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**BERLIOZ**  
SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

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# BERLIOZ

## SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

**Hector Berlioz** (1803-1869)

***Symphonie fantastique*** (An Episode in the Life of an Artist), **Op.14**

- |   |      |  |       |
|---|------|--|-------|
| 1 | I.   | Rêveries, Passions: <i>Largo - Allegro agitato</i>                         | 13.55 |
| 2 | II.  | Un bal: <i>Valse allegro non troppo</i>                                    | 6.22  |
| 3 | III. | Scène aux champs: <i>Adagio</i>  | 16.59 |
| 4 | IV.  | Marche au supplice: <i>Allegretto non troppo</i>                           | 4.38  |
| 5 | V.   | Songe d'un nuit du Sabbat:<br><i>Larghetto - Allegro - Ronde du Sabbat</i> | 10.13 |

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827)

- |   |  |       |
|---|--|-------|
| 6 | <b>Overture, <i>Leonore No.2</i>, Op.72b</b> | 15.02 |
|---|--|-------|

Total timings 67.07

**PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA**  
**ESA-PEKKA SALONEN conductor**

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# BERLIOZ BEETHOVEN

## SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE OVERTURE, LEONORE NO. 2

### Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*

A young musician of melancholic sensitivity and morbid imagination poisons himself with opium in a moment of hopelessness caused by frustrated love. The narcotic, while too weak in dosage to cause his death, sinks him into a deep sleep in which the strangest visions appear. His experiences, feelings and memories are translated in his feverish brain into musical thoughts and images. His beloved becomes for him like a melody, an *idée fixe* which he meets and hears everywhere.

So begins Berlioz's programme for his First Symphony, the *Symphonie fantastique*, finalised in 1855, a quarter of a century after the young composer had first unleashed this extraordinary work on an unsuspecting Parisian public. First performed on 5 December 1830, it lent a suitably revolutionary musical coda to a year in which Europe witnessed a number of uprisings, from the liberation of Greece from Ottoman rule in February through the July Revolution in France, followed by the Belgian and the Polish insurrections in August and November respectively. Berlioz's revolutionary credentials had already been established through his arrangement of *Le Marseillaise* for chorus and

orchestra in 1830, sometime before the first performance of the *Symphonie fantastique* - a massed forces treatment which earned him great respect in a letter from the aging Rouget de Lisle, the composer of *Le Marseillaise* himself, who but for his death may well have collaborated with the young composer on further projects.

Berlioz had an unspectacular early musical training, on the family estate, initially from his liberal-minded physician father on the flageolet and later lessons on the flute and guitar from local teachers. He remains perhaps the only great composer after the Baroque era who could barely sketch more than a few chords on a keyboard. His other singular quality for a great composer is his gift of reaching forward, through the ages, not only with his music, but with his brilliant writings. His *Mémoires* remains one of the most exuberant and hilarious autobiographies yet written; packed with portraits of the musical great and the good of the day, unbelievable vignettes, dreams and nightmares and an unflagging sense of the ironic and the ridiculous. One moment he is praising his contemporaries and the next he

is damning the music of possible benefactors, such as Cherubini, to their faces. The most entertaining of memoirs, it is no real surprise that Berlioz would compose a work based on the life of that other amazing artist, autobiographer and self-promoter, Benvenuto Cellini.

Relocating to Paris in 1821, Berlioz disappointed his parents by spending more time studying music and visiting the Opéra than attending to his degree in medicine which his father hoped would, in time, see him return home to take over the family business. This was never a realistic option and Berlioz continued imbibing the operas of Gluck, Spontini, Méhul and their contemporaries even when Berlioz senior temporarily severed his allowance. Joining Jean-François Le Sueur's composition class in late 1822, the budding composer took instruction until ready to enter the Conservatoire in 1826, remaining under Le Sueur's guidance at the institution. The big composition prize was the highly sought-after *Prix de Rome* which allowed the winner to study and compose for two years at the Villa Medici in Rome, the idea being that they would be inspired by the glories not only of antiquity but also of the Renaissance and Baroque eras to further inspire their artistic endeavours. It took Berlioz four attempts to win the prize, finally succeeding in 1830 with the cantata *La mort de Sardanapale* after previous efforts had been thought either unplayable or too avant-garde. The road to the

*Symphonie fantastique* was just as rocky. A series of typically dramatic events formed the work in Berlioz's mind. The most crucial of these was the concurrent introduction to Shakespeare and to the dramatic talents of the actress Harriet Smithson. She was playing Ophelia in an English production of *Hamlet* and, despite knowing little of the language, Berlioz was well aware that he was not only in the presence of a genius, in Shakespeare, but the love of his life, in Smithson. The next year, 1828, the love-smitten composer was thunderstruck by performances in Paris of Beethoven's Third and Fifth Symphonies: 'Beethoven opened before me a new world of music, as Shakespeare had revealed a new universe of poetry'. The idea of the symphony now set Berlioz's imagination on fire, and the adoration and succeeding bitterness of his obsessive, one-sided adoration for Smithson was sublimated into his *Symphonie fantastique* with a vigour and inventiveness that was lacking among many a European symphonist of the day.

At the time, opera was heavily bankrolled by the French authorities, the state theatres receiving the lion's share of the available funds. In contrast, orchestral music was in a relatively poor condition in Paris. Compared to most other European musical centres, orchestras not attached to the theatre were often amateur and were not high on the funding agenda. Although the symphonic genre would prove to be resilient, Beethoven's nine essays were regarded by 1830 almost as the end point in the

field. It was but a momentary blip in the symphony's inexorable Romantic mission, but composers were certainly suffering from a crisis of creativity, burdened by Beethoven's monumentalism. Wagner abandoned his own symphonic efforts in the early 1830s, agreeing with many a commentator that Beethoven's Ninth had effectively delivered the final word on the symphony as a living, developing genre. Berlioz, however, had other ideas, and by the time his *Symphonie fantastique* had been performed a few times in Germany he was briefly hailed as Beethoven's heir and the saviour of the symphony. The first performance of the *Symphonie* in Paris on 5 December 1830 was meticulously organised by Berlioz and earned him a resounding success. The spectacular programme distributed at the event both satisfied an audience used to operatic storylines and the press, who had published the details ahead of the première.

By 1835, Liszt was already performing his famous transcription of the symphony, garnering it yet more fame, and Schumann was penning a long critique of the work. Ever ready to help fellow composers, Liszt published his transcription of the *Symphonie fantastique* at his own expense, while Schumann's six-part review of the *Symphonie* in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal of Music), was written at a time when his attentions were first being reciprocated by his own seemingly unattainable love, Clara Wieck. So, the *Symphonie* may well have held a two-fold fascination for him – in both

the music itself and the attached programme.

Berlioz made numerous alterations to his programme for the *Symphonie* over some 30 years since the initial performances in 1830. He was at first keen to have texts issued when a companion piece, *Lélio* was performed in tandem with the *Symphonie* and later thought that the music itself would suffice with only the movement titles as clues to the content. But no performance of the *Symphonie* is quite as thrilling without the juicy storyline attached. The gist of his programmes is as follows:

#### **Part 1 - Reveries, Passions**

The Artist remembers a time before he even laid eyes on the love of his life; the aimless joys, sadnesses and spiritual unease, followed by the incredible, volcanic love that suddenly took hold of him, attended by fits of envy, delirious torture and a return to tenderness and religious solace.

#### **Part 2 - A Ball**

Amidst the tumult of a noisy festive ball, the Artist again discovers his beloved. Her image continues to torture him wherever he travels.

#### **Part 3 - A Scene in the Countryside**

The Artist listens to a pastoral duet between two shepherds which, together with the countryside setting and trees rustling in the gentle breeze, lends him a moment of rare tranquility. But not

for long: the beloved re-appears anew in his thoughts and he is plagued by doubts – what if she has not been faithful? He hears the shepherds' tune again, but this time there is no answer, no duet. Thunder sounds in the distance as the sun sets. All is solitude and silence.

#### Part 4 - The March to the Scaffold

The Artist dreams that he has murdered the beloved and is sentenced to death. Being led to his execution, the processional march to the scaffold is variously doom-laden and ferocious or solemn and brilliant. Boisterous outbursts are followed by heavily measured footsteps. The beloved's *idée fixe* re-appears, just for an instant before the fall of the axe silences the brief thought of love.

#### Part 5 - Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

The Artist sees himself at a witches' Sabbath where he is surrounded by spectres and sorcerers and monsters of every sort. They have come to witness his funeral. Strange utterances, moans, groans and distant cries echoing until his beloved returns - hesitantly at first - to join the black Sabbath. Having lost its innocence and nobility the *idée fixe* has mutated into a coarse, trifling and grotesque dance tune. The beloved is attending the diabolical orgy. The sound of the funeral knell is accompanied by a burlesque of the *Dies Irae* plainchant melody. The dance of the witches and the *Dies irae* united.

Harriet Smithson did eventually attend a performance of the *Symphonie fantastique*, aware of her starring role in the proceedings. This was at a concert where the *Symphonie's* companion piece, *Lélio, ou Le retour à la vie* was first performed. Smithson, through intermediaries appeared at the concert, met Berlioz and indeed married him in 1833. While their relationship was more or less happy, if somewhat tempestuous, for at least six years, *Lélio*, a diffuse melodrama, is now barely remembered as a partner for the *Symphonie*.

When Berlioz heard one of Beethoven's *Leonore* Overtures, more than a decade after the *Symphonie's* success, he was bowled over by it, calling it 'a truly gigantic piece'. As ever, Berlioz was a musically astute chronicler, and although we can't be certain which of the *Leonore* overtures he actually heard on this occasion, the **Overture, Leonore No. 2** is indeed a massive piece. So large that Beethoven eventually removed it from the opera *Leonore* (later to become *Fidelio*) in favour of a shorter, punchier, more appropriate opener. It is a masterpiece on its own, a veritable tone poem about the opera rather than the expected relatively brief lead-in to the opera's first number. The subject matter of the opera, and by implication of the overture, ranges from the universal rights of man to the eventual re-uniting of the lovers of the piece, Leonore and Florestan, through an act of individual courage - a quality that Berlioz would have entirely applauded.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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### ESA-PEKKA SALONEN

Born in Helsinki, the conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen studied at the Sibelius Academy, and made his conducting début with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1979. He was Chief Conductor of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra for ten years (1985-1995) and Director of the Helsinki Festival in 1995 and 1996. From 1992 until 2009 Salonen was Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and was named the orchestra's Conductor Laureate in April 2009.

Since September 2008 Salonen has been Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra. In his first season in this role he devised and led *City of Dreams*, a nine-month exploration of the music and culture of Vienna between 1900 and 1935. The project, which presented the music of Mahler, Schoenberg, Zemlinsky and Berg in its social and historical context, travelled to 18 cities across Europe, culminating in October 2009 with semi-staged performances of Berg's *Wozzeck*, with Simon Keenlyside in the title role. A series of recordings from the project is being released on the Philharmonia/Signum label, of which *Gurrelieder* is already available. Other highlights of the 2009/10 season with the

Philharmonia Orchestra include the UK première of Magnus Lindberg's new choral work *GRAFFITI*, and touring throughout Europe and Japan.

His appointment with the Philharmonia cements a relationship that dates back over 25 years. Esa-Pekka Salonen made his London conducting début with the Philharmonia Orchestra in September 1983 (when he was 25 years old), stepping in at the last minute for an indisposed Michael Tilson Thomas to conduct a now-legendary performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 3. The chemistry was immediate, and Salonen formed a strong bond with the players. He was offered the position of Principal Guest Conductor, which he held from 1985-1994, and he has returned to conduct the Orchestra on a regular basis ever since. Some of the Philharmonia's most ambitious and important projects during this time, from *Clocks and Clouds* (Ligeti, 1996) to *Related Rocks* (Magnus Lindberg, 2001-2), have taken place under his artistic leadership.

Esa-Pekka Salonen's guest conducting engagements in the season 2009/10 include, amongst others, appearances with the New York Philharmonic, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

In August 2009, Salonen conducted the Vienna Philharmonic at Salzburg Festival. He will also conduct the Patrice Chéreau production of Janáček's opera *From the House of the Dead* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York and the Teatro alla Scala, Milan.

In his time as Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, highlights have included residencies at the Salzburg Festival, Köln Philharmonie and at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, as well as numerous European tours and guest performances in Japan. On the occasion of his 17 year tenure the Los Angeles Philharmonic celebrated him with a series of concerts in April 2009, including the première of his own violin concerto.

Esa-Pekka Salonen is renowned for his interpretations of contemporary music and has given countless premières of new works. He has led critically acclaimed festivals of music by Berlioz, Ligeti, Schoenberg, Shostakovich and Stravinsky and Magnus Lindberg. In April 2006 he returned to Paris Opéra Bastille to conduct the première of Kaija Saariaho's new opera, *Adriana Mater*, having previously conducted the Finnish première of her first opera *L'amour de loin* in 2004. In August 2007, he conducted Saariaho's *La Passion de Simone* in a production by Peter Sellars at the Helsinki Festival (first Finnish performance) before taking the production to the Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm.

Salonen is artistic director of the Baltic Sea Festival, which he co-initiated in 2003. As an annual event in August in Stockholm and across the Baltic Sea region, it invites celebrated orchestras, conductors and soloists to promote unity and ecological awareness among the countries around the Baltic Sea.

Esa-Pekka Salonen has a considerable discography. In addition to the *Gurrelieder* recording, which launched the new partnership with the Philharmonia's Signum label, forthcoming releases with the Orchestra on the same label will include Mahler's Symphonies Nos. 6 and 9. Other recent releases, on Deutsche Grammophon, include a disc of Salonen works performed with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and a DVD of Kaija Saariaho's opera, *L'amour de loin* with the Finnish National Opera as well as two CDs with Hélène Grimaud with works by Pärt and Schumann. In November 2008, Deutsche Grammophon released a new CD with Salonen's piano concerto and his works *Helix* and *Dichotomie*. The first recording of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Salonen for Deutsche Grammophon (Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* – first CD recording ever at Walt Disney Concert Hall) was released in October 2006 and nominated for a Grammy in December 2007. After recording for Sony Classical for many years, Salonen has an extensive discography with repertoire ranging from Mahler and Revueltas to Magnus Lindberg and his own works. Most of his works are also available at DG Concerts on iTunes.

# philharmonia orchestra

The Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras. Acknowledged as the UK's foremost musical pioneer, with an extraordinary recording legacy, the Philharmonia leads the field for its quality of playing, and for its innovative approach to audience development, residencies, music education and the use of new technologies in reaching a global audience. Together with its relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, most importantly its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia Orchestra is at the heart of British musical life.

Today, the Philharmonia has the greatest claim of any orchestra to be the UK's National Orchestra. It is committed to presenting the same quality, live music-making in venues throughout the country as it brings to London and the great concert halls of the world. Every year the Orchestra performs more than 200 concerts, as well as presenting chamber performances by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra, and recording scores for films, CDs and computer games. Since 1995 the Orchestra's work has been underpinned by its much admired UK Residency Programme, which began with the

launch of its residencies at the Bedford Corn Exchange and London's Southbank Centre, and now also includes De Montfort Hall in Leicester, the Anvil in Basingstoke and a series of partnerships across Kent and the Thames Gateway, based in Canterbury. The Orchestra's international extensive touring schedule each season involves appearances at the finest concert halls across Europe, the USA and Asia.

During its first six decades, the Philharmonia Orchestra has collaborated with most of the great classical artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conductors associated with the Orchestra include Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names have included Lorin Maazel (Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (Principal Conductor and Music Director) and Giuseppe Sinopoli (Music Director). As well as Esa-Pekka Salonen, current titled conductors are Christoph von Dohnányi (Honorary Conductor for Life), Sir Charles Mackerras (Principal Guest Conductor), Kurt Sanderling (Conductor Emeritus) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Conductor Laureate).



The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to pride itself on its long-term collaborations with the finest musicians of our day, supporting new as well as established artists. This policy extends into the Orchestra itself, where many of the players have solo or chamber music careers as well as their work with the Orchestra. The Philharmonia's Martin Musical Scholarship Fund has for many years supported talented musicians at the start of their careers and a new Orchestral Award, inaugurated in 2005, allows two young players every year to gain performing experience within the Orchestra.

The Orchestra is also recognised for its innovative programming policy, at the heart of which is

a commitment to performing and commissioning new works by leading composers, among them the Artistic Director of its Music of Today series, Julian Anderson. Since 1945 the Philharmonia Orchestra has commissioned more than 100 new works from composers including Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Mark-Anthony Turnage and James MacMillan. The Philharmonia Orchestra's joint series with SBC, *Clocks and Clouds: The Music of György Ligeti*, won the Royal Philharmonic Society's Best Concert Series Award in 1997 and *Related Rocks: The Music of Magnus Lindberg*, was nominated for an RPS Award. Other recent awards for the Orchestra include the RPS Large Ensemble Award and two *Evening Standard* Awards for

Outstanding Artistic Achievement and Outstanding Ensemble. In May 2007 PLAY.orchestra, a 'virtual Philharmonia Orchestra' created in partnership with Southbank Centre and Central St Martin's College of Art, won the RPS Education Award.

Throughout its history, the Philharmonia Orchestra has been committed to finding new ways to bring its top quality live performance to audiences worldwide, and to using new technologies to achieve this. Many millions of people since 1945 have enjoyed their first experience of classical music through a Philharmonia recording, and in now audiences can engage with the Orchestra through webcasts, podcasts, downloads, computer games and film scores as well as through its unique interactive music education website launched in 2005, The

Sound Exchange ([www.philharmonia.co.uk/thesoundexchange](http://www.philharmonia.co.uk/thesoundexchange)), which is now visited by almost 2 million people a year. In 2005 the Philharmonia became the first ever classical music organisation to be shortlisted for a BT Digital Music Award, and in the same year the Orchestra presented the first ever concert webcast. Now more than 3500 people a month download free monthly Philharmonia video podcasts, which include artist interviews and features on repertoire and projects; these films are also watched by more than 60,000 people on YouTube. Recording and broadcasting both continue to play a significant part in the Orchestra's activities: since 2003 the Philharmonia has enjoyed a major partnership with Classic FM, as The Classic FM Orchestra on Tour, as well as continuing to broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

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