Mémoires*? Had he wished to present a softer image, would he not have used one of the pictures shot by Pierre Petit in 1863, where the pose, with his head resting on his hand, is the long traditional one of meditation-cum-melancholy?⁶⁵ One of the best explanations of Berlioz's bitterness comes from Camille Saint-Saëns: "Given his superior nature, he found it impossible to approve of so much vulgarity, rudeness, ferociousness, and egoism, which play such important roles in this world, and by which he was so often victimized."⁶⁶ Reviews of the *Mémoires* have yet to be the object of extended study—the number is limited because the book was published in time of war—but their authors would perhaps charitably accept the truth of an aphorism found in Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: "Toute grande haine sert de contrepoids à un grand amour"—"all great hatred acts as a counterbalance to great love."⁶⁷

Love, etc.

In chapter 18, Berlioz comes to the “supreme drama” of his life—the encounter with Shakespeare and Smithson. The plot is set down with supreme economy: “In the role of Ophelia I saw Harriet Smithson, who, five years later, became my wife. The effect upon my heart and upon my imagination of her stupendous ability, or, I should say, her dramatic genius, is comparable only to the cataclysm to which I was exposed by the poet whom she so superbly interpreted. Of this, I can say nothing more.” These three sentences, which do not appear in the chapter as published in *Le Monde illustré* on January 1, 1859, are more rational than emotional—although it may be emotion that caused Berlioz to say “five years” rather than six, the distance between the *Hamlet* première of September 1827 and the wedding of October 1833. Only in the final addition to the book, the *Voyage en Dauphiné*, do we find a more effusive expression of affection. Indeed, it is here, in the Estelle episode, that we find the only love letters of Berlioz that have been preserved. “Mes adorations seront discrètes,” he assured the object of his attentions. But in the autograph draft of this page, before the citation from Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies* that captured for Berlioz the ardency of his feelings for Madame Fornier, the composer let himself go: “I adore her! How bitter the laughter of fate! How immeasurable the caprices of this monster we call the human heart!”⁶⁸ This chapter reveals a side of the man’s soul that he had in many ways explicitly attempted to conceal. His usual mode was ironic. In London in 1847, for example, he took that sincere line from *The Divine Comedy*—“There is no greater sorrow than to recall happiness in times of misery”—turned it around—“There is no greater pleasure than to recall misery in times of happiness”—and set it to music, *lento et grazioso*, in G major.⁶⁹

Working closely with the texts and variants of the *Mémoires* leads to new appreciation of Berlioz’s playfulness, erudition, and verbal craftsmanship. The great Balzac scholar Pierre Citron, in the annotations he provided for the *Mémoires*, the *Correspondance générale*, and the *Critique musicale*, demonstrated that forging neologisms was not the least of Berlioz’s pleasures as a writer. In fact the numerous neologisms of Balzac and Berlioz and their contemporaries are merely a symptom of what has been called “a mild obsession” of the Romantic generation in France.⁷⁰ But for Berlioz there is more. “As for my literary style, to the extent that I have one,” he wrote with a *souçon* of false modesty,⁷¹ “it is that of a writer who seeks but always fails to find the word capable of rendering precisely what he feels. I am too full of violence; I have tried to calm down but I have not succeeded. This causes the flow of

my prose to be unbalanced, or *titubations*, rather like the gait of a man who is drunk” (“cela donne aux allures de ma prose quelque chose d’inégal, de *titubant*, comme la marche d’un homme ivre”).⁷² The word I italicize forces into English something from the Latin *titubare*, “to stagger,” from which French gets the verb *tituber* and participle *titubant*—a word which Berlioz may have been one of the first to employ.⁷³ All of this to say that Berlioz has in a sense contradicted himself, because in *titubant* he found the word that renders fastidiously what he felt.

Berlioz began his literary career as a polemicist, in retaliation to what he saw as others’ stupidities: the first article he published, in the August 23, 1823, issue of *Le Corsaire*, fell under the rubric of *Polémique musicale*. A polemicist, it has been said, is happiest when he has an enemy. Berlioz had many: Cherubini, Fétis, Mainzer, Scudo, and more, as one learns from reading the reviews: the *Fantastique* and *Harold en Italie* drew relatively little immediate reaction, but the two operas premiered in France, *Benvenuto Cellini* and *Les Troyens*, and the composer’s most avant-garde works, *Roméo et Juliette* and *La Damnation de Faust*, drew a great deal.⁷⁴ Reacting to the première of *Faust*, Adolphe Adam cited Rossini’s putative witticism: “How fortunate that that fellow knows nothing of music, for, were he to write some, it would be appalling. Because he is everything you might like him to be—a poet, an idealistic dreamer, a talented man with unusual and inventive ideas—but never a musician” (“Quel bonheur que ce garçon-là ne sache pas la musique. Il en ferait de bien mauvaise. Car il est tout ce qu’on voudra, poète, rêveur idéal, homme de talent, de recherche et parfois d’invention dans certaines combinaisons, mais jamais musicien”).⁷⁵ Rossini may never have said such a thing, but Adolphe Adam enjoyed imagining that he had. Today, yesterday’s assassins, Adam and the others, simply seem asinine. The assaults and those who emitted them, however, while serving in the *Mémoires* to put into relief the portrait of a man not known for his smile, were good neither for his reputation nor for his health. A part of Berlioz’s personal biography is his medical biography: “Berlioz,” his doctor said to him, prescribing distractions and baths, “you are ill more from anger than from fatigue.”⁷⁶ He possessed a dram of it, we saw some in his comments on *Harold en Italie* (cited in chapter 2), but humor of the self-deprecatory sort was not his *fort*. Had he been able to muster more, he might have felt less unwell.

Berlioz felt the need for self-historicization—“Ma vie est un roman qui m’intéresse beaucoup” (we have quoted the phrase above)—and the need to set the record straight. That is why he set down *Mémoires* that are a compendium of his extraordinary experience and his astonishing knowledge of

music, literature, and history. They are a demonstration, unequalled by any other composer, of his sweeping intelligence and his unadulterated, unsurpassed, unforgiving wit.

Epilogue

Berlioz and the Bs— Boschot, Barzun, and Beyond

Adieu, mes amis! Je suis souffrant; laissez-moi seul!

—Berlioz, *Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie*

It goes without saying, as many have *said*, that the personality of the biographer of the painter, of the writer, of the musician, has always colored the portrait of the artist. Because of the natural tendency to extend one's own way of thinking to the thinking of others, "any biography," in the words of the Shakespeare scholar Paul Murray Kendall, "uneasily shelters an autobiography within it."¹ Furthermore, since the dawn of the Romantic era, the archetypical trajectory of the life-narrative of the artist has been, not that of a titan laid low or of a rookie raised high, but that of a "genius" who has suffered—for reasons, variously, of health, finance, family, philistinism, misunderstanding, social or political disapprobation. One thinks of Mozart's indebtedness, Beethoven's deafness, Schubert's poverty, Chopin's tuberculosis, Schumann's madness, Tchaikovsky's homosexuality, Mahler's oppressive jealousy, Schoenberg's burdensome Jewishness, Shostakovich's Stalin-inspired anxiety. And one thinks, obviously, of Berlioz's ill-fortune and illness that have caused some to see his life, too, as an Iliad—a series of disasters. Franz Liszt confided to Richard Pohl that Berlioz tended to exaggerate the martyrdom of his existence, yet Pohl took Berlioz to be an exemplar of the tragic hero.² Berlioz's acute awareness of his own mortality did indeed tinge with tragedy his portrait of himself as well as his portrait of those around him. What separates Berlioz from the usual suspects, however, is his indomitable humor, which found a way to flash or flicker, even in the darkest of times. "Je suis mort," he wrote to a friend on finishing one or another of his grand

projects, “I am dead”; “mais ça commence à aller”—“but things are beginning to look up”!³

In music, the genre of the scientific biography, as opposed to the anecdotal account, took root in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the works on Handel, Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven by such biographers as Friedrich Chrysander, Otto Jahn, Philipp Spitta, and Alexander Wheelock Thayer, who constructed their edifices on foundations of original documents and who constituted something of a golden age. When Adolphe Boschot decided to pick up his pen in defense of Berlioz, he had already witnessed the performance of the two halves of *Les Troyens*, in 1891–1892, and the extended Berlioz Cycle undertaken by Édouard Colonne, in 1894–1895, and he had observed the appearance of Edmond Hippeau’s conscientious *Berlioz intime* in 1883 (not by design, the title of the book you are reading, with one fewer space, would be indistinguishable from Hippeau’s), the grandly illustrated volume by Adolphe Jullien in 1888, and, in 1904, the monographs by Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme and Julien Tiersot, the immediate predecessors of what became his own trilogy, *L’Histoire d’un Romantique*.⁴ In France, where it was sometimes said that from the death of Rameau up to about 1870, “French music ceased to exist,”⁵ Boschot’s biography became the quasi-official work of reference for nearly a century, unquestioned in part because Berlioz left no direct descendants to keep the torch accurate and alive. In this epilogue, I shall speak briefly of the project of Boschot, the industrious begetter of a Berlioz pro-and-contra, and of the work of Jacques Barzun, the unrelenting mastermind of modern Berlioz scholarship. Barzun determined, not only to explicate the life and times of a beloved subject, but also to correct what he took to be the misimpressions transmitted by that same Boschot. I shall conclude with a word about the present state of Berlioz studies.

But before turning to the celebrated Bs among the Berlioz biographers, I should like to mention a more recent A, Jean-Pierre Angremy, a member of the Académie Française, who, under his *nom de plume* of Pierre-Jean Rémy, completed well over fifty volumes (novels, poems, biographies), and who, as president of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, presided over the Comité International Hector Berlioz that promulgated most of the international celebrations of the two-hundredth anniversary of the composer’s birth, in 2003, which I mentioned in the Prologue. Angremy’s biography is the work of a novelist whose interests circle inevitably around love. It draws the outlines of the life based on the standard secondary sources, and enhances the narrative with the fictionalizing flair of a connoisseur. For example, of Berlioz’s flight

to the woods of Vincennes, with Camille Moke, on June 6, 1830—the date is derived from Berlioz’s letter of May 6, 1831, where, with uncommon precision, he mentions putting an end to an abstinence endured since that very day, eleven months earlier—we really know nothing at all.⁶ Angremy, however, sees “Camille, in her sheer cotton nightgown, standing before Berlioz, who is imagining the experience of her thinly disguised figure. Oh, that figure, those breasts, those thighs....”⁷ The prurient biographer would surely have gone further had he known of the note about Mademoiselle Putifar, which I mentioned in chapter 13, and which suggests that the devilry in Vincennes was preceded by dalliance in town.

Biographies of this sort, which fill the historical vacuum with invented detail, are of course nothing new. In the *Mémoires*, Berlioz himself employs the technique: to love scenes, in that book, he only alludes. But elsewhere he gives what a naïve reader might accept as literal transcriptions of his conversations with, among others, Cherubini and Fétis, the Viscount de La Rochefoucauld and the King of Prussia. These conversations represent one of the most effective weapons in Berlioz’s literary arsenal. They are not mathematical equations! They are poems in prose; they quite literally bring the narration to life. So convincing do they seem that some of yesterday’s blinkered observers were boondoggled into believing that they were reading the author’s sworn testimony in a court of law—and thus into considering him guilty of a felony, when the facts turned out to be fictitious.

Adolphe Boschot

By dint of his own rather peculiar version of lively narration, Adolphe Boschot, more than any other turn-of-the-century biographer, was responsible for inscribing Berlioz into the annals of French history. He was born into the post-Darwinian world of 1871, into the disorder of the fledgling Third Republic, into the revanchist atmosphere that prevailed after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, into an ironically Wagnerian environment stimulated by such admirers of the Meister as Charles Baudelaire, Charles Lamoureux, Ernest Reyer, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Joris-Karl Huysmans, and into a world soon to be brutally polarized by the Dreyfus Affair, which broke out in 1898, when Boschot was twenty-seven years old, and which blunted much of what was *belle* in the so-called *belle époque*. The reason for his enterprise, Boschot tells us in his introduction, is this: “Berlioz seems to us to be a perfect subject for a lively biography: he was the most

accomplished of the romantic heroes. Musset and Vigny merely experienced crises of passion; Delacroix and Hugo were methodical artists whose productions were as routinely systematic as those of a bureaucrat. Only Berlioz had a true crater in his heart; only Berlioz was truly volcanic. And, to boot, his volcanism was intentional.”⁸

Did Adolphe Boschot, amateur pianist and violinist, journalist, cofounder in 1901 of the Société Mozart, actually revere the *music* of Berlioz? This is not certain. Indeed, despite his silly remark about Delacroix, it seems, according to his daughter,⁹ that, for some time, Boschot hesitated between Berlioz and Delacroix as subjects for his biography, because for both artists the archives were rich with documentary material. Indeed, the fact that for Berlioz he disposed of “at least one document per week,” for the more than two thousand weeks that created history between 1822 and 1864, was by no means “the least important reason” that he undertook, “with Berlioz as hero,” his *Histoire d’un Romantique*.¹⁰ This seems a bit cold, does it not? But have no fear: I was also told that when he reached the end of the third volume of his *opus maximum*, his apparent disinterest had been transformed into devotion. Again, according to his daughter, Boschot returned from his study to the salon, weeping, to say that he had just recounted Berlioz’s demise. In the book, we read of the funeral that took place at the Église de la Trinité on March 11, 1869, and of the “radiant and ultimate farewell” played by the organist: “the shadowy and nostalgic adagio from *Harold en Italie*.”¹¹ The phrase—“le crépusculaire et nostalgique adagio”—is touching. But the *Marche de pèlerins*—which is what was played by the organist, Charles-Alexis Chauvet, seated at the keyboard of La Trinité’s spanking new Cavaillé-Coll—is marked *allegretto*: the march is perhaps introspective; it is hardly crepuscular.

Boschot’s peculiar style, especially as displayed in *La Jeunesse d’un Romantique*, was well analyzed by the then director of the Conservatoire, Théodore Dubois, who won the Rome Prize in 1861, when Berlioz was a member of the jury, and who, now an academician, reported on the book to his colleagues at the Institut de France:

This volume is obviously quite interesting, and even endearing. It has the advantage of situating the reader smack in the middle of the quite singular romanticism of 1830. The author studies Berlioz in this atmosphere, and I have to say that he leads us to see Berlioz in a light different from the one in which he is usually cast, namely, as a Berlioz who is not at all likeable, a Berlioz who is very much a social climber, highly idiosyncratic, and highly egotistical. Does this represent the celebrated composer’s true character? We are certainly led to

think so on reading the documents upon which the author has depended. The humorous and ironic tone he has adopted, and his anecdotal style, render his work highly attractive and seductive. But, on further reflection, one begins to question his motives for writing this book. Did he wish to glorify Berlioz, to cause us to like and admire him as an artist and as a man? Or, on the contrary, by emphasizing his weaknesses, did he rather wish to belittle him, to diminish him, or indeed to subject him to ridicule? On this subject, we are not quite sure what to believe.¹²

Théodore Dubois is not the only person to have reacted to Boschot in this way. Listen to the well-known critic Émile Vuillermoz, known as a champion of Fauré and Ravel, who, after reading Boschot's first volume, wrote to the author on January 18, 1906:

I am proud to be one of the musicians whom your work has most profoundly enchanted, more, even, than you might have wished. It happens that I was preparing a series of articles on the very subject that you have now magnificently illuminated, and, despite the bitterness I might have felt at your annihilation of my project, I was rather delighted, after reading your volume, to tear up my notes. For many years I have dreamed of dismantling the web of preposterous legends that Berlioz so cleverly wove around his life and work with truly abusive pretention, because the Berliozians who accept blindly the truth of the letters and the *Mémoires* of their god have long caused me hours of impotent exasperation. I was therefore going to attempt to raze this monument of untruth. But now I find that you have totally pulverized it. You will thus understand my glee and the ease with which I now renounce undertaking a task whose purpose, today, has been entirely achieved.

Because—and here I must admit, at the risk of finding myself deprived of your sympathy—I do not like this musical braggart, neither as an artist nor as a man, and this will surely spoil any expression of understanding on your part, because, despite your extensive research, you have nonetheless remained a *Berlioziste*. I find it honestly troubling to see your persistent and even heroic faith... which is hardly the faith of a simple coal merchant! How have you managed to remain so indulgent and respectful of a man so difficult to indulge and respect? But let us not tarry, for I wish not at all to proselytize for my point of view. Besides, I am perfectly convinced that the time has now come for musicians to see that the volcanic Hector is the great imposter of the century, that he has blessed the art of music with nothing new and nothing more than the clumsy writing of an ignorant amateur, even as concerns his famous orchestration, which appears to me to become more and more tiresome, despite the composer's pretentions to the terrifying and the sublime.¹³

Citing Vuillermoz, whose later sympathies for Adolf Hitler are disconcerting, to say the least, gives me no pleasure.¹⁴ Doing so demonstrates what even Boschot was up against, and underlines the respect he deserves for his labors, apparent from the copious notes and thousands of manuscript pages that have been preserved.¹⁵ Boschot wrote on only one side of his large sheets, leaving the other for subsequent additions and revisions. I did not study the differences between the autograph and the edition (I would have done so had Boschot been Berlioz), but some things became obvious. For example, when recounting Berlioz's contemplation of suicide, which he did on learning of his fiancée's marriage to another man, Boschot spoke ironically of a "*faux* suicide"—"a *phony* suicide on the part of a fashionably Byronic jilted lover," citing the letter that Berlioz wrote on April 18, 1831, to Horace Vernet, director of the Villa Medici and master of the students on scholarship there as winners of the Prix de Rome: "I continue to struggle between life and death, but I shall remain standing, of that, on my honor, you may be certain."¹⁶ Thinking he might have gone too far, Boschot removed the sarcastic words "byronien" and "fashionable" (we have seen in chapter 6 that the English word was fashionable in French), but not the expression "faux suicide." We conclude that he read the crucial sentence in Berlioz's letter to Vernet—"at Genoa, in a moment of giddiness, I gave in to childish despair. An inconceivable weakness got the better of my will. But my sole punishment was to swallow a lot of salt water and be yanked out like a fish" ("à Gênes, un instant de vertige, la plus inconcevable faiblesse a brisé ma volonté, je me suis abandonné au désespoir d'un enfant; mais enfin j'en ai été quitte pour boire l'eau salée, être harponné comme un saumon")¹⁷—as calculatedly *implying* that an attempt at suicide had taken place, that once again Berlioz was gilding the lily. D. Kern Holoman's comment on the matter—as "a possibly fanciful explanation concocted for Horace Vernet"¹⁸—is not entirely different from Boschot's. For David Cairns, Berlioz simply "felt himself *slipping*; and, suddenly without will to resist, fell into the sea."¹⁹ For Jacques Barzun, however, whose translation I use here, and with whose view I concur, what took place was indeed a "clumsily attempted suicide."²⁰ When we read the whole story of Berlioz's project of revenge, we smile at its comic mastery, even knowing, as we do, that revenge, "vengeance," was as dear to Berlioz as liberty, love, and lucre.²¹ Furthermore, Boschot to the contrary notwithstanding, suicide is no laughing matter. As to the vituperativeness of Vuillermoz, who goes so far as to criticize Boschot for insufficient skepticism, let it remind the reader of what Jacques Barzun and the new Berliozians were attempting to assuage.

It was perhaps out of some kind of revenge (of whose *raison d'être* we are ignorant) that Boschot, in collaboration with Charles Malherbe (co-editor with Felix Weingartner of the first monumental edition of Berlioz's complete works), waged a campaign against Julien Tiersot on the subject of the *Marche au supplice* of the *Symphonie fantastique*. Tiersot, never having seen the autograph, was wrongly certain that there was no link between the march in the symphony and the *Marche des gardes* of Berlioz's opera *Les Francs-Juges*. Could he have been one of those benighted souls who, unaware that it was the practice of some of the greatest of the greats, sees a composer's borrowing of earlier material as some kind of compositional weakness? Be this as it may, the title page, which Boschot and Malherbe actually possessed, makes it clear for all to see that the march was originally a part of Berlioz's first finished opera.²²

As his three volumes took shape, and as they began to circulate, Boschot became the oracle of "la pensée berliozienne." It is for this reason that, in 1921, when a production of *Les Troyens* in its entirety was for the first time in rehearsal at the Paris Opéra, the then director, Jacques Rouché, wrote to Boschot, on January 16 of that year, to ask for "les coupures à faire," taking it for granted that even a theoretically complete performance would have to bear cuts sufficient to perform the work in one evening, and to have the evening end at the customary hour. To his credit, Rouché had earlier consulted Camille Saint-Saëns, who urged a return to the original score but with certain notes altered (because "Berlioz understood nothing of the mechanism of the voice"), with the prologue that Berlioz had added to *Les Troyens à Carthage* when it became clear, in 1863, that only acts 3–5 of the opera were going to be performed, and *without* the Anna-Narbal duet, the *Danse des esclaves*, and the *Chant d'Iopas* from act 4.²³ In June 1921, one week before the opening, Rouché told Boschot that he had indeed made the cuts that the critic had suggested: "I wished to do nothing without being entirely in agreement with you, who have so fully understood Hector Berlioz's intentions."²⁴ Rouché may be credited with bringing to the attention of the public Berlioz's unitary five-act French grand opera, thus dismissing the two-headed monster of 1863 that Berlioz had created with reluctance and regret. Nonetheless, to hear a properly complete execution of *Les Troyens* (and passing over my promotion, in chapter 10, of the original ending), the world had to wait until Covent Garden put it on properly, on November 17, 1969, some eight months and one hundred years after the composer's death.

Adolphe Boschot was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, seventy years after Berlioz, in 1926. In 1939, he was furthermore elected Secrétaire

Perpétuel, the honored post for which Berlioz, too, had been a candidate, in 1862, after the death of the incumbent, Fromental Halévy, on March 17 of that year. For Berlioz, such a post would have been “far too official and far too academic”; it would have “flattened his mane of revolutionary hair” and “dissolved his halo of despondency,” as Boschot puts it, revving up his ridicule as he arrives near the end of his road.²⁵ The composer would have enjoyed free lodgings in the Palais de l’Institut and avoided “vegetating, in his fourth-floor flat in the rue de Calais, for which he paid rent of eleven hundred francs per month.”²⁶ While Boschot’s account of the matter is based on a close reading of the archives of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, his explanation of the reason for Berlioz’s failure to be elected—the “deplorable” behavior of his wife, Marie Recio—remains, as always, without evidence. “This bitter woman, who darkened his gloom, led Berlioz to his true destiny—the destiny of woe.”²⁷ To which I say (in this chapter on the Bs): bunkum and balderdash!

Jacques Barzun

When he was a small boy, Jacques Barzun made the acquaintance of Adolphe Boschot. He later remembered him as a thickly bespectacled fellow who walked very slowly and played the piano with little aplomb.²⁸ Having later spent two decades correcting the eighteen hundred pages of Boschot’s *Histoire d’un Romantique*, Barzun continued to hear the voice of “la pensée berliozienne” with jaundiced ears. In fact, Boschot’s biography served beneficially as a “counter-source” for many subsequent works on Berlioz, and not only Barzun’s. I borrow the term from Béatrice Didier, who, using it in a positive sense, takes the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a “counter-source” for the autobiographical works of such luminaries as Chateaubriand, George Sand, and Berlioz himself.²⁹ It is now far too late, but the fact that Jacques Barzun’s *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* was not translated into French shortly after its first appearance, in 1950, or after its second appearance, in 1969, is, in the Berlioz world, a crying shame. Barzun’s book inspired a generation of scholars in the English-speaking world, and might have done so in the French-speaking world as well. The author did send the English book to Calmann-Lévy, Berlioz’s Paris publishers, to inquire about a translation, but received no response. It thus transpired that, until recently, Boschot’s elaborate three volumes remained, in France, the more or less official biography.

Who was Jacques Barzun, other than the author of some forty books on history, European and American literature, Romanticism, the English language, French poetry, the science of education, mystery stories, and more, and the translator into English of works by Beaumarchais, Berlioz, Courteline, Diderot, Flaubert, Musset, and others who wrote in German, Spanish, Italian, and Latin—as we know from *Pleasures of Music*, his great anthology of writings on music from Benvenuto Cellini to George Bernard Shaw?³⁰ He was a genius, for reasons I shall mention. He was professor, dean, provost, and architect of the twentieth-century curriculum at Columbia University. And for some decades, with his Columbia University colleague Lionel Trilling, he was one of New York City's celebrated public intellectuals. On the personal level, he was modest, even shy, and, like Berlioz, possessed of a fine sense of humor and a touching gift for friendship. In those *Pleasures of Music*, Barzun does not take credit for the translations: he admitted to their authorship only on being queried. In my copy, he wrote “to Peter Bloom, whose writings would be represented here if he had lived earlier”—one of the many marks I have of the man's affectionate wit. In fact, wit and mirth, joined to unsurpassed learning, are the hallmarks of his style. When I spoke to Barzun of my productive encounters with Jean-Pierre Angremy, author of the romanticized biography I mentioned at the top of this epilogue, and president of the sparkling new Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Barzun quipped: “Angremy sounds better than his building looks.” The form of this witticism was almost a trademark. In answer to my query about his childhood experience of Debussy, Barzun recalled sitting through a performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande*: “Though cut, it still felt as long as her hair.”

Jacques Barzun was born in Créteil, a village just southeast of Paris, on November 30, 1907, into a prosperous family that traced its eighteenth-century origins to the commune of Barzun, near Lourdes, in the southwest region of France. As landowners there, the family had the right to use the surname “de Barzun”: “Come the revolution in 1789, one of the sons, Jacques, the younger, as is assumed on probability, shared the advanced ideas and broke with his family, was bought out of his inheritance, went to Montpellier and became a physician. [...] During the proscriptions by Napoléon III against intellectuals, the carrier of the name was still a republican plotting in an underground cell. He dropped the name so as not to be deported. It was resumed by my grandfather.”³¹ Barzun's father, Henri-Louis-Martin Barzun, who did at times style himself simply “Henri-Martin,” to the confusion of his son's biographers, began his journalistic career at *Le Soir*, in 1905, signing “H. L. Barzun.” Later, in *L'Aurore*, *Le Soir*, *L'Action*, and other

newspapers published before and during World War I, we find “H. Martin-Barzun” and “H. M. Barzun.” Barzun *père* was notably associated with a short-lived artists’ colony known as the Abbaye de Créteil, a Bohemian gathering that included the experimental poets René Arcos and Charles Vildrac, the physician-novelist Georges Duhamel, and the early cubist painter Albert Gleizes, author of the handsome portrait of Jacques Barzun’s mother that now hangs in the McNay Art Museum, in San Antonio, Texas.³² By the time of the infant Jacques’s first birthday, the Abbaye de Créteil had come to an end. But the boy would come to know well a circle of avant-garde artists who included the portraitist of his mother, the painter Marie Laurencin, the professor of rhetoric (and teacher of Arthur Rimbaud) Georges Izambard, the art critic Olivier Hourcade, and the poet Guillaume Apollinaire—the “five adult friends of my childhood” to whom the mature scholar would dedicate his *Essay on French Verse for Readers of English Poetry*.

It is important to record that Henri-Martin Barzun, born in Grenoble in 1881, was himself a devoted admirer of the composer of the *Symphonie fantastique*, so much so that he created, in 1908, a Fondation Hector Berlioz, now largely forgotten, but at the time worthy of regular coverage in the press. To bolster his enterprise, the senior Barzun succeeded in bringing together a distinguished group of writers and musicians, among them Alfred Bruneau, Édouard Colonne, Maurice Faure, Vincent d’Indy, Adolphe Jullien, Charles Malherbe, Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme, and Romain Rolland.³³ From Toulouse, on November 18, 1908, Camille Saint-Saëns wrote to Barzun to say: “It is with the greatest pleasure that I accept the title of Président d’honneur de la Fondation Berlioz.” And from Garmisch, on December 23, 1908, Richard Strauss wrote to accept (as had earlier his countrymen Felix Mottl and Felix Weingartner) the offer of honorary membership:

I should like very cordially to thank you for your gracious letter, and for the great distinction you wish to bestow upon me. Your idea, to establish a society in honor of that magnificent genius who was Berlioz, who, in France, was never appreciated as he ought to have been, is exceedingly felicitous. I hope with the greatest sincerity that your Foundation will flourish and prosper. And I am delighted to be able to call myself “membre d’honneur de la Fondation Hector Berlioz.”³⁴

One of the pillars of the Fondation was, of course, Adolphe Boschot. Of the many things Jacques Barzun remembered about Boschot, a conversation that author of the *Histoire d’un Romantique* had with his father stood out. “Mon cher ami,” said Boschot to Henri-Martin Barzun, “[Berlioz] était un

homme comme nous”—“Berlioz was a fellow just like us.” To which Barzun père replied: “Il était peut-être un homme comme vous, il n’était sûrement pas un homme comme moi” (“He was perhaps a fellow like you; he was certainly not a fellow like me”).³⁵ This encapsulated something of Boschot’s bumptiousness and Barzun senior’s wry wit and respect.

Henri-Martin Barzun became an administrator in the Clémenceau governments and in particular a functionary in the department of labor. During the First World War, as head of the French Press Commission, in New York City, in 1917, he participated in the “advertising campaign” that encouraged continuing American support.³⁶ After carrying out that mission, he determined to settle his family in the United States, in 1919, nonetheless keeping up his work as a reporter and, among other things, as an experimental poet, which kept his name in the newspapers. In *L’Intransigeant* of August 29, 1923, we even find an article noting that “the son of the poet Barzun, who has been living in America for several years, obtained First Honors at the Technical High School in Harrisburg [Pennsylvania].” Indeed, his high school yearbook correctly predicted that “Jack” (“Frenchie”) Barzun would immediately challenge the wherewithal of the professors he was about to encounter, in college, at Columbia University in the City of New York.

Jacques Barzun had begun his musical education “in the manner that Montaigne reports of his own infancy,”³⁷ that is to say, by being one day awakened by his father’s playing of a flute, thus rendering music forever a part of his universe.³⁸ His Berliozian recollections included hearing, at age three, the *Marche de pèlerins*—played at the Saturday afternoon children’s concerts by the Orchestre Lamoureux—and henceforth feeling ever-drawn to the French composer. When Felix Weingartner came to Paris in 1912, young Jacques heard a performance of the *Requiem*, at the Trocadero, on April 26. The following year, on April 3, 1913, he was present (as was the President of the French Republic, Raymond Pointcarré) when *Benvenuto Cellini* inaugurated the sparkling new Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, whose architect, Auguste Perret, was a friend of the family. (Eight weeks later, that new theater was the scene of the riotous première of *Le Sacre du printemps*.) What is abnormal in all of this is the absence of... Wagner! Most of the modernist poets writing in the aftermath of Baudelaire, the instigator in France of *wagnérisme*, were Wagnerians of one stripe or another. But that other friend of the family who was Guillaume Apollinaire may have cast lasting aspersions upon the Meister: in his manifesto, “Futurist Antitradition,” of June 29, 1913, using a scatological expletive, he consigned Wagner and Bayreuth

(along with Beethoven, Poe, Whitman, Baudelaire, teachers, professors, and *Shakespeare!*) to the dustbin of history.³⁹

After studies at the Lycée Janson de Sailly and, in the United States, at that high school in Harrisburg, Barzun entered Columbia University, in 1923. Upon graduation, in 1927, when he was not yet twenty, his alma mater immediately offered him a teaching post in the department of history. There, during his nearly fifty years of professorial life, he defended the cause of “the great books” and the grand principles of a classical education. As an administrator, he managed, among other things, to have academic processions accompanied by the *Marche troyenne!* His educational philosophy is manifest in all of his writing: that history is a branch of literature; that enlightenment is the result of debate; that prejudice—directed not at women or Jews or Belgians or Blacks, but at any *group* whatsoever—is intolerable; that mechanical thinking is to be challenged; that *received ideas* are to be resisted. It is not for nothing that he was the translator of Flaubert’s *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*. As Dominique Catteau has put it, with regard to Berlioz, to fix a place for him is to lessen his importance; “to classify him is to belittle him.”⁴⁰ That is what Barzun came to understand during the two decades of research that preceded the publication in 1950 of his two-volume summa—a work that shuns hagiography while remaining admiring of its subject, and that offers the cultural history of a century. “Admiration,” Barzun wrote in 1990, “makes one want to amend careless posterity and draw fresh attention to the forgotten or misknown.”⁴¹

The “misknown” included Berlioz according to Boschot. Barzun’s second volume devotes eight pithy pages to Boschot’s errors and inadequacies, large and small.⁴² Of the latter: In a letter of January 1, 1832, Berlioz refers amicably to Hiller as a “gros scélérat,” a “big scoundrel”; Boschot picked up the expression and ran with it each time he mentioned Hiller, thus falsely implying that Berlioz had employed it, behind the fellow’s back, as a kind of personal insult, and, worse, that Berlioz was not immune to that kind of backbiting, that he could be an unworthy friend. This stuck in Barzun’s craw. Far more problematical was Boschot’s treatment of the documents of Berlioz’s life—the articles, the letters, and especially the *Mémoires*—as though they were “Euclidian theorems” subject to rational proof. Such a false assumption allowed Boschot to take pleasure, or so it seemed, in tracing Berlioz’s own misrememberings, misstatements, and mistakes. Boschot, in Barzun’s ultimately devastating assessment, found it necessary to “belittle his subject in order to bring it within his grasp.”⁴³ That Boschot’s overall style troubled Barzun is not surprising. Barzun became a master of not only

French, accomplished early on by reading the classics and, he told me, by doing themes in a French lycée, but of English, too, by learned application and native intelligence. In the United States, Barzun came to be seen as the embodiment of an American *Robert, Larousse, and Grévisse*. In 1966, he published *Modern American Usage*, a guide left incomplete by its author, Wilson Follett, and edited and completed by Barzun. In 1975, he published a rhetoric for writers, *Simple & Direct*, defending Cartesian clarity of expression, and the sanctity of the sentence and the word. For thirty years, the author of the “On Language” column in *the New York Times*, William Safire, would, for lexical clarification *in extremis*, turn to Jacques Barzun. Gifted like Berlioz with an astonishing memory, Barzun, at age ninety-three—writing at home, and without a library—was able to complete his ultimate masterpiece, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present—500 Years of Western Cultural Life*, a volume of almost nine hundred pages that in America became an unlikely best seller.



My purpose in outlining these qualities is to underline the good fortune, *for Berlioz*, that such a man as Barzun should have interested himself in the French composer’s life and work, amassed at Columbia University a collection of primary documents that now comprise a major Berlioz archive, and produced an authoritative book based on a bibliography of some fifteen hundred items and a lifetime of learning and research. Barzun himself recalled the accomplishments of his efforts in one of his last essays on the composer, reiterating that Berlioz’s “handling of melody, harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, and instrumentation was original and coherent”; that “he possessed not only genius but cool and conscious mastery of his craft.”⁴⁴ The latter notion, contested well into the twentieth century, is now, I believe, not contested at all. This is not to say that Barzun’s *Berlioz* itself was not contested after its initial appearance in 1950, as has been lately demonstrated in a thorough review of its genesis and reception by Paul Watt.⁴⁵ Most amusing, to me (having explicitly determined to eschew them here), is the occasional denunciation of the book for its lack of musical examples! Readers of Barzun’s appendix on the old German edition of the complete works, to say nothing of his admittedly *descriptive* analyses, will know that the man knew his way around an orchestral score. Furthermore, musical examples in themselves do not prove an author’s bona fides: a printed example that stops at a bar line (as most

do), rather than at the end of a musical phrase, is to me rather proof of the author's tin ear.

Jacques Barzun followed closely the efforts made by members of the Comité International Hector Berlioz, in the run-up to the 2003 anniversary, to have Berlioz honored with a berth in the Panthéon. Unbeknownst to most members of the committee, Barzun, in his great book of 1950, had urged, with the hint of a smile, that if you wish to celebrate Berlioz, "there is a spacious public building in Paris upon whose pediment is written 'aux grands hommes, la patrie reconnaissante'"; "exhume Berlioz and place him in the Panthéon with his peers."⁴⁶ When, for the political reasons I have outlined in the Prologue, the decision was made to forgo the *panthéonisation* of the composer of the *Fantastique*, Barzun's reaction was cheerful disappointment: "France has lost its way; Berlioz ought to have better chosen the country of his birth."

Now

It is a commonplace to say that every generation needs its own biography of the crucial figures of the past. The Berlioz biography for the first half of the twenty-first century is the great two-volume work by David Cairns,⁴⁷ a journalist and not an academic, as he was at pains to say in the brilliant reflections on the *Symphonie fantastique* he offered at Smith College in 1982.⁴⁸ Cairns's magnum opus, a detailed and insightful reading of the life and times of the artist with sensitive accounts of the scores marked by the author's experience as a critic and conductor, has had the advantage of a fine French translation,⁴⁹ which means that it has had an impact, as Barzun's did not, in the nation that perhaps needed it the most.

Cairns's admiration of Barzun comes through, but his vision of Berlioz is of course not the same as that of the earlier master. On the *Fantastique*, for example, in those reflections I mentioned, Cairns rightfully wondered about the piece that we know as it was set down and heard on December 5, 1830, and how it differed when it was played again, after the Italian sojourn, on December 9, 1832, and in subsequent years. Did Berlioz have *bells* for the finale? Those bells are responsible for some of the astonishment we feel from the symphony as a whole. Should bells not be available, Berlioz provided a part for pianos: the effect, with pianos, I assure you, is startling. I do not know if the composer had bells in 1830 or 1832, but I do know that bells were used at his concert of December 13, 1840, because in the

performance dossier for that concert preserved in the Macnutt Collection, now at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, there lies, I was pleased to discover, a ten-franc receipt from Nicolas Hildebrand “for the transportation of bells.” Hildebrand was a bell founder in the rue Saint-Martin; for his work in the eighteen-twenties he twice received medals of honor.⁵⁰ The enormous bells that he placed on exhibit in 1827 weighed approximately 450 kilograms (992 pounds) and 600 kilograms (1,322 pounds).⁵¹ We may never know if they sounded the notes C and G. But the existence of the 1840 receipt does suggest that bells were indeed available for Berlioz’s Paris performances of the symphony. I dwell on this because, if much of Wagner has become more famous than much of Berlioz, the bells of the *Fantastique* may yet outring the bells of *Parsifal* (which, in the beginning, were not really bells at all).

One of Barzun’s overmastering concerns was an “objective” reading of the *Symphonie fantastique* as a coherent work of art independent of any literary “program”: he emphasized what Berlioz wrote in a footnote to the printed programs for concerts in 1836 and 1838, that the composer “knows perfectly well that music can replace neither words nor the visual arts”; that “he never once had the absurd idea of expressing ‘abstractions’ or ‘moral qualities,’ but only feelings and emotions.”⁵² Cairns, who seems to “know” Berlioz’s family and friends almost as well as the composer, concludes that “Berlioz himself saw the symphony in autobiographical terms.”⁵³ These are differing, not opposite points of view. “Program music” and the “meaning of music” are subjects of infinite discussion and dispute. Berlioz insists that they remain in the curriculum.

After the outpouring Berlioz scholarship that accompanied the two-hundredth anniversary of the composer’s birth, in and around 2003 (I list the principal works in the note),⁵⁴ and after the appearance of two further collective efforts in anticipation of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of his death,⁵⁵ you may fairly ask if there is anything more to say, if enough is now enough. But for enthusiasts, such as I, questions remain. Where, for example, are the autograph manuscripts of *Sardanapale*, the arrangement of *La Marseillaise*, and *Le Carnaval romain*? Are they forever lost? What might they tell us? Or: How did Berlioz speak to the members of his orchestras? Was he a strict disciplinarian, as I would suppose? Was he rather warm and fuzzy, as was the great Leonard Bernstein? And was he as brilliant as I suggest he was, in my edition of the *Mémoires*, after observing his remarkable recall of literature far and wide? Or did his “erudition not equal his genius,” as Camille Saint-Saëns rather uncharitably put it in a letter to the musicologist Henri Expert?⁵⁶

After his twentieth birthday, Berlioz was by royal edict required to participate in the draft lottery for military service. The drawing would have taken place in La Côte-Saint-André, would have opened in mid-January in 1823, and would have continued until early March, at which time those marked for conscription could, if finances allowed, find stand-ins.⁵⁷ As the intrepid Berlioz explorer Pascal Beyls has discovered, Berlioz drew a low number and was thus obliged to report for duty. He was able to avoid the army by purchasing the services of a proxy, a practice that was common at the time for those from moneyed families, and, in times of peace, potentially advantageous even to those who chose to serve. Berlioz's replacement, one François Charreton, born in the same year as the future composer, was a textile worker who hailed from the village of Vourey, twenty-five kilometers southeast of La Côte-Saint-André. We know nothing more about him other than that he died, in a military hospital, on July 18, 1829.⁵⁸ Berlioz's family is unlikely to have employed a substitute for their prodigal son solely in order that he pursue music. In early 1823, Berlioz must have been convincingly able to demonstrate, or grudgingly put forth, a continuing interest in medical study.

To what was Berlioz referring when he spoke to Camille Moke, his erstwhile fiancée, of a "chagrin affreux," the terrible affliction that David Cairns believes might be the reason behind their broken engagement?⁵⁹ Who was the mysterious "Amélie" who, near the end of his life, and hers, encountered and enchanted Berlioz in the cemetery of Montmartre? To whom was Berlioz referring, in a letter, when he suggests that his son might have had more than one child? We know only of little Clémentine, born to Zélie Mallet and Louis Berlioz, in Marseille, on April 2, 1861.⁶⁰ And who is that fellow who called himself Berlioz's "fils naturel," that is, Berlioz's illegitimate son, when he appeared on December 15, 1912, as the members of Henri-Martin Barzun's Fondation Hector Berlioz made a pilgrimage to the house in Montmartre to celebrate what would have been, four days earlier, the composer's one-hundred-ninth birthday?⁶¹ On film and in photographs, this gentleman, called "Charles Berlioz" in *L'Événement* and other newspapers printed on December 17, appears to converse with Barzun and others who knew a thing or two about Berlioz, including J.-G. Prod'homme, Adolphe Boschot, and Victor Chapot, the archeologist, library administrator, and member of the Institut de France, who was present at the ceremony in his capacity as a direct descendent of Berlioz's sister Adèle. Chapot and the others would surely have protested had they believed this fellow was an imposter! Pascal Beyls and I have hypothesized that he might have been the unrecognized child of Berlioz and Marie Recio. Were

he to have been born in 1842, he would have been seventy in 1912, as in the pictures he appears to be. I add that the actor Jacques Berlioz (1889–1969) claimed, in a letter printed in *Comœdia* on February 4, 1927, that *his* father, the amateur painter Charles Berlioz, bore an “extraordinary” resemblance to Hector Berlioz, and was in fact the grandson of the composer’s *uncle*.⁶² *Caveat lector*: not everyone named Berlioz is related to the one we know.

Future biographers may wish to treat these small queries as they paint large canvases of their own. What we can do, now, is to make the fundamental source materials accessible to all who might wish to capture Berlioz in one guise or another. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France continues to upload the scores and the images to Gallica.bnf.fr. RetroNews.fr makes the newspapers and magazines for which Berlioz wrote ever more readily available. Monir Tayeb and Michel Austin faithfully render service to Berliozians everywhere by publishing on HBerlioz.com quantities of primary and secondary materials in both French and English. And now, a substantial grant from the city of Paris, funded in 2021, has enabled a small team of which I am a part to embark upon an online edition of Berlioz’s correspondence based on new readings of the autograph manuscripts, with links to facsimiles, explanatory documents, and extensive annotations unrestrained by publishers’ page limitations. The physical book will never die, but the future of scholarly research is online. It will not be long before we will be able to search the text of every document ever penned by or about Berlioz. The new availability will broaden horizons and bear new fruit. But “artificial intelligence,” so to speak, will not tell us what is the definitive version of the work of art or how, definitively, it is to be performed. It will not take the place of articulate speech, commanding discourse, aesthetic acumen, scholarly judgment, humor, or *hubris*.

Berlioz’s music—music “that thinks,” as it was labeled by a journalist at the funeral⁶³—will, one hopes, find its place in the work of those musical scholars in Europe and the United States who, now more than ever, justly debate the roles in the making of music history of race, ethnicity, class, and gender; who rightly insist upon the importance of hearing from the colonized, the marginalized, and the oppressed. Berlioz’s music will, I should like to believe, continue to be variously defended and depreciated, as is normal for vital works that remain in the repertory. But it will no longer be demeaned, I think, as somehow deficient in technique. That is a battle that has been won. The analyses of scholars active today, those by Julian Rushton and Jean-Pierre Bartoli in particular, have demonstrated with conspicuous clarity that Berlioz’s melodic and symphonic forms are not lesser versions of

classic and contemporary models, as the sceptics used to say, but carefully premeditated structures with an inner drama and logic of their own.⁶⁴

Let me conclude, therefore, with a response to the cogent critique of an anthology I had something to do with, the *Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, which, the ever-vigilant Mark Everist observed, “gives the impression that Berlioz is the sole representative of French music” in the middle years of his century.⁶⁵ That is certainly not the impression I intended to give in the *Companion*, nor is it the impression I intend to give here. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the author of the opening essay in the *Companion*, also the author of *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, was a founding father of modern cultural history, to which discipline my eminent colleague would seem to pay homage, and a scholar more alert than most to the particularities of the environment in which his chosen subject lived and worked. Janet Johnson’s subsequent essay, on “the musical environment in France,” goes so far as to identify the elephant in the room: “Berlioz in the Age of Rossini.” Everist’s remark may simply result from the enthusiasm of the Berliozians, Jacques Barzun among them, who may have felt that their fellow had been under-represented, or rather “misunderestimated,” to use a wonderful word coined by the forty-third president of the United States. (In 2002, that president, George W. Bush, awarded America’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, to Jacques Barzun.) Berlioz’s French contemporaries—Fromental Halévy, Adolphe Adam, Louise Farrenc, Louise Bertin, Félicien David, Ambroise Thomas, Charles-Valentin Alkan, Charles Gounod, Jacques Offenbach, and Camille Saint-Saëns, to mention only those born between 1799 and 1835—deserve, have had, and will continue to enjoy their days in court. Berlioz interacted with all of these fine souls, as he did with the non-French composers—Rossini, Meyerbeer, Wagner, and Verdi—who of course became major players on the French musical scene. These same souls find a place in the *Dictionnaire Berlioz*, of which I was an editor, and whose mission was more broad than that of the *Companion*. Could it be, if Berlioz continues to kick his way to the fore, that his understanding of “the intellectual glamour of gloom,” to quote a phrase from Martin Amis’s 2020 novel *Inside Story*, gives him a leg up? Or that, despite our erudition, we still don’t know what to do with him?

For Bruno Messina, and those of an ethnomusicological bent, what remains to be reconstituted, for the better understanding of musical imagination of the composer of the *Fantastique*, is the sonic landscape, the “paysage sonore,” of Berlioz’s homeland, the Dauphiné, that “green and golden plain” lovingly traversed in the opening chapter of David Cairns’s great biography.⁶⁶

For those who understand how the writing of history itself has been molded by men, the absent voices of Harriet Smithson and Marie Recio in particular (the sounds of which in both cases are said to have had an agreeable ring) would resound, if we could hear them, with special resonance. And for those for whom *Rezeptionsgeschichte* is the way of the future, the volume that remains to be written would be the Berliozian equivalent of the one that most resonated in musical circles during the gestation of the present book. Alex Ross's *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music* is a highly unusual compendium, a *tour de force* of recollections and reflections, intimations and inspirations, confrontations and exploitations of a kind uniquely generated—in music and art, in literature and philosophy, in politics and popular culture—by the life and work of Richard Wagner. Though far less fateful and fought about than the composer of *Tristan* and *The Ring*, Berlioz was no less of a genius than he. An admirer willing to look everywhere and read everything, as Ross did for Wagner, might find the material, not for a book of *Berliozism*—the expression is infelicitous—but for a broad-based investigation of *Berlioz Beyond the Grave*. In *Berlioz in Time*, my more limited purpose has been to revisit the precincts of its great subject, to relight rooms gone dim, to invite readers in.

Abbreviations

AnF	Archives Nationales de France
BnF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
CG	Hector Berlioz, <i>Correspondance générale</i> , Pierre Citron, general editor. Paris: Flammarion, 1972–2003.
CG 1	1803–1832, edited by Pierre Citron (1972)
CG 2	1832–1842, ed. Frédéric Robert (1975)
CG 3	1842–1850, ed. Citron (1978)
CG 4	1851–1855, ed. Citron, Yves Gérard, and Hugh Macdonald (1983)
CG 5	1855–1859, ed. Macdonald and François Lesure (1988)
CG 6	1859–1863, ed. Macdonald and Lesure (1995)
CG 7	1864–1869, ed. Macdonald (2001)
CG 8	<i>Suppléments</i> [1], ed. Macdonald (2003)
CG 9	[<i>Suppléments</i> 2, published as:] <i>Nouvelles Lettres d'Hector Berlioz, de sa famille, de ses contemporains</i> . Edited by Peter Bloom, Joël-Marie Fauquet, Hugh Macdonald, Cécile Reynaud (Arles and Venice: Actes Sud/Palazzetto Bru Zane, 2016)
CM	Hector Berlioz, <i>Critique musicale</i> . Paris: Buchet/Chastel [vols. 1–6]; Société française de musicologie [vols. 7–10], 1996–2020. Comité éditorial: Peter Bloom, Pierre Citron, Joël-Marie Fauquet, Yves Gérard, Catherine Massip, Jean Mongrédién
CM 1	1823–1834, edited by H. Robert Cohen and Yves Gérard (1996)
CM 2	1835–1836, ed. Marie-Hélène Coudroy-Saghaï and Gérard (1998)

<i>CM 3</i>	1837–1838, ed. Anne Bongrain, Coudroy-Saghaï, and Gérard (2001)
<i>CM 4</i>	1839–1841, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2003)
<i>CM 5</i>	1842–1844, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2004)
<i>CM 6</i>	1845–1848, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2007)
<i>CM 7</i>	1849–1851, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2013)
<i>CM 8</i>	1852–1855, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2016)
<i>CM 9</i>	1856–1859, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2018)
<i>CM 10</i>	1860–1865, ed. Bongrain and Coudroy-Saghaï (2020).
<i>Les Soirées de l'orchestre</i>	Hector Berlioz, <i>Les Soirées de l'orchestre</i> , edited by Léon Guichard. Paris: Gründ, 1968.
<i>Les Grottesques de la musique</i>	Hector Berlioz, <i>Les Grottesques de la musique</i> , edited by Léon Guichard. Paris: Gründ, 1969.
<i>À travers chants</i>	Hector Berlioz, <i>À travers chants</i> , edited by Léon Guichard. Paris: Gründ, 1971.
<i>Mémoires</i>	Hector Berlioz, <i>Les Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz</i> , edited by Peter Bloom. Paris: Vrïn, 2019.
<i>NBE</i>	Hector Berlioz, <i>New Edition of the Complete Works [New Berlioz Edition]</i> , Hugh Macdonald, general editor. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1967–2005.
<i>NBE 1a–d</i>	<i>Benvenuto Cellini</i> , edited by Hugh Macdonald (1994–2005)
<i>NBE 2a–c</i>	<i>Les Troyens</i> , ed. Macdonald (1969–1970)
<i>NBE 3</i>	<i>Béatrice et Bénédict</i> , ed. Macdonald (1980)
<i>NBE 4</i>	<i>Incomplete Operas</i> , ed. Ric Graebner and Paul Banks (2005)
<i>NBE 5</i>	<i>Huit Scènes de Faust</i> , ed. Julian Rushton (1970)
<i>NBE 6</i>	<i>Prix de Rome Works</i> , ed. David Gilbert (1998)
<i>NBE 7</i>	<i>Lélio ou Le Retour à la vie</i> , ed. Peter Bloom (1992)
<i>NBE 8a–b</i>	<i>La Damnation de Faust</i> , ed. Rushton (1979–1986)
<i>NBE 9</i>	<i>Grande Messe des morts</i> , ed. Jürgen Kindermann (1978)

- NBE 10 *Te Deum*, ed. Denis McCaldin (1973)
- NBE 11 *L'Enfance du Christ*, ed. David Lloyd-Jones (1998)
- NBE 12a *Choral Works with Orchestra (1)*, ed. Rushton (1991)
- NBE 12b *Choral Works with Orchestra (2)*, ed. David Charlton (1993)
- NBE 13 *Songs for Solo Voice and Orchestra*, ed. Ian Kemp (1975)
- NBE 14 *Choral Works with Keyboard*, ed. Ian Rumbold (1996)
- NBE 15 *Songs for One, Two, or Three Voices and Keyboard*, ed. Rumbold (2005)
- NBE 16 *Symphonie fantastique*, ed. Nicholas Temperley (1972)
- NBE 17 *Harold en Italie*, ed. Paul Banks and Macdonald (2002)
- NBE 18 *Roméo et Juliette*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (1990)
- NBE 19 *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, ed. Macdonald (1967)
- NBE 20 *Overtures*, ed. Diana Bickley (2000)
- NBE 21 *Miscellaneous Works and Index*, ed. Macdonald (2005)
- NBE 22a *Arrangements of Works by Other Composers (1)*, ed. Joël-Marie Fauquet (2005)
- NBE 22b *Arrangements of Works by Other Composers (2)*, ed. Rumbold (2005)
- NBE 23 *Messe solennelle*, ed. Macdonald (1994)
- NBE 24 *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*, ed. Bloom (2003)
- NBE 25 D. Kern Holoman, *Catalogue of the Works of Hector Berlioz* (1987). 2nd ed., ed. Holoman and Jonathan Minnick (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1gh3t989>)
- NBE 26 Gunther Braam, *The Portraits of Hector Berlioz* (2003)

Notes

Prologue

- 1 Bloom, *The Life of Berlioz*, chapter 1.
- 2 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 135
- 3 “Robert Schumann and Mary Potts,” *Notes* 65, no. 2 (December 2008): 268–281; “Reading Siegfried’s Reed,” *Wagnerspectrum* 3, no. 1 (2007): 77–92; “History, Memory, and the Oboe Concerto of Richard Strauss,” *The Pendragon Review* 2 (2001): 3–25; Claude Debussy, *1er Quatuor pour 2 violons, alto et violoncelle, op. 10 (Œuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy, 3:1)* (Paris: Durand, 2015.)
- 4 Dominique de Villepin, “N’entre pas ici, Arthur Rimbaud,” *Le Monde* (October 5, 2020).
- 5 Berlioz to his uncle Félix Marmion, March 30, 1843 (CG 8:224).
- 6 See in this regard Sabine Le Hir, “Wagner et la France (1830–1861).”
- 7 Fauquet, *Musique en Utopie*, part 6, 307–384.
- 8 Robert Gottlieb, “Dickensworld,” *New York Times Book Review* (November 8, 2020), 1.
- 9 *New York Times Book Review* (October 25, 2020), 8.
- 10 Félix Grenier, *Le Guide musical* (November 29, 1903), 8.
- 11 *The Listener* (November 18, 1954).
- 12 Richard Lawrence, review of Bloom, *The Life of Berlioz*, *Times Literary Supplement* (February 5, 1999), 19.
- 13 *The Listener* (January 27, 1955).

Chapter One

- 1 *Institut impérial de France, Académie des Beaux-Arts. Discours de M. Guillaume, président, prononcé aux funérailles de M. Berlioz* (March 11, 1869).
- 2 Blaze, “De l’école fantastique et de M. Berlioz,” 98.
- 3 Information from documents preserved at the Musée Hector-Berlioz, where my initial research was generously assisted by Adolphe Boschot’s daughter, Henriette-Louis-Margaret Boschot (1903–1994).

- 4 Lanfranchi, *Voyage à Paris*, “Épisode de la vie d’un voyageur,” 207–224.
 5 *CG* 1:310 (February 29, 1830).
 6 See, for example, Starenne, *Recherches sur les ranz de vaches*.
 7 Börne, *Briefe aus Paris*, 1:120–121.
 8 *Mémoires*, 274.
 9 Vigny, *Le Journal d’un poète*, 1:118; and Lamartine, “Ode contre la peine de mort.”
 10 Holoman, *The Creative Process*, 315.
 11 Rosenblum, “Painting During the Bourbon Restoration,” in *French Painting 1774–1830*, 239.
 12 Lambertson, “Delacroix’s *Sardanapalus*,” 81.
 13 Hadjinicolaou, “*La Liberté guidant le peuple*,” 3–6.
 14 Johnson, “Eugène Delacroix and Charles de Verniac,” 517.
 15 Toussaint, *La Liberté guidant le peuple*.
 16 Gaudibert, “Eugène Delacroix et le romantisme révolutionnaire,” 18.
 17 Citron, “Berlioz en 1830,” 176.
 18 This verse of the printed libretto of 1826 was not set by Berlioz. See *NBE* 12a:396.
 19 *NBE* 4.
 20 Fragment of the libretto of *Les Francs-Juges* preserved in BnF Musique, papiers divers Berlioz, no. 45.
 21 *NBE* 7:xi–xii.
 22 *Mémoires*, 282–288.
 23 Tchamkerten, “Un Autographe inédit de Berlioz,” 22–28; and *NBE* 22b.
 24 Cochran, *The Great Week in Paris*, 19.
 25 Tiersot, *Rouget de Lisle*, 179.
 26 AnF, 300 AP 3:45.
 27 Elwart, *Histoire de la Société des Concerts*, 1.
 28 AnF, O³ 1305.
 29 AnF, O³ 1815 (III).
 30 *CG* 1:216.
 31 From the *Règlement* of the Gymnase-Lyrique, AnF, O³ 1619 (1); published in the *Revue musicale*, 4 (October 1, 1828): 292–296.
 32 *Galignani’s New Paris Guide* (Paris: Galignani, 1837), 225.
 33 AnF, O³ 1619 (1)—document dated October 23, 1828. See also *CG* 9:65–66.
 34 *Le Ménestrel* (October 4, 1835).
 35 Brittan, *Etienne-joseph Soubre: Sinfonie fantastique*.
 36 *Revue musicale*, 4 (October 1, 1828): 291.
 37 *Revue musicale*, 4 (April 1828): 472–473.
 38 Fauquet, *Dictionnaire*, 66.
 39 AnF, F²¹ 1092.
 40 AnF, F²¹ 1092.

- 41 “Bloc” to an unnamed addressee (November 10, 1829), *CG* 8:49.
- 42 AnF, F²¹ 1092 (October 29, 1830).
- 43 Wangermée, “Conscience et inconsciences,” 564–566.
- 44 *Revue musicale*, 9 (September 4, 1830): 113–117.
- 45 *CG* 1:204–205.
- 46 *CG* 1:205.
- 47 Bloom, “Berlioz and the Prix de Rome,” 279–304.
- 48 Le Normand-Romain, “Le Séjour d’Étex à Rome,” 175.
- 49 Relevant documents are found in the archives of the Académie de France à Rome (carton 34).
- 50 AnF, F²¹ 610.
- 51 Information kindly provided by Pascal Beyls, author of *Félix Marmion, Oncle de Berlioz*.
- 52 *CG* 1:351, 356.
- 53 Berlioz to the Minister of the Interior, October 28, 1830 (*CG* 1:377).
- 54 Brittan, *Music and Fantasy in the Age of Berlioz*, 53–88.
- 55 *CG* 1:371.
- 56 *CG* 1:376–377.
- 57 Louis de Carné to the Minister of the Interior, in Lapauze, *Histoire de l’Académie de France à Rome*, 2:205–206.
- 58 *CG* 1:501, 97.
- 59 *CG* 1:324, 386.
- 60 *CG* 1:353.
- 61 *CG* 1:363.
- 62 *CG* 1:476–477.
- 63 *Le Globe* (June 23, 1831).
- 64 *CG* 8:62–63.
- 65 Bloom, “‘Politics’ and the Musical Press in 1830,” 9–16.
- 66 *CG* 1:373.
- 67 Apponyi, *Vingt-cinq ans à Paris*, 376.
- 68 Macdonald, *Berlioz*, 51.
- 69 From Berlioz’s report to the Minister of the Interior (December 28, 1843). See chapter 8.

Chapter Two

- 1 Barzun, *Essay on French Verse*, 9.
- 2 *Mémoires*, 228.
- 3 Barber, “Galignani’s and the Publication of English Books,” 273.
- 4 Nerval, *Études sur les poètes allemands*, 3.
- 5 *CG* 2:146.

- 6 CG 1:80.
 7 CG 1:177n.
 8 CG 1:121n.
 9 CG 1:155.
 10 *Mémoires*, 753.
 11 CG 1:213.
 12 CG 1:167.
 13 *Almanach-Bottin du commerce de Paris*, 1842.
 14 http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/09102/_CM_0852470.html.
 15 *Coriolane: Expliqué littéralement* (1850), “with French notes by A. Brown,” is listed in Thimm, *Shakespeariana*, 105.
 16 *Bulletin de la société pour l’instruction élémentaire*, 35.
 17 Hersant, “Defauconpret,” 83–88.
 18 Bereaud, “La Traduction en France,” 234.
 19 Bereaud, 236.
 20 CG 1:156.
 21 *Mémoires*, 123.
 22 Fauquet, *Dictionnaire de la musique en France*, 943.
 23 CG 1:199.
 24 CG 1:293.
 25 NBE 7:236, citing Moore, *Mémoires de Lord Byron*, 188.
 26 CG 3:719.
 27 Byron, *Ceuvres de Lord Byron*, 9.
 28 Cardwell, *Reception of Byron*, 35.
 29 *Mémoires*, 336.
 30 Altenmüller, “Hector Berlioz and His Vesuvius.”
 31 *Le Pèlerinage de Childe Harold*, in *Ceuvres complètes de Lord Byron* 2:237–238.
 32 *British Review and London Critical Journal* (June 1812), 298.
 33 CG 2:73.
 34 *Mémoires*, 226.
 35 February 6, 1830 (CG 1:306).
 36 Geoghegan, *Robert Emmet*, 24.
 37 *Journal des débats* (July 14, 1823).
 38 Rushton, *The Musical Language*, 97.
 39 The picture is reproduced in Beyls, *Estelle Fornier*, 112.
 40 CG 7:136.
 41 NBE 18:265–274.
 42 CG 7:139.

Chapter Three

- 1 Dufetel, “Liszt et la ‘propagande wagnérienne,’” 265.
- 2 Franz Liszt, Marie d’Agoult, *Correspondance*, 1165, 1169 [henceforth *Correspondance*].
- 3 *CG* 2:119 (October 7, 1833).
- 4 Fouquet, “Le détour obligé,” 71–84.
- 5 Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*.
- 6 The seating plans for Berlioz’s concert of December 9, 1832, are preserved in the Macnutt Collection (BnF, Musique).
- 7 BnF, Musique, ms. 42109.
- 8 Liszt, *Grande Fantaisie Symphonique über Themen aus Hector Berlioz’ ‘Lélio,’* ed. Reiner Zimmermann (Leipzig: Brietkopf & Härtel, 1981).
- 9 Comtesse d’Agoult, *Mémoires*, 19–23.
- 10 *La Marquise* appeared in the *Revue de Paris*, 45 (December 9, 1832): 92–129.
- 11 D’Ortigue’s biography appeared in the *Revue de Paris*, 45 (December 23, 1832): 281–298. The author likens Berlioz’s passion for Smithson to that of Sand’s protagonist at 286, 294.
- 12 BnF, Musique, Berlioz papiers divers 38. See also Ortigue, *Écrits sur la musique*, 277–289.
- 13 *Gazette musicale de Paris* (June 14, 1835).
- 14 Félix Marmion to Berlioz’s sister Nancy Pal (February 10, 1833), in Beyls, *Correspondance de la famille de Berlioz*, 2:91.
- 15 Brittan, “Berlioz and the Pathological Fantastic.”
- 16 *Correspondance*, 80.
- 17 *CG* 1:108 (July 11, 1833).
- 18 Beyls, *Correspondance de la famille de Berlioz*, 2:83–131.
- 19 *Correspondance*, 51 (letter dated March 4 or April 4, 1833).
- 20 *Correspondance*, 64 (my emphasis).
- 21 *CG* 2:112 (August 30, 1833).
- 22 *Correspondance*, 80.
- 23 Corinne Schneider, “Liszt médiateur des œuvres de Weber à Paris (1828–1844),” in Hamburger, *Liszt 2000*, 257–282.
- 24 Sand, *Lettres d’un voyageur*, 304.
- 25 Ben Arnold, “Liszt as Reader, Intellectual, and Musician,” in Gibbs, *Liszt and His World*, 40.
- 26 Letter of January 18, 1856, cited (in French) by Gut, *Franz Liszt*, 367.
- 27 Perényi, *Liszt*, 84.
- 28 Quoted by Jonathan Kregor, “Collaboration and Content,” 221.
- 29 The point is emphasized by Serge Gut in his review of Bruno Moysan, *Liszt: Virtuouse subversif*, 502.
- 30 *Correspondance*, 84.

- 31 CG 2:113.
- 32 CG 2:184 (my emphasis).
- 33 Liszt refers to “la 4^me épreuve” in his letter to Marie of July 7, 1834 (*Correspondance*, 161).
- 34 *Mémoires*, 416.
- 35 Hiller, *Künstlerleben*, 88.
- 36 *Correspondance*, 94.
- 37 *Correspondance*, 95.
- 38 *Correspondance*, 99.
- 39 No. 135 in the Raabe catalogue, no. 395 in Searle.
- 40 CG 2:209 (November 20, 1834).
- 41 Tchaikovsky to Nadezhda von Meck, February 19, 1879, cited at “Tchaikovsky Research,” http://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Hector_Berlioz#cite_note-note4-4.
- 42 CG 9:376.
- 43 CG 9:267 (December 21, 1845).
- 44 CG 4:596 (October 26, 1854).
- 45 See note 3.
- 46 Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 7.
- 47 Blank, *Virginity: The Untouched History*.
- 48 CG 1:318 (April 16, 1830).
- 49 See Raby, *Fair Ophelia*, where a lithograph by Achille Devéria and Louis Boulanger, from *Souvenirs du théâtre anglais à Paris* (1827), shows Charles Kemble, as Othello, about to smother a bare-breasted Smithson, as Ophelia (p. 88). The Dubufe portrait, in a mezzotint by Georges Maile, is reproduced on p. 74.
- 50 Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, 27 (my emphasis). Also quoted by Anderson, “Gendered Pleasure,” 116.
- 51 La Mara, *Liszt und die Frauen*, 10. For the implications of the phrase, I rely on the expertise of my eminent colleague Hans Rudolf Vaget.
- 52 Charles Suttoni, “Liszt and Madame d’Agoult: A Reappraisal,” in *Liszt and His World*, 21.
- 53 CG 2:122.
- 54 Reynaud, “Franz Liszt, lecteur de Berlioz,” 87.

Chapter Four

- 1 Holoman, *Berlioz*, 187.
- 2 Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 1:291.
- 3 Barzun, 1:290–291; Cairns, *Berlioz*, 2:158–159.
- 4 Gossett, “Music at the Théâtre-Italien,” in Bloom, *Music in Paris*, 363.

- 5 AnF, AJ¹³ 1160. The letter is printed in Soubies, *Le Théâtre-Italien*, 101–102.
- 6 AnF, F²¹ 4633 (the minutes of the Commission Spéciale).
- 7 CG 2:404–405, 409–410, 414–420, 731–735.
- 8 CG 2:430.
- 9 CG 2:442n.
- 10 AnF, AJ¹³ 180, II, and 187, I.
- 11 CG 2:358n.
- 12 Soubies, *Le Théâtre-Italien*, 102.
- 13 I derive this from a note in the minutes of the Commission. AnF, F²¹ 4633 [7].
- 14 AnF, C 794 (archives of the Assemblée Nationale for the year 1838), later published in *Procès-verbaux des séances de la Chambre des Députés*, Session de 1838 (Paris: A. Henry, 1838), 590–596.
- 15 Barbier, *Opera in Paris*, 178.
- 16 AnF, C 794, no. 47.
- 17 AnF, F²¹ 953—a proposal for the reorganization of musical instruction in France.
- 18 Tiersot, *Lettres de musiciens écrites en français*, 2:97–98.
- 19 *Journal des débats* (September 14, 1839); Crevier, *Histoire des empereurs romains*, 1:80.
- 20 CG 2:436–437.
- 21 CG 2:439.
- 22 *Procès-verbaux des séances de la Chambre des Députés*, Session de 1838, 6:211–216.
- 23 See [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/17254](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/17254) (consulted February 20, 2020).
- 24 CG 2:440.
- 25 CG 2:442.
- 26 CG 2:444.
- 27 AnF, F²¹ 1113 (report dated May 21, 1836). See also Janet Johnson, “Rossini, Artistic Director,” 608.
- 28 Merle, *Lettre à un compositeur français sur l’état actuel de l’opéra* (Paris: Barba, 1827); Berton, *De la musique mécanique et de la musique philosophique* (Paris: Alexis Aymery, 1826); Gail, *Réflexions sur le goût musical en France* (Paris: Paulin, 1832).
- 29 AnF, AJ¹³ 1163, a report cited by Nicole Wild, “Le Spectacle lyrique au temps du grand opéra,” in Bailbé, *La Musique en France*, 48.
- 30 *Mémoires*, 201.
- 31 CG 2:109, 68, 69.
- 32 Gossett, “Music at the Théâtre-Italien” (see note 4).
- 33 In private correspondence, for which I am very grateful indeed.
- 34 Cairns, *Berlioz* 1:558.

Chapter Five

- 1 O'Neill, *All Politics Is Local*.
- 2 *NBE* 19 and *NBE* 25 (H. 80).
- 3 Kallberg, "Chopin's March," 15.
- 4 *CG* 8:292–293 (Berlioz to his sister, October 30, 1849).
- 5 See Eusèbe Lucas, "Berlioz," *Le Figaro* (April 25, 1878).
- 6 *Le Web de l'Humanité* (February 16, 2000).
- 7 Jean Kahn, Philippe Oliver, and Gottfried Wagner, "À Salzbourg, cet été, comme si de rien n'était," *Le Monde* (June 21, 2000).
- 8 See, for example, Ellison, "Specter of Austria's Nazi Past," 25–28.
- 9 *Le Siècle* (November 1, 1840).
- 10 Charléty, *La Monarchie de Juillet*, 176, quoted by Karila-Cohen, "Charles de Rémusat," 422.
- 11 *CG* 2: 660.
- 12 Lasalle, *L'Hôtel des haricots*, 16.
- 13 *CG* 2:632.
- 14 *CG* 2:637–638.
- 15 *CG* 8:181.
- 16 *CG* 2:645.
- 17 *CG* 9:185.
- 18 *CG* 2:650.
- 19 *CG* 2:248.
- 20 The document is cited in *NBE* 19:viii.
- 21 Rémusat, *Mémoires*, 3:396.
- 22 Fauquet, "Du Louvre à la Bastille," 59–63.
- 23 *Journal des débats* (August 3, 1840).
- 24 AnF, F²¹ 718.
- 25 *CG* 2:646.
- 26 *CG* 2:648–650.
- 27 *CG* 2:647–648.
- 28 Karila-Cohen, "Charles de Rémusat," 418.
- 29 François Mitterrand, interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (December 1984): 45: "Architecture is an art that I admire. For me, it is the first among the arts."
- 30 *CG* 2:658 (August 12, 1840).
- 31 "Toast porté par le citoyen Auguste Luchet au banquet national de la ville de Fontainebleau," in Delvau, *Les Murailles révolutionnaires*, 2:245–247.
- 32 *CG* 2:649–650.
- 33 *CG* 9:185–186. I have suggested "the whole matter" for words in the autograph that are illegible.
- 34 *CG* 2:670.
- 35 Kolb, "Plots and Politics," 82.

- 36 AnF, F²¹ 742, with a full accounting of the expenses of the ceremony of December 15, 1840.
- 37 *CG* 2:671.
- 38 *New York Times* (December 13, 14, 15, and 16, 1940); *Le Temps* (December 16 and 17, 1940).
- 39 *Dresdener Abendzeitung* (June 14, 1841), quoted in *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 133 (I have slightly altered the translation).
- 40 Millington, *Wagner*, 11–12.
- 41 Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, 18/2, ed. Egon Voss (Mainz: Schott, 1997), vii.
- 42 *CG* 3:555.
- 43 *Mémoires*, 481.
- 44 *CG* 8:191.
- 45 Bruneau, *Musiques d’hier et de demain*, iii.
- 46 Bloom, “Berlioz and Officialdom,” 134–146.
- 47 *CG* 2:727.
- 48 *Le Ménestrel* (May 22, 1842).
- 49 *CG* 2:721.
- 50 *CG* 3:197.
- 51 *CG* 2:723.

Chapter Six

- 1 Macdonald, *Berlioz*, 38.
- 2 Locke, “The Music of the French Chanson”; and Caswell, “Loïsa Puget and the French *Romance*.”
- 3 *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (September 1, 1841): 718.
- 4 *CG* 5:252.
- 5 Honegger, *Dictionnaire de la musique*, “mélodie.”
- 6 *Revue et Gazette musicale* (November 12, 1840); *L’Artiste* (November 1840): 316.
- 7 *NBE* 25 [2nd ed.]:308.
- 8 *Beilage no. 8 zur Allgemeinen musikalischen Zeitung* (1842); Facsimile der Handschrift von H. Berlioz.
- 9 Gutzkow, *Briefe aus Paris*; Dresch, *Gutzkow et la jeune Allemagne*.
- 10 *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (November 16, 1842): 925.
- 11 *CG* 2:664.
- 12 The plate number of the Berlioz is Ad.C. 872. The plate number for a *Menuet dans les bois* by Alexis Roger is Ad.C. 841, listed in the *Bibliographie de la France* on August 28, 1841, and thus probably printed, given the bibliography’s slow-paced practice, in July.

- 13 BnF, Musique, Rés. 1432 (27).
- 14 BnF, Musique, mss. 1179, 1180, 1181, 1182, and 1183.
- 15 *NBE* 13:122.
- 16 *CG* 5:602.
- 17 Rushton, “*Les Nuits d’été*: Cycle or Collection,” in Bloom, *Berlioz Studies*, 112–135.
- 18 *NBE* 25 [2nd ed.]:308–321.
- 19 BnF, Musique, ms. 382.
- 20 Gautier, *Correspondance générale*, 1:2271; 3:298, 119.
- 21 Gautier, 2:195.
- 22 *CG* 2:311–312. Katherine Kolb informed me that the letter is postmarked August 3, 1837, and that the Hugo scholar Jean Gaudon was certain that the “young poet” was Gautier.
- 23 According to a note on the autograph manuscript, BnF, Musique, ms. 4383.
- 24 *Poésies complètes de Théophile Gautier*, 1:lv–lxiii.
- 25 Gautier, *Correspondance générale*, 1: 42–43.
- 26 Gautier, 1:248.
- 27 Gautier, 1:146.
- 28 *CG* 2:285.
- 29 *CG* 2:183.
- 30 Spœlberch de Lovenjoul, *Histoire des œuvres de Théophile Gautier*, 1:123, 152–153, 155.
- 31 *Trésor littéraire des jeunes personnes*, 2nd ed., ed. Joseph Duplessy (Tours: A. Mame, 1862).
- 32 *CG* 2:203.
- 33 *CG* 4:37.
- 34 Holoman, *The Creative Process*, 173.
- 35 *CG* 4:150–151.
- 36 *Journal des débats* (November 25, 1854).
- 37 *NBE* 13:xi.
- 38 *CG* 2:699.
- 39 *Journal des débats* (July 19, 1840).
- 40 *CG* 3:635.
- 41 Fauser, “The Songs,” 124.
- 42 From the obituary in *La France musicale* (June 22, 1862).
- 43 Pascal Beyls, “A Surprising Discovery,” 39–52.
- 44 “Les Artistes à Baden-Baden” [August 25, 1840], *La Sylphide* (1840): 127.
- 45 The autographs of Bull’s letters to his wife of August 10 and September 3, 1840, are available online at the site of the Bergen Public Library, Norway. See also *Ole Bulls Breve*, 277.
- 46 Raby, *Fair Ophelia*.

- 47 The review subsequently appeared in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (April 2, 1841).
- 48 *La Sylphide* (1841): 208.
- 49 *Le Ménestrel* (October 31, 1869).
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- 52 Jobert, 246.
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- 6 Mann, "Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner," 352.
- 7 Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1918).
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 4 CG 7:139.
 5 CG 9:463.
 6 CG 3:547
 7 Barzun, *An Essay on French Verse*, 8–9.
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- 30 “A Friend of Berlioz,” *The Musical Herald* (December 1, 1903), 372.
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 38 See Wagner (Cosima), *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries*, 1:864; 2:807.
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 40 CG 6:175.
 41 CG 6:190, 194, 200, 218, 225; CG 8:507; CG 6:238, 250, 255–256, 262.
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- 18 Bloom and Robert, “À propos de la vie matérielle,” 51.
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- 48 This solution was suggested to me by my colleague Hans Rudolf Veget.
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 72 *CG* 7:102.
 73 “Tutubant,” according to the University of Chicago ARTFL database, first occurs in Edmond About, *Le Nez d'un notaire* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1862).
 74 Rushton, *Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette*, 70–79; Boschot, *Le Faust de Berlioz*, chapter 4; Bloom, *Benvenuto Cellini: Dossier de presse Parisienne*; Heidlberger, *Les Troyens: Dossier de presse parisienne*.
 75 Cited by Boschot, *Le Faust de Berlioz*, 113.
 76 Berlioz cites Amussat in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* (September 10, 1848); see also Brittan, “Berlioz and the Pathological Fantastic.”

Epilogue

- 1 Quoted in Kimber, “The ‘Suppression,’” 125.
 2 Liszt to Pohl (October 24, 1884), cited in Lenneberg, *Witnesses and Scholars*, 126.
 3 Facsimile of the unpublished note on argosybooks.com (consulted April 21, 2020).

- 4 Hippeau, *Berlioz intime*; Jullien, *Hector Berlioz*; Prod'homme, *Hector Berlioz*; Tiersot, *Hector Berlioz*; Boschot, *L'Histoire d'un Romantique*.
- 5 Jean-Aubry, *An Introduction*, 30.
- 6 *CG* 1:445.
- 7 Angremy, *Berlioz*, 138.
- 8 Boschot, *La Jeunesse d'un Romantique*, x–xi.
- 9 Henriette Boschot told the story of her father's indecision to Thérèse Husson, mastermind of the Association Nationale Hector Berlioz, and Thérèse Husson told it to me.
- 10 Boschot, *La Jeunesse*, 519.
- 11 Boschot, *Le Crépuscule*, 660.
- 12 Archives de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, procès-verbaux des concours, 1 H 16 [1906].
- 13 Boschot (Henriette), "Une Lettre inédite d'Émile Vuillermoz, 28–29.
- 14 Broche, *Dictionnaire de la collaboration*, 885–886.
- 15 BnF, Musique, Rés. 2714 (1–3).
- 16 *CG* 1:429.
- 17 *CG* 1:429.
- 18 Holoman, *Berlioz*, 116.
- 19 Cairns, *Berlioz*, 1:459.
- 20 Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 1:205.
- 21 *CG* 2:25.
- 22 *NBE* 16:183–184.
- 23 Yves Gérard, "Saint-Saëns," *Dictionnaire Berlioz*, 494.
- 24 Bibliothèque de l'Opéra; lettres autographes (Jacques Rouché).
- 25 Boschot, *Le Crépuscule*, 554.
- 26 Boschot, 553.
- 27 Boschot, 555.
- 28 Jacques Barzun to Peter Bloom (December 8, 1999; September 19, 2003).
- 29 Béatrice Didier, "Mémoires," *Dictionnaire Berlioz*, 340.
- 30 For a bibliography of Barzun's writings through 1975, see Weiner, *From Parnassus*. For further bibliography, see *A Jacques Barzun Reader*.
- 31 Jacques Barzun to Peter Bloom (September 7, 1998).
- 32 On Henri-Martin Barzun, see Kempton, "The Enigma"; on the portrait, see Sénéchal, *L'Abbaye Créteil*, 26.
- 33 Letters concerning the Fondation Hector Berlioz are preserved in the Jacques Barzun Collection at Columbia University (box 2).
- 34 Jacques Barzun Collection, Columbia University (box 2, folder 87–88).
- 35 Jacques Barzun to Peter Bloom (September 9, 2003).
- 36 Keylor, "How They Advertised France," 359.
- 37 Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 2:459.

- 38 Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* (1595), book 1, chapter 26. Jacques Barzun's childhood flute is preserved in the Jacques Barzun Collection at Columbia University.
- 39 Apollinaire, "L'Antitradition futuriste" (consulted November 13, 2020).
- 40 Catteau, *Hector Berlioz ou la philosophie artiste*, 2:229.
- 41 Barzun, "Toward a Fateful Serenity," in *A Jacques Barzun Reader*, 7.
- 42 Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 2:312–320.
- 43 Barzun, 2:320.
- 44 Barzun, "The Music in the Music," 11.
- 45 Watt, "Jacques Barzun's *Berlioz*."
- 46 Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 2:325–236.
- 47 Cairns, *Berlioz*.
- 48 Cairns, "Reflections," 81.
- 49 Cairns, *Berlioz*, 2 vols., translated by Dennis Collins (Paris: Fayard, 2002).
- 50 *Mémoires*, 515.
- 51 *Annales des mines*, 2^e série (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1827), 2:510.
- 52 See *NBE* 17:171.
- 53 Cairns, *Berlioz*, 1:365.
- 54 The year 2003 saw the appearance of *NBE* 24 and *NBE* 26; *CG* 8; *CM* 4; the *Dictionnaire Berlioz*; *L'Herne Berlioz*; *Berlioz: La Voix du romantisme*, ed. Massip and Reynaud; and the papers from the first two of the five international conferences organized by the Comité International Hector Berlioz: Northampton, MA, 2000 (*Berlioz: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Bloom); and Bayreuth, 2001 (*Berlioz, Wagner und die Deutschen*, ed. Döhring et al.). The papers of the three subsequent conferences appeared later: London, 2002 (*The Musical Voyager: Berlioz in Europe*, ed. Charlton and Ellis); Grenoble, 2003 (*Hector Berlioz: Regards sur un Dauphinois fantastique*, ed. Ramaut); and Paris, 2003 (*Berlioz: Textes et contextes*, ed. Fauquet et al.).
- 55 *The Cambridge Berlioz Encyclopedia*, ed. Rushton; *Hector Berlioz 1869–2019: 150 ans de passions*, ed. Ramaut and Reibel.
- 56 Saint-Saëns to Henri Expert (June 24, 1921), quoted by Gérard, "Saint-Saëns musician-musicologue," 559.
- 57 The rules are spelled out in *L'Écho du Midi* (December 9, 1822): 3.
- 58 Pascal Beyls to Peter Bloom (April 14 and November 9, 2020).
- 59 Cairns, *Berlioz*, 1:438; *CG* 1:406–410.
- 60 *CG* 7:59.
- 61 See Beyls and Bloom, "Berlioz's 'Natural' Son," 21–30.
- 62 See Beyls, "Un imposteur."
- 63 Pierre Véron, in *Le Monde illustré* (March 13, 1969).
- 64 Rushton, *Musical Language of Berlioz*; Rushton, *Music of Berlioz*; Bartoli, "développement symphonique," "forme," "harmonie," "modalité," "symphonie," "thèmes symphoniques," "variation," etc., in *Dictionnaire Berlioz*.

- 65 Everist, review of *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, 125.
- 66 Cairns, *Berlioz*, vol. 1, chapter 1; Messina, “À propos de l’enfance d’Hector.”

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