

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-1869)

Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14

- 1 I Reveries; Passions 13:23
- 2 II A Ball 6:12
- 3 III Scene in the Country 13:56
- 4 IV March to the Scaffold 4:30
- 5 V Dream of the Witches' Sabbath 8:39

(Recorded November 14 & 15, 1954)

Roméo et Juliette (Dramatic Symphony), Op. 17*

- 6 Part II – Love Scene 13:20

(Recorded April 23 & 24, 1961)

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Boston Symphony Orchestra

Charles Munch, conductor

(Recorded Symphony Hall, Boston)

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Editorial Supervision: Elizabeth A. Wright

Design: Red Herring Design

Photography: Sara Foldenauer

These were original two and *three-track stereo recordings; in Super Audio CD multi-channel mode, the music will be heard only from the front left and right channels, and from the *front left, center and right channels.

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Berlioz is reported to have said: "I took up music where Beethoven left it." The remark neither utters nor implies a boast: we know from too many other statements that Berlioz put Beethoven at the summit of his musical Olympus, and that he never thought of himself as equalling, superseding, or improving upon him. Berlioz simply meant what he said, and what we must interpret is not Berlioz's opinion of himself but his understanding of Beethoven. This in turn is made clear through the conscious discipleship which began with Berlioz's first great score, the *Symphonie fantastique*.

In ranging himself behind Beethoven's leadership, Berlioz aimed at three things: to produce a large-scale piece which should be *une œuvre*—One Work—not a suite or divertissement; to produce a work of dramatic and lyrical significance (we shall later see more precisely what this means); lastly to adapt musical forms to these requirements.

It is generally believed that in the program written by Berlioz for the first audition of the *Symphonie fantastique* he gave one kind of answer to the problem, namely that music conveys "literary" ideas. His writing a program ought to prove the very opposite, since here is literature added to music. His very first words, moreover, are enough to dispel any doubts: "The composer," he says, "has aimed at developing from certain scenes what they contain that is musical."

His chief purpose in writing the program, as he tells us in the document itself, was to "furnish an occasion for characteristic pieces of music." He therefore made up a text, suited to the contemporary taste, in which the attentive modern reader can easily separate the musical intent from the verbiage. Berlioz "supposes a young musician in love," who never thinks of the beloved except "as associated with a musical thought," the two forming "a double *idée fixe*." His anguish at one

point leads him to take opium and dream dreams. The rest of the program takes the artist-hero to a ball, to country scenes, an execution, and to a posthumous revel of witches. In this scenario, action and musical ideas are interwoven quite carelessly, and we find, for example, under the heading "A Ball" a reference to Nature. Further on, a phrase about the shepherds making dialogue out of a *ranz des vaches* (a Swiss Alpine melody) makes clear the fact that no representation is intended. The music is the dialogue, just as for the last movement the text draws attention, with no hint of programmatic significance, to the superposition of the witches' dance and *Dies Irae*.

If Berlioz thus mixed two modes of expression that were always distinct in his mind, the public can be forgiven for not disentangling them—at least at first. Unfortunately, his "Episode in an Artist's Life" succeeded all too well as a piece of sensational literature and proved an

encumbrance to his own freedom as a musician. People discussed what they read and not what they heard, and the ultimate effect on Berlioz's reputation was disastrous.

Though he did not give perfect theoretical expression to his view of music drama until 1847, when he published his *Romeo and Juliet* symphony, the form itself had been developing steadily since his cantata days: it was, in a word, the organization of musical moments around a single subject, at once musical and dramatic. The idea of a unifying device in the music itself was of that same early date. By 1830, in the *Symphonie fantastique*, he named this device *idée fixe* and made up a set of incidents to fit. The musico-dramatic fusion is automatic: just as the relation of subject and "answer" in a fugue suggests the "chase" which gives the form its name, so the recurrent leitmotif suggests an enduring being or thought, which may then be labeled at the

whim of the composer or public, and pass "dramatically" through varied contexts. This is the germ of the symphonic poem.

It should now be clear how Berlioz, interpreting Beethoven, achieved "one work" and in accordance with Romanticist principles combined within it both lyrical and dramatic significance. This leaves the final question: is the drama of the *Fantastique* autobiographical? Now or never is the time to be literal in order to judge the commonplace that Berlioz wrote the symphony about himself and Harriet Smithson, the Irish actress who became his wife. The striking thing is the total lack of connection between Berlioz's relations with the actress and the scenes he chose for his story: he had never taken her to a ball, never been with her in the country—much less at a public execution: he hardly knew her except across the footlights.

Knowing Berlioz's mixture of shyness and audacity, one may readily understand how he associated his disappointed love with this ad hoc concoction in five parts; but one can say that the "Episode" came from his life only in the generalized sense that all works of the mind distill the experience of the creator. What the story corresponds to structurally is the symphonic plan: allegro, adagio, scherzo, and (here double) finale.

Finally, Berlioz left express instructions that when the *Symphonie fantastique* is to be played by itself (that is without its sequel for the stage, *Lélio*) the program must not be given out, but only the titles of the five movements. Hence the notes given out at nearly every concert that presents the symphony go against the composer's wishes. Nowadays these titles could easily be further shortened, reducing them to familiar musical categories as follows:

1. Appassionata
2. Waltz
3. Pastoral
4. Death March
5. Witches' Dance

Given these and a brief musical analysis, there is not an audience in the world that would fail to grasp whatever drama is implicit in the sounds; the *idée fixe* would obtrude itself without bearing that name—all the more without bearing Miss Smithson's.

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Although Berlioz knew Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* only in a French translation, he attended a performance of it given by Charles Kemble's London company in Paris in 1827. He fell in love not only with the play but with its leading lady, the Irish actress Harriet Smithson, and emerged from the theater determined to write music for the play and marry the Juliet. He did both but in reverse order. He married the actress in 1833 after a turbulent romance, but the pressures of making a living kept him from composing the music, even though during his stay in Italy as winner of the Prix de Rome he had made sketches for such a work.

Then in December 1838 the violinist Niccolò Paganini, excited by a performance of Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, knelt down upon the stage in the presence of lingering members of the orchestra and kissed the composer's hand—this

according to the memoirs of the composer, who also tells how he received from Paganini a note of appreciation enclosing a bank draft for 20,000 francs. Here was the liberation Berlioz needed to take a long breath and compose exactly what he pleased. His gratitude to Paganini was beyond words. When he asked the virtuoso what he should compose, his friend announced "I cannot advise you. You know what suits you best."

And indeed Berlioz knew. *Roméo et Juliette* was the result. He worked on it for seven months, beginning in the spring of 1839. Dedicated to Paganini, this dramatic symphony for mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, orchestra and chorus had its premiere at the Paris Conservatoire on November 24, 1839. Part II is largely symphonic and includes the *Scène d'amour*—the Love Scene—Berlioz's own favorite excerpt. This exquisite adagio is, in the words of C. J. Luten, "perhaps

the most passionate description of the sublimity of love in all music conveyed in an instrumental language of matchless grace and force."

"Inspiration with elegance—that's Charles Munch," wrote Moss Hart of the man who was music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from the fall of 1949 until he resigned in the spring of 1962 at the age of 70. Born in 1891 in Strasbourg, Munch was a violinist first, serving for several years as concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Wilhelm Furtwängler and gaining his first conducting experience there. When he left Germany in 1932 due to the political situation, he was determined to become a conductor; hiring the Straram Orchestra he made his debut in Paris on November 1, 1932. His rise to fame was meteoric. Just six years later he was appointed to the most coveted conductorial post in France, the directorship of the orchestra of the Paris Conservatoire. After World War II he appeared as guest conductor in Europe, the Near East, South America,

and the United States, where he made his debut in 1946 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Upon the retirement of Serge Koussevitzky, Munch became its music director. Following his own retirement from the Boston post, he appeared frequently as a guest conductor and in the fall of 1967 became music director of the Orchestre de Paris, created especially for him; he was touring the United States with that orchestra at the time of his death, November 6, 1968. Charles Munch was a conductor of the widest musical culture, noted particularly for his interpretations of the music of France and Germany, inspired by his Alsatian heritage.

THE HISTORY OF LIVING STEREO

On October 6, 1953, RCA Victor made its first experimental "binaural" recordings. At New York's Manhattan Center, Leopold Stokowski conducted a pick-up orchestra in Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* and Tchaikovsky's *Waltz from Eugene Onegin*. In December RCA continued stereo tests in Manhattan Center with Pierre Monteux and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Then, in February 1954, RCA took equipment to Boston's Symphony Hall, where Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony were recording Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. For the first time, RCA engineers captured the performance on both mono and two track tape. These experiments, combined with further technological refinements employed in Chicago's Orchestra Hall in March 1954, were the first forays into the world of stereo.

At the time that RCA initiated multi-track sessions, disc mastering and consumer playback technology were monaural. RCA Victor proceeded to use two- and three-track equipment to record the world's greatest artists—Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Reiner, Munch, Rubinstein, Fiedler—in anticipation that home technology would catch up to stereo sound. Finally, in 1955, 1/4" 7 1/2ips stereo-phonetic tape players arrived on the consumer market, and RCA released its first Stereo Orthophonic tapes.

Stereo Orthophonic tapes redefined high fidelity. In 1958, the Western Electric Company produced the breakthrough Westrex stereo disc cutter, thereby revolutionizing master disc production. Stereo playback equipment was developed to coincide with the new disc cutting technology. The same year, Living Stereo LP records were launched, ushering in the golden age of stereo high fidelity.

RCA Victor's first two-track sessions in late 1953 and early 1954 were captured on proprietary RCA RT-21 1/4" 30ips tape machines, wired to a pair of mono mixers, each dedicated to one tape track. Neumann U 47 cardioid and M-49/50 omnidirectional microphones were favored, as were RCA-designed LC-1A 15" duo-cone speakers in the control room. Three track recordings were realized on tube amplifier Ampex 300-3 1/2" machines running at 15ips and in later years at 30ips, and were mixed down to 1/4" two-track masters. No equalization was used in the original tracking process; the microphone signals were summed through passive electronics and printed straight to tape. In addition, no equalization was used to alter playback takes for artist approval.

TECHNICAL NOTES

JOHN NEWTON, SOUNDMIRROR INC.

Since the earliest days of recording, engineers have strived to make recorded sound as immediate and thrilling as natural sound. The earliest electrical recordings were made with a single microphone positioned in the hall for optimum balance. The signal was fed to a cutting lathe, and with the advent of magnetic recording, to a monaural tape recorder; a copy of that tape was used to produce the LPs which consumers listened to at home.

With stereo, two microphones were placed in the hall. Signals were fed to a stereo tape recorder and consumers, listening back on two speakers, heard a new "depth" of sound. By placing microphones in the left, center, and right of the hall, engineers progressed to 3-channel recordings, which afforded them greater control over the musical balances that ended up in the stereo mix. Even as CDs replaced LPs, this same process was often followed.

Today, with the advent of Super Audio CD and multi-channel playback, the listener can hear the left, center, and right channels exactly as the engineers heard them at the original recording sessions. In this series of Living Stereo reissues on hybrid Super Audio CDs, we have used the 3-channel original tapes whenever they existed; when the material was recorded only in stereo, we used that tape. Some of the Super Audio CDs will therefore contain 2-channel, or a combination of 2- and 3-channel material. We used only two or three of the available six channels on the Super Audio CD disc because that was the vision of the original producers.

In remastering these tapes, we kept the signal path as short as possible. A Studer-Aria analog tape recorder was connected with premium Siltech cabling directly to specifically chosen dCS converters. This DSD data is directly encoded on the Super

Audio CD. Thus the listener is able to hear the output of these converters exactly as we heard it in the studio. The DSD program is essentially identical to the analog tape. What you hear are faithful copies of each historic recording—the pure performance, presented in its original splendor. No signal processing was necessary to "improve" these extraordinary tapes.

Throughout this very exciting project, history came alive as we heard the voices of legendary engineers verbally slating the tapes with the location and date of each session. We were greatly impressed not only with how little the original tapes were edited, but how skillfully engineers edited with their high-tech tool of the day, namely, a razor blade! Applying the best in 21st-century remastering technology, we believe we have done justice to the best in 20th-century recording technology for a new generation of listeners.

TECHNISCHE ANMERKUNGEN

JOHN NEWTON, SOUNDMIRROR INC.

Seit Beginn der Aufnahmetechnologie streben Tontechniker danach, den Klang der Aufnahme so unmittelbar und ergreifend zu erzeugen, wie der natürliche Klang selbst. Die frühesten elektronischen Aufnahmen wurden mit einem einzigen Mikrophon durchgeführt, das in der Mitte des Aufnahmesaals positioniert war, um eine optimal ausgewogene Balance zu erzeugen. Das Signal wurde zu einer Schnittmaschine, und nach der Einführung von magnetischen Aufnahmen zu einer Bandmaschine geleitet. Eine Kopie dieses Bandes wurde dann für die Produktion der LPs verwendet, welche die Käufer zuhause abspielten.

Seit dem Stereozeitalter wurden zwei Mikrophone im Aufnahmesaal platziert. Die Signale wurden zu einer Stereobandmaschine geleitet, und die Konsumenten, die die LP auf zwei Lautsprechern abspielten, bekamen einen neuen Eindruck der

„Tiefe“ des Klanges. Durch eine Anordnung der Mikrophone links, mittig und rechts im Aufnahmesaal, gelangten die Tontechniker zu 3-Kanal Aufnahmen. Diese erlaubten ihnen eine größere Kontrolle über die musikalische Balance, was im Stereo Mix aufging. Noch als CDs die LPs ersetzten, wurde dieses Verfahren oft verwendet.

Heute, seit der Einführung der Super Audio CD und Multi-Kanal Wiedergabe, kann der Konsument den linken, mittleren und rechten Kanal exakt so wahrnehmen und hören, wie der Tontechniker sie während der ursprünglichen Aufnahmesitzung gehört hat. Für diese Serie von Living Stereo Wiederveröffentlichungen auf hybrid Super Audio CDs haben wir die originalen 3-Kanal Bänder verwendet, wann immer diese existent waren. Sofern nur in Stereo aufgenommen wurde, haben wir diese Bänder verwendet. Deshalb enthalten einige dieser Super Audio CDs nur 2-Kanal oder eine Kombination aus

2-Kanal und 3-Kanal Aufnahmen. Wir haben darum auch nur zwei oder drei der sechs auf einer Super Audio CD verfügbaren Kanäle benutzt, da dies die Vision der ursprünglichen Produzenten war.

Während des Remastering Prozesses dieser Bänder haben wir den Weg des Signals so kurz wie möglich gehalten. Eine analoge Studer-Aria Bandmaschine wurde durch hochwertige Siltech Kabel direkt mit speziell ausgewählten dCS Konvertern verbunden. Dieses DSD Datenmaterial wurde direkt auf die Super Audio CD kodiert. Dadurch ist der Konsument in der Lage, das Ergebnis dieser Konverter exakt so zu hören, wie wir es im Studio gehört haben. Das DSD Programm ist im Wesentlichen identisch mit den analogen Originalbändern. Was Sie hören sind genaue Kopien von jeder der historischen Aufnahmen—die pure Aufführung, präsentiert in ihrem ursprünglichen Glanz. Keine Aufbereitung der Signale

war erforderlich, um diese herausragenden Bänder zu „verbessern“.

Im Verlauf dieses außerordentlich reizvollen Projekts wurde Geschichte lebendig, während wir die Stimmen legendärer Tontechniker gehört haben, wie sie den Ort und das Datum der jeweiligen Aufnahmesitzung auf die Bänder gesprochen haben. Wir waren höchst beeindruckt, nicht nur darüber wie wenig die Originalbänder bearbeitet worden waren, sondern auch wie gekonnt die Tontechniker mit dem High-Tech Gerät ihrer Tage gearbeitet haben: einer Rasierklinge! Für eine neue Generation von Hörern glauben wir der Aufnahmetechnologie des 20. Jahrhunderts gerecht geworden zu sein, unter Verwendung der besten Remastering Technologie des 21. Jahrhunderts.

NOTE TECHNIQUE

JOHN NEWTON, SOUNDMIRROR INC.

Depuis les tout débuts de l'enregistrement discographique, les ingénieurs rivalisent d'efforts pour que le son enregistré soit aussi immédiat et électrisant que le son naturel. Les premiers enregistrements électriques étaient réalisés avec un seul micro placé dans la salle pour une balance optimale. Le signal était transmis à un graveur, et, avec l'avènement de l'enregistrement magnétique, à un magnétophone monophonique ; une copie de cette bande magnétique était utilisée pour produire les microsillons que le consommateur écoutait chez lui.

Pour la stéréophonie, on a installé deux microphones dans la salle. Les signaux étaient transmis à un magnétophone stéréophonique, ce qui conférait un nouveau « relief » sonore à l'enregistrement écouté par le consommateur sur ses deux haut-parleurs. En positionnant

des micros à gauche, au milieu et à droite de la salle, les ingénieurs ont évolué vers un enregistrement à trois canaux leur assurant un meilleur contrôle de l'équilibre musical du mixage stéréophonique final. Ce procédé a souvent continué à être utilisé alors même que le CD remplaçait progressivement le disque noir.

Aujourd'hui, avec l'avènement du Super Audio CD et de la restitution multicanaux, l'auditeur entend les canaux gauche, central et droite exactement comme les entendaient les ingénieurs lors des séances d'enregistrement originales. Dans cette collection de rééditions « Living Stereo » sur Super Audio CD hybrides, nous avons utilisé les bandes originales à trois canaux chaque fois qu'elles existaient ; lorsque le matériau n'était enregistré qu'en stéréophonie, c'est cette bande que nous avons utilisée. Certains de ces Super Audio CD contiennent donc des

enregistrements à deux canaux, ou une combinaison de matériau à deux et trois canaux. Nous n'avons utilisé que deux ou trois des six canaux disponibles sur les Super Audio CD, car telle était la conception des producteurs de l'époque.

Lors du rematriçage des ces enregistrements, nous avons veillé à ce que le parcours du signal soit aussi court que possible. Nous avons directement connecté un magnétophone analogique Studer-Aria à des convertisseurs dCS spécifiquement choisis, au moyen de câbles Siltech haut de gamme. Ce matériau DSD est encodé directement sur le Super Audio CD. L'auditeur peut ainsi entendre la sortie de ces convertisseurs exactement telle que nous l'avons entendue en studio. Le flux DSD est essentiellement identique à la bande analogique. Ce que vous entendez est une copie fidèle de chacun des enregistrements historiques :

l'interprétation à l'état pur, présentée dans sa splendeur originelle. Aucun traitement du signal n'a été nécessaire pour « améliorer » ces bandes extraordinaires.

Tout au long de ce projet enthousiasmant, l'histoire est redevenue vivante pour nous grâce à la voix de ces ingénieurs de légende repérant verbalement les bandes en indiquant le lieu et la date de chaque séance d'enregistrement. Nous avons été très impressionnés non seulement par le petit nombre d'interventions sur les bandes originales, mais aussi par le talent avec lequel ces ingénieurs réalisaient le montage nécessaire à l'aide de l'outil de pointe de l'époque : la lame de rasoir ! Utilisant le meilleur de la technologie de mixage numérique du XXI^e siècle, nous pensons avoir rendu justice au meilleur de la technologie d'enregistrement du XX^e siècle pour une nouvelle génération d'auditeurs.

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 Orchestra

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