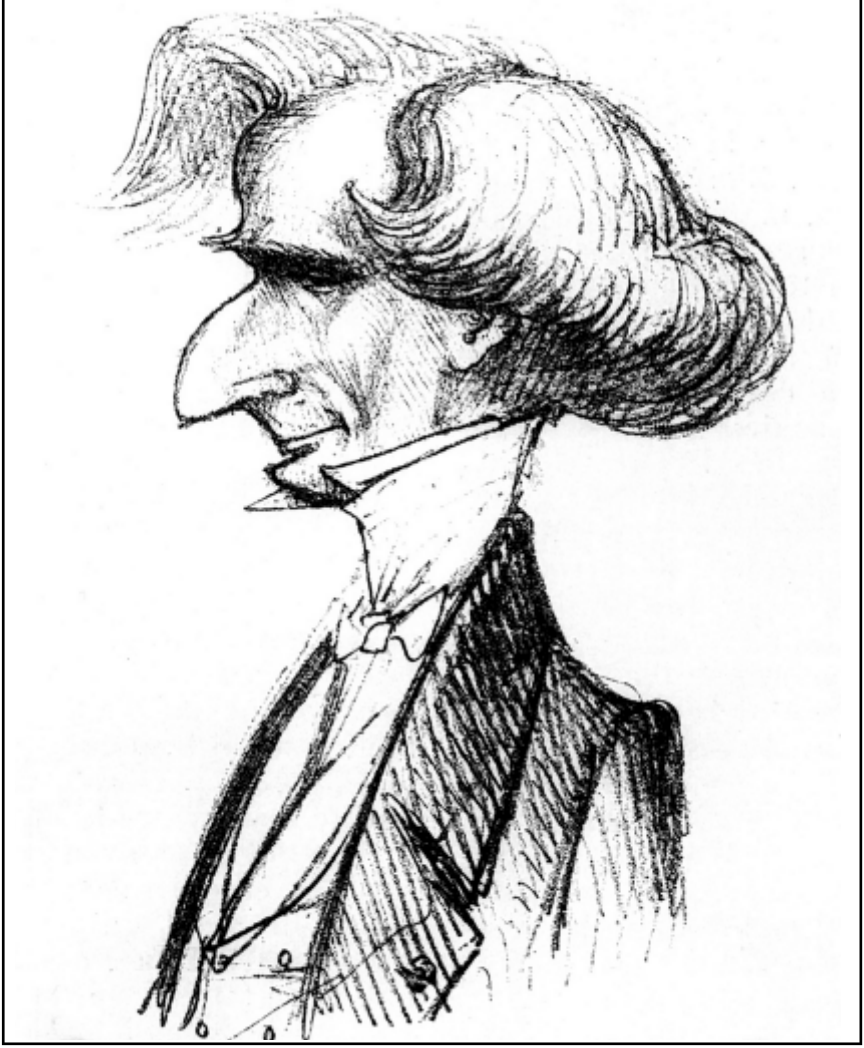

THE
BERLIOZ SOCIETY

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les grotesques dissertations des feuilletonistes, les chaleureuses démonstrations de mes amis, les invectives de mes ennemis, et le monde musical et même la musique. - - - - -

~~Cette institution~~ a eu sans doute, dans le principe, un but d'utilité pour l'art et les artistes. Il ne m'appartient pas de juger jusqu'à quel point les intentions du fondateur ont été remplies à l'égard des peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs et architectes; quant aux musiciens, le voyage d'Italie, favorable au développement de leur imagination par le trésor de poésie que la nature, l'art et les souvenirs, étalent à l'envi sous leurs pas, est au moins inutile sous le rapport des études spéciales qu'ils y peuvent faire. Mais le fait ressortira plus évident du tableau fidèle de la vie que mènent à Rome les artistes français. Avant de s'y rendre, les cinq ou six nouveaux lauréats se réunissent pour combiner ensemble les arrangements du grand voyage qui se fait d'ordinaire en commun. Un *voiturin* se charge, moyennant une somme assez modique, de faire parvenir en Italie sa cargaison de grands hommes, en les entassant dans une lourde cariole, ni plus ni moins que des bourgeois du Marais. Comme il ne change jamais de chevaux, il lui faut beaucoup de temps pour traverser la France, passer les Alpes, et parvenir dans les Etats-Romains; mais ce voyage à petites journées doit être fécond en incidents pour une demi-douzaine de jeunes voyageurs dont l'esprit, à cette époque, est fort loin d'être tourné à la mélancolie. Si j'en parle sous la forme dubitative, c'est que je ne l'ai pas fait ~~ainsi moi-même~~. Diverses circonstances me retinrent à Paris après la cérémonie auguste de mon couronnement, jusqu'au milieu de Janvier. Enfin, après être allé passer quelques semaines à la Côte St André, où mes parents tout fiers de la palme académique que je venais d'obtenir, me firent le meilleur accueil, je m'acheminai vers l'Italie seul et assez triste.

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Editorial

We are pleased to print, in this issue of the Bulletin, Olivier Feignier's richly researched, authoritative survey of Byron's impact on French culture. This encyclopaedic survivor from the 2016 Members' Weekend is preceded by three of the talks from the 2017 Weekend, when the theme was Berlioz and Italy: David Cairns's "Berlioz and Italy, 1823-30", Julian Rushton's "Berlioz's response to Italy and Italian music of his time", and Paul Banks's "Byron, Berlioz and *Harold*".

Two of the cover illustrations reflect the Weekend's topic. On the back cover is a page from the autograph full score of *Béatrice et Bénédict* (Bibliothèque Nationale), and on the inside front cover a page from Chapter 31 of the autograph *Memoirs*, where Berlioz tells of his (unwilling) departure for Italy and comments on the wisdom/unwisdom of sending composers there. *The Memoirs* were serialised in *Le Monde illustré* in 1858 and 1859, but with certain passages crossed out (as in the page shown here), to indicate that they were not to appear in the journal. (Berlioz left them legible so that the printer of the *Memoirs* would have no trouble reading them.) This one has been kindly provided by Peter Bloom, whose new edition of Berlioz's autobiography is due to appear in 2019. The cover illustration shows the caricature drawn by the aptly named Constant Mocquard, Louis Napoleon's private secretary, in the late 1850s or early 1860s.

As always, grateful thanks to our treasured designer Bryan Sherwood.

Berlioz and Italy, 1823-1830

David Cairns

Considering the central importance of Italy to Berlioz's career, and to his life, it's extraordinary to think that if he had got his way he would never have gone there. To his sixteen months in Rome, in the Roman Campagna and the foothills of the Abruzzi, and in Naples, we owe not only his second symphony, *Harold in Italy*, and also the complete rewriting of the *Scène aux champs* in his first symphony, but so much else – almost, you might say, two thirds of his remaining output of compositions.

Several of his major works show profound Italian influences. In his own words, his third symphony, *Romeo and Juliet*, ripened under the blue skies of Italy. The long, slow but inevitable germination of his culminating masterpiece, *The Trojans*, was nurtured by his guitar-accompanied improvisations in the Virgilian countryside and by his visit to Naples. Here are his own words, from chapter 37 of the *Memoirs:*

> Sometimes, when I had my guitar with me instead of my gun, I would station myself in the midst of a landscape in harmony with my mood, and some passage from the *Aeneid*, dormant in my memory since childhood, would come back to me, set off by the character of the country into which I had wandered. Then, improvising a strange recitative to stranger harmonies, I would sing of Pallas's death and the despair of the good Evander, the young warrior's funeral procession, his horse Aethon unharnessed and with flowing mane and great tears following the body, the terror of good King Latinus, the siege of Latium, whose dust I trod, Amata's sad end and the cruel death of Lavinia's noble lover. […] I wept for poor Turnus, robbed by the hypocrite Aeneas of kingdom, mistress and life; I wept for the beautiful and pathetic Lavinia, forced to wed an unknown brigand with her lover's blood still fresh upon him. I longed for those poetic days when the heroes, sons of the gods, walked the earth in glittering armour, casting delicate javelins, their points set in a ring of gleaming gold. Quitting the past for the present, I wept for my own private disappointments, my uncertain future, my interrupted career; until, collapsing amid this maelstrom of poetry, and murmuring snatches of Shakespeare, Virgil and Dante – *Nessun maggior dolore*… c*he ricordarsi*… Oh poor Ophelia… Good night, sweet ladies… *Vitaque cum gemitu… fugit indignata…sub umbras* – I fell asleep.

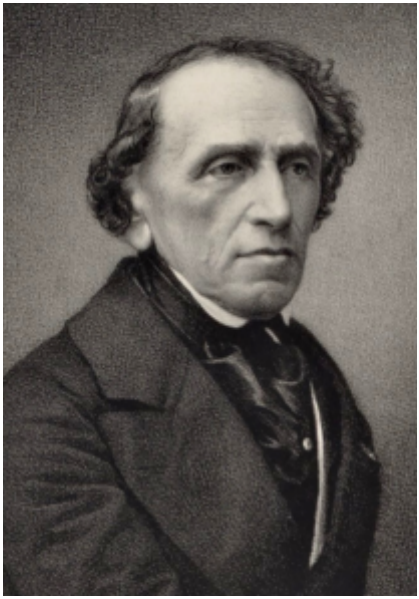
Even the negative aspects of his Italian experiences played a crucial part in the genesis of three other scores. *Benvenuto Cellini* - not only the carnival scene but the whole work - is his response to the degradation of the modern carnival and the pitifully low state of Italian musical culture, against which he sets his vision of the vitality and central importance of art in the Italy of the Renaissance. His conception of religious music as the "soul" of the great buildings which house it receives fresh impetus from discovering that the mighty interior of St Peter's in Rome is served by a choir of 18 voices and an organ on wheels. Both the Grande Messe des Morts and the Te Deum may be seen, in an important sense, as his riposte to that indignity.

Yet how much of this rich treasure would we possess if he had succeeded in his attempt to be dispensed from the obligatory period in Italy, incumbent on all winners of the Prix de Rome? Berlioz campaigned vigorously throughout the autumn of 1830 to be given exemption and to be allowed to draw his Prix de Rome scholarship in Paris. It was not completely unprecedented – the year before, exemption had been granted on compassionate grounds to a painter called Vauchelet. Encouraged by this, Berlioz enlisted the aid of the powerful Dauphinois family of Périer, who had become prominent under the new regime of Louis-Philippe, and also the Comte d'Argout, a peer of the realm and another Dauphinois (Berlioz's lawyer uncle, Victor, wrote him a letter of introduction to the Count). He got his doctor to testify that his tendency to nervous disorders risked being exacerbated by the hot climate of Rome. And he persuaded Spontini, Meyerbeer, Le Sueur and Fétis to send testimonials to the Minister in favour of his staying in Paris. As Fétis wrote, "this young artist merits your benevolence by reason of the boldness of the work on which he is engaged for the advancement of his art"; he would "employ the time more usefully in France than in Italy".

Berlioz had very good reasons for not wanting to leave Paris at that moment in his life. He had just composed the Fantastic Symphony, there was a chance of an opera commission, and he was unofficially engaged to the enchanting pianist Camille Moke and needed to be present to watch over his interests, knowing that Camille's mother was less than enthusiastic about the match. But there was another powerful motivation for his reluctance to go to Italy: his profound antipathy to contemporary Italian music.

Here I hope you'll allow me to digress and talk about another of Berlioz's fellow- Dauphinois, the great writer Stendhal. Actually, as I shall show, it's not really a digression. Though Berlioz affected to despise him, there were links, and affinities, between them. The two families had

Gaspare Luigi Pacifico Spontini



Giacomo Meyerbeer

Jean-François Le Sueur

François-Joseph Fétis

friends in common. Stendhal's grandfather Dr Gagnon was a leading figure in Grenoble when Berlioz's father began to study medicine. When Dr Gagnon and his granddaughter Pauline, Stendhal's sister, went to visit Berlioz's grandfather Nicolas Marmion at Meylan, Marmion read out a poem he had written in honour of Dr Gagnon, who, Pauline says, having always considered Marmion an absolute dolt, began to revise his opinion of him.

Stendhal, twenty years older than Berlioz, seems at times almost to be anticipating him. They both dislike Grenoble, regarding it as a symbol of bourgeois philistinism and the sordid pursuit of material gain. When Berlioz, staying in Grenoble after his return from Italy, complains in a letter to Madame Vernet in Rome about the condescension and complacency of the inhabitants – "to hear them talk of Byron, Goethe or Beethoven you would think it was some tailor or bootmaker of slightly more than common ability. Nothing is good enough for them – never any enthusiasm, any respect" – he could be echoing Stendhal. Again, what Stendhal called his "espagnolisme", the youthful cult of heroism and beauty regardless of calculation of personal advantage (which he never outgrew), was shared by Berlioz too. When Stendhal says that it's very rare in Dauphiné for a bourgeois to have a well-stocked library – why put capital into objects as unproductive as books? – it's as if he is making an exception of Dr Berlioz, just as, when he accuses orthodox education in France of preventing the growth of imagination, it's as if he's predicting Berlioz, who by being educated at home escapes that fatal moulding and inhibiting process. Finally, Stendhal's description of "le type Dauphinois", the characteristics peculiar to the region - that combination of passion and caution, timidity and willpower – could be a description of Berlioz. Or take Stendhal on the Romantic cult of the Actress: "How can one help projecting feelings of warmth and affection onto the physiognomy of a well-favoured actress whom one watches […] for the space of a couple of hours expressing the loftiest sentiments, and whom one knows only thus and not in any other way?" That is Berlioz and Harriet Smithson in the autumn of 1827, to a t.

Not long before, Stendhal had republished, in expanded form, his celebrated pamphlet *Racine et Shakespeare*, in which he praises Shakespeare's poetry of contrast, singling out the passage in *Macbeth* where Banquo observes a martin nesting above the gateway of Macbeth's castle where Duncan will soon be murdered. Berlioz, voracious reader that he was, was surely familiar with it. Why then such antipathy to the author? It's possible there was some personal, family reason, though so far as I know there's no record of any. But in any case, in Berlioz's eyes there was

Stendhal
by Olof Johan Södermark, 1840

ample reason for him to write of Stendhal as he does.– more than enough, in fact – in the one word "Rossini". Here he is in chapter 36 of the *Memoirs*, where he is letting himself go on the squalor of the contemporary Roman carnival: "Who's that potbellied little man with the mischievous smile, trying to look solemn?" Then, in a scathing footnote: "M. Beile or Bayle or Baile, who wrote a life of Rossini under the name of Stendhal, full of the most tiresome nonsense about music, for which he fancied he had a feeling".

Stendhal certainly had a feeling for music. But his exaltation of Rossini was fatal. The book's first sentence was enough to damn him: "Since the death of Napoleon another man has arisen who is talked of day in and day out in Moscow as in Naples, in London as in Vienna, in Calcutta as in Paris. The fame of this man knows no bounds but those of the civilised world, and he is not 32 years of age".

For Berlioz that was simply not to be borne. He had arrived in Paris in late 1821, already predisposed to be devoted to Gluck, had had the initiation of *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Opéra, had devoured the full scores of the other Gluck operas in the Conservatoire library, had discovered and been overwhelmed by Spontini and had sung his music in the hospital dissecting room, had steeped himself in French classical opera, had recognised Gluck and Spontini as the summit of dramatic music, as the true gods. Then less than two years later, in 1823, a new pagan deity had come and taken Paris by storm. Even sober-minded judges spoke of Rossini as a kind of combination of Titian and Michelangelo. A dozen of his operas were in the repertory of the Théâtre-Italien. The conqueror himself came to Paris and was feted at a huge banquet at the Conservatoire, where the toast was raised to the man "whose fiery genius has blazed a new trail in the theatrical profession and signalised a new era in the art of music". Gluck, it went without saying, was now completely passé, his works just plainchant compared with this miraculous new music.

How could the 19-year-old Berlioz react other than he did? The idea of planting a mine under the Théâtre-Italien and blowing it up with its entire congregation of *dilettanti* might have to be abandoned as impractical, but at least he could carry on the fight in print. Here is a sample of his opening salvo in the new arts daily, *Le Corsaire*: "Come on! Who could seriously deny that all Rossini's operas put together could not stand comparison with a single line of recitative by Gluck?" It's like Hugo Wolf claiming that a single cymbal clash by Bruckner is worth more than all Brahms's symphonies put together.

Berlioz as I say was nineteen at the time. He will later admit that his

prejudices blinded him to Rossini's genius, and even to the charms of *The Barber of Seville*. In his 1852 *Evenings in the Orchestra*, the *Barber* is one of the works during which the musicians' usual conversation and exchange of stories are silenced, and the orchestra plays with total commitment and dedication "cet étincelant chef-d'oeuvre", that brilliant masterpiece, as Corsino-Berlioz calls it. In Italy he and his fellow Prix-de-Rome, the architect Antoine Etex, sing the lakeside duet from *William Tell,* "O Mathilde, idole de mon âme", as they plunge into the lake at Tivoli. And not long after his return to Paris, Berlioz writes, in 1834, a mainly eulogistic 4-part analysis of the opera in the *Gazette Musicale*. In a later article, on Imitation in Music, he singles out for praise the music which in *William Tell* suggests so skilfully the movement of oars on the Lake of Geneva.

He will also come to delight in *Le Comte Ory*. But in the 1820s Rossini is still the enemy. A letter of 1829 describes a conversation with the German musician Theodore Schloesser (who had arrived in Paris to study with Le Sueur), in which each imagines the other to be a thoroughgoing Rossinian but prevaricates out of politeness, so that neither of them reveals what he feels. "What do you think of *Le Comte Ory*?", Berlioz asks eventually, after they've spent a quarter of an hour stalking round the subject. " By Jove, it's not…" answers Schloesser." Fabulous, you mean?" "On the contrary, it's vile." "So you're not a Rossinian?" "Me? God forbid! How could an admirer of Weber and Spontini possibly be one? It's your being one that astonishes me, if you'll forgive my saying so". "Well – if Rossini had to make do with me for a partisan… What on earth gave you that idea?" "At that", Berlioz goes on, "we collapsed in laughter at our wary conversational manoeuvrings". After this their talk takes wing. Schloesser proves to be an admirer of Shakespeare (whom he can read in the original), and to have known Weber well. Berlioz and he spend several hours at the piano, introducing Le Sueur to music from *Freischütz*, *Oberon* and *Euryanthe*, which they perform by heart, Schloesser accompanying and singing in German, Berlioz singing everything that has been translated into French. But Rossini!

With time and reflection Berlioz's attitude relaxes and changes. He comes to realise what a gem *Le Comte Ory* really is. His taste broadens, he becomes less extreme and violent in his sympathies. I'm not going to trespass on Julian Rushton's preserves, and will leave Berlioz in France, in Marseille, on the eve of embarking for Italy. Another digression: in Marseille he sees Grétry's opera *Le Tableau parlant* and finds it as feeble as the composer's *Panurge* and *Le Caravan du Caire*, which he and his fellow-Gluckists had scorned when they were given at the Opéra,

Gioachino Antonio Rossini
Photograph by Étienne Carjat, 1865

especially when they were added to the bill at the last minute, in place of the advertised Gluck or Spontini – at which point "we would rise in a body and leave the theatre, swearing like marauding soldiers who discover water in what they had taken to be brandy casks, and including in our general execration the composer of the work substituted, the management who had inflicted it on the public, and the government which allowed it to be performed". In the same spirit, *Le Tableau parlant* was a product of "the ancient French provincial muse, whose bespectacled nose reeks of snuff at ten paces".

Yet before long Grétry will actually feature in Berlioz's concerts, and in 1856 he will describe his *Richard Coeur de Lion* as "delicious", a work of a "fineness, truthfulness, and inventiveness and good sense that are captivating", and will say how much he prefers "those simple unassuming orchestral scores with holes in the elbows of their coats, and even in the seats of their pants, to those great loud mountebanks covered in cheap brass finery who bawl from the height of their soap boxes, 'Roll up, gentlemen, every place is taken, et cetera'".

If not quite to the same extent, his view of Rossini mellows. In the 1820s it was all or nothing. Later, it's not modern Italian music per se that he objects to but its abuses. (In Italy he will hear far worse – the imitators of Rossini and the imitators of the imitators.) Berlioz's anti-Rossinian prejudice, even at its most extreme, is not mere ignorance. As a student he frequents the Théâtre-Italien as well as the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique, and hears *La gazza ladra*, *Otello*, *Tancredi* and *Mosè in Egitto*. He can't help being occasionally impressed. It's the anti-dramatic nonsenses, as he sees them, the cynicism and perfunctoriness in Rossini that offend him to the soul – he would have agreed with Shaw, who said *William Tell* owed its quality to having been written for the Paris Opéra, where "the public had been educated by Gluck to expect at least a show of seriousness. Rossini rose to the occasion as a matter of business, just as he would have sunk to it had the commission come from Venice".

What Berlioz couldn't bear, what he outraged the Parisian *dilettanti* by attacking in print, was when Rossini betrayed a lack of seriousness, lapsing from genuine expressiveness into empty decoration, or his endlessly repeating a single stereotyped cadence formula, the brutalising din of cymbals and bass drums used in invariable tandem to whip up physical excitement, the mania for vocal display which – and this was a serious charge against the Italian style in general – influenced singers and led them to disfigure the vocal line in his beloved French operas with ornaments in the Italian mode.

The stereotyped cadence formula is parodied in the ophicleide solo in

the carnival scene in *Benvenuto Cellini*, set in competition against the beautiful cor anglais and harp music. And of course it's the ophicleide solo which wins the prize.

Music example 1:
Benvenuto Cellini, music competion

As for the mania for vocal display in Rossini's music, Berlioz's friend the dramatist Ernest Legouvé recalled him at a performance of *Otello*, reacting against the passage where Desdemona's music, after *Se il padre m'abandonnà,* plummets from passionate emotion into empty decoration. Legouvé confesses he "found her scales and roullades very stirring, but they infuriated [Berlioz]. At the end of the act he leaned over and murmured in my ear, in a voice as expressive as the melody itself, 'If my father renounces me, if my father renounces me' … Then, with a sudden burst of sardonic laughter, and faithfully reproducing the coloratura of the score, 'I don't give a damn, I don't give a damn, I don't give a damn!'".

It was his betrayal of his genius that Berlioz couldn't forgive Rossini: he had been given genius but had misused it. The lesser talents didn't have any genius to betray. Reviewing an *Ernani*, at the Théâtre-Italien, by the young Italian composer Vincenzo Gabussi in 1834, Berlioz finds no trace of the passions of Victor Hugo's play – this is "no more *Ernani* than I am the Pope". He goes on: "The physiognomy of the Italian drama is such that it might just as well be called Francesco or Pietro. And the music shares this fault. It wants distinctive colour. The cavatinas are tailored to the pattern of every other example of the kind. The ritornellos have the form used by every other maestro of the Italian school: the same modulation appears exactly at the point where custom decrees it should appear, the tunes have sisters and cousins in every corner of the globe".

Hardly anything that Berlioz heard in his sixteen months in Italy disposed him to think differently. As before, I won't trespass on Julian's territory, except to quote what Berlioz said about the real theatres he enjoyed frequenting in Italy – not the Fondo, the Valle or the Pergola, but the ancient Roman ruins where "the evening breeze playing along the deserted tiers sings airs more expressive than Coccia, Schiafogatti, Focolo or Vaccai himself could hope to achieve". Instead, if you'll allow me, I'll end by reading the passage in the *Memoirs* where Berlioz sums up what he feels about Italian musical culture.[1] After describing a visit to the

1. The passage, originally written for *Italie pittoresque* (1834), was included thirty years later in the *Memoirs*, though by that time Italian musical culture had been largely transformed by Verdi.

Cannobiana in Milan, where the audience is full of people talking in normal voices, he adds that apparently the Italians do sometimes listen – "I've been assured by several people that it is so".

> The fact remains that music to the Milanese, as to the Neapolitans, the Romans, the Florentines and the Genoese, means arias, duets, trios, well sung; anything beyond that provokes only aversion or indifference. It may be that such antipathies are mere prejudice, due above all to the feebleness of their orchestras and choruses, which prevents them from appreciating any great music outside the narrow circuit they have ploughed so long. It may also be that they are capable to some extent of rising to the challenge of genius, provided the composer is careful not to disturb entrenched habits of mind too rudely. The striking success of *William Tell* in Florence supports this view; even the sublime *Vestale* of Spontini had a series of brilliantly successful performances in Naples twenty-five years ago. Again, if you observe people in towns under Austrian domination, you will see them flock to hear a military band and listen avidly to its rich German harmonies, so unlike the pale cavatinas they are normally fed on. Nevertheless, in general there is no denying that the Italians as a nation appreciate music solely for its physical effect and are alive only to what is on the surface.
>
> Of all the nations of Europe, I am strongly inclined to think them the most impervious to the evocative, poetic side of music, as well as to any conception at all lofty and out of the common run. Music for the Italians is a sensual pleasure and nothing more. For this noble expression of the mind they have hardly more respect than for the art of cooking. They want a score that, like a plate of macaroni, can be assimilated immediately without their having to think about it or even to pay attention to it.
>
> We French, so paltry and mean-minded in musical matters, are as capable as the Italians of roaring our heads off at the trill or chromatic run of a fashionable *cantatrice*, while a fine dramatic chorus or an accompanied recitative in the grandest style passes us by; but at least we listen (and if we don't understand the composer's ideas, it is *never* our fault). The behaviour of audiences beyond the Alps is so humiliating to art and to artists that I confess I would as soon sell pepper and cinnamon in a grocer's shop in the rue St Denis as write for the Italians. Add that they are bigoted and reactionary to a degree no longer known even at the Academy, and that the slightest innovation in melody, harmony, rhythm or orchestration throws them into a fury, to the point that when Rossini's *Barber of*

Seville first appeared, Italian though it is through and through, the Roman *dilettanti* were ready to lynch the insolent young composer for presuming to go beyond Paisiello.

But what finally makes all hope of improvement vain, and forces one to the conclusion that the peculiar musical tastes of the Italians are a natural and immutable consequence of the national physiology, is their exclusive appetite for everything that dances and is gay and brilliant, in defiance of all the diverse passions by which the characters are moved, in defiance of time and place – in a word, in defiance of sense. Their music is always laughing; and if the composer, forgetting himself so far as to let the drama dictate the style, becomes sensible for an instant, he quickly returns to the *gruppetti* and trills and melodic trivialities, vocal and orchestral, of the approved style – the effect of which, following immediately on a few bars of true expression, is to give to *opera seria* an irresistible air of burlesque.

I could quote some famous examples; but, simply arguing in general terms and leaving aside all higher aesthetic questions, where but in Italy did those conventional, stereotyped formulas of composition originate which have been adopted by more than one French composer, and which Cherubini and Spontini alone among their fellow- countrymen have resisted, although the German school is quite uncorrupted by them? Would a nation with any real feeling for musical expression happily accept the style of ensemble-writing in which four characters, moved in totally opposing ways, can in turn declare their passions to an identical phrase, the same tune doing duty for "Oh thou whom I adore," "What terror chills my blood", "My heart with pleasure beats", and "With rage I am consumed"? There are indeed people who seriously believe music to be a language of such vagueness that the vocabulary of rage will do as well for fear, joy and love. This only proves that they are devoid of that faculty which to others makes the expressive variety of music a fact as incontrovertible as the existence of the sun. The question, however, has been endlessly debated and I must have done with it. I will add only this. Having given the Italian musical sensibility a long and unbiased scrutiny, I conclude that their composers write as they do because the natural taste of the public wills it, with the rider that the natural taste of the composers shows every sign of sympathising. These tendencies were already apparent in the time of Pergolesi. […] Not even Gluck, with all his genius and the prodigious success of *Orfeo* behind him, was able to get the

better of them. They are actively supported by the singers; and certain composers have in turn fostered them in the public. In short, such qualities are as native to the Italians and as indestructible as the passion for vaudeville to the French.

Berlioz then goes on to compare the street singing he heard in Turin with that of Paris, and then the Litany of the Virgin as sung in Tivoli and its much more sensitive and gentle version sung by the people of Dauphiné – "who on the contrary I believe to be entirely innocent in all things connected with the art of music". He concludes as follows:

> What are undoubtedly more common in Italy than anywhere else are good voices, voices that are not only full and incisive but agile and flexible as well. But the prevalence of voices lending themselves naturally to vocalisation and the public's instinctive love of glitter and display react on each other. Hence the mania for *fiorituri* which debases the finest melodies; hence those convenient vocal formulas which make all Italian phrases sound alike; hence that eternal device of the final cadence, which leaves the singer free to embroider at will but maddens many listeners by its perfunctoriness and dreadful inevitability; hence the constant tendency to break into the buffo style which lurks even in the tenderest scenes of pathos; hence, in short, all those abuses which have made of melody, harmony, tempo, rhythm, orchestration, modulation, plot, staging, poetry, the poet, and the composer the abject slaves and playthings of the singer.

One further point: the passage just quoted originally appeared in 1834, in a publication called *Italie pittoresque*. But in the intervening two years, immediately after his return to Paris, what he writes about the insistence on sending winners of the Rome prize to Italy is more nuanced. It may not (he says) benefit the young composer, given the degradation of Italian musical life; but on anyone with keen sensibilities the Italian countryside – what he calls "L'Italie sauvage", wild Italy – and the ancient buildings cannot fail to have a profound and inspiring effect.

That degree of detachment is typical of Berlioz. Just as he continued to think it a bad principle for non-musicians to be on the judging panel for composers competing to win the Prix the Rome – even though it was thanks to the painters and engravers and architects that he won second prize in 1828 and not to the composers - so he still believed it stupid to send composers to Rome before they went to Germany, even though he

himself got so much out of the experience.

What he got, in addition to a blessed interval of relaxation and fruitful idleness and a much-needed holiday from his stressful life in Paris, I summarised at the beginning of this talk. His writings reveal palpably how much he enjoyed it. The first piece of journalism in which he is completely himself is the *Letter from an Enthusiast on the Condition of Music in Italy,* written in Rome, and the accounts of his Italian wanderings have a special zest and freshness. We can but rejoice that, despite all his strenuous efforts to get out of going, he did go to Italy.

To end, a little music from the opera that he and his friend Theodore Schloesser agreed was "vile" but whose delights he came to recognise.

Musical example 2:
Le Comte Ory, "A la faveur de cette nuit obscure"

Berlioz's response to Italy and Italian music of his time

Julian Rushton

Early reception of Berlioz in Paris sometimes implied that he was a displaced German – if for no other reason than that he didn't align himself with fashionable Italian music. He might not have minded the implicit association with Gluck, whose French enemies called him "German" as if that were sufficient condemnation. Undoubtedly the influence of German music was strong; as Rainer Schmusch writes: "Berlioz discovered and developed his own voice through the assimilation of 'German' composers: Gluck, then Weber, finally Beethoven. In these […] he recognised his own 'aesthetic idealism', which ascribed to music a special ethos and an intrinsic value that raised it above mere entertainment" (*The Cambridge Berlioz Encyclopedia*, hereafter *CBE*, p. 136). But this picture is far from complete. Berlioz was, after all, French; his earliest musical experiences, before he encountered Weber, never mind Beethoven, belonged to French culture, in the provinces and then in Paris where Gluck had been assimilated along with Italians such as Salieri. And, again before those German encounters, Berlioz had come across modern Italian music, which in practice meant Rossini.

Thus it was that Italian, as well as German and French, music played its part in the complex language of the maturing and mature Berlioz, even before the short stay in Italy that so profoundly affected the rest of his career.[1]

French composers' experiences in Italy

Besides Berlioz's own account, we learn something of the atmosphere in the French Academy in the Villa Medici from the memoirs of Jules Massenet.[2] In 1863, terrified of hearing the verdict of the Prix de Rome judges, Massenet fled to the courtyard of the Louvre; but there was no escape. He saw approaching, arm in arm, three who barred his way: "My dear teacher, Ambroise Thomas, came to me and said: 'Embrace Berlioz! You owe him a great deal for your prize'. … I embraced Berlioz with indescribable emotion". Massenet goes on to discuss his journey to Rome and his reception there. Like Berlioz, and for similar reasons, he set out

1.The chronology of his Italian sojourn is laid out by Cécile Reynaud in the *Dictionnaire Berlioz* (Paris: Fayard, 2003, pp. 281–3). The principal source remains Berlioz's own account, published in feuilletons, in the *Voyage musicale* of 1844, and Chapters 32–43 of the *Memoirs*.

2.Jules Massenet, *Mes Souvenirs* (Paris, 1912); see *Mes Souvenirs et autres écrits*, ed. Jean-Christophe Branger (Librairie Philosophique J. VRIN, 2017).

Rome panorama from the Villa Medici

alone, rather than leaving Paris with his peers. Berlioz visited his family at La Côte-Saint-André before proceeding to Rome. Massenet went to Nice, to visit his father's grave, and to see his widowed mother. Unlike Berlioz, Massenet travelled overland, and he was not an object of suspicion to the police.

Before reaching Rome, Massenet met up with fellow-students, with whom he visited Milan and Verona – the "obligatory pilgrimage" to the supposed tomb of Juliet. For Massenet this was especially satisfying, as he was "a young man in love with love" (*amoureux d'amour*). Then Vicenza, Padua, Venice, Pisa, Florence … and on to Rome. He and his comrades took the rash decision to avoid the usual route into the city, unaware that fellow- students already in residence intended to meet them on the road. The two parties missed each other, and the senior students were not amused. There followed a series of practical jokes at the expense of the new recruits. Berlioz didn't suffer this indignity, but the atmosphere of camaraderie mingled with high spirits was probably much the same in 1864 as in 1831. On arrival at the Villa Medici, Berlioz records that, when addressed as 'tu', he responded with 'vous'. He is told 'on tutoie tout de suite ici' (*Memoirs*, Ch. 33). He continued this tutoiement with the

The Castel St Angelo

sculptor Jean de Bay (*Memoirs*, Ch. 42), and the architect Joseph-Louis Duc – though with few other people.

What was the value to Berlioz of his stay in Rome? Spontini, an Italian whom Berlioz admired almost without reservation, declared that the *Grande Messe des Morts* must have been influenced by artistic representations of the Last Judgement. But Berlioz denied being influenced by what he called conventional art – even, as Cellini puts it in the opera, if it's by Michelangelo himself. But the Villa Medici has, from its terrace, a panoramic view of the city, and Berlioz no doubt remembered the source of the cannon that marks the end of Carnival in *Benvenuto Cellini*, the Castel St Angelo. Otherwise, he found Rome frustrating, finding it impossible to compose there; and there was no music in Rome of the kind he craved hearing. When, away from Rome, he could compose, his subjects were not Italian. There are (unattributed) Italian words to the *Choeur d'Anges*, but they are based on St Luke's Gospel. In Nice, he composed overtures on British themes – *King Lear*, *Rob-Roy* – and in the Abruzzi he improvised *La Captive*, a song about a Spanish slave in Turkey. Yet much of Berlioz's later output connects with Italy: *Harold en Italie*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Béatrice et Bénédict*, are all set there. The idea of Italy also pervades *Les Troyens*: the statue of Hermes (Mercure) who calls "Italie" at the ominous ending of Act IV still stands (albeit in replica) at the rear of the Villa Medici, for which it was commissioned.

Giambologna's statue of Hermes

Berlioz and Italian composers

Berlioz's musical encounters with Italy took various forms, but primarily concerned Italian opera, the genre that threatened to take over the musical life of Paris, or at least its theatres. When he first came to Paris, he was confronted by "Rossini mania", and his first effort at criticism, to quote Benjamin Walton, "nailed his anti-Rossinian colours to the mast" (*CBE*, p. 176); "Who could deny that all the combined operas of Rossini do not bear comparison with a line of Gluck's recitative, three bars of melody by

Mozart or Spontini, or the least chorus of Lesueur!" (*Critique musicale*, hereafter *CM*, Vol. 1, p. 3). The adulation of Rossini, and the types who adored him, annoyed Berlioz more than the music itself. But as the words quoted make clear, he wasn't being entirely negative; he was taking up the cudgels on behalf of the composers he most admired, and Rossini was the whipping-boy. It is noticeable that Berlioz's literary enthusiasms don't seem to have included Rossini's great advocate, Stendhal. This lack of interest was reciprocated. As Emmanuel Reibel puts it: "Stendhal was a ferocious defender and expounder of Italian opera, and biographer of Rossini. His deep-rooted Italophilia is sufficient explanation for these two artists' lack of interest in each other" (*CBE*, p. 131).

In due course Berlioz came to depend on criticism as a source of income. This was a serious matter; he couldn't afford to alienate his likely readership by ferocious attacks on composers whom they liked. Whether from conviction or necessity, his views expressed in print appear less intemperate than they are in letters to his friends. If he wished to undermine Italian opera, it had to be by subtler means: faint praise, satire, and attacks on French opera composers whose language was essentially Italian. Frenchified Italian music went back to composers of Gluck's time, such as Philidor and Grétry, all of whom strove to join successful Italians on the stage of the Opéra. There they largely failed, but they were successful in opéra- comique, which is where several of Berlioz's French contemporaries followed them, notably Adolphe Adam. One of Berlioz's critical weapons was "cruel reticence" (as he calls it in *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, 18th evening). As Sarah Hibberd writes: "In 1850 Berlioz tried to avoid reviewing *Giralda,* before stating that 'Adam's score is facile to excess' (*CM* 7: 325, a feuilleton revised for *Soirées*, suppressing Adam's name and the opera's title)" (*CBE*, p. 2). But the allusion was unlikely to have been missed. Also in *Les Soirées* (9th Evening) the orchestra chatters through an opera and an "Italian ballet". But during this ballet, the orchestral musicians suddenly snatch up their instruments to play a single number, an Andante by one Burgmüller interpolated into the so-called Italian ballet. I suspect this is a covert allusion to a French ballet, *Giselle* – music by Adam.

Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* was premiered in 1829, and five years later Berlioz wrote about it, treating it with entire seriousness as a major and significant work (*CM* , Vol. 1, p. 401). He knew it intimately, as he had helped with proof-reading the full score in 1830. He also had some words of praise for Rossini's comedies, at least for *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Le Comte Ory*. Though at first he had called the latter "detestable", he changed his mind, as any good critic should be prepared to do (perhaps it

helped that Marie Recio took part in a revival). In the meantime, Rossini had praised *Huit Scènes de Faust*, and supported Berlioz's plea that he be allowed to stay in Paris, rather than be packed off to Rome.

After *Guillaume Tell*, Rossini wrote no more operas. As Walton puts it, Rossini's retirement "turned the force of Berlioz's disdain (occasionally tinged with envy) to a new generation. First came Bellini …" (*CBE*, p. 177). Berlioz's ire was first directed at Bellini's *Romeo and Juliet* opera (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), which he saw in Florence in 1831. But this fury is largely on behalf of his literary hero Shakespeare, though he also took exception to Romeo being sung by a woman. Berlioz disliked *La sonnambula*, seen in Florence a year later, writing to Ferdinand Hiller that it redoubled his aversion to Bellini and all he represented: "Quelle partition! Quelle pitié!" (*Correspondance Générale*, Vol. I, p. 550). Bellini's *I puritani* was written for the Italian theatre in Paris, and by then Berlioz was writing for the *Journal des Débats*. His review is more balanced, although he seems to have left before the end (*CM*, Vol. 2, p. 45). Yet it seems clear that Berlioz appreciated some aspects of Bellini. His long melodic spans can at least be associated with Bellini's, as with Gluck's. For example, in one aria of *I puritani* Bellini abandons his usual four-by-four phrasing, admittedly because the character singing, Elvira, is mad at the time.[3] The great aria "Casta diva" from *Norma* is also not entirely square in phrasing. Such pieces surely contributed to Berlioz's developing sense of *Fortspinnung*, which appear in instrumental as well as vocal melodies, for instance the long themes that occupy much of the first movement of a very non-Italian work, *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*.

Berlioz's obituary of Bellini (*CM* 2, pp. 293–5) courteously passed over perceived shortcomings, and warmly praised *La straniera* and *Norma*. For Berlioz, Bellini at least possessed artistic integrity. This could be another dig at Rossini, or perhaps Donizetti, who came to Paris in 1838 – a fateful year for Berlioz's own operatic ambitions, the year of *Benvenuto Cellini*. Donizetti seemed about to occupy "just about every lyric stage" in Paris; Berlioz perhaps agreed with his friend Heine, who compared Donizetti's fertility to that of a rabbit. When Berlioz reviewed *La Fille du régiment* in 1840 (*CM*, Vol. 4, pp. 253–60), he accused Donizetti of treating Paris as a conquered land, and he wondered how Italians would react if Adam took over the theatres of Florence. Yet Berlioz admired some things in Donizetti's operas, including *Dom Sébastien* of which he reviewed the Paris Opéra premiere in 1843 (*CM*

3. See my comments in *The Musical Language of Berlioz* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 152–3.

Vol. 5, pp. 379–89). As for *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Berlioz praised some of it in print, and conducted it in London, along with *Linda di Chamounix* (but conducting something does not imply unconditional admiration).

Donizetti wrote the title-role in *La Favorite* for Berlioz's Ascanio, Rosine Stoltz. It was rumoured that her prima-donna behaviour drove him mad. Bereft of Donizetti, who died in 1848, Paris looked to replace him. Saverio Mercadante had had no great success with *I briganti* in 1836, but then came Verdi. Berlioz was in London in November 1847, and so missed Verdi's first Paris venture, a revision of *I Lombardi* as *Jérusalem*. In 1855 Berlioz was generally positive about Verdi's new Grand Opéra *Les Vêpres siciliennes*. He praised its "penetrating intensity of melodic expression, sumptuous variety, and prudent economy of orchestration", and he rated it more highly than earlier Verdi known to him through Paris productions (*CM* Vol. 8, pp. 163–74). These included the translation of *Il trovatore* as *Le Trouvère*, and *Luisa Miller*, which appeared at the Italian theatre in 1852 and then at the Opéra (in French) in 1853. This gave Berlioz the idea for a feuilleton, in which he discoursed on the state of singing in French and Italian theatres.[4] But by the time Verdi produced his *Macbeth* in Paris, much revised, and his masterpiece of Grand Opéra, *Don Carlos*, Berlioz had retired from reviewing. He and Verdi seem to have respected each other. In a letter to Princess Wittgenstein Berlioz called Verdi "a gentleman [*galant homme*], very proud, inflexible" – and so by implication unlike Rossini (*CG* VI: 83–4). But Verdi, like Donizetti, came on the scene too late actually to influence Berlioz. Berlioz's style was well formed before Verdi wrote his first Italian opera, and before the first of his twenty-odd visits to Paris, many of them after Berlioz died. His last visit was to produce *Otello*, which at least for its subject would surely have interested Berlioz.

Other Italian experiences

Italian influence in Berlioz's larger works might be classed as emotion recollected in tranquillity, if one could call Berlioz's life in Paris tranquil. He knew the Roman setting of *Benvenuto Cellini* at first hand. He made no pilgrimage to Verona, but he surely experienced the beauty of Italian nights, and this may have helped inspire the love-scene in *Roméo et Juliette* and, much later, the duo-nocturne in *Béatrice et Bénédict*.

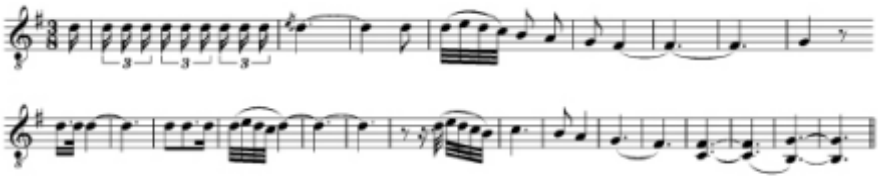
There was more to Italian music than opera. Italian composers also wrote instrumental pieces, songs and choruses, and there is a possible

4. Reprinted in *A travers chants* (Ed. Léon Guichard, Paris: Gründ, 1971, pp. 113–128; trans. in Elizabeth Csicsery-Ronay, *The Art of Music and Other* Essays, pp. 58–68).

connection here with one of Berlioz's loveliest works. In 1840, there was published in Paris an edition of a collection for voices and piano by Donizetti, in form rather like Berlioz's *Neuf Mélodies* (*Irlande*). Donizetti's work is called *Nuits d'été à Pausilippe* – Summer Nights at Posilippo. The Italian nights themselves no doubt contributed more than Donizetti to the quality of Berlioz's songs; but Gautier's poems are not all nocturnal, nor do they specifically evoke summer, so possibly Donizetti's title was a hint Berlioz picked up when naming his song-cycle *Les Nuits d'été*.

As a Prix de Rome laureate, Berlioz was supposed to absorb Italian culture, not just opera. Distressed by the musical poverty of Rome itself, not to mention Bellini's operas, he set off whenever he could to explore other parts of Italy. In his wanderings, and his journeys by coach, he seems to have found things of musical interest in the popular music he encountered, sacred and secular. Chapter 38 of the *Memoirs* makes clear that he heard music in the Subiaco region, and he notated Crispino's "Bon giorno, come state", later used in *Benvenuto Cellini* to an entirely different text: "Bienheureux les matelots, Ces enfants des flots". Perhaps Berlioz imagined Cellini's assistants to be countrymen who had come to Rome to get a better life, and instead had to labour in a foundry, envying sailors, despite the dangers of the sea. Ex. 1 shows the Crispino notation and the opera version.

Example 1



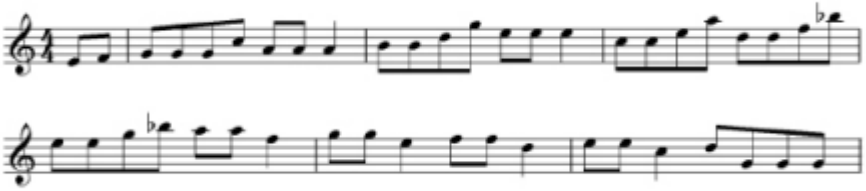
Further evidence of Berlioz's interest in folk music emerged with the rediscovery of his one surviving sketchbook, the so-called *Carnet d'esquisses*.[5] This continued in occasional use to 1836, and includes sketches for *Benvenuto Cellini*, so not everything belongs to Berlioz's time in Italy. Other jottings were used in completed works, including part of the finale of *Harold in Italy*, originally intended for the Bonapartist

5. The notebook was commented on by Julien Tiersot in *Berlioziana*, but then disappeared from view. When rediscovered it was transcribed and published by D. Kern Holoman, "The Berlioz Sketchbook Recovered" (*19th-Century Music* VII/3 (April 1984), 282–317).

symphony *Le Retour de l'armée d'Italie*. The contents are not only musical; there are notes about travel, expenditure, the draft of an article, and a poem by Victor Hugo. Berlioz began setting this (*Dans l'alcove sombre*); the fragment is reproduced in NBE Vol. 21.

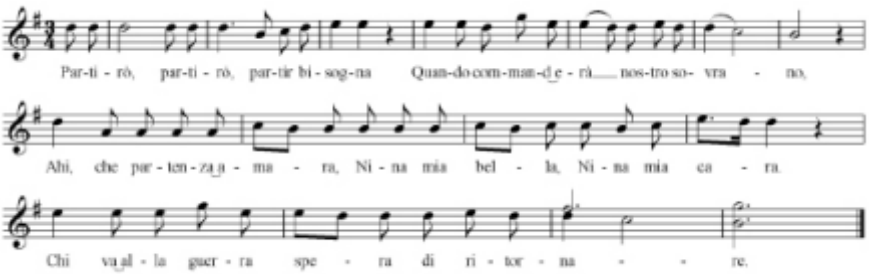
Among what seem to be the earlier notations in the *Carnet d'esquisses* are musical jottings that were not developed or recycled in later works. These I suggest are notations of music heard in the street, or in the hills; perhaps through a carriage window, perhaps on a perambulation. One of these is a cheeky looking tune, without words, perhaps because Berlioz couldn't make them out, or perhaps because the music was instrumental (Ex. 2).

Example 2



There is also a song to Italian words, the farewell of a soldier to his beloved: "Partirò, partir bisogna": "I'm leaving, I must leave when our sovereign commands. Ah, what bitter parting, my lovely Nina, my dear Nina. He who's off to war hopes to return." (Ex. 3)

Example 3



Neither of these pieces sounds at all like Berlioz, even as notations intended for later use. The words don't seem Berliozian, either. Although *Partirò* appears in Vol. 21 of the NBE as if it were by Berlioz, I suppose it to be a popular song. Note the addition of a second voice at the end, like

a pair of singers (or chorus) dividing at the cadence; this is typical of spontaneous part-singing, and Berlioz remembered it in "Bienheureux les matelots" (see Ex. 1).[6]

In the next section of the *Memoirs* (Ch. 39) Berlioz wrote: "In Rome, I was struck by one type of music only, and that (I'm inclined to think) is a relic of antiquity". This was the music of bagpipers, the *pifferari* (the word means the players, not the instruments). They came down from the mountains, armed with bagpipes and *pifferi* (a kind of oboe, Berlioz tells us), to play before statues of the Madonna. In 1844 Berlioz composed three pieces for his friend Alexandre's Orgue-Mélodium. They were published, alongside pieces by Adam and one by Meyerbeer, to advertise this new instrument, which is a species of harmonium. The first is *Sérénade agreste à la Madone sur le thème des pifferari romains*: "Rustic Serenade to the Madonna on tunes from Roman bagpipers". It is based on two popular melodies that Berlioz heard in the country near Rome.[7] After an opening flourish, a gentle melody (its origin a piece of sacred music) unfolds over a gently rocking accompaniment. The second section is a lively Allegro, complete with bagpipe drone, based on a popular tune once used by Domenico Scarlatti. This faster section closes with what music theory has termed a "Neapolitan" inflection, flattening the second scale-degree.[8] Before this, Berlioz had imitated the music of *pifferi* in the third movement of *Harold in Italy* – the serenade of the mountaineer. David Munrow, in one of his "Pied Piper" programmes for young listeners to the BBC Music Programme (now Radio 3), included a recorded sample of Italian bagpipes. He then played the introductory bars of the "Shepherds' Farewell" from *L'Enfance du Christ*. They sounded remarkably similar.

Such examples are deliberately unsophisticated. In *Béatrice et Bénédict* Berlioz introduced a dance that is less directly imitated from folk music, the Siciliano. The Roman Carnival, like the finale of Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony, is a Saltarello, not much different from the Neapolitan Tarantella, a dance that became a popular genre, for instance in piano pieces by Berlioz's friends Stephen Heller and Camille Saint-Saëns.

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6. In my own youth, I recall noisy bus-rides from school in which the close of *Ilkley Moor* was expanded in just this way.

7.These are identified by Hugh Macdonald in NBE Vol. 21 (acknowledging the help of Jean-Pierre Bartoli and Dinko Fabris – who hails from Southern Italy).

8. There is no reason to associate this detail with his visit to Naples; Berlioz could have heard it anywhere, in folk- or art-music.

Conclusion

Berlioz was affected by various kinds of Italian music, and as his was a thoughtful and critical mind, he was prepared to modify his opinions. With Rossini, his original negative view was formed on the basis of perhaps inferior performances of works originally intended for an Italian public. In the mid-1820s, Rossini began his Paris campaign by adapting two such Italian works. Berlioz attributed the abuse of the bass drum to *Le Siège de Corinthe*, as he mentioned in *A travers chants* and satirized in *Soirées*: when nearly everyone else is chatting or telling stories, the bass drummer remains devoted to duty.[9] But in reviewing *Guillaume Tell*, Berlioz praised Rossini's de-coupling of the bass drum and cymbals; and in his *Grand Traité*, he praised the passage in the overture for five solo cellos over a pizzicato accompaniment. Peter Bloom's splendid edition of the *Traité* has a footnote informing us that the Opéra orchestra of the time had ten cellos, so two to a part (NBE Vol. 24, p. 80). Berlioz, typically, praised the passage for its place in a larger dramatic scheme: the effect, excellent in itself, makes the following Allegro more brilliant by contrast. He also quoted a passage of *Guillaume Tell* to illustrate the possibility of forming "a kind of vocal orchestra" (Ibid., 389).

Berlioz's treatment of Bellini in the obituary was markedly kinder than his mostly private assessment, in letters, of some of his works. Donizetti died in April 1848 when Berlioz was in London waiting for the political situation in Paris to settle; perhaps a kinder obituary might otherwise have followed his harsher judgements of the living composer.

Berlioz's Italian period remained a potent influence, and part of that derives from what he called the "anti-musical atmosphere" of Rome itself ("One must virtually resign oneself to hearing no music while in Rome"; *Memoirs*, Ch. 39), for it served to fix his convictions about what is best in musical art. He had tried to evade, or avoid, the taxing business of spending any time there, and no doubt this coloured his feelings about Italian dramatic music. In his concerts, he revived music by Clari and Palestrina, and he praised Benedetto Marcello as "a great musician, even a poet, and a brilliant satirist" (*CM* 7, pp. 105–110). Possibly he thought of older music as antique rather than specifically Italian, and he treated it quite freely; Palestrina would surely have been surprised to hear his Italian madrigal *Alla riva del Tebro* with 450 performers.

Berlioz had an ear for what is fresh, spontaneous, authentic. That he had ear for folk music, or music of the people, is apparent in many of his major works. In one of the odder passages of the infamous 1954 *Grove*

9. *A travers chants*, Guichard edn., p. 125; *The Art of Music*, p. 66; *Soirées*, passim.

article on Berlioz, Léon Vallas sneeringly remarks on an alleged plainchant origin for the opening of *La Damnation de Faust*, and singled out the woodwind tune that frames the "Chasse Royale" in *Les Troyens*, of which only a few notes derive from a folksong.[10] Yet composers from Haydn and Beethoven to Bartók and beyond are usually praised for opening their ears to the inflections of popular genres. Even Arnold Schoenberg used a folk-song in his Septet, and popular idioms were adopted by Alban Berg in his violin concerto and his operas.

So let us praise Berlioz for the popular idioms touched on in *La Damnation*, which include a plainchant remembered from his native Dauphiné; in *Benvenuto Cellini*, the chanting of monks as well as the workers' song; and, in *Harold* and *L'Enfance*, the bagpipes. Folk idioms may have affected more than the *pifferi* frame to *L'Adieu de bergers*: the overture to *La Fuite en Égypte* uses two "types of oboe" at the expense of clarinets, silent in Part II of *L'Enfance* until they open the *Adieu* itself in the humble role of drone.

Neither *L'Enfance du Christ* nor *Les Troyens* is set in Italy. But apart from the watchword "Italie", the North African night of the *Troyens* Septet and love duet must have been helped on their way by memories of the warmest climes Berlioz ever experienced. Both these, and the love-scene in *Roméo et Juliette* and the duo-nocturne in *Béatrice et Bénédict*, are in a fairly slow six-eight metre, itself possibly a reflection of popular idioms. Berlioz's furthest North was bitterly cold St Petersburg; his furthest South was near Naples. But Nice, where he did manage to compose, also has a pleasant climate. Nice was not then in France, but was Nizza, in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, and there Berlioz said he spent the happiest days of his life (*Memoirs*, Ch. 34). If not Rome, then the very air of Italy was for him wonderfully productive.

10. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Fifth Edition (ed. Eric Blom, London: Macmillan, 1954, Vol. 1, p. 664). David Cairns offers a Beethovenian derivation for the *Damnation* melody; *CBE*, p. 93).

Byron, Berlioz and *Harold*

Paul Banks

In one of his once-famous, though now rarely read, essays in musical analysis written in the early twentieth century, the English composer and academic Donald Tovey opined that

> There are many excellent reasons for reading Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. But among them I cannot find any that concern Berlioz and … [*Harold en Italie*], except for the jejune value of the discovery that no definite elements of Byron's poem have penetrated the impregnable fortress of Berlioz's encyclopaedic inattention.[1]

It is one of musicology's paradoxes that whereas in the case of the *Symphonie fantastique*, a work whose extensive verbal programme makes no explicit reference to its literary origins, scholars have worked diligently to identify such sources,[2] in that of *Harold*, whose brief programmatic annotations do make an explicit and intentional reference to a literary model, there has been a tendency to cast doubt on the significance of this reference. It may be that because *Harold*'s verbal apparatus is less elaborate than that of the *Symphonie fantastique* it has also been considered to be less important.

Whatever the reasons for it, Tovey's is an articulate manifestation of a common attitude. A more subtle example may be found in the critical commentary to the score of *Harold en Italie* published in the original (but incomplete) edition of Berlioz's works.[3] In their notes to the first movement the editors, Charles Malherbe and Felix Weingartner, report:

> The title and subtitle, *Harold in the Mountains. Scenes of melancholy, happiness and joy*, are missing in the autograph, and must have been added by the author at the time of publication.[4]

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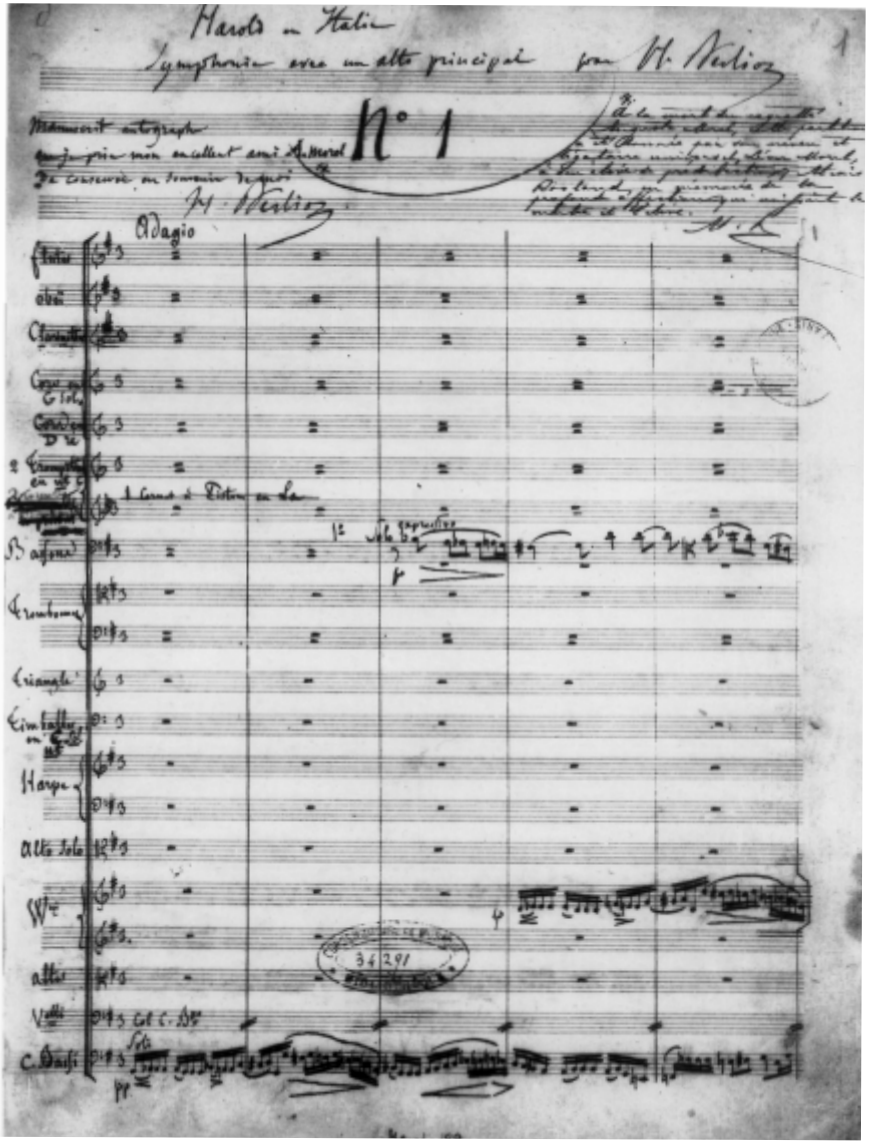
1. D.F.Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis* (London, 1936), iv, p. 74. Although the present paper suggests that Tovey's opening is less than an adequate discussion of the relationship between the two works, the rest of his essay, concerned with the music of the symphony, is highly perceptive.
2. See N. Temperley, 'The Symphonie fantastique and Its Program', *MQ*, 57/4 (1971), 593–608; and Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*, New Edition of the Complete Works (hereafter NBE), vol. 16 (Kassel, etc., 1972).
3. *Hector Berlioz Werke*, ed. Charles Malherbe and Felix Weingartner [henceforth OBE].
4. OBE II, p. i


Harold en Italie
Symphonie avec un alto principal par H. Berlioz
N° 1
Manuscrit autographe
H. Berlioz
Adagio
Flutes
Hautbois
Clarinettes
Cors en Sol
Cors en Do
2 Trompettes en Ut
2 Cornets à Pistons en La
3 Trombones
Timbales en Ut Sol
Harpe
Alto Solo
Violons
Violoncelles
Contrebasses
Solo
pp
34291

At first glance this explanation is plausible enough, but the underlying assumption that there is only a tenuous relationship between the literary sources and musical transformations in Berlioz's output is surely unjustified, and in any case there are other factors which should have been considered. It is true that today the MS[5] lacks a title page to the first movement, but one might also note two features of the document. Firstly, that the three succeeding movements each begin with an autograph title page that gives the full title of the movement concerned; and secondly that the manuscript is made up mostly of bifolios, large sheets of manuscript paper folded in half. So, it seems likely that the first movement also originally possessed a title page and if this supposition is correct there should be a single leaf (the remaining half of the bifolium bearing the title page) somewhere near the beginning of the manuscript. Examination of the make-up of the autograph reveals just such a leaf, folio 11. If the original initial folio of the manuscript is missing (a possibility nowhere discussed by Malherbe and Weingartner) it might well have included the titles of the first movement. In any case Berlioz had certainly decided on the title and subtitle for the movement by 16 November 1834 when details of the work were advertised in the *Gazette musicale*.[6] So to suggest that they were added ten or more years after the work's composition is disingenuous.

On one level such movement titles might evoke picturesque images against which the purely orchestral music of the symphony might be heard by a theatrically inclined Parisian audience, but it may be that the reference to Byron should also serve to draw our attention to important musical features of Berlioz's second symphony. Unfortunately surviving documents offer only a fragmentary and contradictory account of the work's gestation. The earliest press announcement, on 21 January 1834,[7] reported that a dramatic fantasy for solo viola, chorus and orchestra, entitled *The Last Moments of Mary Stuart*, had been commissioned by Paganini for a forthcoming concert in England.

In the *Memoirs* Berlioz gives an account of Paganini's crucial visit:

> A few weeks after the concert which had re-established me [22 December 1833], Paganini came to see me. He told me he had a Stradivarius viola, a marvellous instrument, which he wanted to play in public; but he lacked the right music. Would I write him a

5. *F-Pn*, fonds du Conservatoire, ms 1189.
6. *Gazette musicale*, iv/46 (16 November 1834), 371.
7. Quoted in Hector Berlioz, *Correspondence générale*, ed. P. Citron (Paris, 1975) [henceforth *CG*], ii, p. 159.

> piece for it? "You are the only one I would trust with such a commission", he said. I replied that I was more flattered than I could say, but that to live up to his expectations and write a work that showed off a virtuoso such as he in a suitably brilliant light, one should be able to play the viola, which I could not. "No, no, I insist," he said; "you will manage. I can't possibly do it – I am too ill just now to compose."[8]

It must be remembered that the press announcements are the only known references to *The Last Moments*; the title appears nowhere in the *Memoirs* or in Berlioz's surviving letters, and the autograph bears no trace of an early conception of the work employing chorus. If evidence of the first programmatic ideas is slight and relates only to an early period in the work's history, the first surviving references to a Byronic connection are rather later: the autograph itself (dated 22 June 1834) and a letter written to Eduard Rocher on 31 July 1834.[9]

So, the surviving documents provide no clear insight into the role of programmatic elements in the creative process which culminated in the musical design of *Harold en Italie*. Even the *Memoirs*, which are quite informative about the musical content of the work, are unhelpful in this regard. But at whatever stage the decision was made, Berlioz chose to make an explicit reference to Byron's poem; does this reference tell the listener anything about the music?

At what date Berlioz first read Byron is unknown, nor are there many clues indicating specific works he knew, although the *Memoirs* report that he read *The Corsair* in St. Peter's during his Prix de Rome period.[10] Nevertheless Byron occupied a prominent place in the composer's Pantheon and in the autobiographical sketch of 1855[11] is identified as one of the poets who influenced him the most.

Berlioz's knowledge of the English poet was by no means unusual in France at the time. The earliest published reference to Byron's works was a report of the publication in England of Cantos I and II of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, that appeared in December 1812.[12] From 1816 translations of individual works began to appear, and between 1818 and 1833 eleven English editions of Byron's complete works were published in Paris, and between 1819 and 1835 eleven editions of the complete

8. *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, trs. and ed. D. Cairns (London 2002) [henceforth *Memoirs*], p. 215.
9. *CG* ii, p. 188.
10. *Memoirs*, p. 148.
11. *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, xxviii (11 December 1903).
12. *Journal générale de la littérature étrangère*, xii/12 (1 December 1812), 370.

works appeared in French.[13] It is likely, therefore, that a significant proportion of "the literary and artistic elite"[14] who gathered to hear the première of *Harold en Italie* on 23 November 1834 were acquainted with the composer's literary model. Moreover, many would have been in a position to perceive that unlike Lamartine's *Le Dernier chant du pèlerinage d'Harold* of 1825, which supplies a continuation and conclusion for Byron's unfinished travelogue, the Symphony is a supplement to the poem that purports to show Harold in various Italian settings, despite the fact that Byron only briefly evokes his pilgrim in such a locale, at the end of Canto IV, in order to bid farewell to him and the reader. So, it is perhaps no surprise that Berlioz makes no specific references to the content of Byron's Italian canto.

What would not have been apparent to the first audience for Berlioz's Symphony was the surprising parallel between the circumstances behind Byron's and Berlioz's peregrinations – travels that bore artistic fruit in *Childe Harold* – and *Harold en Italie*. It is a curious coincidence that neither artist particularly wanted to travel to Italy. In Byron's case his departure from England and subsequent journey, via Belgium, and Switzerland, was motivated by a desire to escape the social opprobrium that surrounded him following the end of his brief marriage. On the other hand, although Berlioz's effort to win the Prix de Rome had been motivated in no small part by his desire to marry Camille Moke, by 1831 it subsequently become apparent to the composer that an extended trip to Italy would seriously undermine the development of his professional reputation and career in France.

There are also, *pace* Tovey, a few narrative details in the poem that *are* echoed in the music of the Symphony. Some are comparatively trivial: the first time the reader encounters Childe Harold's own words it is in the form of a song ostensibly sung to a harp accompaniment,[15] just as Berlioz's soloist makes his first entry accompanied only by that instrument:

Music example 1:
Berlioz: *Harold en Italie*, first movement,
Imai, LSO, Colin Davis

Later the poet's hero does observe an orgy – though not of brigands,

13. E. Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français* (Paris, 1907), pp. 525–35.
14. *L'Artiste*, viii (1834), 217.
15. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, ed. J.D. Jump (London, 1975), Canto I, line 109ff. (All subsequent references to the poem will be in the form I, 109ff.)

and somewhere in Albania, not Italy.[16] The *Memoirs* make it clear that there were other reasons why Berlioz associated orgies with Byron and hence with Harold. While sailing to Italy, in January 1831, he met a Venetian sailor who claimed to have known Byron and who

> described in minute detail the glittering uniform which Byron had insisted on his wearing and the orgies they took part in together [....] I was much too pleased at meeting someone who had been with Childe Harold on his pilgrimage not to believe it all implicitly.[17]

However there are more important parallels between the works, concerning content and structure.

The all-pervasive theme of Byron's poem is the alienated, or, to use Berlioz's adjective, 'melancholic', Romantic hero as embodied in Childe Harold himself. The poem is not concerned with the presentation of a character portrait of Harold as an individual – even though heightened individualism lies at the core of his personal isolation – but rather with the presentation of a generalized portrait of this Romantic phenomenon. The failure to be precise about Childe Harold's particular psychological state imbues him with an aura of mystery; but, insofar as he embodies a general human condition, an account of his history is unnecessary.[18]

At the root of Harold's condition is his failure to establish any human relationships. As their vessel leaves England, Childe Harold and his two companions reflect on what they have left behind:[19] his "page" has left his parents, his "yeoman" a wife and family. But Harold is convinced that no-one will regret his absence: even his dog will forget him, as he tells us in his harp-accompanied song:

> But why should I for others groan,
> When none will sigh for me?
> Perchance my dog will whine in vain,
> Till fed by stranger hands;
> But long ere I come back again
> He'd tear me where he stands. [I, 184–9]

More subtly, Harold's individualism is emphasised by the juxtaposition of a description of his human isolation (II, 136–44) with an

16. *Ibid*., II, 631ff.
17. *Memoirs*, p. 124.
18. Nevertheless it is hinted that Harold was psychologically predisposed to such a state (I, 69–71).
19. This passage (beginning at I, 110) starts as a solo song but in a typically Romantic manipulation of genre, turns into a trio.

account of the closed, self-sufficient society founded on mutual co-operation and a well-defined hierarchy, represented by a ship's crew (1I, 145–71): that the latter is human society in microcosm is made explicit in the description of it as "the little warlike world within"(II, 154).

The juxtaposition of a soft-toned soloist and a large orchestra could be understood as a musical metaphor for an individual's existential relations with society. By referring to one of the most famous literary projections of this motif, Berlioz was surely inviting his audience to hear the work in such a way. Thus the instruction that the soloist "must stand in the foreground, near the public *and isolated from the orchestra*"[20] has profound expressive as well as practical musical significance. But Harold is also musically embodied by a theme, and in the *Memoirs* Berlioz makes it clear how its treatment differs from that of the *idée fixe* in his first symphony, and how that treatment might be understood as reflecting the alienated individual's predicament:

> As in the *Fantastic Symphony*, a motto (the viola's first theme) recurs throughout the work, but with the difference that whereas the theme of the *Fantastic Symphony*, the *idée fixe*, keeps obtruding like an obsessive idea on scenes that are alien to it and deflects the current of the music, the Harold theme is superimposed on the other orchestral voices so as to contrast with them in character and tempo without interrupting their development.[21]

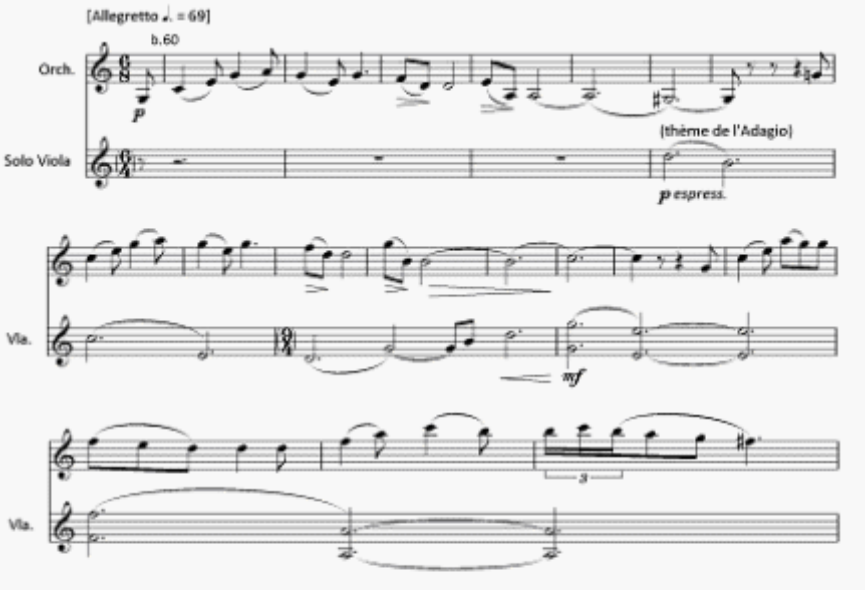
However, what is striking is the way that the treatment of both the characteristic sonority – the solo viola – and the motto theme often associated with the instrument evolves across all four movements. In the first movement the presentation and development of material is shared between the viola and the orchestra, to the extent that it is the orchestra that first presents the motto theme, albeit in a minor-key version. The full range of textural relationships is explored: solo accompanied by orchestra (bar 34ff.); solo doubled by orchestra (bar 69ff.); orchestra accompanied by solo (bar 246ff.) and antiphonal exchanges (bar 143ff.). At no point is the solo rhythmically or metrically differentiated from the orchestra, and the movement presents an imaginative but unified texture. Berlioz deploys much skill to ensure that where necessary the solo part is audible, but particularly interesting is the way the solo is at times overpowered by

20. *Harold/en Italie/Symphonie/en 4 Parties/avec un ALTO principal/... Op. 16*., (Paris, Brandus et Cie, n.d.) plate number: B. et Cie 4782 bis., 1 [the italics are mine].This note may be a late addition: it is lacking in the autograph. But it too may have appeared on the missing title-page.

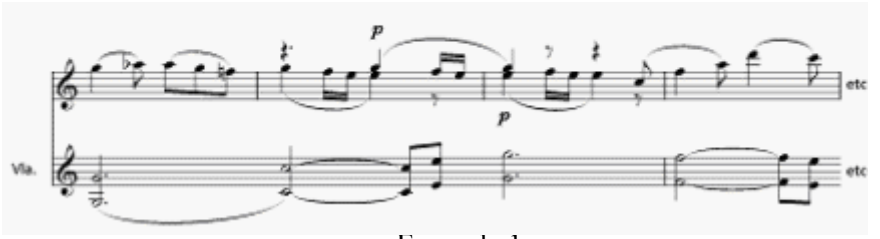
21. *Memoirs*, p. 216.

orchestral sonority. Since the orchestra is usually continuing or completing an idea initiated by the viola, it creates the effect of the soloist having been momentarily absorbed into the orchestral texture.

This relatively homogeneous treatment of texture begins to change in the inner movements, and the alienated treatment of the motto theme emphasised by Berlioz in the *Memoirs* begins to emerge more strongly. Increasingly the contrapuntal combination of the motto (played initially by the viola) with the thematic material of the movement concerned is unstable and disruptive because of the differences in metre and the resulting lack of co-ordination of metrical stress, most notably in the Serenade: after an orchestral introduction, with prominent use of wind instruments and drones, evoking the music of the pifferari heard by Berlioz in Italy, the serenade commences, "sung" by the cor anglais, but soon another voice – the solo viola – cuts across it. Although it "fits" harmonically with the Serenade,[22] the motto theme is out of step with it, using a different time signature, longer note-values and a different phrase structure:



22. These passages, where simultaneous statements of two ideas reveals their lack of relationship, may have eventually influenced Berlioz's first symphony. The comparable combination of fragments of the Valse with the *idée fixe* in the second movement of the *Symphonie fantastique* (see Paul Banks, "Coherence and Diversity in the *Symphonie fantastique*", *Nineteenth Century Music* VIII/1 (Summer 1984), 39.) dates from 1845, eleven years after the completion of *Harold*.



Example 1
Harold en Italie, b. 60ff.

Music example 2:
Berlioz: *Harold en Italie*, first movement,
Imai, LSO, Colin Davis

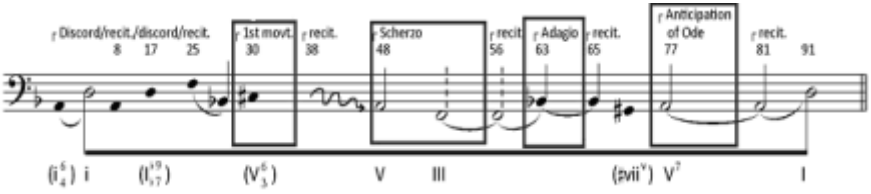
Within these two inner movements the number of types of texture involving the solo viola and orchestra is reduced to just three: firstly, the solo playing with orchestra (although the latter rarely accompanies in a conventional sense, but continues with its own apparently autonomous material); secondly, solo accompanying orchestra; and finally there is one example orchestra doubling solo (III, bar 72ff.). There is no longer a dialogue between solo and orchestra, merely coexistence; thematic differentiation is reinforced by the textural isolation and reduced role for the solo viola. In the March and the Serenade the instrument's first entry is postponed for about sixty bars, and in both movements occurs at a structurally unimportant point, part of the way through a section. In the Serenade the soloist never plays the material of the opening Allegro assai**,** and in the March is given none of the orchestra's material.

These features can be understood as part of Berlioz's remarkable response to and musical embodiment of an extraordinary process that spans all four cantos of Byron's poem: the gradual elimination of the putative subject of the poem. In Canto 4 direct reference to Harold is reduced to two passages, a total of 37 lines out of 1674. The bulk of the poem embodies the reflections and narratives of the poet/narrator.

Berlioz employs a musical equivalent of this poetic device in his handling of the solo instrument and the motto theme. From the second movement onwards the soloist and the Harold theme are gradually isolated from the orchestra and its musical material, and the solo viola is given a significantly reduced role. The process is completed in the concluding Orgy, where both the theme and the solo instrument are virtually excluded from the movement and the orchestra takes over. That is an extraordinary and potentially bizarre feature, yet Berlioz seems to have planned the first three movements with this in mind. Even the way

the orchestra overwhelms the soloist in the closing pages of the first movement can be understood, retrospectively, as an anticipation of what will happen in the finale. Even so, the creative challenge that Berlioz had set himself in the final movement was to find a musically convincing way of making plausible the disappearance of what were otherwise distinctive features of the work. He did so through an inspired appropriation and reworking of a controversial modern symphony, Beethoven's Ninth. Berlioz had known the score for some years, and heard it for the first time in January 1834 – just as he was begining work on *Harold*.[23] As has long been recognised, the opening of Berlioz's finale clearly employs some of the processes found in the introduction to the choral finale of Beethoven's work. What has not been fully appreciated is that Berlioz reverses the function of these processes.

The challenge that Beethoven had given himself was to make musically convincing the late appearance of a musical component not previously heard in his Symphony: voices singing words. His imaginative solution was to begin his movement with an introduction, but not a symphonic introduction – which would close on the dominant – but an introductory recitative complete with its clearly articulated full close in the tonic. This overt reference to a vocal genre (albeit in instrumental guise) is decisive in making the subsequent appearance of the vocal forces appear to be a natural outcome of the music. The other striking feature of Beethoven's introduction is the series of brief recollections of thematic ideas used in the first three movements.



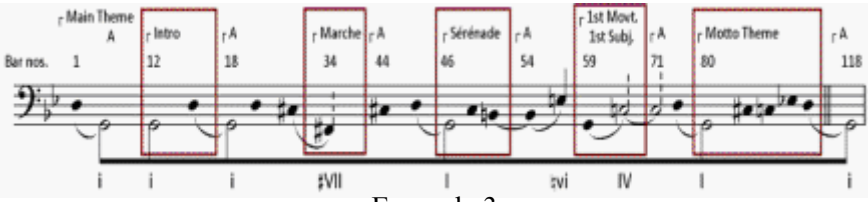
Example 2
Beethoven: Ninth Symphony: outline of the opening of the finale

Music example 3:
Beethoven: Ninth Symphony, fourth movement
ORR, Gardiner

Although none of the thematic quotations attains the stability of a statement in the home key, D, they all have a clear harmonic function,

23. The performance took place on 26 January, but Berlioz almost certainly attended rehearsals – see *CG* II p. 159.

participating in the cadential preparation for that key, and thus contribute to the harmonic process which culminates in the onset of the movement proper. The other material of the introduction is clearly disruptive (the discords) and/or introductory (the recitatives) and neither element plays a further role in the movement after their abbreviated return between variations three and four. The quotations from earlier movements thus appear as arioso-like insertions of music with consistent rhythmic motion and identifiable thematic content enclosed within thematically ill-defined music of less regular forward impetus.



Example 3
Berlioz: Harold en Italie: outline of the opening of the finale

Berlioz, on the other hand, begins not with disruptive or introductory material that is insignificant in the subsequent course of the movement, but with the main theme of that movement. This theme has a clear identity, an unambiguous rhythmic and metrical structure and is firmly in the main key of the movement. The five recollections of previously heard material disrupt this opening on virtually every level: metre, rhythm, texture, dynamics and thematic contrast. The first, fourth and fifth adopt different tempi, and the last – the reappearance of the motto theme – loses all sense of rhythmic continuity and direction. Moreover, whereas the main theme of the Orgy assumes greater solidity on each reappearance (through increasingly complete harmonisation and sonorous instrumentation) the orchestral texture of the quotations becomes more tenuous.

Music example 4:
Berlioz: *Harold en Italie,* fourth movement
Imai, LSO, Colin Davis

Throughout this passage the solo viola plays only during the reminiscences, the music of the past, and never during statements of the main theme of the new movement. It participates not in an introduction but in interruptions that repeatedly disrupt the opening of the movement.

The musical material that is recalled has no functional relationship to the rest of the movement: it is not related to the finale on a foreground level, but is isolated from it. Berlioz associates the soloist with this dissociated material and provides the viola with less substantial orchestral support on each reappearance. Whereas in the first movement the treatment of the solo-orchestra relationship was such that passages where the viola was covered by orchestral sound create the aural impression of the solo being absorbed into a web of orchestral texture, here the same situation results in the opposite effect: the viola is excluded from participation in tutti passages.

Thus Berlioz's handling of the thematic reminiscences stands Beethoven's device on its head. The earlier composer had evolved the procedure as a means of justifying musically the introduction of new elements – voices and text – into a previously instrumental symphony at a late stage in its structure, whereas Berlioz uses it as part of the aural justification of the exclusion of two elements – the solo viola and the associated motto theme – from the work at a late stage.

Berlioz's first intention was that once reduced to silence at bar 107 the solo viola should be heard no more in the final movement: at that point the autograph bears the note 'L'Alto compte jusqu'a la fin'. However, this was deleted, probably c. 1834–37 at the same time that two new leaves, fol. 125–6, were added to the autograph.[24] In the inserted passage the solo viola makes a final appearance and is again associated with an interrupting recall of an earlier movement. By giving the theme of the Pilgrims' March to an off-stage string trio, Berlioz further emphasises thematic dissociation with spatial separation, while the solo viola is reduced to a series of non-thematic melodic gestures.

Music example 5:
Berlioz: *Harold en Italie,* fourth movement
Imai, LSO, Colin Davis

The revision thus draws attention to the lack of relationship between soloist and orchestra, and the dissolution of thematic coherence in the viola part might encourage us to consider whether the passage is a commentary on the fragility and instability of the melancholic psyche. Given that the first months of Berlioz's visit to Italy coincided with one of the most serious emotional and psychological crises of his early life, it

24. There is evidence that this revision was made between 1834 and 1837. See, Berlioz, *Harold en Italie*, ed. Paul Banks and Hugh Macdonald (NBE vol. 17) (Kassel, 2001).

would not be surprising if that experience was also reflected in some of the music of this symphony.

Even if such a line of psychological interpretation is not tempting, it is clear that in *Harold* the finale completes a process spanning the whole work: the gradual separation of a theme and a timbre from their musical surroundings, and their eventual exclusion from the musical discourse. The work's reference to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* draws attention to a multi-sectional poetic structure in which a fictional character is portrayed as isolated from his environment and is gradually excluded from the poetic narrative. The parallels between *Harold en Italie* and *Childe Harold* go beyond those of poetic images and extend to narrative processes – it was not Berlioz who was inattentive, but his critics.

Byron's influence on music in France during Berlioz's lifetime

Olivier Feignier

"Vous êtes le Byron de la Musique!" Such was the exclamation of his fellow-musician Baptiste Pastou to Hector Berlioz when he bumped into him on a Paris street-corner not long after the composer's first concert on 26 May 1828.

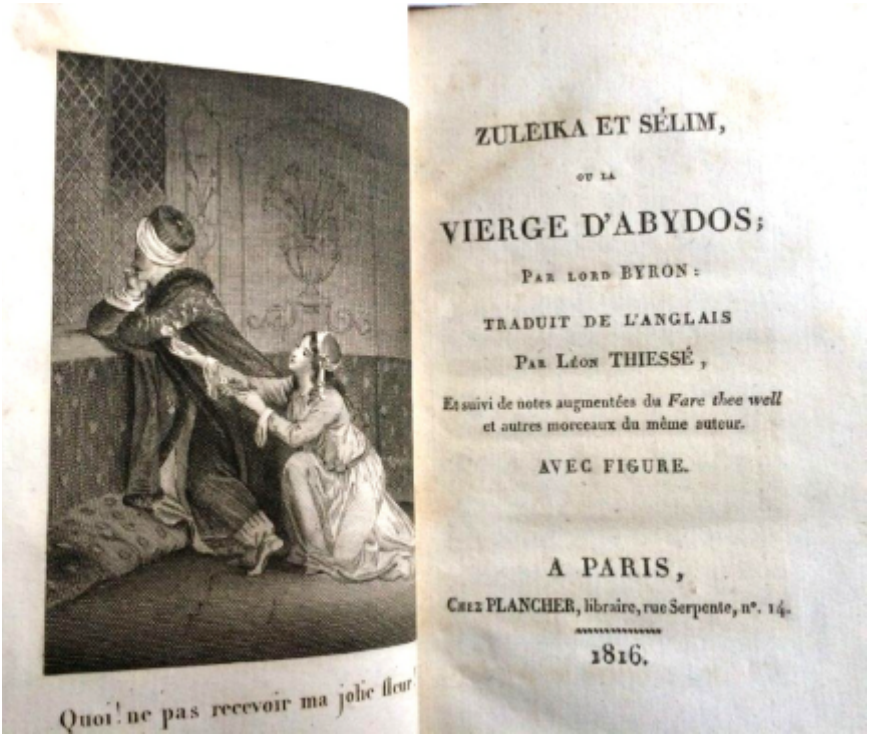
At that time Berlioz was a young man, not even 25 years old, and still a student. Some of his early works had just received their first public performance, he had written a mere three articles of music criticism, in *Le Corsaire*, a small satirical newspaper with a limited audience, and the only things that general readers probably knew about him were his execration of Italian music and his adoration of Gluck. His friends alone knew that he had discovered Shakespeare's works and world a few months earlier, and Beethoven's music even more recently. It is not documented whether Berlioz had read Byron by that time,[1] but it is likely that he had already some knowledge of his works. What then were the reasons behind Pastou's sudden outburst, what drove him to such a literary comparison, what could he really mean by it? And what could it mean for Berlioz? Before trying to answer these questions, let me remind you how well (or not so well) Byron was known in France in 1828.

After a few mentions of Byron's name in reviews and footnotes of books between 1812 and 1815,[2] a first complete poem was made available to French-speaking readers in October 1816,[3] a year of exceptional importance in Byron's life and works. Under the title *Zuleika et Sélim*, Léon Thiessé had made a prose translation of *The Bride of Abydos*. It seems that the publication, which was adorned with an engraving derived from that of Stothard published in London two years before, did not attract much interest, as no mention of the book has yet been found in

1. The first mention of Byron in Berlioz's published letters is precisely the one to Humbert Ferrand of June 1828 in which he told his friend about the success of his concert and of what happened with Pastou. (*Correspondance Générale*, éditée sous la direction de Pierre Citron professeur à l'Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle, volume 1 (1803-1832), Flammarion, 1972, p.199 ; new transcription : vol. VIII, Suppléments, Flammarion 2002, p.28 ; manuscript visible on Gallica : IFN-53031015)

2. *Epoques et faits mémorables de l'Histoire d'Angleterre, depuis Alfred-le-Grand jusqu'à ce jour*, by R. J. Durdent, Paris, Eymery, 1815, p.356 ; *Alfred, poème en quatre chants*, by Ch. Millevoye, Paris, Eymery, 1815, where lord Baron (sic) is cited as one of the main poets in contemporary England (note p.112),

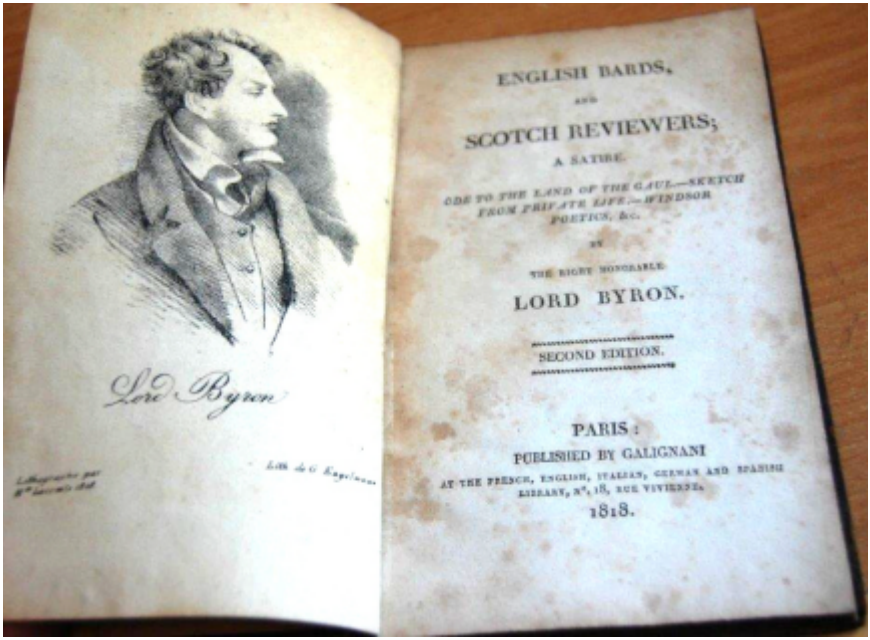
3. The French Byron Society recently celebrated the bicentennial of this event by giving Danièle Sarrat, the author of a new translation of a selection of poems by Byron, published or written in 1816, the opportunity to present her work and read some extracts (Editions d'Otrante, 2016).



contemporary newspapers. However, a month before, the article on Byron in the first French biographical dictionary with an entry dedicated to the poet had given a tantalizing picture of his poetry by highlighting "his mood, usually sombre and terrible", and "his talent, which is characterised by the brilliance of his imagery".

At the same time as this first evidence of interest in Paris, the effort of popularizing Byron among French-speaking audiences was doubled by one of the editors of the *Bibliothèque universelle des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Genève*. Charles Pictet de Rochemont,[4] the famous Genevan agronomist and diplomat, spent part of his free time translating extracts of the 3rd canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Prisoner of Chillon*. Extracts from *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *The Giaour* followed in

4.Charles Pictet de Rochemont (1755-1824): after a short political career in Geneva before the French revolution, he returned to private life, dedicated time to agronomy and literature; he founded the Bibliothèque britannique in 1796, where he was in charge of the articles dealing with his two main interests. In 1815, he represented Geneva at the Congress of Vienna before returning again to his beloved studies.



1817. At the end of that same year, French readers who understood Italian were able to get to know the whole of *The Giaour* in the Paris and Geneva editions of Pellegrino Rossi's translation. After nearly 20 years of close political links between France and Italy, and prolonged stays in the Peninsula by numerous French soldiers and administrative staff, Italian was the most widely-known foreign language among the French. In 1818, the Italian-English publisher Galignani, based in Paris, launched the first French pirate edition of Byron, in 6 volumes, and thus gave all English-speakers (or readers) among the French public the opportunity to get acquainted with the poet's works, and with his features: a portrait of Byron was placed as frontispiece to the satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

In 1819, "Byron-mania" really took off: two young medical students at Montpellier University, Amédée Pichot and Eusèbe de Salle, began a complete translation into French prose of Byron's works. The first two volumes were issued in September 1819, and the further six volumes were published in the next months, two in October, two in February 1820 and the last two in March – which was an incredible speed and one of the reasons why this first translation did not pay a lot of respect to Byron's ideas and even less to his poetical style. They included the short story

entitled *The Vampyre*, which had been reprinted in Paris as early as 8 May 1819 in an English pirate edition by Galignani,[5] and immediately translated by Henry Faber (June 1819). This Vampyre-mania developed into a kind of rage within months: in February 1820, a novel was published which expanded "Byron's" short story; in June, a play based on it was staged, and in July, a second one. The *Vampyre* is not the only work impudently attributed to Byron: in February 1821, Eusèbe de Salle, one of the early translators of his complete works, published a novel entitled *Irner*, which partly recalled Byronic heroes and scenes drawn mainly from *Manfred* and *Lara*, but which showed such deep familiarity with the Languedocian countryside that its author must have been from that part of France…

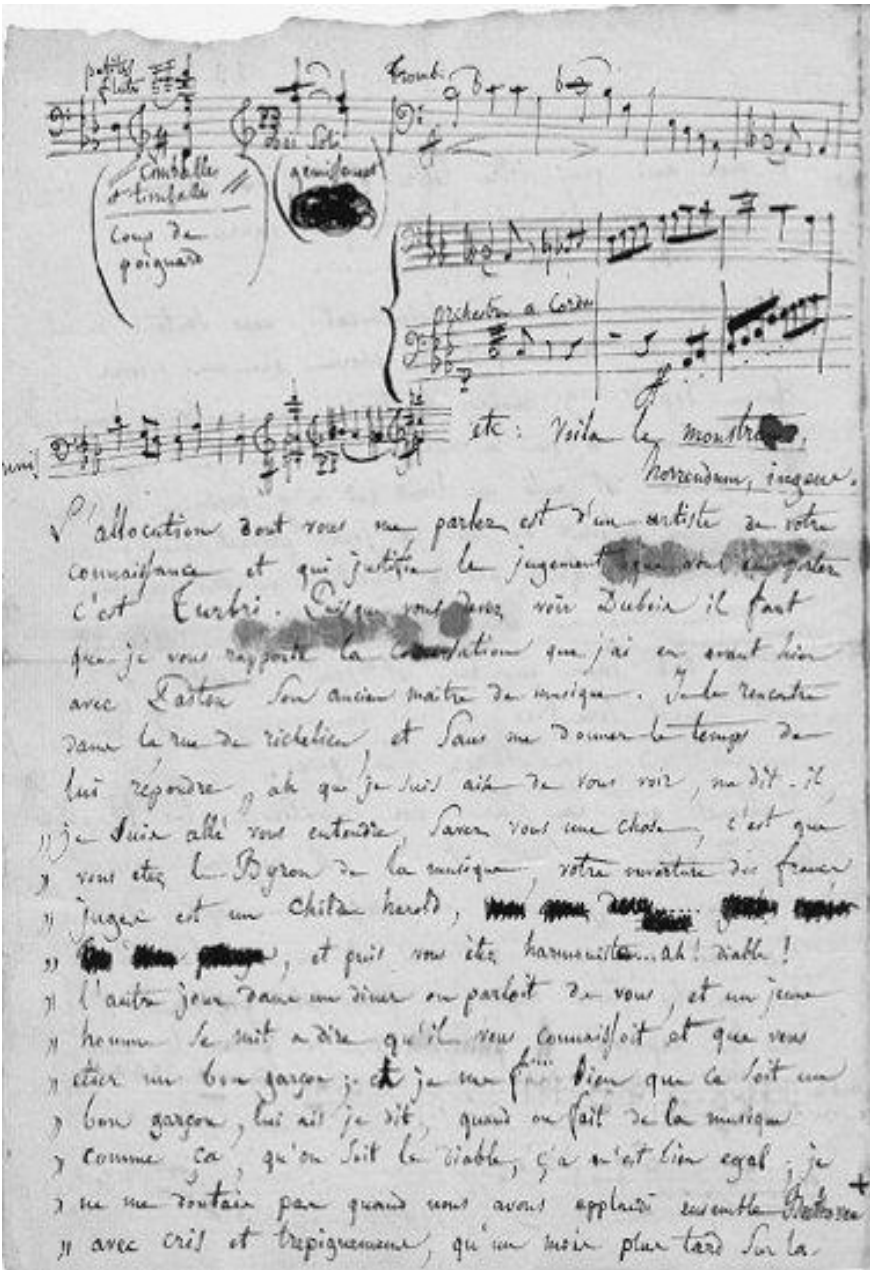
Just after Paris heard of Napoleon's death in St Helena, several apocryphal poems and literary pieces were published under Byron's name. They clearly establish that part of Byron's readership in France was made up of old soldiers from the Grande Armée and admirers of Napoleon.[6] In the same period, Byron's poems provided painters and illustrators with several scenes and subjects. Both Horace Vernet's and Théodore Géricault's imaginations were captivated by Byron. Between 1818 and 1823, Byron's poems *The Corsair, Lara, Manfred, The Giaour, Mazeppa,* and *The Bride of Abydos* were the source of several early masterpieces of French lithography. In 1824, Byron's death in Greece was felt as a "personal disaster" by many young poets, in France as well as in many European countries; his action was seen as a major contribution to Greek independence, a kind of self-sacrifice of genius for a noble cause, and it generated a new peak of Byronism in France, more political than the initial literary one, and more widely spread[7] than the "Napoleonic" one of 1821.

I will not bother you any longer with a detailed account of the early developments of Byronism in France. Let's say – to give an overall view of the situation at the time of Pastou's exclamation – that, by 1828, the Pichot translation, reviewed, corrected, and improved, had reached its sixth edition, in 20 volumes, its publication half-way through by the date of Berlioz's concert, and that several works had been translated more than once, in full or as a selection of extracts. By then, all works of Byron, apart from *The Age of Bronze* and *The Vision of Judgment*, were available in

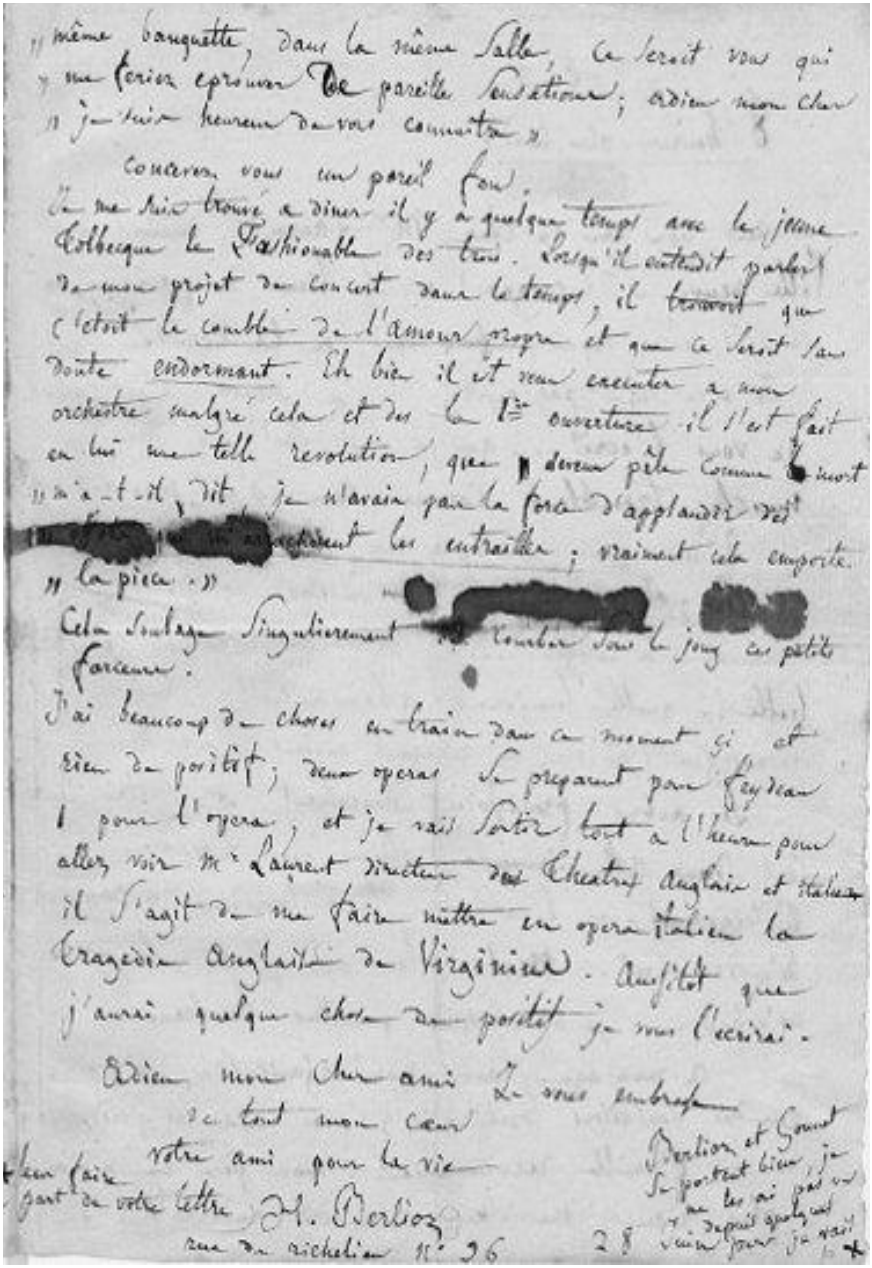
5. The first edition appeared in London on 1 April of this same year 1819.

6. See the paper I presented at the International Byron Conference in King's College, London, July 2013: "Byron's *Dithyramb on the Death of Napoleon* and the lessons of apocryphal works". www.internationalbyronsociety.com

7. Both "liberals" enthusiastic for peoples' freedom and "royalists" keen to support the Cross in its fight against the Crescent claimed that Byron had been fighting on their side.



l'allocution dont vous me parlez est d'un artiste de votre connaissance et qui justifie le jugement [illegible] c'est Curbi. [illegible] il faut que je vous rapporte la conversation que j'ai eu avant hier avec Castil Son ancien maître de musique. Je le rencontre dans la rue de richelieu, et sans me donner le temps de lui répondre, ah que je suis aise de vous voir, me dit-il, je suis allé vous entendre, savez vous une chose, c'est que vous êtes le Byron de la musique, votre ouverture des francs juges est un chiffon horrible, [illegible], et puis vous êtes harmoniste... ah! diable! l'autre jour dans un dîner on parloit de vous, et un jeune homme se mit a dire qu'il vous connaissoit et que vous étiez un bon garçon; et je me fus bien que ce soit un bon garçon, lui ai je dit, quand on fait de la musique comme ça, qu'on soit le diable, ça n'est bien egal; je ne me soucie pas quand nous avons applaudi ensemble [illegible] avec cris et trépignemens, qu'un mois plus tard sur la



French to the reading public.[8]

What about music of Byronic origin by that time? You can easily guess that my insistence upon *The Vampyre*, that most famous apocryphal work, was not completely innocent. It is indeed this work attributed to Byron which sparked the first piece of music in France that is undoubedly related to him and whose creation date is precisely known. The *Wedding Hymn* by Alexandre Piccinni[9] was sung at the performance of the first *Vampire* melodrama, at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint Martin (13 June 1820), and published a few weeks later (end of July). This *Vampire* music was the origin of a piano fantasy with 9 variations, by Henri Darondeau,[10] another composer linked to the Parisian "Petits Théâtres". A few years later, in 1825, Auguste Andrade, then a well-known composer of simple melodies, published *Irner, "romance" imitated from Lord Byron.*

Despite thorough research at the BnF and through the contemporary bibliographical sources, I have not been able, so far, to find Byronic music earlier than the *Vampire* – music which derived from actual works by Byron. But I have found a nice little gem, which can likely be dated back to the summer of 1821. During the Empire (and you can easily guess which Empire a Frenchman refers to), the composer Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny[11] had dedicated *Six romances extraites du roman de Clémence Isaure et les Troubadours* to the Queen of Holland, Hortense de Beauharnais - a pioneering publication in the fashionable collection of "romances" with illustrations. Auguste Dupuy des Islets, a poet nearly contemporary to Momigny,[12] had brought his artistic tribute to the Empire up to 1813, with a *Chant inspiré de la Bataille de Wurtchen* which is about Duroc's death during the last campaign in Germany – a poem set to music by the composer Stanislas Champein.[13] After the fall of Napoleon, Momigny and Dupuy collaborated in a "song imitated from Lord Byron", entitled *Amour*

8. Probably due to their very caustic style and the harsh attacks against the old monarchies they contained, the two works had not yet been completely translated into French; *The Age of Bronze*, and *The Vision of Judgment* would both be part of volume 16, published in January 1829.

9. Alexandre Piccinni (1779-1850), a prolific stage-music composer, active under the Empire and the July monarchy.

10. Henri Darondeau (1779-1865), a pianist and composer, active also as a stage composer, occasionally collaborated with Alexandre Piccinni.

11. Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, born in 1762 in Philippeville, near Namur, then in the Austrian Netherlands, died in 1842 in Charenton, near Paris. He is more famous for his works as a music theorist than for his compositions. However, he composed several sonatas, trios, quartets, and "romances".

12. Auguste Dupuy des Islets (ou Du Puy), baptised on 24 December 1760, died on 27 May 1829.

13. Stanislas Champein (1753-1830), born in Marseille, died in Paris. Several of his comic operas earned him success before the Revolution.

et Regret,[14] in pure "troubadour" style. When I discovered it, I doubted very much whether it was derived from Byron, and guessed it was yet another apocryphal work, but a thorough reading of Byron's youthful poems allowed me to unearth the actual source of the text. Written before his departure for the Grand Tour, *Well ! Thou art happy*, a much larger poem than Dupuy's French version (nine quatrains instead of four) is the obvious origin, even if Sophie, the beloved woman, was originally called Mary, and the baby's eyes rather than its smile reminded him of its mother…

When late I saw thy favourite child,
I thought my jealous heart would break;
But when the unconscious infant smiled,
I kiss'd it for its mother's sake.

I kiss'd it, – and repress'd my sighs
Its father in its face to see;
But then it had its mother's eyes,
And they were all to love and me.

Mary, adieu! I must away:
While thou art blest I'll not repine;
But near thee I can never stay;
My heart would soon again be thine.

The first French translation of this poem by Byron was published in May 1821; a likely assumption is that Dupuy des Islets versified his "romance" shortly after, and that Momigny set it to music in the following months.[15] To my knowledge, this is the first music piece inspired by Byron that was composed and published in France. If we admit that it dates from 1821, it would correspond well with the beginning of French enthusiasm for Byron, as reported by Thomas Moore to the poet.

Alas! The next piece of music which undoubtedly derives from interest in Byron is Rossini's *Cantata on the Death of Byron*, which was published by the Parisian music editor Antonio Pacini as early as 21 August 1824.

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14. BnF Louvois Vm7 82531. – Incipit: "T'aimais, Sophie…"
15. On 6 July 2016, during the 42nd International Byron Conference, organised in Paris by the French Byron Society, a concert of Byronic pieces was offered to the participants. This naive and simple composition was of course the concert "entrata". The pianist Jean-François Ballèvre accompanied the baritone Philippe Cantor.

Byron's death, seen as heroic even if it did not actually happen during a battle against the Turks, had an enormous effect in all areas: poets, painters, engravers, competed to express such a terrible event by means of their art. There is also a piece of music by "a young Hellen who escaped the disaster in Ipsara" named Nicoris, who composed a trio for men's voices with piano accompaniment on a related topic. Entitled *Byron au camp des Grecs*;[16] it features a fictitious encounter between Byron, Marcos Botzaris and Canaris; the score was published by Stanislas Champein, the same editor and composer who had set two poems by Dupuy des Islets to music in 1813.

Such an unlikely work reminds us of the very strong association of Byron's name with Greece and the Greek war of independence. And it is not impossible that this specific link could have played a role in Pastou's exclamation: let's remember that the last piece at Berlioz's concert in May 1828 was the *Scène héroïque (La Révolution grecque)*, then performed for the first time in public. If the name of Byron did not show up in Humbert Ferrand's lyrics, the spirit of the text is totally consistent with that of the numerous poems in homage to the Greeks published in France in the 1820's, where Byron so often plays a central role.

Let's sum up the situation at the moment of the May 1828 concert: Byron's fame was close to its apex in France, nearly all of the poet's works had been translated into French[17] and imitated, some of them several times, in prose and in verse; the Byronic hero was invading the whole field of literature (poems, novels, short stories), and the time would soon come when *Don Juan* would find its French public. Byron was considered by reactionary classic writers as the foreign and dangerous leader of the nefarious "Romantic revolution". Compared to him, Berlioz could appear as an anonymous and unknown musician, but also as one full of enthusiasm for the Greek struggle for independence, and a vigorous supporter of a new way of writing music. Let's read again the extract of Berlioz's letter in which he told his friend Humbert Ferrand of his encounter with Baptiste Pastou. The authenticity of the scene is guaranteed by the date of the letter, written a few days after the encounter: "…You are the Byron of Music. Your *Francs-Juges* overture is a *Childe Harold*, and then you are a harmonist." – Nine words have been crossed out by Berlioz after "Childe Harold", nine words which may have made

16. *Byron au camp des Grecs, Trio par Nicoris, jeune Hellène échappé aux désastres d'Ipsara. Hommage à la Grèce et à ses défenseurs*. Paris, chez Champein. The score was announced on 22 July 1826 in the *Bibliographie de la France*, with misspelled names for the composer and the poet.

17. Which had been used as an "intermediary" language for several translations into Spanish published in Paris.

more explicit what Pastou actually meant…

But who was Baptiste Pastou? Born in Le Vigan, north of Montpellier, in 1784, to a family of musicians, he was expected to become a musician himself, but his passion for the military made him enlist in the Army in September 1802, where he served until Napoleon's fall; he participated in the battles of Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Heilsberg, then served in Spain, and finally took part in the campaign in France. Back in civil life in 1815, he returned to music, gave lessons on violin, guitar and accompaniment, set up a school of "vocal music", and elaborated a violin method and a vocal method. He wrote several "romances", of which *The Retreating Drummer* sounds like a nostalgic echo of his previous life, and *The Two Nobilities* like a veiled political criticism of the day.[18] In the spring of 1828 he discovered Beethoven's symphonies during a concert Berlioz also attended; they were simultaneously moved to tears by the revelation. Of his readings of Byron, I have found no trace so far, but the fact that he was a captain of light infantry in Napoleon's Army certainly predisposed him to become a Byron admirer (you might think that I am joking, but the number of officers of the "Old Army" who expressed admiration for Byron exceeds by far any possible coincidence), and his Languedocian origins might reveal that he had acquaintances with the rich translation school of the city of Montpellier. Fétis, in his *Biographical Dictionary*, named Pastou as a "chevalier de la Légion d'honneur", which he would become, but not until the July Revolution. In 1828, he was known as a teacher and a pedagogue. All in all, it is likely that Pastou meant that, like Byron, Berlioz had a talent for "describing" or "depicting" tragic feelings and for moving his audience.

The years that followed Pastou's exclamation did not bring any fundamental change in the musical reception of Byron in France. Whether the Institute's choice of the *Death of Sardanapalus* as its competition subject in 1830 had any relation to the prevalent Byron-mania, or to the famous Delacroix painting, is not documented, but the fact is that it gave Berlioz the opportunity to win the Prix de Rome with a grand topic, at once antique and reminiscent of a modern play, which was certainly inspiring for him. It could have been a great operatic subject, but would not be used for such a purpose for a long time to come, and not by Berlioz.

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18. Le Tambour en retraite. Chanson, paroles de Mr Firmin Aîné, musique de B. Pastou, avec accompagnement de piano par Rhein, Paris : Hentz et Jouve, [s.d.] VM7-86974. It is the only music by Pastou in the BnF catalogue, but the official announcement of its publication in the *Bibliographie de la France*, on 23 March 1821, was accompanied by another one: Les Deux Noblesses, chansonnette en forme de ronde, avec accompagnement de guitare par B. Pastou. Prix, 75c. - Le Tambour en retraite, chanson avec accompagnement de piano. Prix 1fr.5oc. – (…) A Paris, chez Jouve.


B. PASTOU.
Fondateur de l'Ecole de la Lyre harmonique

1) Opera: local production and imported goods

Unlike what happened with Walter Scott's novels, which were adapted as opera *libretti* very soon after their publication, Byron's poems and dramas did not prompt the same frenetic activity. That was not peculiar to France only but is valid for Italy and Germany as well. One of the first operas linked to Byron is – again! – derived from an apocryphal work rather than from a genuine work. *The Vampyre*, of course, inspired the masterpiece by Marschner, first performed in 1828. Six years later, Berlioz considered it of "high musical interest" and called upon the good sense of Parisian theatre directors to bring it to Paris. When he was on his way to the Villa Medici, Berlioz missed by a few weeks Giovanni Pacini's *Corsair* which was premièred in Rome in January 1831.[19] It is not documented whether he was able to attend any of the performances, but what is well-known is Berlioz's deep disdain and relentless execration of the composer. Should we then assume that his reading of Byron's poem *The Corsair* in the cool of a confessional in St Peter's was an antidote to Pacini's opera? Byron's passionate poetry is presented by Berlioz as a kind of antithesis to Roman indolence.

While Berlioz was in Italy, no opera derived from Byronic sources was created, either on this or on that side of the Alps. A few months after his return to Paris, Donizetti's *Parisina* was staged in Florence (17 February 1833), but the Parisian public would have to wait until 1838 before being able to see it. By that time, the Byron-mania in Paris had been stagnating (even at a high level) and the opera's Parisian success was most likely due to the incredible fame Donizetti was enjoying at that time, in the wake of his first success at the Théâtre des Italiens, *Marino Faliero*, on another Byronic subject, but adapted by Casimir Delavigne. Despite his general lack of enthusiasm for Italian music, Berlioz wrote a balanced review of the opera:

> Rubini's first *cavatina* was considered very graceful, but real enthusiasm was aroused by the second one. In our view, this piece is the best in the score. It is well shaped, richly developed, and its forms are distinguished. The melody in the *cantabile* is simple and moving. The allegro, by contrast, is remarkable for its powerful dramatic impetus.[20]

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19. Giovanni Pacini: *Il Corsaro*, first performed at the Teatro Apollo in Rome, libretto by Jacopo Ferretti (1784-1852) after Byron.
20. Berlioz, in *Le Rénovateur*, 29 March 1835, in *Critique Musicale*, Buchet-Chastel, t.2, pp.97-99.

The next operatic production of Byronic origin presented in Paris, in 1836, was an Italian work by a French composer: *Lara*, by Henri de Ruolz. The composer had left France for Naples in order to increase his chances of having his opera put on stage, which happened in December 1835. He came back to Paris and managed to have some extracts played at one of the Concerts du Conservatoire. Berlioz attended the performance; his friend Joseph d'Ortigue attended as well; both praised Nourrit's singing of the *cavatina*.

In 1839, yet another forgotten composer, Jules Bovery,[21] had a *Giaour* performed at the Lyon theatre. Although this "provincial" opera had the honour to be staged again in Amsterdam shortly after, it does not seem to have been successful enough to be noticed in Paris; neither Berlioz nor d'Ortigue mentioned it. (But we will see shortly that it may have had other musical consequences.) In the 1840's, Franz Liszt planned more than one opera on a libretto after Byron. The first might have been a stunning French grand opera: the librettist was to have been Alexandre Dumas, who was asked for a libretto based on *The Corsair*. Alas! this attractive project never got off the ground. Liszt, by now rarely in France, asked another French theatre-writer to adapt Byron's *Sardanapalus* as an opera: Félicien Mallefille[22] drafted a libretto which went through several revisions, and, by 1849, Liszt had sketched some 111 pages of music, but they were never assembled into a complete opera. In the meantime, Giuseppe Verdi had presented *I due Foscari* in Rome.[23] In France, Byron-inspired opera did not attract any composer in the next twenty years, which corresponds to the period of relative disaffection that Byron's works went through after the peak reached in the late 1820's and 1830's.

The names of the composers who revived Byron's works on the operatic stage later in the century are more or less forgotten. In 1864, Aimé Maillart set *Lara* as an opéra-comique. Berlioz, who had retired from his work as music critic, wrote to a friend that the new composition was "tripe" ("tatouille"). My personal experience of this opera – limited to one scene sight-read with a pianist – prompts me to imagine a "well-educated" score, without genius and fantasy, but pleasant to hear as an entertainment if not to listen to with passion. In 1865, Adrien Barthe set *The Bride of Abydos* to music (there is no mention of it in Berlioz's correspondence).

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21. Jules Bovery (1808-1868): born in Liège, died in Paris; he was a composer and a conductor; performed in Douai, Anvers, Gand. His first operas include *Mathieu Laensberg* (1833), *Le Giaour* (1839); *La Tour de Rouen* (1843); *Charles II* (1844) ; *Jacques Van Artevelde* (1846).

22. Félicien Mallefille (1813-1868) born in the Isle de France; died in Bougival; playwright, novelist, and occasional librettist.

23. Giuseppe Verdi, *I due Foscari*, premiered at the Teatro Argentino in Rome, on 3 November 1844.

Two years later, Victorin de Joncières composed an opera after *Sardanapalus*, which I would be glad to hear, especially if it is of the same quality as his later opera *Dimitri*, recently recorded.[24] All in all, Byron did not have the impact on opera in France that Walter Scott had. We have therefore to search for Byron's influence elsewhere in the musical landscape.

2) "Romances" and "scènes dramatiques"

In the 1820's and 1830's in France (as in England[25]), a few poets wrote original works based on Byron's poems. Several of these hybrid creations were set to music; some of them may even have been written for that purpose, like Hilaire Sazerac's poem, *Le Corsaire*, which is shaped in the form of the French musical "romance": a simple song with four couplets and a chorus. It expresses the warnings of a young lady in love with a pirate seaman who is about to sail .

Où vas-tu, corsaire intrépide?
N'entends-tu pas les vents, les flots ?
Crois-tu que ta barque rapide
Résiste à leurs doubles assauts ?
Ne t'éloigne pas de la plage !
Je t'en prie au nom de l'amour.
Ah ! si tu quittes ce rivage
En vain j'attendrai ton retour. [26]

Though no names are mentioned in the poem, the "intrepid corsair" is likely to refer to Conrad, and the poor tender loving young lady to Medora: such a departure scene as described in the piece strongly reminds one of the corresponding section in Canto 1 of Byron's work, and Sazerac

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24. Victorin Joncières (1839-1903), *Dimitri*, premiered at the Théâtre Lyrique de la Gaieté, on 5 May 1876, and recorded as a 2CD set, Ediciones Singulares, 2014, with the support of Palazzetto Bru Zane – Centre de Musique Romantique française.

25. At the 2010 International Byron Conference, in Boston, on "Byron and the book", Sharifah Aishah Osman, from the University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, presented and analysed an original poem by Letitia E. Landon published in 1833 in *Heath's Book of Beauty*, which "tells" *The Corsair* again, from Gulnare's viewpoint.

26. "Where are you going, intrepid corsair? / Hear you not the winds and waves? / Do you think that your swift boat / Will resist their double assaults? / Don't move away! / I pray you, in the name of love. / Ah! If you leave this shore / Vainly will I wait for your return." (Our translation)

left other hints of his enthusiasm for Byron.[27] Amédée de Beauplan's score was published with an illustrated title page which evokes the fight of the Greeks against the Turks and most probably Byron's Oriental Tales. Let's remember that in Paris, from 1817, songs had often been published adorned with lithographic "vignettes" whose main aim was to catch the buyer's eye in the shop-windows of music publishers. Such pictures give us a second chance to get the poet's original intention "translated" by a contemporary artist. With his *fustanella*, his heavy weapons and dreadful gaze, the male hero standing at the centre of the picture, impervious to the humble prayer of his sobbing mistress, looks like a caricature of the fierce type of the Byronic hero.

From the 1820's till the late 1840's in France, the theme of the daring outlaw at sea was one of the most popular, for its cheap exoticism and harmless enthusiasm for freedom, in music as well as in poetry. (Let's think again of Berlioz's famous reading sessions at St Peter's.) Whether closely connected to their Byronic origin or not directly related to it, the pirate and corsair songs all flowed from the same English-speaking literature, and mainly from Byron.[28] Two late examples are *Le Chant du corsaire* for two tenors and a bass, composed by Saverio Mercadante to lines by E. Monnier, and *La Chanson du Pirate* composed by Alfred Quidant[29] to lines by Gustave Mathieu, where the poets played with the idea that his vessel is the pirate's only true love. There is nothing directly Byronic in them, but the composers could well have had Byron in mind when they wrote their melodies, as they were impregnated with his poetry. (Mercadante's opera *Francesca Donato, ossia Corinto distrutta*, derived from *The Siege of Corinth*, was premièred on 14 February 1835 at the Teatro Regio in Turin, and we will shortly meet Quidant again.)

Earlier on, in 1839, Antoine Bessems, born in 1806 in Antwerp,[30] composed an amusing song entitled *Le Corsaire* to hilarious lines by Adolphe Vannois.[31] Again, the text does not find its direct origin in any of Byron's works, but its tone is unmistakably Byronic.

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27. As an example, in *Un mois en Suisse, ou souvenirs d'un voyageur* (1824-1826), Hilaire Sazerac alludes to Byron's travels and quotes *The Prisoner of Chillon*. – The "romance" of *Le Corsaire* was not included in Sazerac's collections of poems, *Mes Loisirs*, 1823, and *Heures de récréation*, 1838, or in his later miscellanea of prose and verse, *Glanes*, 1849, and *La Siesta*, 1850.

28. We can also identify the influence of Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper.

29. Alfred Quidant, *La chanson du pirate. Ma Goëlette*. Paroles de Gustave Mathieu. Paris, Bernard Latte. [1844]

30. When the city was the préfecture of the French "département" of "Les Deux Nèthes".

31. Antoine Bessems, *Le Corsaire.* Paroles d'Adolphe Vannois, Paris, Bernard Latte. [1839] Adolphe Vannois's name does appear once only in the catalogue of the BnF, precisely for this humoristic song.

Alerte matelots, voyez-vous cette voile
Qui file sur les flots comme au ciel une étoile ?
C'est un vaisseau romain !
A genoux, à genoux mes enfants !
Respectons le Saint Père
Et ne lui pillons rien
Et ne lui pillons rien sans dire une prière :
Je veux être à la fois bon chrétien,
Bon chrétien et corsaire ![32]

While this is obviously not derived from Byron's *Corsair*, its powerful sense of derision is Byronic – the Byron of the *Don Juan* period.

What has just been illustrated, based on the *Corsair,* could apply to *The Giaour* as well, which aroused many poets' and composers' imaginations at the turn of the 1830's and 1840's. At the same time as Jules Bovery based an opera on Byron's *Giaour*, Antoine Fanna, a Venetian musician who had settled in Paris, illustrated the same poem with an extended "scène" for bass voice and pianoforte;[33] the hero sings of his fierce hatred for Hassan, tells of his lost love for "Zélie" – as Leila was renamed – and prepares himself to fight his rival and arch-enemy; when the latter is in sight, the piece comes to an end, and leaves the listener uncertain about the outcome of the fight – unless he is well acquainted with Byron's poem. This "dramatic scene" is built like a kind of miniature opera, with an overture, an aria, followed by an *allegro moderato*, which grows into a tormented coda.

In 1841, Louis Graziani, yet another Italian composer who had settled in Paris, wrote *Le Giaour* to lyrics by Alexandre Dumas. The poem, which describes the hero's passionate love for a young blue-eyed lady, is supposed to take place before the beginning of Byron's poem. It is a 19th-century example of the "story" of a well-known hero's youth. The first edition of the score was illustrated by Célestin Nanteuil, one of the leading young graphic artists of the "1830 generation", a friend of Théophile Gautier's and Gérard de Nerval's, who was also closely connected with Victor Hugo and Dumas. In addition to his paintings and numerous book

32. "Watch out, seamen! Can you see this sail / Speeding on the waves like a shooting star? / It's a Roman vessel! / On your knees, on your knees, my lads! / Show respect for the Holy Father / And let us not plunder anything from Him / Let us not plunder anything without first saying a prayer: / I want to be both a decent Christian and a corsair!"

33. Antoine Fanna (1793-1845), *Le Giaour*, air de basse-taille. Paris, Schonenberger. [1839]. – According to *Le Ménestrel*, there had been another "romance" entitled *Le Giaour*, by Emilien Pacini, already in Summer 1834; it is not available at the BnF.

illustrations, Nanteuil produced some 800 lithographs for original scores, mainly songs with piano accompaniment. His title-page pictures were supposed to make the character of the music visible at a glance, if not the whole "story" told in the usual three or four "couplets" of the score.

The Giaour is not the only piece of music derived from Byron that was illustrated by Nanteuil. His collaboration with Adolphe Vogel[34] enabled him to sketch two other Byronic characters: Cain and Manfred. But in both cases, the author of the lyrics "christianised" the heroes, thus changing the whole meaning of Byron's works. The "scene" of *Manfred* is characterized by a desperate effort to "save" the Byronic hero in spite of himself and his creator. Edouard Plouvier's poem merges the very first scene of Byron's drama with its final scene, transformed into a kind of confession in which the hero strives for redemption – the very negation of the original drama!

J'ai tout appris, j'ai voulu tout connaître.
A mon esprit j'ai voulu tout soumettre :
Hommes, ciel, Dieu lui-même mon maître,
Et, je le vois, je ne sais rien encor[e].
Brisant les fleurs de ma blonde jeunesse,
Autour de moi, j'ai banni la tendresse.
J'ai sur mon front appelé la vieillesse
Et maintenant, je n'attends que la mort.
Eternité resplendissante ou sombre,
Me gardes-tu quelque tourment vengeur
Toi que souvent j'ai bravé dans mon ombre ?
A moi, mon Dieu ! Près du tombeau j'ai peur ![35]

Can you think of anything *less* Manfredian than that?!

In the same category of original poems on Byronic themes set to music, *Le Prisonnier de Chillon* by François de Bongars is a narrative scene based on Byron's poem, and probably on Delacroix's painting as well…

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34. Grandson of Johann Christian Vogel, the eighteenth-century opera composer, Adolphe Vogel was born in Lille in 1808, and died in 1892. Like Berlioz, he studied with Reicha. His song *The three colours*, composed and published just after the July 1830 Revolution earned him success. He composed two operas in the early 1830's (*Le Podestat*, and *Marie Stuart*), which did not bring him the position he coveted; among his further works are chamber music and numerous songs and melodies.

35. Translated into English: "I've learnt everything, wanted to know everything, / I've wanted to submit everything to my mind: / Men, Heaven, God himself, my master, / And – I must admit – I don't know anything yet. / Crushing the darling buds of my youth, / I've banished tenderness. / I've called old age upon my head / And death is now my sole expectation. / Radiant or dark eternity, / Will you avenge and torment me / . . . / God, help me! so close to the tomb, I shudder!"

MANFRED


PAROLES DE Mr ÉDOUARD PLOUVIER,
AD. VOCEL
CAIN.
LE MAGE.
Paris chez COLOMBIER.

2e ÉDITION.

A SON AMI EMILE PRUDENT.

MAZEPPA

ETUDE-GALOP

DE CONCERT

POUR **PIANO** PAR

A. QUIDANT

Op. 21. N° 1. Piano. PR. 6 f.

N°

Op. 21 bis. N° 2. 4 mains. PR. 7 f. 50

PARIS, COLOMBIER, EDITR.
6, Rue Vivienne, (Au Coin du Passage Vivienne)

It focuses on the relationship between the older and the younger brothers rather than on Bonivard and freedom, and its ending, on the word "dead", is a clear imitation of Schubert's *Erlkönig*. Célestin Nanteuil also illustrated Mazeppa's ride, for the *Grand galop cosaque*, by Alexis Kustow, which leads us to the next category of musical works that I would like to highlight.

3) Instrumental music: pianistic narratives, orchestral portraits…

The next musical genre that was inspired by Byron's poems is that of original instrumental pieces, which only borrow a title from Byron, with sometimes a short summary or an epigraph. Unlike the narrative music pieces of the Revolution and Napoleonic era – the "battles" for pianoforte, where the "storyline" is minutely described in the scores in detailed "captions", sometimes directly quoted from battle bulletins – the "Byronic" instrumental pieces I have identified do not include any "captions" to explain the composer's intent and permit the interpreter – if not always the listener – to follow the tale precisely. These "pure" instrumental pieces present specific artistic challenges. Musical "translations" of poems struggle with the reverse difficulty proper to paintings: instead of explicitly depicting one carefully selected episode, easily identifiable by spectators familiar with the source of the inspiration, they "narrate" the original poem through a mere flow of combined sounds, without the external help of words. Where painters would choose Mazeppa bound to the wild horse, or one of the multiple and spectacular episodes of the wild ride, or Mazeppa courting Teresa, or the final rescue, composers had to organize several episodes into a "musical discourse". Narrating in music is an adventurous exercise when it is not supported by any text.[38] So-called "programme music" has sparked endless debates about its value since its inception at the beginning of the 1830's. In the absence of indications in the scores, "deciphering" the composer's intentions is a risky task.

Today's meeting focuses on music in France during Berlioz's lifetime, so I will not analyse the most spectacular of these instrumental pieces in as much detail as its quality might demand. I refer to Carl Loewe's *Mazeppa*, *eine Tondichtung nach Byron*, "a musical poem after Byron" for piano, composed between 1828 and 1832. So far, I have not been able

38. In his criticism, Berlioz repeatedly inveighs against "descriptive" music which uses clichés like descending scales to depict falling sunbeams and other "falsely logical" tricks.

to find any trace of Loewe in France before 1857. It is nevertheless obvious that Loewe's German publisher had a solid knowledge of modern French art: the title page shows an engraving freely adapted from Horace Vernet's celebrated painting of 1826 which shows the wolves pursuing the steed and its human burden. At the end of the score, the composer (or is it the publisher?) has given a brief summary of the action "for those who do not know Byron's poem, *Mazeppa*", but there are no indications in the ten pages of the score itself. The summary offers the pianist a precise list of the narrative passages chosen by the composer (wild ride, crossing of the river, pursuit by the wolves, collapse of the horse, approach of the vultures and final rescue), but the general impression of an exhausting ride across numerous obstacles is enough to make it a powerful musical "translation" of Byron's poem.

Mazeppa's wild ride, with its *ostinato* rhythm, is such an essentially "musical" theme that it caught the imagination of other composers. In 1847, Alfred Quidant – whom we have already met, with the pirate in love with his ship – published *Mazeppa, étude-galop*, which went through many editions in the following years, with or without its original title, with or without an illustration – when there is an illustration, it is again Horace Vernet who has been plundered and imitated, with a strange mixture of two of his paintings.[39]

You might wonder why I did not begin this *Mazeppa* section with Franz Liszt's etude, the most famous *Mazeppa* in instrumental music, whose first version precedes Loewe's piece. There are two compelling reasons for this: the first is that Liszt did not give his etude the title until its "intermediate" version, in 1840 (even if he had the thought of composing such a piano piece as early as 1834[40]); the second is that his *Mazeppa* is directly based on Victor Hugo's homonymous poem and its allegory of poetic genius, which was only "derived from" Byron's poem: it is therefore a musical "translation" of a literary transposition. Liszt's piano piece concentrates on the wild ride with its inexorable rhythm. It is as taxing for the pianist as for the young hero bound to the horse. The piece's structure is as simple as a vignette; its dynamics very much contrasted, as "black and white" as the keyboard of a grand piano. When Liszt transformed his

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39. Alfred Quidant too will be "plundered" by Louis-Moreau Gottschalk, whose "Tournament-Galop" quotes several bars of the earlier "Etude-galop"… Other *Mazeppas* for piano were composed during the nineteenth century by Langalerie (1850), Sawanoff (1851), Sowiñski (1854)…

40. I am grateful to Arnaud Laster, the eminent Victor Hugo scholar, who reminded me of Liszt's letter to Marie d'Agoult (July 1834) in which the young pianist and composer wrote: "A propos, vous ai-je dit que j'avais fait un Mazeppa qui s'élance au quadruple galop?". *Correspondance de Liszt et de la comtesse d'Agoult, publiée par Daniel Ollivier*, Paris, Grasset, 1933, t.1, p.105.

piano piece into a symphonic poem, he added orchestral colours, "translating" it from a clear sketch, as neat as an engraving, into a colour-loaded painting. He also added many more elements, so that Sacheverell Sitwell had no words strong enough to despise it:[41] "The orchestral version [of *Mazeppa*] is laboured and banal […] this piece is one of the primitive beginnings of programme music. The stage directions are too apparent and the voice of the prompter too loud […] the orchestral web is too thin and, even, the programme is too obvious." Really?

Another composer, Théodore Gouvy, used different, ingenious techniques to "translate" Byron's poems into music: not only sketches of a few "easy-to-depict" episodes, but psychological portraits of the protagonists, with specific musical themes. In his orchestral overture, *Le Giaour,* Gouvy subtly combines narrative moments (the Giaour's ride, his fight against Hassan) and musical portraits, like the beautiful "oriental" theme of Leila. This mix of techniques, enhanced by rich orchestration, gives the necessary "depth" to the musical narration.[42]

4) …and innovative symphonies

The extent to which Théodore Gouvy was indebted to Berlioz in terms of musical architecture and instrumentation has still to be thoroughly documented. But it is likely that the young Franco-German composer had a thorough knowledge of the works of his predecessor. Of course, it would be wrong to associate the development of new forms of overture exclusively with the attempt to translate Byron into music. Berlioz's efforts to renew the overture go back to the *Francs-Juges*, which Baptiste Pastou compared to "a Childe Harold", and to *Waverley*, of Walter-Scottian descent; neither of these is connected to Byron, and even the *Corsair's* overture's link to the poet is tenuous – nothing more than a title, added after the composition and preceded by two different titles, as is well known.[43] But some of Berlioz's exploration of new forms of *symphony* are definitely linked to Byron: as everybody is aware, *Harold en Italie* is by no means a concerto, it is not a "sinfonia concertante" either, it is – as explicitly described by the composer – a symphony with a solo viola, a

41. Sacheverell Sitwell, Liszt, New York, Dover Publications, Inc. 1967, pp.58 and 156.

42. *Théodore Gouvy (1819-1898) Cantate, œuvres symphoniques et musique de chambre*. Ediciones Singulares © 2013 Palazzetto Bru Zane. ISBN 978-84-939-6867-0. The *Giaour* overture is n°1 of CD 2 of the 3-CD set.

43. *Dictionnaire Berlioz*, sous la direction de Pierre Citron et Cécile Reynaud avec Jean-Pierre Bartoli et Peter Bloom, Fayard, 2003, Jean-Pierre Bartoli, "Ouverture du Corsaire", pp.125-126.

new kind of composition – as *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was a new kind of poem, somewhere between an epic poem and a descriptive poem, unclassifiable and hence irritating for some reviewers, but fascinating in the intimate correspondence between its themes and its genre.

Some critics have tried to persuade themselves and the whole world that, as not a single scene in Berlioz's *Harold* could be found in Byron, Berlioz's inspiration could not have come from Byron.[44] They have laughably insisted that there was nothing Byronic about the *idée fixe* played by the solo viola as an obsessional idea; they have tried to sever the literary link with Byron established by Berlioz himself – in a word, they have tried to demonstrate that Berlioz's work was totally alien to Byron's work. Let's listen to how the composer himself describes his work, with its witty self-mockery, a few weeks before the first performance:

> The new symphony in four parts, with a solo viola, [is] entitled *Harold*. May I ask in good faith what a symphony called *Harold* could mean? The first part aims at depicting some *scenes of melancholy, of happiness and of gaiety*; the second one claims that we are attending a *march of pilgrims singing the evening song*; the third one is entitled "*serenade of a mountaineer of the Abbruzzi to his mistress*", the fourth one drags us among *bandits having an orgy*. And always, among these various scenes, the solo viola stands as Harold, a wandering dreamer like Byron's hero, characterised by a sluggish and boring melody which keeps recurring with despairing monotony. This is what *Harold* is about.[45]

It is really dishonest to deny the Byronic influence on the composer! The role of the solo viola, a protagonist at times, a commentator at other times, or even absent or mute, is as diverse as Harold's role in Byron's poem: acting, narrating, commenting, or disappearing behind the scene. In the article *Harold en Italie* in the *Dictionnaire Berlioz*, Jean-Pierre Bartoli

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44. The most famous example of such an exercise is probably in Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in musical analysis*, Vol. IV: Illustrative Music, Oxford University Press, 1969 (9th ed.), pp. 74-75.

45. *Le Rénovateur*, 2-3 novembre 1834: ' …j'en viens tout de suite à la nouvelle symphonie en quatre parties, avec un alto principal, ayant pour titre Harold. Je vous demande de bonne foi ce que peut signifier une symphonie qui s'appelle Harold ?... 'La première partie a pour but de peindre des scènes de mélancolie, de bonheur et de joie ; la seconde prétend nous faire assister à une marche de pèlerins chantant la prière du soir ; la troisième s'intitule, sérénades d'un montagnard des Abbruzes (sic) à sa maîtresse, la quatrième nous traîne au milieu d'une orgie de bandits. Et toujours à travers les diverses scènes se retrouve l'alto solo, le Harold, vagabond rêveur comme le héros de Byron, caractérisé par une mélodie traînante et ennuyeuse qui se reproduit avec une désespérante uniformité. Voilà ce que c'est qu'Harold.' CM t.1, p.439.

suggests that, in the symphony, the solo viola gives a voice to Harold, to Byron and to Berlioz himself.[46] Liszt understood the source of the inspiration so well that he noted that "*Harold* and the *Fantastique* are two poems related to and associated with those of Byron, of Senancour, of Jean-Paul – psychological studies *in anima nobile*, as they might have written in their own language."[47]

There is little doubt that *Harold en Italie* is the most important of all the scores inspired in France by Byron during Berlioz's lifetime. Nevertheless, it is not the only one that is both monumental and innovative. The other one, after *Manfred*, and subtitled "a dramatic symphony" is based on a poem by Château-Renaud derived from Byron's "dramatic poem"; it is made up of four parts, and requires soloists and choirs. The music, by Lucien Lacombe,[48] a pianist and composer, was performed for the first time in Paris on 21 March 1847, a few months after *La Damnation de* Faust and two weeks after Félicien David's *Christophe Colomb.* But the score was not published until 1888 (posthumously), after a thorough revision, and in five parts. Berlioz did not review the performance – he was in Russia.. To my knowledge, the work has not been performed in modern times, or recorded.

We have seen that Byron inspired musicians in most genres: songs, operas, instrumental pieces, and symphonies. Berlioz is for sure among the composers most sensitive to the influence of the poet. Shall we return one moment to examine whether the comparison of Berlioz with Byron can be justified?

5) Berlioz and Byron : what Pastou could not know

At the beginning of this essay I tried to imagine what Baptiste Pastou could have meant with his exclamation. Apart from a sense of heroism and a talent for depicting violent and contrasting feelings, there is little that Pastou could have heard or known of Berlioz which could have triggered the bold comparison with Byron. With today's knowledge of Berlioz's life and works, of Byron's reception in France at the time of Berlioz, and

46. *Dictionnaire Berlioz*, Fayard, 2003, Jean-Pierre Bartoli, « Harold en Italie », pp.248-251.
47. Franz Liszt. *Tout le ciel en musique. Pensées intempestives, choisies et présentées par Nicolas Dufetel*, Le Passeur, 2016, fragment n°248.
48. Louis Lacombe (1818-1884) was born in Bourges and died in Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue. He was on friendly terms with Berlioz, to judge from an undated letter to him from Berlioz (*Correspondance générale, t.VII,* p.590).

Byron's life and works, many more parallels can be drawn between the two artists. Here is a short list of points they had in common. They both mixed different genres with supreme talent, Byron in *Don Juan*, Berlioz in *Benvenuto Cellini*, and they both exasperated some contemporary critics who were at a loss when confronted with this "dissolution of the artistic genres". They both created or refined "hybrid" genres – Byron with "plays to be read", like *Manfred*, a "dramatic poem", and Berlioz with *La Damnation de Faust*, a "légende dramatique", which is not an opera but requires similar resources.They both showed an innate talent for choosing or adapting the form of their works to their contents. They both transgressed the classic rules when they needed to for their artistic purposes, Byron in his "rhymes" which were often mere assonances or his daring displacement of a tonic accent to provoke an amusing rhyme (balcòny / Giorgione), Berlioz by breaking the "rule" of symmetry in musical themes or in his original harmonic technique. Both were masters of new narrative "architecture": Byron by using abrupt transitions or avoiding such transitions (the reader has to fill the gaps with his own imagination), Berlioz by his daring harmonic or rhythmic transitions. Both were masters of complex architectures: Byron's *Giaour* and its seven different narrative voices, Berlioz's *Romeo* and its different viewpoints, external to the hero (as in the ball at the Capulets') or psychologically "internal" to him (as in the Tomb scene). Even their apparent defects and "technical" errors bring Berlioz and Byron close to each other: the same kind of nonsense has been written by critics on "Berlioz, the composer beloved by non-musicians" or on Byron whose poetry "cannot compare" with – and here comes the name of any supposed "real" poet.

It would be possible to add many more aspects: their incomparably witty correspondence, their devastating sense of humour, of satire and of self-mockery, the importance of foreign literature in their lives and works, and therefore the evidence of a common cultural multilingualism,[49] their fascination for Napoleon and disdain for the restored Bourbons, but over and above, their defence of a tradition attacked by their contemporaries: Pope for Byron, Gluck for Berlioz, who play a similar role as "tutelary spirits". Finally, neither Byron nor Berlioz was ready to accept the role of "artistic leader" – they were too jealous of their own creative freedom – though they are considered as the archetype of the Romantic poet and the

49. See the final paragraphs of Peter Bloom's article on "Richard Wagner" in the *Dictionnaire Berlioz* (Fayard, 2003, p.592), and his comment on Berlioz's letter to the German composer about the correspondences between language and music.

archetype of the Romantic musician.

As we have seen, there are several good reasons for associating the names of Byron and Berlioz, but I have found examples of another musician being compared to Byron. In 1850, Berlioz himself called his friend Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst "the Byron of the violin". What did he mean by this? "The Byron of the violin,[50] whom the English are never tired of listening to, applauding, and showering with banknotes." It sounds a bit sarcastic, doesn't it? And slightly tinged with envy too? Did Berlioz remember that Baptiste Pastou, years before, had called him "the Byron of Music"?

50. In the *Journal des Débats*, 13 April 1850. (*Critique musicale*, vol. 7, Société française de musicologie, 2013, p.278.)

Miscellany

David Cairns

Béatrice et Bénédict

Hugh Macdonald has sent us this report from a friend – "a seasoned opera-goer who has seen the opera many times elsewhere" – on the recent production by the Seattle Opera.

The programme note explained that the production team found the opera to be a bit thin for their production. So they expanded the story to include a lot more Shakespeare text, as well as bringing in the "dark" part of the love story (the betrayal of Hero). It was sung in English.

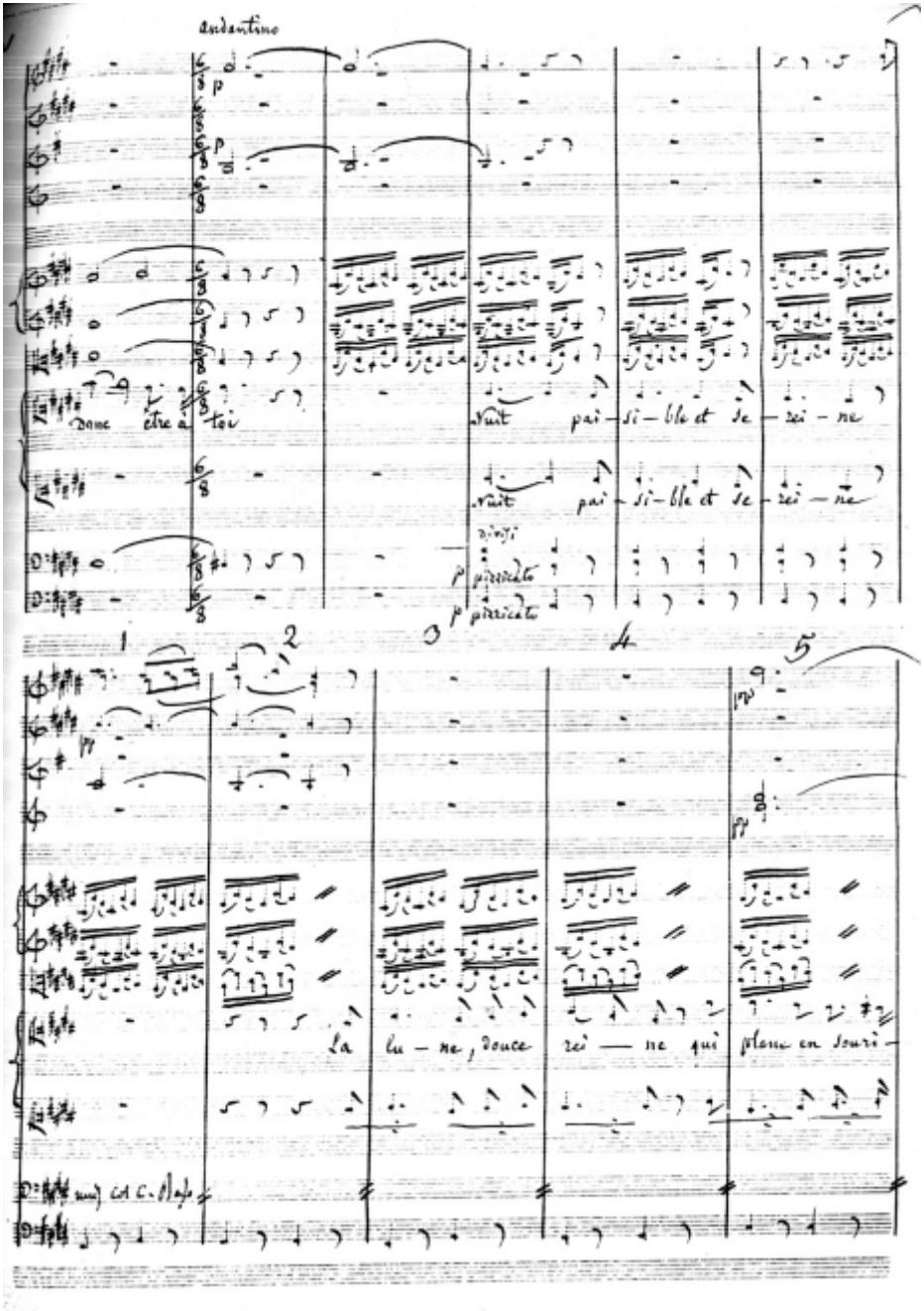
The result was a serious betrayal of the concept and tone of the opera conceived by Berlioz. New music was brought in from *The Damnation of Faust, Benvenuto Cellini*, and *L'Enfance du Christ*. There were fairly long periods with only spoken text. The music was like incidental music rather than the main thing. Because the spoken text was amplified, the unamplified singing seemed rather faint. More seriously, the dark part of the story, and the way it was presented, tended to trample on the charming tone of the opera. Case in point, the beautiful moonlight serenade by the women was immediately followed by a scene of the staged false betrayal of Hero. Then followed the intermission on a downer which cancelled the memory of the beautiful moonlight garden scene.

The conductor for the production was Ludovic Morlot, who was an active participant in the adaptation of the opera, along with the director John Langs.

Othello

Katherine Kolb has asked us to correct an error she has spotted in her piece on "Shakespeare and the Symphonie fantastique*" in Bulletin 203, on page 41. She writes:*

Following a long quotation from *Othello* III, iii, I wrote: "The Shakespeare quotations are given in the original in Berlioz's French text". Please delete the rest of the paragraph, and do not impute to Berlioz, whose knowledge of Shakespeare was clearly far better than mine, the gibberish about integrating part of Othello's famous farewell speech into the dialogue with Iago, since that is precisely where it goes.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