



In Concert

Berlioz's The Damnation of Faust

Friday Night Masters
20 March at 8pm
Arts Centre Melbourne,
Hamer Hall

Saturday Night Symphony
21 March at 8pm
Arts Centre Melbourne,
Hamer Hall

What's On

April — July



Sarah Chang Plays Bruch

FRIDAY 10 APRIL

SATURDAY 11 APRIL

MONDAY 13 APRIL

Following her enormously popular concerts in 2013, celebrated violinist Sarah Chang returns to perform Bruch's famous Violin Concerto in G minor. Conducted by MSO Chief Conductor Sir Andrew Davis.



Anzac Tribute

THURSDAY 23 APRIL

FRIDAY 24 APRIL

On the eve of the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, Diego Matheuz conducts Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and incidental music to Goethe's *Egmont*. With the MSO Chorus and Australian and international soloists.



Beethoven: the 1808

Vienna Concert

SATURDAY 2 MAY

With a line-up of internationally acclaimed soloists and the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir joining the Orchestra for this rare event, we invite you to sit back and relax in the company of one of music's greatest creative minds.



Beethoven's Symphony No.7

THURSDAY 22 MAY

FRIDAY 23 MAY

MONDAY 25 MAY

One of the world's most sought-after composers, Matthias Pintscher, returns to conduct the Australian premiere of *Idyll*, an MSO co-commission, in a program that also includes Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Saint-Saëns' Third Violin Concerto.



Britten's War Requiem

THURSDAY 11 JUNE

FRIDAY 12 JUNE

Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, a haunting piece interweaving the traditional Latin Mass for the Dead with the works of First World War poet Wilfred Owen, is paired with the profoundly moving *Elegy in memoriam Rupert Brooke* by Frederick Kelly.



Yuja Wang plays Prokofiev

THURSDAY 23 JULY

FRIDAY 24 JULY

SATURDAY 25 JULY

Chinese piano superstar Yuja Wang brings her acclaimed virtuosity to Prokofiev's tempestuous Second Piano Concerto. Also featuring Tchaikovsky's *Marche Slave* and Brahms' luminous fourth and final symphony.



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Welcome to Berlioz's The Damnation of Faust

MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Let us forth!/Come and taste life and pleasure./While every sense shall glow with a joy beyond measure.

Thus, with such tempting pleasantries, does Méphistophélès lure Faust into his satanic web. This devilish entreaty proves as irresistible to the lovelorn Faust as Goethe's epic poem did to Hector Berlioz.

Welcome to this special performance of *The Damnation of Faust* – an operatic oratorio described by its master composer as a '*Légende dramatique*'. Such are the complexities of its scoring and fearsome singing demands, the work is rarely performed. But it is one of those huge pieces that positively demands to be performed. One of its foremost interpreters is MSO Chief Conductor Sir Andrew Davis, whom we proudly welcome back for his third season.

The Damnation of Faust is of symphonic strength and dramatic intensity, and is the true test of orchestra, chorus and soloists. To do it justice, Sir Andrew has assembled the finest cast available. The singers include the incomparable Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel, who returns after his landmark concerts in 2013 to sing Méphistophélès. Faust is sung by tenor Andrew Staples, and Marguerite by Croatian mezzo-soprano Renata Pokupić.

The other vital ingredient in *The Damnation of Faust* is the chorus, whose role is not only indispensable but almost omnipresent. For this performance the MSO Chorus, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, is joined by the men of the Sydney Philharmonia Choir.

I hope you enjoy this performance of one of the most astonishing and extravagant works in the repertoire.



André Gremillet
Managing Director, MSO

With a reputation for excellence, versatility and innovation, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is Australia's oldest orchestra, established in 1906. The Orchestra currently performs live to more than 200,000 people annually, in concerts ranging from subscription performances at its home, Hamer Hall at Arts Centre Melbourne, to its annual free concerts at Melbourne's largest outdoor venue, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Sir Andrew Davis gave his inaugural concerts as Chief Conductor of the MSO in April 2013, having made his debut with the Orchestra in 2009. Highlights of his tenure have included collaborations with artists including Bryn Terfel, Emanuel Ax and Truls Mørk, the release of recordings of music by Percy Grainger and Eugene Goossens, a 2014 European Festivals tour, and a multi-year cycle of Mahler's Symphonies.

The MSO also works each season with Principal Guest Conductor Diego Matheuz, Associate Conductor Benjamin Northey and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus. Recent guest conductors to the MSO have included Thomas Adès, John Adams, Tan Dun, Charles Dutoit, Jakub Hrůša, Mark Wigglesworth, Markus Stenz and Simone Young. The Orchestra has also collaborated with non-classical musicians including Burt Bacharach, Ben Folds, Nick Cave, Sting and Tim Minchin.

The MSO reaches an even larger audience through its regular concert broadcasts on ABC Classic FM, also streamed online, and through recordings on Chandos and ABC Classics. The MSO's Education and Community Engagement initiatives deliver innovative and engaging programs to audiences of all ages, including MSO Learn, an educational iPhone and iPad app designed to teach children about the inner workings of an orchestra.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is funded principally by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and is generously supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. The MSO is also funded by the City of Melbourne, its Principal Partner, Emirates, corporate sponsors and individual donors, trusts and foundations.





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BRITTEN'S WAR REQUIEM

Sir Andrew Davis conducts this haunting piece, and the profoundly moving *Elegy in memoriam Rupert Brooke* by Frederick Septimus Kelly.



Ian Bostridge tenor

11 & 12 June at 8pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

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Berlioz's

The Damnation of Faust

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis
conductor

Renata Pokupić
mezzo-soprano (Marguerite)

Andrew Staples
tenor (Faust)

Bryn Terfel
bass-baritone (Méphistophélès)

Shane Lawrence
bass (Brander)

Dimity Shepherd
mezzo soprano (solo in the final chorus)

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Jonathan Grieves-Smith
MSO chorus master

Men of the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Brett Weymark
Sydney Philharmonia Choirs music director

Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, op.24

This concert is two hours 20 minutes duration with one 20 minute interval, which will take place immediately following the conclusion of Part 2. Saturday night's concert will be broadcast and streamed live around Australia on ABC Classic FM

Pre-concert talk

Join Professor Kerry Murphy, University of Melbourne for a free pre-concert talk prior to each performance at 7pm in the Hamer Hall stalls foyer.

Sir Andrew Davis

conductor

Sir Andrew Davis is Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He recently extended his contract as the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago through to the 2020/2021 season, having been appointed in 2000. He is also Conductor Laureate of the Toronto Symphony and BBC Symphony Orchestras. A former organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, he has conducted all of the world's major orchestras as well as at leading opera houses and festivals.

His tenure as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony, whom he led at the Proms and on tour to Europe, the USA and Asia, was the longest since that of the Orchestra's founder Sir Adrian Boult.

He was made a Commander of the British Empire in 1992, and a Knight Bachelor in 1999.



Renata Pokupić

mezzo-soprano (Marguerite)

Croatian mezzo-soprano Renata Pokupić is praised for her engaging and expressive interpretation of Baroque, Classical and coloratura repertoire. Recent operatic and concert highlights include performances at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Opéra de Lille, Washington National Opera, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Hofkapelle Esterházy, Göttingen International Handel Festival, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, and an extensive tour with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, 'Tribute to Lorraine Hunt Lieberson'.

Highlights in 2014/15 include a return to Wigmore Hall in recital with Roger Vignoles, Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Cherubino (*The Marriage of Figaro*) with Flemish Opera and the Gulbenkian, Lisbon, and Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* with Collegium Vocale Gent. This marks her Australian debut.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Andrew Staples tenor (Faust)

Andrew Staples sang as a chorister in St Paul's Cathedral before winning a choral scholarship to King's College Cambridge, where he gained a degree in Music.

He has performed with the Berlin Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Gävle Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, and Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

He is a regular guest at the Royal Opera House, where he has sung the roles of Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Flamand (*Capriccio*), Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Artabanus (Arne's *Artaxerxes*) and Narraboth (*Salome*).

His recent venture, Opera for Change, has taken *The Magic Flute* on tour in Africa.

Bryn Terfel bass-baritone (Méphistophélès)

The Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel made his operatic debut as Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) for Welsh National Opera, and has since performed at La Monnaie; Santa Fe Opera; the BBC Proms; La Scala; Royal Opera House; Metropolitan Opera; and the Bavarian State Opera. Highlights in 2015 include his debut in the role of Tevye (*Fiddler on the Roof*) for Grange Park Opera, the title role in *Sweeney Todd* for English National Opera, and Méphistophélès in *The Damnation of Faust* for Paris Opera and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

He is known for his versatility as a concert performer, with highlights including the opening ceremony of the Wales Millennium Centre, the BBC Last Night of the Proms, the Royal Variety Performance and a gala concert with Andrea Bocelli in Central Park, New York. For nine years he has hosted his own music festival in Faenol, North Wales.

Bryn Terfel is a Grammy, Classical Brit and Gramophone Award winner. In 2003 he was made a CBE for services to opera, and in 2006 was awarded the Queen's Medal for Music.

Shane Lawrencev bass (Brander)

Shane Lawrencev was born in Melbourne and studied in Melbourne and London. In 2008, he won the Australian Singing Competition's Opera Awards.

Shane is a full-time principal artist with Opera Australia. Recent highlights have included Scarpia in *Tosca*, Schaunard in *La bohème*, Wotan/The Wanderer in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Prince Selim in *Il turco in Italia* and Leporello in *Don Giovanni*.

His concert appearances have included *Messiah*, Mozart's Requiem; Bach's B minor Mass, St John Passion, and Haydn's *Creation*.



**Melbourne Symphony
Orchestra Chorus**

Under the leadership of Jonathan Grieves-Smith, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus has an international reputation for the highest standards and for bold artistic planning.

With the finest conductors, including Sir Andrew Davis, Edward Gardner, Mark Wigglesworth, Bernard Labadie, Stephen Layton, Masaaki Suzuki and Manfred Honeck, the Chorus sings a broad range of repertoire from Bach's Mass in B minor to Brett Dean's *The Last Days of Socrates*, from Kancheli's *Styx* to Rachmaninov's *The Bells*.

The Chorus commissions and performs new Australian and international choral repertoire, including music by Gabriel Jackson, Brett Dean, Paul Stanhope, James MacMillan, Arvo Pärt, Hans Werner Henze, and Peteris Vasks.



**Jonathan Grieves-Smith
MSO chorus master**

Jonathan Grieves-Smith is Chorus Master of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Director of Music at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, and Artistic Director of Australia's professional choir Hallelujah Junction. Former posts include Music Director of Brighton Festival Chorus, Chorus Master of Huddersfield Choral Society, and the Hallé Choir.

Jonathan has guest-conducted widely and intensively with, among many others, The BBC Singers, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lille, Hallé Orchestra, Choir of the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

As chorus master Jonathan has trained choirs for concerts, recordings and broadcasts with outstanding musicians including Sir Simon Rattle, Valery Gergiev, Mark Wigglesworth, Stephen Layton, Klaus Tennstedt, Pierre Boulez and Sir Roger Norrington.



MSO Chorus

SOPRANO

Philippa Allen
Naomi Angelico
Julie Arblaster
Carolyn Archibald
Aviva Barazani
Eva Butcher
Anna Castro-Grinstein
Thea Christie
Veryan Croggon
Samantha Davies
Piera Dennerstien
Laura Fahey
Rita Fitzgerald
Catherine Folley
Susan Fone
Rashika Gomez
Camilla Gorman
Karina Gough
Jillian Graham
Karling Hamil
Juliana Hasset
Penny Huggett
Jasmine Hulme
Tania Jacobs
Rachel Jeffreson
Gwen Kennelly
Judith McFarlane
Ruth McIntosh
Lynne Muir
Caiflin Noble
Susie Novella
Susannah Polya
Natalie Reid
Jo Robin
Lynda Smerdon
Elizabeth Stephens
Sylvia Tiet
Eloise Verbeek
Beth Ylvisaker

ALTO

Aleksandra Acker
Ruth Anderson
Catherine Bickell
Cecilia Björkegren
Kate Bramley
Jane Brodie
Elize Brozgul
Alexandra Chubaty
Elin-Maria Evangelista
Jill Giese
Debbie Griffiths
Alexandra Hadji
Ros Harbison
Sue Hawley
Kristine Hensel
Christina McCowan
Rosemary McKelvie

Helen MacLean
Siobhan Ormandy
Sharmila Periakarpan
Alison Ralph
Kerry Roulston
Annie Runnells
Rosemary Saunders
Helen Staindl
Libby Timcke
Jenny Vallins
Emma Warburton

TENOR

James Allen
Steve Burnett
Alexander Davie
James Dipnall
Marcel Favilla
Lyndon Horsburgh
Wayne Kinrade
Dominic McKenna
Simon Milton
Michael Mobach
Jean-Francois Ravat
Daniel Riley
Malcolm Sinclair
Tim Wright

BASS

Maurice Amor
Richard Bolitho
David Brown
Denny Chandra
Roger Dargaville
Phil Elphinstone
Gerard Evans
Michael Gough
Andrew Ham
John Howard
Daniel House
Jemly Kalangie
Andreas Loewe
Alastair McKean
Andrew Murrell
Vern O'Hara
Edward Ounapuu
Douglas Proctor
Matthew Toulmin
Foon Wong
Allan Yap
Maciek Zielinski

REPETITEUR

Tom Griffiths

LANGUAGE COACH

Douglas Proctor

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs is Australia's most established choral organisation and will be celebrating its centenary in 2020. Members of the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs believe in sharing the joy of choral singing with fellow choristers and audiences alike. Members of the choirs, which across the organisation number 1500 people, voluntarily give their time and talents to singing in extraordinary performances with major international artists and orchestras, in the country's leading concert halls.

The choirs appear regularly with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and in 2015 will be performing in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and *Missa Solemnis*, *The Planets*, *Tristan and Isolde*, Danny Elfman's *Music from the films of Tim Burton* as well as presenting their own programs including Bach's St John Passion at Easter, *The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace* by Karl Jenkins, Fauré's Requiem and Handel's *Messiah*.

Brett Weymark has been the Music Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs since 2003.

Brett Weymark SPC music director

Brett Weymark studied singing at the University of Sydney and conducting at the Sydney Conservatorium alongside studies in Europe and America. In 2002 he was awarded a Centenary Award for his services to music and in 2003 he was appointed Musical Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. He has performed with all the major ensembles from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to the Black Arm Band. He has conducted the choirs in premieres of works by composers such as Elena Kats-Chernin, Andrew Schultz and Peter Sculthorpe and has also prepared the choirs for concerts with conductors such as Sir Charles Mackerras, Charles Dutoit and Sir Simon Rattle. Recent highlights include working with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, and this year, in addition to conducting a full program with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs including three world premieres, he will conduct Handel's *Hercules* in Canberra and Haydn's *The Creation* with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

TENOR
Patrick Blake
Simon Cadwallader
John Donohoe*
Giles Donovan
Joshua Ebert
Adela Greenbaum
Kaine Hayward*
Jude Holdsworth
Michael Kertesz
Selwyn Lemos
Vincent Lo
Juan Martin Marangoni
Dimitry Moraitis
James Oxley
Joshua Oxley*
George Panaretos
John Pitman*
Daniel Sloman
Paul Sutton*
Robert Thomson
Joseph Toltz*
Koen van Stade*
Dan Walker*
Michael Wallach
Alex Walter

BASS
Christopher Allan*
Jock Baird
Bryan Banston
Phil Barton*
Simon Boileau
Andy Clare
Julian Coghlan
Paul Couvret
Philip Crenigan
Robert Cunningham
Ian Davies
Tom Forrester-Paton
Ashley Giles*
Kevin Gormley
Robert Green
Eric Hansen
Todd Hawken
David Hidden*

David Jacobs
Ian Jurd
Martin Kuskis
Simon Masterton*
Mark McGoldrick
Daniel Nicholson*
Sam Piper*
Peter Poole
David Randall
Michael Ryan
Antony Strong
Nicholas Tong
Dallas Waits*
Arthur Winckler
David Wood
Ben Yi
Stephen Young

*= SPVoices

STAFF

David Francis
General Manager
Brett Weymark
Music Director
Francis Greep
Assistant Chorus Master
Josephine Allan
Rehearsal Pianist
Thomas Chiu
Rehearsal Pianist
Michael Curtain
Rehearsal Pianist
Natalie Shae
Language Coach



**HECTOR BERLIOZ
(1803 - 1869)**

**La Damnation de Faust, op.24
Dramatic legend in four parts**

Synopsis

Part 1

Scene 1

Plaines de Hongrie
(Plains of Hungary)

Scene 2

Ronde des paysans
(Peasants' Dance)

Scene 3

*Une autre partie de la plaine.
Une armée qui s'avance*
(Another part of the plain.
An army is seen advancing)

Marche Hongroise
(Hungarian March)

Part 2

Scene 4

Nord de l'Allemagne
(Northern Germany)

Chant de la Fête de Pâques
(Easter Hymn)

Scene 5

Ô pure émotion!
(‘O innocent emotion’ - Faust,
Mephistopheles)

Scene 6

La cave d'Auerbach à Leipzig
(Auerbach's cellar in Leipzig)

Choeur de Buveurs
(Chorus of Drinkers)

Chanson de Brander (Brander's
Song: ‘Song of a Rat’)

*Fugue sur le thème de la chanson
de Brander* (Fugue on the theme
of Brander's Song)

Chanson de Méphistophélès
(Mephistopheles' Song: ‘Song of
the Flea’)

Scene 7

*Bosquets et prairies du bord de
l'Elbe* (Woods and meadows on
the banks of the Elbe)

Scene 8

*Choeur de gnomes et de
sylphes. Songe de Faust*
(Chorus of Gnomes and Sylphs.
Faust's Dream)

Ballet des sylphes
(Dance of Sylphs)

Choeur de soldats
(Soldiers' Chorus)

Chanson d'étudiants
(Students' Song)

*Choeur des soldats et chanson
des étudiants - ensemble*
(Soldiers' chorus and Students'
song - together)

INTERVAL 20 MINS

Part 3

*Tambours et trompettes sonnant
la retraite* (Drums and trumpets
sounding retreat)

Scene 9

Air de Faust (Faust's Aria)

Scene 10

'Je l'entends!'
(‘I can hear her!’)

Scene 11

Que l'air est étouffant!
(‘How stifling the air is!’)

Le roi de Thulé
(The King of Thule)

Scene 12

Évocation (Invocation)

Menuet des follets
(Minuet of the Wills-o'-the-Wisp)

*Sérénade de Méphistophélès et
choeur de follets* (Mephistopheles'
Serenade and Chorus of
Wills-o'-the-Wisps)

Scene 13

Duo (Duet)

Scene 14

Trio et Choeur (Trio and Chorus)

Part 4

Scene 15

Romance

Forêts et cavernes
(Forests and Caves)

Scene 16

Invocation à la nature
(Invocation to Nature)

Scene 17

Récitatif et chasse
(Recitative and Hunt)

Scene 18

La Course à l'abîme
(The Ride to the Abyss)

Scene 19

Pandaemonium

Epilogue sur la terre
(Epilogue on earth)

Scene 20

Dans le ciel
(In Heaven)

Apothéose de Marguerite
(Marguerite's Apotheosis)



ABOUT THE MUSIC



Hector Berlioz

Berlioz was always something of a genre bender. While composers in German-speaking countries tended to make fairly clear distinctions between concert, ceremonial and stage music, Berlioz was fond of hybrid forms that he generated to match his own highly personal artistic vision. Works like the *Symphonie fantastique*, or the *Grande Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* wear their extra-musical connotations in their titles; *Roméo et Juliette* makes claims to being both dramatic and symphonic and indeed the dramatic weight is, to a certain extent, concentrated in the orchestral score while the chorus sings the program notes. *Harold en Italie* is almost a viola concerto, but with strong extra-musical links to Byron. That Berlioz used 'concert opera' to describe *La Damnation de Faust* before settling on 'dramatic legend', should not, therefore, surprise us, and it also gives us a clue to the sort of work it is, or rather, the sort of work it is not. Berlioz came across Gerard de Nerval's French translation of Goethe's *Faust* (part I) in 1827 and the incipient composer's imagination was fired up by it to the extent that his opus 1 was *Eight Scenes from 'Faust'*. This work, on which he drew for *La Damnation* some 18 years later, contained Marguerite's 'Ballad' and *Romance*, *Mephistopheles' Serenade* and 'Song of the Flea', the 'Song of the Rat', an early version of the Sylphs'

chorus, the Easter hymn and the peasants' dance.

Berlioz deliberately avoided calling *The Damnation* an opera, for reasons that well-meaning directors have discovered to their cost on numerous occasions since. Yes, there are precise scene descriptions in the score and the singers are all characters, but the overall shape of the piece is one of disjointed tableaux, and the pacing of events works against the cumulative tension of a through-composed piece of music theatre. *The Damnation* was anything but through-composed, and not just because Berlioz recycled parts of the *Eight Scenes*. Wagner would write the libretto for an opera and then work on the music in sequence. By contrast, Berlioz began his libretto with Nerval's lyrics, and commissioned 'links' from a journalist friend, Almire Gandonnière. While composing to the so-far extant libretto, Berlioz undertook a concert tour in 1845, and having completed setting what there was of the text, then began to write his own. Despite the libretto's complex patrimony and Berlioz's itinerant lifestyle, he found himself composing, as he puts it, 'with an ease such as I have very rarely experienced with any of my other works. I wrote it where and when I could: in coaches, in trains, on steamboats, even in the towns I visited (this despite all the various responsibilities that my concerts

entailed).'

One of the places Berlioz visited was Pesth, now part of Budapest, where he heard the famous *Rákóczi March*, a tune which celebrated the hero of a Hungarian uprising against the Austrians. When Christopher Marlowe brought the Faust story into mainstream literature in the late 16th century, the damnation of the central character was not, as we might have expected, a sure thing. Certainly Faust had entered into a pact with the devil – a damning offence in Christian terms – but Marlowe's play is, right from the outset, ambivalent about the 'form of Faustus' fortunes, good or bad'. There is a further ambivalence in the discernible remnants of the morality play where salvation is the inevitable outcome: Everyman is saved; Faustus is damned. By the time Goethe took up the story, the tenor of the times made it a vehicle for salvation through love. While Goethe was never a Romantic (despite outliving that generation of younger poets) the conclusion to his *Faust* was of immense importance to the Romantic movement. As Faust is saved, the chorus triumphantly reminds us that the 'Eternal feminine draws us ever on'. But with Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* we are again in a state of some ambiguity. We know, from the title alone, that Faust hasn't got a chance, though just why he is damned remains something of a mystery for much

‘Berlioz...and the character of Mephistopheles, the devil, have two great things in common: a vast imagination and a sense of unbounded mischief that means breaking all the rules..’

THE INDEPENDENT (UK)

of the piece. He commits the sins of despair and, presumably, fornication, but the cause of his damnation is paradoxically a result of his attempt to save Marguerite.

Part One

In the first of the four parts that constitute *La Damnation de Faust* we find Faust (tenor) alone on the plains of Hungary, a classic candidate for anomic suicide. He extols the beauty of the countryside in spring (*Le vieil hiver a fait place au printemps*, ‘Old winter has made way for spring’) and muses on the joys of utter solitude. In Scene 2 he is interrupted by the distant sounds of a peasant dance and chorus (*Les bergers quittent leurs troupeaux*, ‘The shepherds leave their flocks’). Berlioz quipped once that ‘where one ordinary voice is detestable, fifty ordinary voices can be ravishing’, and this chorus, with its innocent bawdiness, has an energetic charm. Not, however, for Faust, whose complete alienation is intensified first by the peasant merrymaking, and then again in Scene 3 by the sounds – distantly heard at first – of the approaching Hungarian army marching to war and glory to the sound of the *Rákóczi March*.

Part Two

After the epic sweep of the Hungarian plains we find ourselves in the confines of Faust’s study in Northern Germany, where he laments that in fact neither the open spaces nor his return home has given him any joy (*Sans regrets j’ai quitté les riantes campagnes*, ‘Without regret I left the smiling countryside’). He is about to take poison, when the sound of the Easter hymn (Scene 4) reaches him from outside. As the chorus sings of the atonement of humanity by Christ’s death, Faust is plunged into reminiscences of childhood innocence, and not without ambivalence declares that heaven has won him back.

Scene 5 introduces Mephistopheles (baritone) with a characteristic motive for muted brass, and the sarcastic observation that Faust has been charmed by ‘the pious pealing of silver bells’ (*Ô pure emotion*, ‘Oh innocent emotion’). Mephistopheles, describing himself as the ‘Spirit of Life and consoler of men’, recommends a change of air and offers Faust ‘everything’. Interestingly though, Mephistopheles doesn’t at this point ask for Faust’s soul, but Faust consents to follow him and they vanish into the air. After a classic piece of Berlioz tone painting, Faust and Mephistopheles reappear in Auerbach’s Cellar in Leipzig, where a chorus of drinkers is in full cry (*À boire encor! Du vin du*

Rhin!, ‘More drink! Some wine! Some Rhenish!’). To entertain his friends, Brander (bass) sings the mock-tragic ‘Song of a Rat’ which concludes with one of Berlioz’s favourite objects of musical scorn, the fugue here setting the ironic ‘Amen’ after the rat’s death. Mephistopheles responds with the comic ‘Song of the flea’. After another orchestral interlude describing a flight through the air, Scene 7 takes us to the banks of the Elbe where Mephistopheles lulls Faust to sleep with promise of dreams of ‘divine utterance’ (*Voici des roses*, ‘Here are roses’). As Faust sleeps he dreams of a chorus of gnomes and sylphs, who, along with Mephistopheles, promise him that a beautiful girl will love him. Enthralled by a vision of Marguerite, Faust (led by Mephistopheles) falls in with a noisy throng of soldiers (*Villes entourées*) and students (*lam nox stellata*), both singing of the pleasures of seduction. They will, Mephistopheles tells him, be passing by Marguerite’s door.

ABOUT THE MUSIC



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Part Three

The scene is Marguerite's chamber where Mephistopheles hides Faust behind a curtain and disappears before Marguerite (mezzo-soprano) enters. She too has dreamed of Faust (*Que l'air est étouffant*, 'How heavy is the air') and as she braids her hair, sings the Ballad of the King of Thule, a 'Gothic' story of marital love and fidelity. The scene shifts to Mephistopheles' evocation of the spirits of the air (*Esprits des flammes inconstantes*, 'Spirits of fickle flame'), where he calls on their help to lead Marguerite into sin. They respond by dancing a minuet and looking forward with energetic malice to the downfall of Faust and Marguerite.

We return to Marguerite's chamber, where she and Faust declare their love for each other in a ravishing duet. They are, however, interrupted by the sudden arrival of Mephistopheles who warns them that a crowd of angry neighbours is on its way, and will alert Marguerite's mother to the fact that she has a strange man (not to mention a devil) in her room. In a splendidly operatic trio, Faust and Marguerite sing of their new-found happiness, while Mephistopheles gloats over his imminent victory. The chorus enters, singing sardonically to the mother, concluding Part Three in general tumult.

Part Four

Marguerite's opening Romance (*D'amour l'ardente flamme*, 'Love's burning flame') expresses her overwhelming love for Faust and her torment at his absence, against fragmentary reminiscence of soldiers' and students' songs in the background. Faust, meanwhile, in a landscape of forests and caves sings his celebrated *Invocation to Nature* in which he again confesses to pathological ennui. Mephistopheles arrives to tell him that Marguerite has been arrested for the murder of her mother – by a soporific, which he claims Faust gave her. Mephistopheles says he can still save Marguerite, if only Faust will sign away his soul on this piece of parchment.

Faust is now damned, though he thinks the frenzied ride he now makes with Mephistopheles is to save Marguerite when in fact it carries him to the abyss against a backdrop of praying peasants and dancing skeletons. In *Pandaemonium* the devils sing 'in infernal language' of Mephistopheles' victory, while a chorus on earth describes hell falling silent while a 'frightful mystery' is observed. Finally, Marguerite's soul is taken up into heaven, where choirs of angels sing quietly of her regained innocence, and forgiveness for having loved not wisely but too well.

Gordon Kerry © 1998

The first complete performance of La damnation de Faust by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra took place on 30 May 1957 under the direction of Enrique Jorda. The MSO's most recent performance, conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier, was on 19 and 21 October 1995 and featured Françoise Pollet, John Aler, Kristinn Sigmundsson, David Hibbard, the Melbourne Chorale and the National Boys Choir of Australia.

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