

Berlioz and "Rakoczy March" Homework Assignment



***Please read the following pages on Hector Berlioz and "Rakoczy March". Print out just pages 4 and 5, be sure to staple them together! By the way.... Mr. Moore does wish that he had hair like that.**

Hector Berlioz was born on December 11, 1803, into the family of a Medical Doctor Louis Berlioz and Marie-Antoinette-Josephine. He was the first of 6 children of whom 3 died. He took music lessons at home from a visiting teacher and played flute and guitar. By the age of 16, he wrote a song for voice and guitar, that was later reused for his "Symphonie Fantastique."

In 1821, Berlioz went to Paris to study medicine. His impressions of the Paris Opera performance of "Iphigenie en Tauride" by Christoph Willibald Gluck turned him on music forever. He spent more days at the Paris Conservatory, than at the Medical School. In 1823, he started writing articles on music for "Le Corsaire." He abandoned medicine for music and successfully performed his "Messe Solennelle" in 1825. After being "cursed" by his mother for abandoning medicine his allowance from his father was reduced. He worked random jobs as a choir singer. In 1828, he heard the 3rd and 5th Symphonies by 'Ludwig Beethoven' and with that impression he read "Faust" by Johann Wolfgang Goethe. With such inspiration he started composing "La Damnation de Faust."

Berlioz fell in love with the Irish actress Harriet Smithson and became so inspired that he finished the "Symphonie Fantastique." He premiered the "Symphonie Fantastique" and met Franz Liszt at the premiere. They became good friends and Franz Liszt transcribed the "Symphonie Fantastique" for piano. In 1830, after being rejected by Harriett Smithson, Berlioz became engaged to the pianist Camille Moke. He went to Rome as the Prix de Rome Laureate and met Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the Russian Mikhail Glinka. All three became friends for many years. At that time, he received a letter from his fiancée that she was marrying M. Camille Pleyel, a wealthy piano maker in Paris. He decided to return to Paris and kill all three, but the long road cooled him down. He stopped in Nice and composed "Le Roi Lear," inspired by the Shakespeare's play.

Back in Paris he became friends with Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas père, Niccolò Paganini, Franz Liszt, Frédéric Chopin, and George Sand. He met the writer Ernest Legouve and they became life-long friends. In 1833, he finally married Harriet Smithson having Franz Liszt as one of his witnesses. Their son was born in 1834. Later he had a mistress, singer Marie Recio, whom he married after the death of his first wife in 1852.

Berlioz was an influential music critic. He wrote about Giacomo Meyerbeer, Mikhail Glinka, Niccolò Paganini, Franz Liszt, and other musicians. During 1834-38, he completed opera "Benvenuto Cellini." In 1838, his "Harold en Italie" was performed at the Paris Conservatoire. Niccolò Paganini was so impressed by that performance,

that he gave Berlioz 20,000 francs.

In the 1840s, Berlioz toured in Europe and strengthened his friendship with Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Richard Wagner, Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Robert Schumann. After extensive concertizing in Belgium and Germany, Berlioz returned to Paris. There his friend Mikhail Glinka, who lived in Paris for over a year, came with idea of concerts in Russia. Berlioz's joke "If the Emperor of Russia wants me, then I am up for sale" was taken seriously. Having Mikhail Glinka as a convert Berlioz was invited to Russia twice, and each tour brought him such financial gain that succeeded beyond his expectation. His deep debts in Paris were all covered many times over after his first concert tour to Russia in 1847. Back in Paris he was having difficulties in funding performances of his massive works and lived on his witty critical publications. His second tour in Russia in 1867 was so much more attractive, that Berlioz turned down an offer of 100,000 from American Steinway to perform in New York. In St. Petersburg, Berlioz noted a special pleasure of performing with the first rate orchestra of the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

The second Russian concert tour was a successful finale of his career and life. Berlioz never performed again. He died on March 8, 1869, and was laid to rest at the Cimetiere de Montmartre with his two wives.

Famous Berlioz Trivia:

- Was the first composer to write for suspended cymbal, in the last measure of "Symphonie Fantastique". Was also the first composer to specify what type of timpani mallets to use, as well as stickings, in that same piece.
- Was actually planning a composition calling for 32 timpani.
- Harriet Smithson was the inspiration for the "idee fixe" theme in the "Symphonie Fantastique.
- He became infatuated with actress Harriet Smithson after seeing her act in a Shakespeare play just once. He attended all of her subsequent performances of Shakespeare and eventually persuaded her to marry him.
- He wrote one of the first textbooks on orchestration. The book was an enormous influence on all future composers, and encouraged musicians to become more daring in their style of orchestration. It is still in print today, and still studied by musicians.
- His 1830 "Symphonie Fantastique" was the first symphony in the history of music to have a definite "storyline". All of Berlioz's future symphonic works were similarly based on literary ideas. The "Symphonie Fantastique" also featured the most unusual orchestration ever heard in a musical work up to that time, and dramatically opened new possibilities in unusual instrumentation in classical music.

"Rakoczy March" History

At the beginning of 1846, Berlioz was in Vienna. Following a farewell concert on January 11th, with the virtuoso Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst taking the viola solo in Harold en Italie, the intendant of the Hungarian National Theater, Count Ráday, suggested to Berlioz that if he wished to score a success in Pesh, which Berlioz was to visit, he should arrange the national Hungarian air, Rákóczy-induló, or Rákóczy march. Locked into the forced marriage of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Hungarians were seething with anti-Austrian sentiment, and

Berlioz was, after all, from a nation which had seen two revolutions within living memory and was, moreover, widely regarded -- if in a somewhat different sense -- as the most revolutionary of living composers.

He sketched the march the evening before leaving Vienna and completed it upon his arrival in Pesth. It was included in his first concert there, given on February 15, a Sunday morning, with the Roman Carnival Overture, movements from the *Symphonie fantastique*, and *Harold en Italie*. Wisely, Berlioz reserved it for last. An open letter to his friend, Humbert Ferrand, included in his *Memoirs*, describes with inimitable verve one of the most stupendous successes of his career. Before the concert, a newspaper editor, one M. Horváth, after examining Berlioz's arrangement of the Rákóczy air as it lay beneath the hand of the copyist, presented himself to the composer. "Well?" Berlioz asked. "Well -- I'm nervous...You state the theme piano. We, on the contrary, are accustomed to hearing it played fortissimo." With the serene assurance of the great master depicted in August Prinzhofer's pair of oft-reproduced engravings, made just weeks before, Berlioz replied, "Don't worry, you shall have such a forte as you have never heard in your life."

Indeed, after a fanfare, the theme is announced by flutes and clarinets, set off by string pizzicati, and repeated several times with suspenseful alternations of loud and soft until, as Berlioz writes, "a long crescendo...with fragments of the theme reintroduced fugally, broken by the dull thud of the bass drum, like the thump of distant cannon...." The excitement was palpable and electric, and "as the orchestra unleashed its full fury and the long-delayed fortissimo burst forth, a tumult of shouting and stamping convulsed the theater...." The piece had to be repeated, to even greater excitement. During his central European tour, Berlioz had begun the composition of *La Damnation de Faust*. With his arrangement of the Rákóczy air such a superbly accomplished fact, he did not hesitate to designate its opening scene as "the plains of Hungary," and to have Faust, like Hamlet, view troops passing to the strains of the Rákóczy March, for which he added a more elaborate coda. The autograph score was purchased by Count Casimir Batthiany for 500 francs.

Name: _____

Berlioz Reading Questions

Please answer in full, complete sentences!

1. What instruments did Berlioz study?
2. How did Berlioz's parents react to his decision to commit his life to music?
3. What three artistic works served as the inspiration for *La Damnation de Faust*?
4. Provide some information about Berlioz's significant others.
5. List some composers that Berlioz associated with, and some that he critiqued.
6. Provide three sentences describing the unique elements of *Symphonie Fantastique*.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

