Orchestral Studies

David Itkin, Anshel Brusilow Professor of Orchestral Studies
Clay Couturiaux, Assistant Director of Orchestral Studies
Charles Andersen, Master’s Conducting Associate/Operations Manager
Yuya Miyazaki, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Librarian
Daniel Wiley, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Personnel Manager

Instrumental & Keyboard Studies

Julia Bushkova, violin
Philip Lewis, violin
Felix Olsofoka, violin
Susan Dubois, viola
Daphne Gerling, viola
Eugene Osadchy, cello
Nicola Ružević, cello
Jeffrey Bradetch, double bass
Gudrun Raschen, double bass
Jaymee Haefner, harp
Mary Karen Clardy, flute
Elizabeth McNutt, flute
James Scott, flute
Terri Sundberg, flute

James Ryon, oboe
Daryl Coad, clarinet
Gregory Raden, clarinet
John Scott, clarinet
Jorge Cruz, bassoon
Kathleen Reynolds, bassoon
Eric Nestler, saxophone
Jason Bergman, trumpet
John Holt, trumpet
Terence Reynolds, horn
William Scharnberg, horn
Tony Baker, trombone

Natalie Mannix, trombone
Steven Menard, trombone
Brian Bowman, euphonium
Don Little, tuba
Christopher Deane, percussion
Mark Ford, percussion
Paul Remnick, percussion
Quincy Davis, drumset
Joseph Banowetz, piano
Steven Harlos, piano
Gustavo Romero, piano
Vladimir Viardo, piano
Adam Wodnicki, piano

College of Music Administration

John W. Richmond - Dean
Warren H. Henry - Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs
Jon Christopher Nelson - Associate Dean, Operations
Raymond Rowell - Assistant Dean, Enrollment Management and External Affairs
Benjamin Brand - Director, Graduate Studies
Jaymee Haefner - Director, Undergraduate Studies
Joel D. Wiley - Director, Admissions

Upcoming Events

Thurs., Feb. 15, 6:30 - TMEA Convention, Lila Cockrell Theatre, San Antonio
Tues., Feb. 20 - Baroque Orchestra & Collegium Singers, Paul Leenhouts, conductor
Thurs., Feb. 22 - Sun., Feb. 25 (3:00 pm - Concert Orchestra & UNT Opera present Weill’s Street Scene
Wed., Feb. 28 - Concert Orchestra & University Singers (with Felix Olsofka, violin & Kimberly Cole Luevano, clarinet
Sun., Mar. 4, 3:00 - DSO on the Go (Ruth Reinhardt conductor; Blythe Gaisert mezzo-soprano)
Sun.,Wed., Mar. 7 - Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition Winners with student conductors
Wed., Apr. 18 - Concert Orchestra (with Adam Wodnicki)
Fri., Apr. 20 - Baroque Orchestra & Collegium Singers, Paul Leenhouts, conductor
Wed., Apr. 25 - Symphony Orchestra & Grand Chorus, David Itkin, conductor, perform Verdi’s Requiem (with soprano Molly Fillmore, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Lane, tenor William Joyner, and bass Stephen Morschek)
music.unt.edu/orchestra - concerts begin at 8:00 pm in Winspear Hall, unless noted

University of North Texas
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

David Itkin, conductor
with student soloist
Ning Zhou, piano

Wednesday, February 7, 2018
8:00 pm
Winspear Hall
Murchison Performing Arts Center

music.unt.edu/orchestra - concerts begin at 8:00 pm in Winspear Hall, unless noted
VIOLIN I
William Estes+
Yuri Noh
Jiaxi Liu
Phoenix Abbo
Karim Ayala Pool
Leihlani Garcia-Tamez
Diego Campos
Jishuang Yan
Xinye Niu
GaLeoung Kim
Amy Wang
Adrienne Leung
Daseul Kim
Christian Harvey
Limeng Zhang
VIOLIN II
Jihyun Kim*
Xiang Wang
Yirong Tang
Xuanling Wan
Chin Min Wang
Sarah Marts
Criussanti Garcia-Tamez
Richard Brochetti
Asia Charles
Adrienne Fogarty-Ramirez
Xueyan Wu
Esther Tran
Chia-Ying Shieh
VIOLA
Haojian Wang*
Edwaro Rios
Duemin Kim
Kathleen Crabtree
Kyle Davis
Kelly Bartek
Nathaniel Martin
Samantha Peng
Ke Zhang
Kwan Wai Lung
Gavin O’Connell
Jorge Zapata-Marin
VIOLONCELLO
Ivana Biliskov*
Sally Murphy
Ya-Chen Lee
Yankai Peng
Jacob Surak
Samuel Lee
Alina Park
Alexander Eggleston
Nicholas Buck
Hyunjung Kim
BASS
Joseph Nunez*
Roberto Milanes
Judson Baines
Aaron Olguin
Joshua Lambert
Daniel Murray
Andrew Williams
FLUTE
Charles Gibb**
Won Lee**
Britney Balkcom
Sarah Deay
OBOE
Jongyeob Kim**
Clayton Williams**
Ha Eun An
CLARINET
Benjamin Cummins**
Samuel Day**
Catherine Conlin
Kyle McKay
BASSOON
Luke Varland**
Martin Wells**
Lauren LaChapelle
Matthew Emanuelson
HORN
Eric Hessel**
Jung Hsuan Chu**
Sarah Bryant
William Holderby
Kelli Williams
TRUMPET
Robert Garrison**^
Casey Goldman**
Matthew Fitzsimmons
David O’Neill
TROMBONE
Jeremiah Umboltz*
Scott Avant
Ethan Scholl
TUBA
Keith Packman*
Zachary Marley
HARP
Urszula Rucka*
Haley Hodson
TIMPANI
Austin Cernosek
Percussion
David Cavazos*
Houston Youngman
Nathan Rearick
Ismael Garza
Hunter Langhans
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Yuya Miyazaki
PERSONNEL MANAGER
Daniel Wiley
OPERATIONS MANAGER
Charles Anderson
OPERATIONS ASSISTANTS
Kwan Wai Lung
Charles Stolte
CONDUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

The 2017-2018 season marks Maestro David Itkin’s 10th year serving as Professor of Music and Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of North Texas College of Music, his 13th season as Music Director and Conductor of the Abilene Philharmonic, and his 4th season as Artistic Director and Conductor of the McCall Summerfest in McCall, Idaho. Following a distinguished 17-year tenure, Maestro Itkin was named Conductor Laureate of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra in July 2010. Previously he served as Music Director & Conductor of the Las Vegas Philharmonic, Lake Forest Symphony (Chicago), Kingsport Symphony (TN), Birmingham Opera Theatre, and Lucius Woods Music Festival (WI).

During past seasons Maestro Itkin’s career has taken him to 45 U.S. states and 15 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including concerts and recordings with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Slovenska Filharmonija, San Diego Symphony, and Seoul Philharmonic. Other guest conducting appearances include concerts with the Colorado Philharmonic, Annapolis Symphony, National Repertory Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony, Illinois Symphony, Delaware Symphony, New Hampshire Symphony, Cheyenne Symphony, and the Indianapolis, Baltimore, and Reno chamber orchestras. During the Summer of 2006 Maestro Itkin appeared once again with the Slovenska Filharmonija in Ljubljana, Slovenia, conducting the opening concert of the 14th World Saxophone Congress.

His book Conducting Concerti was released in August 2014 to considerable critical acclaim. Leonard Slatkin called it “a valuable textbook for the aspiring Maestro” and “highly recommended”, and Samuel Adler wrote that it is “an invaluable addition to the world of conducting textbooks.” Mr. Itkin is now the principal faculty member for the Conductors Guild/UNT International Conducting Workshop, and serves on the national board of directors of the Conductors Guild.

Mr. Itkin’s first film score (Sugar Creek) was recorded in 2006 by the Arkansas Symphony for the film’s 2007 release. His oratorio Exodus was premiered in April 2005 in Little Rock, with William Shatner narrating; it was released worldwide on CD in 2007.

In May 2009 Maestro Itkin was awarded both an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by Lyon College and the Above the Barre award by Ballet Arkansas.

In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Itkin regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician with the Arkansas and Maine all-state orchestras, Southern California High School Honors Orchestra, Las Vegas Senior Honors Orchestra, and several Texas all-region Honors Orchestras.

In demand as a speaker and lecturer, Mr. Itkin has been asked to lecture for a wide variety of organizations, including SilverSea cruise lines, two consecutive years as a featured lecturer for the Arkansas Governor’s School, the Texas Association of Symphony Orchestras, and a keynote address at the National Federation of Music Clubs national conference.

PROGRAM

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Opus 18 (1901)..........................Serge Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)
I. Moderato
II. Adagio sostenuto
III. Allegro scherzando

Ning Zhou, piano

--Intermission--

Symphony fantastique, Opus 14 (1830)......................Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)
I. Réveries - Passions (Reveries - Passions)
II. Un bal (A Ball)
III. Scène aux champs (Scene in the Fields)
IV. Marche au supplice (March to the Scaffold)
V. Songe d’une nuit du sabbath (Dream of the Night of the Sabbath)

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Photography and videography are prohibited.
Anshel Brusilow, Professor Emeritus of music, violinist and longtime conductor at UNT, was born in Philadelphia, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants who passed their love of music on to him. He began his study of violin at age 5 with William Happich and would walk to lessons with his father. Brusilow entered the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia at age 11 as a student of the world-famous violinist Efrem Zimbalist. At 16, he was accepted to the Philadelphia Musical Academy as the youngest conducting student of Pierre Monteux, with whom he would study for 10 years. Brusilow won 4th prize in the Jacques Thibaud-Marguerite Long Violin Competition in 1949.

Philanthropist Theo Pitcairn gifted Mr. Brusilow with the violin of his choice, a 1743 Guarnerius del Gesu. He sold it in 1968 when he chose conducting over playing, and recently the Guarneri was named “The Brusilow.” He performed as a soloist with major U.S. orchestras, including the San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and served as concertmaster of the New Orleans Symphony Orchestra (1954-55), associate concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell (1955-59), and concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy (1959-66). Recordings of Scheherazade and Ein Heldenleben with Ormandy display Brusilow at his best. He conducted the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra (1961-65) and then the Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia (1966-71). In 1971-73, he conducted the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, where he inaugurated their first pops concerts and led the orchestra on a tour of Central and South America. Brusilow was also music director of the Richardson Symphony from 1992 to 2012.

In 1973, Brusilow joined UNT for one year as a visiting professor. Ultimately, he decided to stay to develop the school’s orchestral and graduate conducting programs. “I had fallen in love with the school,” he said in a 2008 interview with The North Texan. “When I think about it, it was a very important turning point in my life because I went from performance to teaching, and those are two different worlds.”

During his first tenure at UNT from 1973 to 1981, Brusilow established the UNT Chamber Orchestra to perform works for smaller ensembles. Former professor of viola George Papich stated that “within a few years the UNT Symphony Orchestra performed regularly at TMEA, which was a huge and successful means of recruiting students.” He left to teach at Southern Methodist University from 1982 to 1989 and returned to UNT in 1989 bringing international prominence to Denton. Under his leadership, the UNT Symphony Orchestra performed at the Mozart Bicentennial at Lincoln Center (1991), toured Spain and other Mediterranean countries (1992), presented with UNT’s Grand Chorus “A Christmas Card to the Community” (1992), by invitation performed Verdi’s Requiem in Monterrey, Mexico (1993), performed with organists Jesse Eschbach and Lenora McCroskey at the Meyerson (1997), celebrated the orchestra’s 100th birthday by performing Cindy McClee’s Timepiece at Dallas’ Meyerson/Fort Worth’s Bass/UNT’s Murchison (2000), performed at Texas Music Educators Association in San Antonio (2007), hosted countless winners of the Van Cliburn, and accompanied many of the world’s leading soloists. University concerts under his direction never performed to less than capacity audiences.

A semifinalist in the 2016 Queen Elisabeth Music Competition, Ning Zhou also won first prize in the Jiangxi First Teenage Piano Competition at age eleven, and entered the prestigious Shanghai Conservatory of Music at age seventeen. During studies there, he performed with the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and Xiamen Symphony Orchestra, and took second prize in the 2010 Gulangyu National Piano Competition.

Additional awards have come in the Shenzhen International Piano Concerto Competition (Final Prize, 2014) and the Southern Highlands International Piano Competition (Best Chopin Prize, 2011). Mr. Zhou was a participant in the 13th quadrennial Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth; Ning’s performance was hailed by Olin Chism, music reviewer for the Fort Worth Star-Telgram, as “a highly musical person, a master not only of technique but of interpretation.” Ning has performed in Korea, Hong Kong, Australia, Belgium, Italy and Germany. Mr. Zhou received two master’s degrees, from San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He earned an artist certificate in the chamber music program at San Francisco Conservatory of Music, working with Sharon Mann and Mack McCray. Currently he is studying at University of North Texas in the studio of Pamela Mia Paul.

As a chamber music lover, Ning won first prize in the 3rd Coltman Chamber Music Competition in Austin, Texas. While studying chamber music at San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Ning expanded his artistic boundaries by each period of chamber music, including Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Bartók, Schubert, Ravel and Mozart. Ning was invited to perform in the 2014 Zephyr International Chamber Music Festival in Courmayeur, Italy and he 2016 Decoda Skidmore Chamber Music Institute in Saratoga Springs, New York.
PROGRAM NOTES (cont’d)

He sees himself at the witches’ sabbath, in the middle of a frightful crowd of spirits, sorcerers, and monsters of every kind who are assembled for his funeral. There are strange noises, moans, bursts of laughter, and far-off cries, which other shouts seem to answer. The beloved melody appears again, but it has lost its character of nobility and timidity; it is now no more than a vulgar dance tune, trivial and grotesque; it is she who has come to the sabbath... A roar of joy celebrates her arrival... She mingles with the diabolical orgy... A funeral knell, a burlesque parody of the Dies irae, a round dance (ronde du sabbat)... the round dance and the Dies irae together.

--Emily Hagen under the direction of Margaret Notley

IN MEMORIAM (cont’d)

“Anshel Brusilow was without doubt one of the truly significant leaders in the history of lifting the UNT College of Music into the realm of America’s most respected comprehensive music programs,” says Jim Scott, retired dean of the UNT College of Music. “As a superlative artist with a background of working alongside the top musicians of the twentieth century, armed with an engaging absence of pretense and a frequently irreverent sense of humor, he brought orchestra students to a level of playing well beyond their individual abilities.” Wilfred Roberts, principal bassoon of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra 1965-2015, remembers him this way: “Anshel was one of the most enormously, innately talented musicians I have ever worked with. Things other conductors worked hard at, he did with ease and in the DSO we saw it every time he stepped on the podium. I can’t think of any greater conductor, on a high level, at a university, and one that identified so closely with his students,” said Philip Lewis, professor of violin at UNT and concertmaster of the Richardson Symphony. “He just loved young people, and wanted them to do well. There was also his generosity. He would give out literally thousands of dollars in personal orchestral scholarships, and students who were in need would often get unmarked envelopes with money.” Clay Couturiaux, assistant director of orchestras at UNT, “admired his ability to inspire musicians, to draw out of the players everything they had to give and more, but especially his courage as innovator and interpreter.”

On April 23, 2008, Brusilow directed his farewell concert at UNT, leading the Symphony Orchestra (Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 in B minor) and Grand Chorus with mezzo-soprano Pamela King (Prokofiev’s Alexander Nevsky). When he stepped away from the podium that night to a standing ovation, he left behind a legacy of musical greatness. That legacy is carried on today by his former students across the world and is reflected in the $1 million Anshel Brusilow Chair in Orchestral Studies, created primarily to raise scholarship money for orchestral students.

His memoir, Shoot the Conductor, written with Robin Underdahl, was published in 2015 by the UNT Press. It took first place in the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction contest (book manuscripts) and in the 2015 INDIEFAB contest (music and performing arts division).

“Professor Anshel Brusilow served the UNT College of Music with distinction and remarkable impact for more than two decades,” says John Richmond, dean of the college. “He was an iconic and transformational figure in building the orchestral program here at UNT and, by way of the reach of his many impressive students, in nurturing orchestral music in professional and higher-education settings across the nation and around the world. We mourn his passing with a deep sense of loss but also with a profound sense of gratitude for the incredible impact of his life and work.”
Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Opus 18 (1901)
Serge Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Though the Second Piano Concerto does not match the musical complexity or staggering pianistic challenge of the Third, it remains Serge Rachmaninoff’s most frequently performed work for piano and orchestra. The concerto’s enduring popularity is founded not on virtuosity or monumental scope, but on the concerto’s melodic inspiration and the final movement’s optimistic journey from ominous tension to triumph. Its composition coincided with a sojourn in the Mediterranean Rachmaninoff undertook with a friend and colleague, the famous operatic bass Fyodor Chaliapin. This trip, which followed the unsuccessful premiere of his Symphony No. 1 in D minor, reportedly raised the composer’s spirits. Rachmaninoff felt the premiere had suffered more from Alexander Glazunov’s poor rehearsal management and conducting than from problems in his composition. After a brief bout of depression, he returned to Russia from Italy in August 1900 filled with energy and bearing sketches for the Second Piano Concerto, which he completed and personally premiered on October 27, 1901 under the baton of his cousin, Alexander Siloti. Its memorable main themes and variety of approaches to the relationship between soloist and orchestra, rather than reliance on virtuosity alone, have helped the concerto to maintain its position as a favorite among performers and audiences alike.

The sonata-form first movement opens with a series of thick, ominous chords that move slowly from F minor toward the concerto’s home key of C minor. This introduction dissolves into a soft flurry of arpeggiated chords as the strings and clarinet reveal a brooding first theme. Horns and bassoons join the texture as the theme gradually rises in a more optimistic manner. After the piano’s continued rippling arpeggios, the orchestra pauses as the piano repeats the soaring conclusion to this first theme. A last emphatic reminder of the theme’s opening gesture in the full orchestra gives way to a sweeping crescendo, and the piano introduces a gentler second theme in the related key of E-flat Major. The soloist leads as this melody unfolds, sometimes in passionate dialogue with the low strings and the woodwinds. A restless transition dominated by brass sounds leads into the development section, which explores fragments of both the first and second themes and shifts rapidly between key areas. The soloist and full orchestra then unite in a long crescendo as the melodic line soars higher and higher. The basses and timpani pause dramatically on G, the dominant of the home key, to introduce the return of the main theme, in its original key of C minor. In the recapitulation, the melodic interest is more equally shared between the strings and the soloist than in its first appearance. As the orchestra declares the main theme, the soloist plays a melody introduced in the development. Marked *alla marcia*, the melodic fragment is now more fully developed and adopts the jaunty, martial quality of the piano’s energetic staccato octaves. The piano takes the lead in a brief transition, after which a horn soloist reintroduces the second theme over gentle accompaniment from *tremolo* strings, briefly emphasizing the unexpected key of A-flat before returning to C minor. The woodwinds gradually join the texture in overlapping lyrical lines. The dynamic level

Finding himself in the country, he hears from afar two shepherds playing a rustic melody (a *ranz de vaches*) together. This pastoral duet, the setting, the gentle rustling of the wind in the trees, a few faint glimpses of hope he has recently experienced—all of these combine to produce an unaccustomed peace in his heart and make his thoughts more cheerful. He reflects on his loneliness; he hopes perhaps to be no longer alone… But if she should deceive him! … This combination of hope and anxiety, these happy thoughts that are disturbed by dark forebodings, form the subject of the *adagio*. In the end, one of the shepherds takes up the *ranz de vaches* once again but the other answers him no more… There is a distant rumble of thunder… solitude… silence.

The fourth, darkly energetic, movement portrays the young artist’s opium-induced dream in which, having killed his beloved, he is led through the streets, accompanied by a military band, to face the guillotine. At the beginning, the movement has a heavy, plodding character with straining violins, but a military band is soon heard. The march features a large and varied brass section, and the cruel brightness of its martial sounds and fanfares in this somber moment offers a hint of the macabre mood that will dominate the final movement. At last, a solo clarinet lovingly intones the *idée fixe* before a brusque chord in the full orchestra deals the guillotine’s fatal stroke. Berlioz’s note:

Having decided with certainty that his love is unrequited, the artist poisons himself with opium. This dose of the narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him instead into a sleep that is filled with the most horrible visions. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, and that he is condemned to death for this crime, that he is conducted to the scaffold, and that he witnesses his own execution. The procession progresses toward the scaffold to the sound of a march that is sometimes somber and wild, sometimes brilliant and solemn. Within the march, a dull sound of heavy steps ceases abruptly to a noisy disturbance. At the end of the march, the first four measures of the *idée fixe* reappear like a final thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

After a slow, shadowy introduction featuring a variety of woodwind timbres above *tremolo* strings, the *idée fixe* appears in a new scoring that projects a decidedly different character. No longer soaring and stately, in this final movement depicting a witches’ sabbath, it now sounds mocking and frenzied. The sound of low bells introduces the fearful moment when the bassoons and ophicleides (or today, often bass tubas) will play the *Dies irae*, a Medieval Catholic chant describing the wrath of God. This melody retains its ominous associations because it has been included in many popular film scores. With additional statements of the *Dies irae*, a Witches’ Round Dance concludes the movement. Berlioz employs a number of new instrumental techniques here. His use of effects such as *col legno* (played with the wood of the bow), plucked strings, and unusual combinations of timbres, along with the program’s evocative description of the events, offer listeners a deeply satisfying experience. Berlioz’s note:
decreases to pianissimo as the piano soloist embarks on one of the greatest virtuosic challenges thus far, in an intricate passage that simultaneously requires agility, delicacy, and speed. A quick, anxious closing section culminates in a rising scale and an abrupt fortissimo ending.

The second movement depicts the artist’s attempts to engage in distracting activities and his constant failure to escape his thoughts of love. Though the program names several settings, the movement’s title and dance-inspired sounds suggest his attendance at a ball where he encounters the object of his affections. The waltz melody that provides the movement’s primary musical material is derived from the idée fixe, and the composer’s choice to feature two harps enhances the romantic, dreamlike mood. Periodically, statements of the idée fixe interrupt the waltz as if the chaotic swirl of the dance has momentarily caused the artist’s beloved to come into view. These episodes bring changes in orchestration that dramatically alter the mood until a final, complete statement of the idée fixe brings the movement to a close. Berlioz’s note:

The artist finds himself engaged in the varied events of life: surrounded by the chaos of a festival, enjoying the peaceful beauties of nature; but above all, in the town or in the fields, the beloved image comes to present itself to him and trouble his soul.

The third movement depicts a pastoral scene in which shepherds entertain themselves in the fields by playing flutes or pipes together. This fascination with an imagined idyllic life in the countryside and the escape it might offer from the noise and crowded conditions of cities is a common theme in Romantic art, as is the tendency to see the beloved reflected in the natural world. The shepherds’ duet on English horn and oboe and the later return of the idée fixe in the oboe and flute (all instruments associated with pastoral style) enhance the mood, and the movement ends with the ominous rumbling of timpani, prefiguring an approaching storm—or darker events to come. This movement bears a striking resemblance to parts of Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, which also alludes to pastoral themes through the use of woodwinds and suggests the sounds of a thunderstorm in its fourth movement. Berlioz’s note:
Symphonie fantastique, Opus 14 (1830)
Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

Symphonie fantastique contains innovative musical elements that are sufficiently rich and complex to provide an enthralling listening experience, even without a non-musical paratext. Yet Hector Berlioz did provide a detailed program for the symphony that explains the story it depicts. This plotline, along with the sensational love story that prompted the symphony’s composition, offers listeners an undeniably attractive and absorbing musical experience. Berlioz’s own extant writings, together with those of his close associates, reveal how his love for the English actress Harriet Smithson became an obsession that eventually found expression in his Symphonie fantastique. Smithson, an established actress reputed to be both beautiful and talented, was engaged in a performance tour of Paris with a traveling company in the 1820s. Berlioz attended Smithson’s acclaimed performances in which Berlioz wrote that she was apparently uninterested in the unknown young composer, and she does not appear to have responded to his numerous love letters or requests to meet. While the Shakespearean company toured the French countryside, Berlioz worked intently to build a reputation for himself in Paris. Upon completing the provincial tour, Smithson returned with her troupe to England, apparently without acknowledging her musical admirer. Berlioz was undeterred and resolved to express a love story similar to his own in a large-scale orchestral work. The Symphonie had its first performance on December 5, 1830 in Paris, apparently without attracting the actress’s interest, but her presence at a second premiere of the revised symphony two years later initiated a relationship that led—briefly—to a tumultuous marriage with Berlioz.

The symphony has several remarkable musical characteristics that express the spirit of Berlioz’s time. Both through his symphonic writing here and in his treatise on orchestration, Berlioz was a leader in expanding the palette of orchestral timbres (a process that would continue throughout the nineteenth century). In Symphonie fantastique, Berlioz expands the typical four-movement structure of the symphony with an additional movement in the manner of Beethoven’s “Pastoral” Symphony, but here with the intent of presenting a series of scenes in the love story of a young artist. Before the premiere, Berlioz had a synopsis of each movement’s storyline printed in Parisian newspapers to guide the listening experience. Thus, Symphonie fantastique can be considered an early example of the programmatic symphony: an orchestral work that depicts a story provided as text, but not sung in the manner of an opera. Though Berlioz’s program offers considerable detail, it still leaves a great deal of room for personal interpretation.

Berlioz also employed a relatively new compositional technique when he unified the five movements through the use of a recurring theme he called the idée fixe to represent the idea of the beloved. The idée fixe appears in all five movements. Altersations to the theme through new orchestration, meters, and tempos create different versions of this melody and convey the artist’s evolving impression of the loved one. Berlioz initially insisted that printed copies of the program be handed out to audience members, but his ideas about this evolved during his life. He wrote several different versions over a fifteen-year period, and later on, no longer required that the program be distributed at performances, although he wanted the programmatic titles of the movements to remain. The quoted text that accompanies the description of each movement below comes from one of his 1830 leaflets, in which Berlioz wrote that the composer’s goal has been to develop, inasmuch as they can be musically expressed, various situations in the life of an artist. The plan of the instrumental drama, which is deprived of the help of words, needs to be outlined in advance. The following program should therefore be thought of like the spoken text of an opera serving to introduce the musical movements, whose character and expression it calls into being.

The first movement hints at the sonata form that typically opens a symphony and includes an ambitious harmonic plan, but its main function is to introduce the idée fixe. A mysterious introduction for muted strings leads into an energetic section that features constant, quick-moving broken chordal patterns in the woodwinds and violins. After a more subdued, contrasting section over an extended A-flat harmony, a rapid intensification of energy unites the full orchestra, including prominent timpani, in preparation for the entrance of the idée fixe in the first flute and first violins. This long, soaring melody has several phrases, which unfold over quiet, pulsing chords in the strings. Several orchestral outbursts of thick chords follow. The idée fixe is repeated once exactly as before, and then several times with new accompaniments and instrumentation. A final full iteration features vibrant brass and timpani, after which the movement ends with a tender, emotional statement of the melody’s first phrase in the violins while the full orchestra, marked “as sweetly as possible, religiously,” intones gently fluctuating chords.

The composer imagines that a young musician, affected by the malady that the celebrated writer called the vague des passions, sees for the first time a lady who unites all the charms of the idealized woman of his dreams, and he is seized by a desperate love for her. Through some bizarre trick of the mind, her beloved image never appears to the artist’s mind without being accompanied by a musical idea, in which he detects a particular character that he ascribes to the object of his affections: passionate, but also noble and timid.