The Musical Madhouse
(Les Grotesques de la musique)
The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters
(Retrived Second Edition)
Edited by Margaret G. Cobb

The Gardano Music Printing Firms, 1569–1611
Richard J. Agee

“The Broadway Sound”: The Autobiography and Selected Essays of Robert Russell Bennett
Edited by George J. Ferencz

Theories of Fugue from the Age of Josquin to the Age of Bach
Paul Mark Walker

The Chansons of Orlando di Lasso and Their Protestant Listeners: Music, Piety, and Print in Sixteenth-Century France
Richard Freedman

Berlioz’s Semi-Operas: Roméo et Juliette and La damnation de Faust
Daniel Albright

The Gamelan Digul and the Prison Camp Musician Who Built It
Margaret J. Kartomi

“Wanderjahre of a Revolutionist” and Other Essays on American Music
Arthur Farwell, edited by Thomas Stoner

Elliott Carter: Collected Essays and Lectures, 1937–1995
Edited by Jonathan W. Bernard

Music Theory in Concept and Practice
Edited by James M. Baker, David W. Beach, and Jonathan W. Bernard

Music and Musicians in the Escorial Liturgy under the Habsburgs, 1563–1700
Michael Noone

Analyzing Wagner’s Operas: Alfred Lorenz and German Nationalist Ideology
Stephen McClatchie

Concert Music, Rock, and Jazz since 1945: Essays and Analytical Studies
Edited by Elizabeth West Marvin and Richard Hermann

French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor
Edited by Lawrence Archbold and William J. Peterson

Musical Creativity in Twentieth-Century China: Abing, His Music, and Its Changing Meanings (includes CD)
Jonathan P.J. Stock

Berlioz: Past, Present, Future
Edited by Peter Bloom

The Musical Madhouse (Les Grotesques de la musique)
Hector Berlioz
Translated and edited by Alastair Bruce
The Musical Madhouse
(Les Grotesques de la musique)

Hector Berlioz

Translated and Edited by Alastair Bruce
with an Introduction by Hugh Macdonald

University of Rochester Press
For Libby
Disclaimer:
Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.

To view the image on this page please refer to the printed version of this book.
Contents

Illustrations xi
Introduction xiii

by Hugh Macdonald

Translator’s Note xxi

PROLOGUE

Letter from the Chorus of the Opéra to the Author 1
The Author’s Reply to the Chorus of the Opéra 3

THE MUSICAL MADHOUSE

The right to play a symphony in the wrong key 11
A crowned virtuoso 11
A new musical instrument 13
The regiment of colonels 13
A cantata 14
A programme of grotesque music 16
Is it a joke? 18
The evangelist of the drum 19
The apostle of the flageolet 20
The prophet of the trombone 21
Conductors 21
Appreciators of Beethoven 22
The Sontag version 22
You can’t dance in E 23
Kissed by Rossini 23
A clarinet concerto 24
Musical instruments at the Universal Exhibition 25
A rival to Érard 34

Diplomatic Correspondence:

Letter addressed to H.M. Aimata Pomaré, Queen of Tahiti 37
Prudence and sagacity of a provincial—Alexandre’s melodium 40
The tromba marina—The saxophone—Experts in instrumentation 41
Jaguarita—Female savages 42
The Astucio family 44
Marriages of convenience 45
Great news 46
More news 46
Barley sugar—Heavy music 47
The Evil Eye 50
Ordinary music lovers and serious music 50
Lamentations of Jeremiah 54
A model critic 66
Dramatic emphasis 66
Success of a Miserere 68
The season—The bugbears’ club 69
Minor irritations of major concerts 75
20 francs per ticket 79
War on flats 79

Scientific Correspondence:
   Plombières and Baden, 1st letter 81
   Plombières and Baden, 2nd letter 93
Aural aberrations and delusions 104

Philosophical Correspondence:
   A letter to Monsieur Ella 106
The débutante—The Director of the Opéra’s despotism 109
The song of cockerels—The cockerels of song 112
Sparrows 114
Music for laughs 116
National fatuities (Castigat ridendo mores) 117
Ingratitude shows an independent spirit 118
The futility of glory 120
Madame Lebrun 125
Time spares nothing 127
The rhythm of pride 129
A remark of Monsieur Auber 129
Music and dance 130
Dancer poets 132
Another remark of Monsieur Auber 132
Concerts 132
Nelson’s bravery 134
Grotesque prejudices 135
Non-believers in musical expressiveness 140
Mme. Stoltz and Mme. Sontag—Making millions 143
The rough and the smooth 150
Dilettanti of the fashion world—The poet and the cook 151
Orange groves—The acorn and the pumpkin 152
“Duckings” 153
Sensitivity and concision—A funeral oration in three syllables 154

Travels in France—Academic Correspondence:
   First letter—Marseilles 157
   Second letter—Lyons 164
   A day later 175
Contents

Third letter—Lille; Arras 177
All’s well that ends merrily 189

Notes 190
Sources 211
Selected Bibliography 215
Index 219
Illustrations

Berlioz in 1862. Lithograph cartoon by Étienne Carjat

Figure

1. Journal des Débats, 10 June 1854—front page, including a Berlioz feuilleton from which extracts appear in The Musical Madhouse

2. Journal des Débats, 24 October 1861—part of Berlioz’s feuilleton marked up with his autograph changes for publication in book form

3. Opéra, Paris—interior, during a performance of Auber’s La Muette de Portici

4. Tartarini. Gustave Doré

5. Transfer of the ashes of the Emperor Napoleon I to the Invalides, 15 December 1840

6. The capture of Sebastopol, September 1855. Gustave Doré

7. “The likely composition of the orchestra conducted by Monsieur Berlioz in the Hall of the Universal Exhibition”. Cartoon by Cham, 1855


10. Queen Pomaré IV of Tahiti with her second husband and two of their sons

11. Lions and Lionesses. Gustave Doré


13. The Street-Sweeper’s School (“L’École du balayeur”). Lithograph by de Villain after Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet

14. Berlioz c1860–64. Photograph by Nadar

15. View of the coast at St.-Valery-en-Caux. Watercolour by N. Pérignon

16. Opéra-Comique, Paris (Feydeau theatre)—exterior. Engraving by Elizabeth Byrne after T. T. Bury

17. Édouard Bénazet. After a drawing by Lallemand


19. Plombières—general view

20. Emperor Napoleon III. Lithograph by Marie-Alexandre Alophe

21. Le règne de la crinoline (“The reign of the crinoline”). Anonymous lithograph
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist/Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>La saison des eaux (&quot;The season for taking the waters&quot;).</td>
<td>Drawing by Cham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Les deux ânes et les deux à pieds (&quot;The two donkeys and the two walkers&quot;).</td>
<td>Gustave Doré</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Baden—the Fremersberg road. Lithograph by Jules Coignet</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>The Flight into Egypt (&quot;La Fuite en Égypte&quot;). Title page of first edition of full score (Richault, Paris, 1852)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mr. Durand, pour la 3ème et dernière fois, . . . Porter armes! (&quot;Monsieur Durand, for the third and last time . . . Shoulder arms!&quot;).</td>
<td>Lithograph by Hippolyte Bellangé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Gioacchino Rossini. Lithograph caricature by H. Mailly</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Au Théâtre-Lyrique (&quot;At the Théâtre-Lyrique&quot;). Drawing by Cham</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Adolphe Adam. Lithograph caricature by Benjamin</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Daniel Auber. Lithograph caricature by Benjamin</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rosine Stoltz. Lithograph after Francis Grant</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Henriette Sontag. Anonymous lithograph portrait, printed by Sturm, Berlin</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Berlioz in Vienna, 1845. Lithograph by Joseph Kriehuber</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Marseilles—view of La Canebière, the principal street of the city</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Jenny Lind. Anonymous engraving</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Georges Hainl. Lithograph by “A. F.”</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Lyons—view of the hill of Fourvières</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Hector Berlioz: Railway Cantata (&quot;Chant des chemins de fer&quot;).</td>
<td>Title page and first page of the autograph full score 180/81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Berlioz seeking recruits from the artillery. Cartoon by Nadar</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Lille—view of the theatre. Lithograph by Deroy</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Concert à mitraille (&quot;Concert with grape-shot&quot;). Woodcut after cartoon by J.-J. Grandville</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Berlioz, who believed his first obligation in life was to compose music and his second was to perform it, wrote six books. Bitterly though he resented his long years’ work as a critic, he was a brilliant writer, acknowledged in his own time and ever since as the wielder of a lively pen, sharp, witty, well informed and passionate. Among the great composers of his day a number had secondary callings as writers, notably Schumann and Wagner. Berlioz’s writings are much more extensive than Schumann’s, much more readable than Wagner’s, and much funnier than both.

The Musical Madhouse, published in 1859 as Les Grotesques de la musique, was Berlioz’s fourth book, with a deliberate tone of levity, as reflected in its title. It was preceded by a two-volume book of autobiography (the Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie of 1844), the Grand Traité d’instrumentation et d’orchestration modernes of the same year, and Les Soirées de l’orchestre (“Evenings with the Orchestra”) of 1852. Still to come were A travers chants in 1862 (the title is untranslatable: an early English version was entitled “Mid Realms of Song”, while the most recent is simply called “The Art of Music”) and the celebrated Memoirs, which, though compiled over many years, were not issued until 1870, after Berlioz’s death. The orchestration treatise and the Memoirs have been widely read and translated into many languages; Les Soirées de l’orchestre and A travers chants, compiled from articles published in the Parisian press, have each been translated twice into English, while the similar compilation Les Grotesques de la musique has remained untranslated until now.

This oversight has no doubt come about because humorous writing is notoriously difficult to translate and because the other books appear, at least, to take on weightier concerns such as Berlioz’s views on opera, on Gluck, on Beethoven, and so forth. As readers of the present volume will discover, Berlioz switches abruptly from telling teasing tales about musicians of his time to profound reflections on the nature of his art; indeed the two are entwined, since music is both an exalted expression of the spirit and an untidy element of everyday life. Amongst the grotesques and absurdities of the book there are many noble pages where Berlioz speaks passionately on behalf of music’s divine power and of our obligation to treat it with the utmost seriousness. Grotesques of all kinds had been declared respectable by Victor Hugo in his preface to Cromwell in 1827, where he argued that our perception of beauty is conditioned by our awareness of ugliness. Abrupt contrasts between the heroic and the commonplace, so
striking in Shakespeare, became a watchword of Romantic dramaturgy and occur frequently enough in Berlioz’s music; in his writing we detect an instinctive sense that the grotesque serves as a butt for our jokes but also as a circuitous path to the noble, the beautiful and the sublime.

Berlioz’s career as a critic began in 1833, soon after his return from Italy, when he began to make regular contributions to Le Rénovateur and to the Gazette musicale. In 1835 he became the concert critic of the Journal des Débats, an influential daily paper; his brief soon extended to opera and he continued to write for that newspaper for nearly thirty years, reporting on opera, concerts, new publications, visiting virtuosi, recently deceased musicians, newly invented instruments, his own travels abroad, and much else. A typical feuilleton, which might run to several thousand words, cost him several evenings in the theatre and long nights of agony at his desk, and it was inadequately paid. But he was glad of the modest income and had faith, at least to start with, in the power of the press to purvey his ideas on music and win readers to his cause. The Bertins, proprietors of the Journal des Débats, supported him strongly, but eventually he was regarded by many Parisians as a critic who tried to compose rather than as a composer of genius in their very midst. He was right to reflect that writing all those miles of prose had kept him from composing more music, and though posterity is much the poorer for that, we at least have his still lively, still pertinent writing as compensation.

During a visit to London in 1852, Berlioz conceived the plan of a book to be made up from miscellaneous articles and presented in the form of stories exchanged by members of an opera-house orchestra who are so numbed by the futility of much of the repertory they have to play that they leave the task of accompanying singers to the player of the bass drum while they chatter the evening away. The formula goes back to E. T. A. Hoffmann, perhaps to Chaucer and Boccaccio, and it was very successful as a book; it also allowed Berlioz to single out the great works which the players treat with proper respect by sticking to their duties. Evenings with the Orchestra appeared in December 1852 and attained its eleventh edition in 1929.

In the early 1850s Berlioz was at the height of his career as a conductor and had effectively given up composing. The haphazard genesis of The Childhood of Christ and its unexpected success in Paris in December 1854 brought about a striking change in his routine, for although the year 1855 was fully occupied with the first performance of the Te Deum, with concert tours to Weimar, Brussels and London, and with his consuming duties for the Universal Exhibition in Paris in the autumn, he was able to devote the years 1856 to 1858 almost entirely to the composition of his greatest masterpiece, The Trojans, with a greatly reduced concert schedule in those years. One regular invitation which he could not refuse was from Baden-Baden, the fashionable spa to which the aristocracy of all Europe flocked in the summer and where Berlioz was royally treated as an honoured guest con-
ductor. His observations on the curious behaviour of the Baden visitors make up some of the most diverting pages of *The Musical Madhouse*, the compilation of which occupied Berlioz at the end of 1858, after *The Trojans* was completed and after three annual visits to the spa. *The Musical Madhouse* was intended as a sequel to *Evenings with the Orchestra*, as we can tell from the Prologue presented in the form of a letter from the chorus of the Paris Opéra begging for a book that will while away their long periods of waiting backstage. It was dedicated to them, with Paris named as a “barbarous city” in contradistinction to the artists of “X***, a civilised city”, to whom the earlier book was dedicated. The new book was not divided up in the same way, but still contained a miscellany of writings mostly drawn from *Journal des Débats* articles from the 1850s, with some important pieces from the 1840s, notably the accounts of his visits to Marseilles, Lyons and Lille in the years 1845–46. *Les Grotesques de la musique* was an attractive little volume of three hundred pages, published by A. Bourdilliat et Cie in March 1859. It remained in print until 1933 and was almost as successful as its predecessor.

Three years later Berlioz put out a third compilation of articles under the title *A travers chants*. This volume renounced the story-telling fiction and concentrated on musical and aesthetic matters much more than the biography and anecdote that had filled the earlier books. Finally, in 1865, Berlioz sent his *Memoirs* to the printers, but although a few close friends were given copies at that time, the book’s existence was kept a closely guarded secret until after his death on 8 March 1869.

*The Musical Madhouse* is structured around four “Correspondences”, in turn diplomatic, scientific, philosophic and academic, although the labels bear little relation to the content. The first is an imagined report to Queen Pomaré of Tahiti about the musical instruments at the Universal Exhibition of 1855, which have already been discussed a few pages earlier; the second describes Berlioz’s visits to the summer spas; the third, scarcely philosophic, recounts the composition of *The Flight into Egypt*; and the fourth recalls Berlioz’s concerts in the French provinces—not an academic topic at all. The other major essays include the “Lamentations of Jeremiah”, a heartfelt cri de cœur about the critic’s unhappy calling constructed in a form any musician would recognise as a rondo. “The season”, along with the following essay, “Minor irritations of major concerts”, gives a vivid picture of the difficulties and frustrations of giving concerts in mid-century Paris, with which Berlioz was perhaps more familiar than anyone. “The futility of glory” is a meditation on the havoc wreaked on composers’ scores after their death. In an age which felt that old music ought to be brought up to date, Berlioz was a pioneer in the belief that a composer’s instructions are sacrosanct, bearing an integrity that no conductor or singer has any right to trample on. There is passion, even desperation, in his plea to perform
Disclaimer:
Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.

To view the image on this page please refer to the printed version of this book.
Disclaimer:
Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.

To view the image on this page please refer to the printed version of this book.
Gluck according to the proper tradition, and his regard for Mozart was inspired largely by the thought that he had been cold-shouldered by the French and that his music had been grievously misrepresented.

There is passion, too, in his evocation of Mme. Sontag’s wonderful performance of The Marriage of Figaro in London in 1851, even though it is buried in a diatribe against the obscene fees paid to star singers (a theme that has not lost its force today). Berlioz was appalled by Offenbach and the disgraceful level of Second Empire taste to which his operettas seemed to pander. He fumed at artists whose greed transcended their artistic integrity. Striking yet another modern note, we find Berlioz enraged by the way daughters are treated by pushy fathers, and curious about the movement of glaciers and the rise and fall of global temperature. There is a bemused curiosity about science throughout the book, always treated humorously, with a recurrent concern for mountain ranges, distant oceans, subterranean forces and the idyllic qualities of distant lands. In the early 1850s, when his prospects in Paris seemed particularly bleak, Berlioz spoke longingly of Tahiti and the South Seas, imagining the delights of a land where the abuses and humiliations of Parisian life did not exist. By the middle of the decade, his son Louis was sailing the oceans himself at the start of a career at sea, and the dream was to some extent transferred to him. Meanwhile Berlioz found something close to heaven on earth in St.-Valery-en-Caux, a small town on the Normandy coast, where there were no aspiring singers, no virtuoso pianists, no music critics, in fact no music—a telling contrast to the city of Euphonia described in Evenings with the Orchestra, where everything is devoted to the service of music and everything is organised according to enlightened (i.e., Berlioz’s own) designs.

In The Musical Madhouse, the disillusionment is sometimes painful, but it is always leavened by humour. To make sarcasm funny is a high art of which Berlioz was a master (“Dear me!” he remarks, “What naïveté, asking a Director for direction!”), and it helped him through his final years when disappointment and chronic ill-health beset him. He even describes his sickbed and its tribulations in the essay “Concerts”. Another consolation was his devotion to great literature, evidence of which is sprinkled throughout the book. He quotes freely and frequently from his favourite authors, especially Virgil, Shakespeare, La Fontaine and Molière, without feeling the need to check his memory or supply a reference. Modern readers, ever curious to know what they’re reading, need a little help here, supplied in the present book by the Notes, which also identify the stream of composers, singers, critics and musicians of all kinds who appear in these pages. To a reader in 1859 who followed artistic matters (as all Parisians always do) these were no doubt familiar names, but most of them have today suffered the “futility of glory” and fallen into the obscurity of dictionaries—if they were lucky.
The reader is also presumed to understand the social and artistic hierarchy of Paris’s four opera houses, then still governed by regulations that circumscribed their different repertories. The Opéra (the Académie Impériale de Musique in Napoleon III’s time) commanded the highest prestige and paid the highest fees. Its repertory was “grand opera”, especially the works of Meyerbeer. With its large orchestra, chorus and corps de ballet and its reputation for technological innovation, it was the theatre to which all composers aspired. Verdi wrote *The Sicilian Vespers* for it in 1855, and Berlioz’s *The Trojans* was composed expressly for it, even though he guessed (correctly) that little or no interest would be shown in his opera. The Opéra-Comique was a smaller company, devoted to lighter works mostly by French composers. Spoken dialogue was mandatory, and it paraded a large number of works that enjoyed only brief success. Berlioz spent innumerable evenings there listening to trivial scores and racking his brains for something to say about them.

The Théâtre-Italien was confined to Italian opera and was by 1859 past its great days when Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini were to be heard and seen there. The newest house was the Théâtre-Lyrique, driving a wedge between the two older French repertories and skilfully skirting the regulations. At the very moment that *The Musical Madhouse* was published, it mounted Gounod’s *Faust*, one of the triumphs of the age, and in 1863 it was brave enough to take on *The Trojans*, even though in the end only part of the work was staged, meting out the very dismemberment against which Berlioz had railed all his life.

Berlioz adored puns, jokes and paradoxes. Like most Frenchmen, he was an ardent conversationalist and a witty raconteur. As in Shakespeare or old volumes of *Punch*, the humour of *The Musical Madhouse* is sometimes obscure, sometimes childishly obvious, sometimes right up to date. He himself described the book (in a letter of 22 January 1859 to the Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein) as “horribly jolly”, somehow embracing its unusual blend of bitterness and fun; in a later letter to her (10 March) he called it a collection of “grunts and thrusts”. “Perhaps,” he went on, “it’s a good idea to spread a few straws and needles in the beds of idiots and imbeciles; besides, the spreader feels better for it too.” These grunts and thrusts will provoke both tears and laughter, and we do Berlioz less than justice if we resist either response. Many composers have claimed that their message lies in their music, but in Berlioz’s case his message was too concerned with the real world, too verbal, too contemporary and too wide in its embrace for this to be the whole truth. The message of his music is undoubtedly his strongest and greatest legacy, but his sparkling prose is precious and personal enough for us to treasure every line.

Readers of the *Berlioz Society Bulletin* have for many years enjoyed extracts from *The Musical Madhouse* in Alastair Bruce’s brilliant transla-
tion. The bicentenary of Berlioz’s birth is surely an appropriate moment to gather the whole book within a single cover and offer the first full English translation. He has mastered the verbal sleight-of-hand with great skill and caught to perfection the immediacy of Berlioz’s prose. All those who love Berlioz the musician and Berlioz the man owe him a great debt of thanks.
Translator’s Note

Is The Musical Madhouse the best rendering of Berlioz’s title Les Grotesques de la musique? Alternative possibilities include Musical Grotesques or Music’s Absurdities or Oddities of Music, or perhaps Musical Monstrosities. After leaning towards the latter, which seemed closer to the sense of the French title, I finally decided on The Musical Madhouse because of its reflection of Berlioz’s comments in his Introduction on the ‘singular lunacies’ inspired by music.

Perhaps this dilemma over the very title of the book should have alerted me to the translational challenge of its content. It seemed such a good idea when I first started in the 1980s. Unlike Berlioz’s other two published books of essays and articles drawn from his musical criticism (Les Soirées de l’orchestre and A travers chants), Les Grotesques de la musique had never appeared in a complete English version. As a fervent admirer of Berlioz with a good grasp of French and a penchant for translation, I thought that filling this gap would make an ideal project for me.

So in a way it has proved, although I never expected its fulfilment to take so long. An original version appeared in instalments in the Bulletin of the UK-based Berlioz Society from late 1982 to 1987. This was a rather literal and stilted effort, riding roughshod over many of the subtleties and complexities of Berlioz’s text, and often inelegant if not inaccurate. It also omitted several pieces which had previously appeared in the Bulletin in translations by others.

Since then the translation has been substantially revised, completed and improved. I have tried to maintain a balance between enhancing readability for a modern audience and preserving Berlioz’s own tone and style. Finding idiomatic modern equivalents for the expressions he uses in French, without being overtly anachronistic, has presented frequent challenges, not all of which I have been able to solve. Too much polishing may result in removing even those rough edges which Berlioz himself, intentionally or not, left in.

It rapidly became clear why the book had not appeared in English before. It is a challenging work to translate, not least because of Berlioz’s fondness for wordplay and other literary conceits. I have sought to retain the effect of his many puns wherever possible, but some (like the atrocious one on ‘corregidor’ on page 79) have defeated me—others I may not even have spotted. One whole piece (“National fatuities” on pages 117–18) is based on French proverbial sayings: I have used English equivalents where they exist and invented suitably proverbial-sounding sayings where they do not.

In his letter to the Queen of Tahiti (“Diplomatic Correspondence”, pages 37–39), and also in the pieces on his travels to Plombières (see pages 93–95)
and Marseilles (see pages 160–63), Berlioz seeks to reproduce real or imagined local dialects or ways of speaking. I have created my own pseudo-dialects to convey the effect of these.

To maintain a sense of Berlioz’s Frenchness, I have generally used terms like ‘Monsieur’ and ‘Madame’ rather than ‘Sir’ or ‘Madam’, and have kept the French names of major theatres and institutions like the Opéra and the Académie Française. However, I have found it impossible to deal consistently with the titles of musical and other works. Again, I have tried to follow the principle of making the text as straightforward as possible for an English-speaking reader by translating most such titles into English. Exceptions are when they are well known in their original language (like the *Symphonie fantastique*) or when they are hard to translate idiomatically (like *A travers chants*); *Der Freischütz* meets both these criteria. Titles in French follow the French convention of giving an initial capital only up to and including the first noun; those in English have initial capitals for all significant words.

Quotations from Shakespeare are given in the original English, even when Berlioz’s versions contain minor inaccuracies. Biblical quotations are taken from the Authorised King James Version of the Bible. In most, but not quite all, cases I have retained the French currency denominations used by Berlioz (including sous and napoleons), rather than converting them all into francs and centimes; their value is explained in the notes where necessary.

Berlioz’s own few footnotes appear at the bottom of the relevant pages, marked with asterisks. My own notes, intended solely to provide helpful information and clarification for the modern reader, are indicated by small superscript numbers and grouped at the end of the volume, where they may be consulted or ignored as desired. They are followed by a list of original sources of the pieces used by Berlioz in compiling the book, based on information from Professor Léon Guichard’s scholarly French edition, published by Gründ in 1969 as one of a series of Berlioz’s literary works to mark the centenary of his death in 1869.

In the course of translating it, I have read the complete book quite a few times. I hope at least some of the enjoyment I have derived from it will be shared by readers of this version, and that they will be encouraged to read Berlioz’s other books (especially his *Memoirs* and *Evenings with the Orchestra*, the predecessor of the present work). For even greater rewards, they should get to know Berlioz’s music—easier than it used to be now that fine recordings are available of almost his entire output. He produced scarcely more than a dozen major works, all of them magnificent, and all utterly different from each other. There might have been many more if he was not condemned to earn his living as a music critic, but a book containing some of the results of that necessity is hardly the place to complain!
Berlioz was unlucky in many things, but has been outstandingly fortunate in the quality of his current interpreters and promoters. Prominent among these is Hugh Macdonald, one of today’s leading Berlioz scholars. It has been an enormous privilege to have his enthusiastic support and advice on all aspects of this volume, including numerous details of the translation and the notes as well as the Introduction he has provided. His contributions to the understanding of Berlioz and the availability of his works are innumerable, not least as General Editor of the *New Berlioz Edition*, which is coming tantalisingly close to completion. I cannot thank him enough for his commitment to bringing this much smaller project to a successful conclusion as well.

Numerous other people have helped me in a variety of ways, sometimes without even being aware of their contributions. They include Professor Guichard, whose French edition has been invaluable in providing a substantial part of the information I have used in the Notes, as well as all of that in the Sources; several of the illustrations I have chosen are also ones that appear in his edition. David Cairns is another of those admirers in whom Berlioz has been so lucky; both his two-volume life of the composer and his English edition of the *Memoirs* have been essential reference sources, as well as superb reads.

Richard Macnutt, another indefatigable Berlioz admirer and evangelist, has been kind enough to provide photographs for many of the illustrations, drawing on the outstanding resources of his own collection. I am grateful to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France for permission to use the photographs obtained from them. (All photos from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France are from the Department of Prints and Photographs with the exception of Figure 38, which comes from the Department of Music.)

Gilles Bragadir has helped on matters of French translation and topography, while Jonathan and Teresa Sumption contributed both advice and accommodation for my sortie to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. Peter Naughton was a thought-provoking, as well as thorough, reader of the proofs. The team at the University of Rochester Press and the Eastman School of Music, especially Timothy Madigan, Molly Cort, Ralph Locke (whose determination to get the book published has been magnificent) and Louise Goldberg, have been marvellously enthusiastic, encouraging and efficient. Above all I owe my thanks to my wife, Libby, who has almost single-handedly, and with boundless patience, redecorated our home at least twice over the years while I have excused myself from helping on the grounds of being engaged in translating the *Madhouse*.

My final acknowledgement must go to Berlioz himself, who through his music, his writings and his life has given me immeasurable reward and enjoyment over the thirty-five years since I first discovered his music through the *Symphonie fantastique*. This translation is a way of repaying a small
part of my debt to him—I hope it may lead others to find similar pleasures through getting to know the man and his music.

Alastair Bruce
December 2002
Prologue

Letter from the Chorus of the Opéra to the Author

Cher maître,

You have dedicated a book (Evenings with the Orchestra) “to your good friends the artists of X***, a civilised city”.1 This city, which we understand to be in Germany, is probably no more civilised than many others, despite the mischievous intent which led you to call it that. We take leave to doubt that its artists are any better than those of Paris, and their affection for you couldn’t possibly be as lively or long-standing as ours. The cho- ruses of Paris as a whole, and of the Opéra in particular, are devoted to you body and soul: they’ve proved it many times and in many ways. Have they ever grumbled at the length of your rehearsals or your insistence on musical perfection, or at your violent interjections—outbursts of fury, even—when they struggle to master the Requiem, the Te Deum, Romeo and Juliet, The Damnation of Faust, The Childhood of Christ, etc.?2 Never, absolutely never! On the contrary, they’ve always gone about their work with zeal and unfailing patience. Yet your own behaviour at those awful rehearsals is hardly gracious towards the men nor gallant towards the ladies.

When it’s almost time to start, if the entire chorus isn’t all present and correct—if even one person is missing—you pace around the piano like a lion in its cage at the zoo, growling through your teeth and chewing your lower lip, with glaring yellow eyes. If someone greets you, you turn your head away. Every now and again you violently bang out dissonant chords on the keyboard, revealing your inner rage and making it clear you would be quite capable of tearing latecomers and absentees limb from limb . . . if they were there.

Then you’re forever reproaching us for not singing quietly enough in piano passages and not attacking fortès together; you insist that we pronounce both s’s inangoisse and the second r in traiûre.3 And if even a single poorly trained wretch has strayed into our ranks and, forgetting your lecture on grammar, persists in singingangoise or traiûre, you take it out on everyone and heap cruel wisecracks on us all, calling us lackeys, scullery-maids and other such things! Well, we put up with that too, and we love you all the same, because we know you love us and we realise how much you adore music.

Only the French habit of giving pre-eminence to foreigners, even when it is flagrantly unfair, could have led you to dedicate your Evenings with the Orchestra to German musicians.

Anyway, what’s done is done, we’ll say no more about it.
Disclaimer:
Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.

To view the image on this page please refer to the printed version of this book.