

Berlioz to Bellamy

Innovations in Space and Time

Had Berlioz had the stomach for the gory bits of a medical training we may never have heard of him. Following his father's preference he enrolled in medical school, but a jump out of a window to escape a dissection class soon led to a jump into music. Largely self-trained, he was a composer, a conductor, a music writer and critic. His compositions were highly original, and he became one of the leading lights of the Romantic era, advancing the cause of French music at a time when German music was dominant.

The "Te Deum" was one of his major works and was composed in 1848–49. No money was promised in advance so he had to work hard to find a suitable occasion for a first performance. This took place in 1855, and was conducted by Berlioz; the occasion was the opening of the new organ in the church of Saint-Eustache in Paris. Sadly it was to be the only complete performance in his lifetime.

In his memoirs Berlioz says, "The prevailing characteristics of my music are passionate expression, intense ardor, rhythmical animation and unexpected turns," He was a pioneer of orchestration; his innovations shine through everywhere in the "Te Deum". He deployed vast instrumental and vocal forces like armies in order to make the most of a vast church acoustic; he envisaged the orchestra sited centrally, the organ at the far end (like God and the Pope) separate choirs at the ends of the transepts – the result was astounding, resounding sound!

His forte was drama. You can hear this in his:

- massive instrumental and choral outbursts
- exploitation of the contrast between colossal and intimate rich sounds
- sudden changes of tempi and mood
- irregular rhythm patterns and dynamic effects
- use of the trombones' pedal-tone growl
- unexpected combinations of instruments, e.g. in "Grande Messe des Morts" the otherworldly effect of flutes and trombones separated by many octaves, to represent the immensity of the distance from heaven to hell

- inclusion of newly invented, improved and unusual instruments

Berlioz loved the sound of large choruses. As a guest conductor he performed several concerts with over 1000 musicians. In 1851 he was in London, employed as a judge for the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace and had the opportunity to hear the singing of the Charity Children in St Paul's Cathedral. He was very impressed by the powerful effect of 6,000 children's voices singing in unison. As a result he revised the "Te Deum" the following year to add a

third choir of children's voices, contributing to the opening and closing choruses. For the 1855 performance Berlioz organised a choir of 600 orphan children, together with a double choir of 150 singers and a hundred and fifty-strong orchestra.

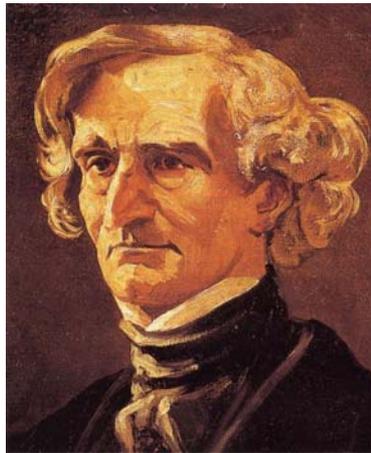
The epic and emotional qualities of his music have appealed to many film makers in a variety of genres: you will find him in "Star Trek: First Contact" (1996), Mike Newell's romantic comedy "Mona Lisa Smile" (2003) and Stanley Kubrick's horror classic "The Shining" (1980).

During his time at the Great Exhibition Berlioz judged hundreds of musical instruments from many countries. He often found it tiresome; imagine a day listening to a host of out of tune musical boxes and 24 different types of accordion. But he was particularly impressed by the Erard pianos and the extensive range of brass instruments made by Adolphe Sax, a Belgium instrument maker working in Paris. Berlioz described his newly invented saxophone as "the most beautiful low

voice known to this day". Berlioz was in awe of the craftsmanship he saw and was committed to using new instruments in his compositions.

Berlioz' music was passionate, intense and turbulent. These qualities sum up Romanticism, which replaced the simplicity, calm, and conformity of Classicism. In France his ideas were often seen as far too inventive, even eccentric, and were ridiculed; but many composers, including Wagner, Liszt, Strauss, Stravinsky and Debussy would take inspiration from his orchestral innovations.

Not long before his death Berlioz said that if he could live to be 140 his musical life would become "decidedly



Hector Berlioz



Matt Bellamy

interesting". Fast forward in time....
Born in 1803, Berlioz would have been 140 in 1943. He picked a vibrant musical year, despite the ravages of World War II. All these musical events happened in 1943:

- **Duke Ellington's** orchestra performed for the first time at New York's **Carnegie Hall**.
- **Leonard Bernstein** conducted the **New York Philharmonic** for the first time
- **Béla Bartók** wrote his "**Concerto for Orchestra**"
- **Benjamin Britten**, having just finished the "A Ceremony of Carols" and "Hymn to St Cecilia" composed his "**Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings**"
- **Sergei Prokofiev** wrote his "Flute Sonata in D Major"
- **Dmitri Shostakovich** finished his "**Symphony No. 8**"
- **William Walton** composed "**The Quest**" – a ballet
- **Frank Sinatra, Fats Waller, Irving Berlin, Benny Goodman, Glen Miller, Deanne Durbin, Bing Crosby, Lena Horne, Judy Garland** and **Anne Shelton** had hit songs
- Ralph Vaughan Williams' "**Symphony no 5 in D major**" had its premiere
- The soundtrack to "**Oklahoma**" was released
- **Miles Davis** began his musical career

Remember Berlioz' excitement over the piano and saxophone? You wonder what he would have written about Miles Davis' band. Working with a host of talented musicians including the pianist Herbie Hancock and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, Miles Davies would stretch the dimensions of jazz music. In the next two decades, inspired by an optimism based on the strong post-war economy and the boom in technology, music genres expanded and diversified. With the arrival of "hi-fi" (high fidelity) in the 1950's and 60's there was a

Duke Ellington



Leonard Bernstein



Frank Sinatra



Benjamin Britten



Miles Davis



fascination with space exploration, which provided a rich seam of inspiration for classical, jazz and pop musicians.

Who knows, Berlioz might well have appreciated the way musicians aimed to convey an impression of the vastness of space and the emotions of the explorers beyond our world. Pop groups often employed exotic and unusual sounds generated by newly- developed electronic instruments, and included wordless vocals and studio effects. The Tornados had a hit here and in the U.S. with "The Theme from Telstar." Their producer Joe Meek had been inspired to compose the piece after the first overseas transmissions from the Telstar satellite in 1962. It was said at the time that the weird sounds on the record came from sending the signal up to the Telstar satellite and re-recording it back on Earth. More probable is the story that the sounds intended to symbolize radio signals were produced by running a pen around the rim of an ashtray, and that the "rocket blastoff" at the start of the record was actually a flushing toilet, with the recordings made to sound exotic by playing the tape in reverse at various speeds. See the new film "Telstar", opening in June, for more on this story.

George Bellamy was the rhythm guitarist of The Tornados. Forty-four years later in 2006, his son Matthew (songwriter, vocalist, pianist, keyboards and guitar player with Muse) wrote a tribute to him; Muse released "Knights of Cydonia" on their "Black Holes and Revelations" album. Muse love the big acoustic; they were the first band to sell out the newly built Wembley Stadium in 2007.

Small jump forward this time: to the Barbican Hall, late 2008. Hertfordshire Chorus are on stage, Musical Director David Temple sits in the audience alongside Matthew Bellamy (yes, really). In the interval, common musical influences and inspirations are discussed. Berlioz! Matthew is invited to attend Berlioz' "Te Deum" in the Sage – it's the first time it has ever been performed there. Matthew talks about his up and coming album "The Resistance"; distinctly classical apparently, a large part orchestral. Hector Berlioz sits listening behind them, and thinks its all "decidingly interesting".

Searching questions...

Don't Believe the Link?

Try Googling Matthew Bellamy and Berlioz, and find samples of Bellamy's music which show classic Berlioz ideas.

Inventions

A vast number of products and tools were invented during Berlioz' working life. Here's a selection of things invented then that we still use today. Can you work out which are still known by, or associated with their inventor's name?

Refrigerator

Dishwasher

Plastic

Photograph

Propeller

Internal combustion engine

Calculator

Morse code

Fax machine

Postage stamp

Stapler

Rubber tyres

Platform scales

Mercerized cotton

Sewing machine

Antiseptics

Pasteurisation

Safety pin

Gyroscope

Train sleeping car

Dynamite

Tin can

Air brakes

Manned glider

Traffic lights



Space Music

Make a time line that begins with Debussy (who was inspired by Berlioz) and ends with Muse. Plot composers, works and space exploration landmarks.

On Film

Berlioz' and Muse's music are gifts for film makers looking to enhance epic landscape establishing shots or moments of high emotional intensity. Choose one of your favourite films and select movements/tracks to match them to the footage.