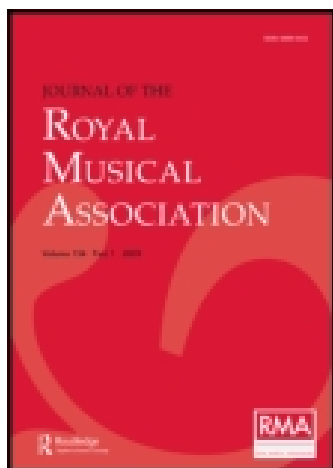


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Proceedings of the Musical Association

Publication details, including
instructions for authors and
subscription information:
[http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/
rma18](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rma18)

Berlioz

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Published online: 28 Jan 2009.

To cite this article: G. A. Osborne Esq. (1878) Berlioz, Proceedings of
the Musical Association, 5:1, 60-75, DOI: [10.1093/jrma/5.1.60](https://doi.org/10.1093/jrma/5.1.60)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jrma/5.1.60>

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FEBRUARY 3, 1879.

G. A. MACFARREN, Esq., M.A., Mus. Doc.,
VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

BERLIOZ.

By G. A. OSBORNE, Esq.

THE paper which I have the honour of reading before you to-day, I have called a sketch, as it would be impossible for me to do more than touch slightly on some salient points of Berlioz' life, and I am glad of the opportunity of so doing, having enjoyed his friendship and confidence for many years.

There are some things I should like to tell you of concerning Berlioz, as a man apart from the artist, but, as in his biography written by himself, some years prior to his death, he has refrained from touching on them, I must not draw aside a veil which he has kept closed.

In 1848, Berlioz, who was much dissatisfied with the biographical notices of him that had already appeared, and fearing that others, already announced, would be equally full of errors, determined to give an account of his laborious life, which was a truly agitated one. His wish was to offer a retrospective study to composers, enlightening them as to difficulties which beset their career, and helping them with advice, the fruit of his own experience. At this time he had already published a volume containing fragments of musical criticism, and a narrative of his travels, but, being importuned by many friends, he determined to write his life; and in the preface he says, "It is better that the public should know the truth from me than be confirmed in what is inexact, although for them it will be little matter what I say, think, or feel."

At this time the Republic was proclaimed in France, and nearly all the thrones on the Continent were threatened with the revolutionary wave which was then passing over Europe. The arts at such a period do not flourish, and Berlioz could not hope to benefit himself in France or Germany, so he thought of England, where he was received with a noble and cordial hospitality.

Berlioz was born in a small town, La Côte St. André, on the 11th of December, 1803. His mother, as he says, did not dream, as did the mother of Virgil, that she was to bring forth a branch of laurel, so he made his appearance in all simplicity, without any precursory signs, which in poetic times were the forerunner of those predestined to glory. In his early years he attended all the ceremonies of the Roman Church with assiduity, and weekly he confessed to the director of his conscience that he did nothing, to which the good priest replied, "My son, continue to do the same thing." At the age of ten, Berlioz was put to school, but soon after his education was undertaken by his father, a doctor of medicine, a clever man, and much respected by all who knew him. He could not get his son to commit to memory pages of Horace and Virgil, but he could tell you of Java, Borneo, the Sandwich and Philippian islands. His thirst for information respecting foreign lands was extreme, and had he lived near a seaport, he would, most indubitably, have been off to sea, with or without his father's consent.

Berlioz was violently in love when twelve years old, and he considers no after-love sufficiently strong to efface the effect of the first passion. In this he does not agree with Goethe, who says that a man can find himself in no position so delicious as between a love that is ending and one that is beginning. At this time his father undertook to teach him, in conjunction with his other studies, the rudiments of music, as well as the proper fingering of the flageolet, an instrument discovered in an old wardrobe, much to the discomfort of those under the parental roof. His proficiency on this instrument was so great that his father was induced to bring over a professor from Lyons, who settled at La Côte St. André, with the appointment of *Chef de Musique de la Garde Nationale*. From this gentleman Berlioz received daily two lessons: his progress was rapid. He had a sweet voice, was an intrepid reader, and performed on the flute some of Drouet's most complicated pieces. Having had some lessons on the guitar, he delighted in finding out a succession of chords. His great desire was to compose, but, although he passed nights in studying a treatise on music by Rameau, he found it too obscure. He tried to arrange duets and trios, but could not, as he jocularly says, find either chords or bass that had a grain of common sense. Being more successful in his study of Catel's Harmony, and as he had frequently heard Pleyel's quartets performed, he ventured on the composition of a quintet, for flute, two violins, tenor, and bass. The enthusiasm of the performers was great; but not participated in by Berlioz' father, who reserved his applause for a second quintet, which was tried two months later. Now at this time, the young composer not being thirteen years old, this

account of himself does not agree with one of his biographies, wherein it is stated that he was twenty before he began to learn his notes. With such discrepancy, we cannot be surprised that he was induced to speak for himself. These two quintets were burned by him some years afterwards in Paris; but, in his overture to the "Francs-Juges," the theme in *A♭*, after a few bars of introduction, played by the first violins, is the one approved of by his father, who, on hearing him play it on the flute, exclaimed, "That is music indeed."

Berlioz was not permitted to learn the piano, fearing that he might augment by one the 40,000 celebrated performers on that instrument supposed to exist in France, besides which, his father was anxious he should become a doctor, so as to take his place at some future day.

His first essays in musical composition were uniformly in minor keys, and profoundly melancholy. His juvenile thoughts seemed draped in crape, which he attributes to his ardent early love. Reading the lives of Gluck and Haydn threw Berlioz into ecstasy. Up to this time he had never seen a full orchestral score; but now a thousand combinations suggested themselves to his mind, and he at once resolved to devote himself to the divine art, and throw physic to the dogs. As his father was bent on his pursuing his medical studies under the guidance of a friend, a surgeon in Paris, he was sent there, having made considerable progress in the study of anatomy under his father, who, with the aid of large engravings and an old skeleton, did much for him. In Paris he had for fellow-student a young man who played the violin; consequently many hours which should have been devoted to Esculapius were spent in playing duets. In 1822 he walked the hospitals with his fellow-student, but the more he walked in compliance with his father's desire, the greater was his aversion to the study of medicine, and particularly to the dissecting-room, which positively affected his nervous system. Having heard Gluck's opera "Iphigénie en Tauride," he was so struck with its beauty and power, that he resolved at once to write to his father, informing him that no entreaty of father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, uncles or aunts, could in any way influence him in his determination to be a musician.

Although he had already made up his mind respecting his future career, still he had only now informed his father of his final resolve, which resulted in a correspondence most painful to both. At this time Berlioz was introduced to Lesueur, who was musical director of the Chapel Royal, where a mass was performed every Sunday before Charles X. He was kindly received by him, and, after examining a canon and cantata recently composed, he was told that his harmony was against all rule, but that he would receive him into his class after preliminary study under his chief pupil. In a few weeks he

was received by Lesueur, who was much pleased with his attention and rapid progress; but, although Berlioz acknowledges the many acts of kindness received from his master up to the time of his death, he also laments over the time lost in learning and unlearning his antediluvian theories. The first work of importance by Berlioz was a mass to be performed at St. Roch, with an orchestra of one hundred selected instrumentalists, and a more numerous chorus. At the rehearsal there was only one oboe, one horn, and one bassoon—in fact, not one-third of the promised number put in an appearance; but, as he was assured that all would be right on the following day, the rehearsal began. After a few bars the strangest chords were heard, which drove Berlioz nearly wild. In vain he cried out “B flat, C sharp,” on they went, making a fearful noise, till he rushed on to the platform crying out, “Stop! stop!” On examining the parts, which, to save expense, were copied by amateurs, it was found that the accidental sharps and flats were left out, with numerous other mistakes. The mass was withdrawn, and, for a time, the composer had to wait for the realisation of his most ardent desire, that of hearing a work of his performed by full band and chorus.

Having made important changes in his work, and having copied out all the parts himself, not wishing to trust unpaid artists, he wrote to Châteaubriand requesting the loan of £50, which the great poet refused, with that courtesy and regret which usually accompany answers to such epistles. Berlioz persisting in disobeying his father's wishes, his monthly allowance was withdrawn, so he was in despair, when one evening he found himself at the Opera seated next a young man whom he had remarked at the memorable rehearsal already noticed. In conversation Berlioz told him of his want of means and the refusal of the £50; upon which the young man exclaimed, “Is that all? You shall have £80, in fact, any sum you require.” The offer being accepted, the mass was performed, and favourably received. In 1827 it was again performed at St. Denis, the orchestra and chorus giving their service gratuitously. Having now acquired much experience, he was so dissatisfied with his work that he burned it with other compositions, beholding the flames with the joy of an inquisitor. Cherubini, who was then director of the Royal Academy of Music, wishing to keep the lady and gentlemen students apart, had assigned to them a different entrance to the college, of which Berlioz was not aware, being only recently admitted as pupil to the classes. One morning, going to the library by the forbidden door, he was refused admittance; an altercation ensued, when Berlioz, sending the doorkeeper to some objectionable place, which was not precisely Jericho, passed on triumphantly. Cherubini being informed of this, went at once to the library in a great rage,

with several attendants, when a comical scene took place; a regular chase; stools and desks knocked down amidst much laughter, Berlioz exclaiming, "You shall not have me nor my name." The fact is there was no love lost between Cherubini and Berlioz, who says of him, "Often has he made me swallow serpents, obliging me now and then to treat him with a few rattlesnakes." The favourable mention of Berlioz in the journals had in some degree mitigated the aversion of his family to the musical profession, but this aversion redoubled when, after a preliminary examination, his name was eliminated from the number of candidates selected to compete for the prize which entitled the winner to a government pension for three years, to be spent principally in Rome.

A visit to the parental home, at this moment, foreboded no good to Berlioz, but, being the vacation, he went there. No entreaty of his father had any effect on him to give up music for medicine. On bended knee his mother supplicated him not to disgrace his family by becoming a second-rate musician, though she felt no scruple at his becoming an indifferent doctor, doing that harm with drugs which crotchets and quavers do not aspire to. Berlioz was obdurate, and unfortunately received a mother's curse. The first idea of Berlioz, on his return to Paris, was to pay back the sum lent to him by his generous friend; but how was it to be accomplished? The small sum gained from lessons on the guitar and flute, at a franc a lesson, together with a salary of 50 francs a month as chorister in a small theatre, and a trifle for copying music, was not sufficient; so he economised on his daily personal expenditure, which, in the purchase of bread, dried raisins, dates, and milk, enabled him to repay half of the sum lent to him. There being no professor of instrumentation at the Royal Academy, his knowledge on that head was derived from perusal of full scores during the performance of works by the great masters. From Reicha he learned counterpoint and fugue. One day he asked the celebrated professor what he thought of vocalised fugues on the word Amen. "C'est de la barbarie," was the reply, which coincided with his own idea that such fugues are grotesque abominations. At this time, Habeneck, the conductor of the concerts at the Conservatoire, was doing his best to imbue the artists with his enthusiasm for Beethoven. Berlioz, who worshipped this great genius, was anxious that his master, Lesueur, should give him his opinion of the C minor Symphony, which was then to be performed. At the termination of the concert he waited for his master, who, on seeing him, cried out, "Let me pass, I want air, 'tis marvellous! Leave me, and see me to-morrow." Notwithstanding the immense effect produced on Lesueur, Berlioz was anxious to have the opinion of his master after a night's rest, which was, that music must not be composed like

that ; to which Berlioz replied, " Be assured, very little of *such* music will be produced." It is a curious fact that Haydn was persistent in calling Beethoven merely a great pianist. Grétry, in speaking of Mozart, says, he placed the statue in the orchestra, and the pedestal on the stage. Handel asserted that his cook was more of a musician than Gluck, and Rossini, speaking of Weber, said he gave him a stomach-ache. Shakespeare, although only known to Berlioz through a French translation, had wonderful power on his nervous temperament. He speaks, in his biography, of the miserable sleepless nights he passed after reading the great poet's plays, which he was then going through, and he asserts that he had refreshing sleep but four times, and that only after fatiguing his body by long walks. Twice he slept profoundly in a meadow, once on the frozen Seine, and again on a table in the Café du Cardinal, where he remained five hours without waking.

If the reading of Shakespeare had such an effect on his organisation, we cannot be surprised at his saying that the great drama of his life had begun after seeing Miss Smithson in Ophelia. I assisted at this representation of " Hamlet " in Paris, and never before nor since was a greater success achieved on the French stage, or greater unanimity of highly eulogistic praise in the press. Not knowing a word of English at this time, and Shakespeare only through a mutilated form and a poor translation, it was the dramatic genius of Miss Smithson that produced such a wonderful effect on his heart and imagination. He wrote letters to her which remained unanswered.

Miss Smithson was much admired and sought after. I remember being at a public ball, and while walking with her leaning on my arm, we were stopped by Mdlle. George, the great French tragedian, who took my other arm, making me look like an urn with two handles as we paced up and down the room. Many were the winks and nods I received ; one gentleman loudly remarking, " Look at that monopoliser of tragedy."

In a benefit for a French actor, two acts of " Romeo and Juliet " were to be performed, and Berlioz, wishing to draw Miss Smithson's attention to him, got the director to announce an overture of his to be played between the acts. During the rehearsal Berlioz entered the theatre, and seeing Romeo carrying out Juliet, he uttered a shriek, and with outstretched arms rushed out. Miss Smithson saw him and recognised her admirer ; being much frightened, she requested those about her to watch him, as his eyes betokened no good. At night his overture was performed ; but, though applauded, was not encored. Miss Smithson, who was in her dressing-room, neither heard it nor inquired about it. Berlioz at last, after two fruitless attempts, gained the prize which was to send

him to Rome; and here I may mention that the prize awarded by the musical section of the Academy must be ratified by a majority of votes given by sculptors, painters, and engravers.

In July, 1830, during the fighting on the three memorable days, he was engaged in instrumenting his cantata of Sardanapalus to the sound of cannon and musketry, which probably suggested some *confused* passages. On the 29th, having regained his liberty, he promenaded the streets, pistol in hand, with a band of Orphéonists, celebrating the triumph of people over king. His cantata was performed soon after at the Institute, and, as at the rehearsal, the tone-colouring of the conflagration scene produced immense effect; it was anxiously awaited for; unfortunately, the horn which was to give the signal for the entering of drums and cymbals during a *tremolo* for violins and basses, forgot his counting and was afraid to come in. Berlioz, who was seated behind the conductor, rushed off the stage, upsetting several desks and a chair on which Madame Malibran was sitting. The consternation of audience and performers was great, and many were the jokes circulated respecting the failure of the musical conflagration; soon after Berlioz took his departure for Rome. Some time after his arrival in that city he received a letter exasperating him to such a degree that he determined to proceed at once to Paris, commit a double murder and then a suicide. Armed with two pistols, laudanum, and strychnine he set off on his journey. At Florence he purchased a woman's costume so as to introduce himself unknown to his destined victims. Travelling, fortunately, at that time was not so rapid as it now is, and reflection brings counsel. So it was with Berlioz; he did not go to Paris, but from under the ramparts of Genoa he was rescued from a watery grave in the Mediterranean. His memoirs do not tell us whether his fall was premeditated or accidental. Soon after Berlioz took his departure for Rome, and there he was in ecstasy with the sublime works of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Canova. He trod on marble and mosaic of the rarest beauty. In the midst of all those arts, so full of life, majesty, and grandeur, he saw music brought to the level of a degraded slave. After spending the required time in Italy, where he certainly was not studying music, but rambling about the country, he returned to Paris, where he found Miss Smithson, who, after a prolonged absence from the French capital, was giving representations of Shakespeare's plays, having secured a theatre, and engaged a company at her own risk and peril. By a curious fatality he lodged opposite the residence of Miss Smithson, and seeing her from his window go in and out, his former passion was rekindled and burned bright for Ophelia. He was now presented to her, and soon began to experience all the annoyance that a proposed matrimonial

alliance brings about from those whose feelings on the subject are not in consonance with our own. As love laughs at locksmiths, the opposition he encountered made him the more determined to marry the object of his passion. The speculation entered into by Miss Smithson was a failure; the fickle French public no longer came to worship at her shrine, and, as she had the misfortune to break her leg when stepping from a carriage, the theatre had to be closed. For some months she was laid up, and though sufficiently recovered to appear in the mad scene of *Ophelia* at a benefit organised for her, still she was uncertain of her movements, and the great success she was accustomed to receive passed from her on that night to *Madame Dorval*, who performed in one of *Dumas'* pieces. This representation only produced a sufficient sum to pay the most pressing claims; and when Berlioz married, he not only made himself responsible for outstanding debts, but on that day, to begin his honeymoon, he had only £12 in his pocket, which was lent to him by a friend. After a few years his married life was far from being a happy one, owing to an uncontrollable jealousy of a lady who eventually became his second wife. One evening after dining with me, we conversed on the usual painful subject, and, as I saw but one remedy, I frankly told him of it. Much to my surprise, he sat down and wrote a charming letter of adieu to the lady, which he left at her lodgings when walking out with me. Next day he told me that he had gone back to the house, took the letter from the servant and tore it up, his courage having failed him. In December, 1838, he gave a concert in Paris, at which was performed his symphony of *Harold*. At the termination of the concert, *Paganini*, who was suffering from a disease in the larynx, of which he eventually died, and whose voice was then scarcely audible, whispered something to his young son, who thus addressed Berlioz: "My father desires me to tell you that never during the course of his life has he experienced such emotions as he felt this evening on hearing your music, and he can scarcely refrain from kneeling to you while proffering his thanks." At these strange words, Berlioz made a gesture of incredulity, at which *Paganini* with effort cried out, "Yes! yes!" and then in the presence of many artists he knelt before Berlioz and kissed his hand.

On the next day he received the following letter from *Paganini*:—

My dear Friend,—

Beethoven dead, Berlioz alone can revive him, and I, who have tasted your divine compositions worthy of a genius like yours, deem it my duty to beg, as homage on my part, your acceptance of 20,000 francs, which will be delivered to you on presentation of the enclosed.

Believe me always yours affectionately,

NICOLO PAGANINI.

To this letter Berlioz sent the following reply :—

O noble and great artist, how can I express my gratitude!!! I am not rich, but, believe me, the praise of a man of genius like yours touches me a thousand times more than the royal generosity of your present. Words fail me; as soon as I can leave my bed, where I am confined, I shall hasten to embrace you.

H. BERLIOZ.

The Harold symphony owes its origin to the following: Paganini possessed a magnificent Stradivarius tenor, and, wishing to play it in public, he asked Berlioz to compose a solo for him, as he was too unwell to do so for himself. To please the illustrious violinist, he wrote a solo combined with the orchestra in such a way as not to interfere with its action, knowing full well that Paganini would be able to make the tenor part a great feature by his incomparable talent. When the first part of the symphony was finished, it was shown to Paganini, who, seeing the number of bars' rest for the tenor, said, "This won't do; I must be always playing." A few days after he went to Nice, and only returned to Paris three years afterwards, when he heard Harold for the first time. On the 23rd of November, 1834, this symphony was brought out by Berlioz at his concert, and, although it achieved a complete success, still the work was reviewed in a musical paper, and turned into the greatest ridicule. The article began thus: "Ha! ha! ha! Haro! Haro! Harold!" The next day he received an anonymous letter reproaching him with want of sufficient courage to blow his brains out. Berlioz saw himself caricatured and turned into ridicule in every possible way. At a masked ball, Arnal, a celebrated comic actor, harangued a group before him, exclaiming, "I am the great musician who, unaided by poetry, prose, scenery, and costume, can express everything, even as to how a man may tie his cravat, and that only with the aid of 350 musicians. Compare me to Rossini, who, to make his reputation, is obliged to have his music played in the four quarters of the globe. I tell you, gentlemen, he is an impostor; his music produces no effect, absolutely not a particle of effect; that is the effect it produces on me."

There is a turning point in the lives of men, and such was now the case with Berlioz. He was so indignant at the non-recognition of the great masters, and the fulsome praise bestowed on the sensuous music of the Italian school, that he determined to do battle in the press with those who were daily proclaiming that the end of music was merely to charm the ear. His first exclamation when beginning his article was, "Ah! wretches, I hold you now." He deceived himself, he held nothing. His inexperience of journalism was great, and his musical proclivities violent. When the editor of the *Quotidienne* read the article which he had asked for,

he was surprised at the audacity of the attack, and said, "This won't do; it is perfectly true, but you are breaking windows, and I cannot accept your article." Berlioz could remain for hours over a score, but he disliked spending any time over a musical critique, and in this instance he did not comply with a request to modify his article. When he became musical critic of the *Journal des Débats*, he says it took two or three days to write an article, and, when finished, his copy was full of blots and erasures. Musical composition for him was a natural function, a happiness; prose writing a labour without love. I have heard him say he would rather be a porter of a double-bass than a musical critic, if he could get as well paid for it. Although his articles, full of admiration of Gluck, Spontini, Beethoven, and Weber were most favourably received, still he began to realise the difficulties and danger of his position as composer conjointly with that of musical critic, and which, as he says, exercised so great and so deplorable an importance in his after-life. For enemies he had, not only those great conservatives who detest innovation of any kind, but also those who fell under his lash, of which he was not sparing. His most bitter enemies, however, were probably those whom he did not sufficiently praise according to their estimation of their talents. We can easily imagine the effect of his music on an audience thus composed. Berlioz had some friends he was much attached to, and one of them was Adolphe Nourit, principal tenor of the Grand-Opéra, where he was a great favourite. After his last performance, before the appearance of Duprez, I walked with him and Berlioz, who, seeing him much depressed, strove, as I did, to persuade him that after Duprez success, which was anticipated and fully realised, he would, on his return from Italy, be welcomed with enthusiasm. He wished to believe us, but did not. Soon after, he appeared in Naples in one of his favourite characters, and was warmly applauded, but unfortunately he heard a slight disapproval of the applause, which unnerved him. He returned home, supped with his wife, then retired to rest, and without any idea on her part that there was anything wrong, he left her sleeping, and, going to a balcony on a terrace, threw himself off, and was killed on the spot.

At this time, Berlioz, who had hitherto entrusted his compositions to Habeneck, Valentine, and others, set now to conducting them himself, and announced a grand concert, at which Cherubini being requested by a friend to attend, refused, saying he did not want to know how music should not be composed. Those who give orchestral concerts know well the difficulties with which they are beset, and how seldom it is that even a small profit is realised after the expense is paid. Keeping this in view, we can easily imagine how Berlioz often found himself in embarrassed circumstances. During his

concert-giving tours in Russia and Germany, he had to send to the *Journal des Débats* an account of his travels, which he did in a series of letters to several friends, which are to be found in his biography, one of which he has honoured me with. At the end of a letter addressed to Stephen Heller, he says, "Continue to write charming pieces, and may Heaven preserve you from fugues with four subjects on chorales." The physical and mental organisation of Berlioz accounts for much of his startling originality; his intellect was keen, his will violent, and his tenacity of purpose excessive. As a composer, Berlioz had a bold innovating spirit, possessing marked individuality in the romantic school of music. His whole life was one desperate struggle for the triumph of a system of musical poetry. He was a great champion of what is termed programme music, but the best specimens of his instrumental works are those in which the music speaks for itself. Nothing can be more exquisitely tender than certain of his songs and choral pieces. He has left on record a problem to be solved: "Which has the greatest power in elevating a man to the sublimest height, music or love?" He thinks that love cannot give an idea of music, but music can give an idea of love—they should not be separated, being the two wings of the soul. Notwithstanding the first-rate beauties to be found in the scores of Wagner, in speaking of the school of the future, he says, "If such is this religion, it is exceedingly novel, I admit; but I am far from professing it. I never did belong to it, I do not belong to it, and I never shall belong to it. I raise my hand and swear, '*Non credo.*' There is one thing I believe firmly: the beautiful is not horrible, and the horrible is not beautiful. It is not, no doubt, the exclusive effect of music to be agreeable to the ear; but it is a thousand times less its object to be disagreeable to the ear, to torture and to flay it." This profession of faith, solemnly uttered, horrified the adherents of the new school, who, regarding Berlioz as its high priest, denounced him as a traitor. Few persons have been more misappreciated than he was in his own country, though received everywhere else in triumph. He may be said to have died of the systematic disdain of his countrymen, which, to a man of his superior genius, was most revolting. The stereotyped commonplace flattery from commonplace men was hateful to him. In Vienna he was offered a permanent and lucrative appointment, which he refused, as by its acceptance he could not travel where he liked. In London his engagement for three years as conductor at Covent Garden was very satisfactory, as it did not interfere with his visits to Paris and elsewhere. Unfortunately, Jullien became bankrupt. His visits to London were always agreeable to him, and his praise of English artists most enthusiastic. He was not fortunate

with his operas, and the failure of the last, "Les Troyens," considerably affected him. During the following six years he suffered much, both mentally and bodily; and the death of his son, which happened during that period, caused him the deepest sorrow. By the advice of his doctor he went to Nice, which town he always visited with pleasure; but one day, falling down from weakness, he was much cut, and was taken bleeding to his hotel, where he remained confined to his bed for some time. On his return to Paris his friends were horrified at the great change they saw in him; he sometimes lost his memory, and forgot the names of his most intimate friends. The last time he gave any sign of intellectual life was on the 17th of December, 1868. On that day paralysis struck him dumb, and the words addressed to him remained unanswered. By one of those returns to life to be met with in men of nervous constitutions, he took from Madame Charton an album, traced in it a dozen bars, and wrote the words and music of one of his earliest melodies, "*Reviens, reviens, ma bien-aimée.*"

At the age of sixty-six, on the 8th of March, 1869, Berlioz died. At the very moment that he was breathing his last a telegram was received from Moscow announcing the success of his opera, "Les Troyens." A funeral service, consisting of music by Mozart, Cherubini, and his own, was performed in the church of the Trinity, and his mortal remains were accompanied to the cemetery of Montmartre by a deputation from the Institute, of which he was a member, the procession being headed by a band of the National Guard, playing appropriate pieces from his compositions. Sorrowing friends bade him a long adieu at the brink of his grave. I have not touched on the works of Berlioz; men more competent than I am are constantly reviewing them, and will continue to do so, for tardy justice is now being done to him, and his works are heard in every country where an efficient orchestra is to be found. If time permitted I should like to tell you much more about Berlioz; but if I have interested you in this slight biographical sketch of a departed friend, my object will have been amply obtained.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Osborne, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. McCAUL wished to ask Mr. Osborne whether the composer of whom he had been speaking wrote a School for the Violin. He should also like to know if the story he had heard with reference to the removal of the bones

of Berlioz's first wife from the cemetery was correct; also if his opera of "Benvenuto Cellini" was a success on the Continent.

Mr. C. STEPHENS asked if the last speaker was not thinking of Baillot as the author of the Violin School he alluded to. He never heard of one by Berlioz.

The CHAIRMAN inquired if there was any one else who had anything to ask or any remark to make; was there no one present who had something to say about this very remarkable musician beyond expressing admiration for the excellent paper they had heard? Were there no reflections to be added on his strange aspirations to assert himself in a new musical form—to produce musical ideas in an idiom totally untried before; nothing to recollect of how many persons had said, as Paganini did, that at the death of Beethoven music was still to continue in the works of Berlioz? His music had not been played enough in England for very confident opinions to be stated respecting it, but speculation must be active, and curiosity and interest could not be dormant on a subject which had attracted the attention of the whole musical world. Berlioz had certainly musical genius, but it seemed more especially to have tended in the direction of musical colouring; and the attention he seemed to have given to this art of combining different qualities of sound had brought it to a more definite theory than perhaps any previous composer. He even went to the extent of calculating the exact balance of tone, by the number of players that were to be engaged in each part in a score. It was not enough for him to write for first and second violins, but he prescribed how many should play each part; and in other of his orchestral directions he was equally minute. This led one to suppose that he must have calculated with a careful nicety the exact proportions that were required to realise the effects which floated in his mind. Perhaps, however, this was a dangerous calculation, because the different strength of tone of various players might counterbalance the difference of numbers—and it might well be that eighteen violin-players in one town would have a very different amount of power to the same number in another; and the prescription that there should be sixteen, eighteen, or twenty first violin-players, would be but a vague direction after all. It was, perhaps, even to be regretted that his thoughts should have passed into such minutiae of theory, which could be little more than practical visions, which fact could scarcely interpret and realise. These biographical particulars concerning the man Berlioz led one to muse upon the curious problem of his artistic mind. The enthusiasm which he had for music seemed strangely to diverge from the faculty of musical production in the line in which it had been exercised by most of the men whom he himself, as well as the world at large,

was delighted to admire. One rarely found in his music those remarkable compounds of melodic interest and that complete grasp of harmony which were the main charms in musical composition, and for contrapuntal ability he seemed, from the words quoted, as much as from the absence of it in his works, to have had rather a dislike. So far as a small acquaintance with his productions enabled the speaker to guess at the ground-work of an opinion—for he could not be said to have formed one—he should suppose that his main thought in music was in this department of musical combination. It was very remarkable indeed that with the particular attention he gave to that, and with the result of that attention, not merely in his works but in his elaborate Treatise on Instrumentation, he should have had very small means to prepare himself for the task of writing on instruments or for instruments. For the speaker believed that, except the flageolet, flute, and guitar, he could play no instrument whatever, and yet he treated theoretically in his book on the manner in which other musical instruments should be handled by the musical composer. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at that there were some things in his treatise at variance with the mechanical facts; and whereas that book had been held in great respect, and still would be so, on account of the very high imaginative qualities it displayed and the strong feeling which it uttered in words, on the beauty of orchestral combination—still he thought it had mainly held its place as a text-book in this country because there was no other, and that the work which was now before the world by Mr. Prout would go very far indeed to supersede it, for English use at any rate. They must all regard with respect that treatise of Berlioz, but he was happy to think that in this art of instrumentation we had now a work of our own which would be still more valuable, which was thoroughly practical, and founded on a knowledge of the instruments themselves, so that it would not mislead any one by speaking of uses that were not known in this country.

The Rev. T. HELMORE said he supposed every one knew the story of Berlioz attending the service at St. Paul's when the Charity children sang there.

Mr. OSBORNE said on that occasion he read out of the same book with him. He got two tickets from the organist, and they both put on their surplices and sang.

The Rev. T. HELMORE asked if it were true that he was dissolved in tears on that occasion.

Mr. OSBORNE said it was quite true. He said never during the whole course of his life had music affected him in the same way as the singing in unison of those children.

Professor MONK thought it would be interesting if Mr. Osborne could tell them whether in the course of his career Berlioz ever had, to any great extent, opportunities of

trying in practice the combinations often so minutely pictured out in his mind—whether he was ever able to assemble together such bodies of instrumentalists and choralists as he described, or whether they were merely efforts of the imagination.

Mr. STEPHENS said a great many points referred to were such as he had an opportunity of trying, such as the minute directions he gave as to the materials of which the head of a drum-stick ought to be constituted, and things of that kind ; or where he wished the clarinet to be enveloped in a bag so as to produce a distant sound ; but he could hardly think it would be in his power to accurately try the effects of the numbers in the orchestra. It would scarcely fall within the power of any man to do that.

Professor MONK said many of his directions were on a gigantic scale.

Mr. STEPHENS said that in one place he gave orders for about forty pianofortes in an orchestra.

Mr. BOSANQUET said that probably no one present had heard many of Berlioz's works performed, but most likely Mr. Osborne had heard many of them, and he should be glad to have some little description of any that struck his memory.

Mr. OSBORNE said he was sure the meeting would thank him for having said nothing with regard to the works of Berlioz. He had felt sure that the Chairman would honour them with his presence that afternoon, and he knew that no one was better able to give the real character of his works. In the first place, in an "Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography," there was an account of Berlioz' works, by "G. A. M.," in which he described many of the works up to the time when he was preparing his opera, in five acts, of "Les Troyens." He would not, therefore, attempt to deal with that part of the subject. They had heard some very interesting remarks on the balance of power which Berlioz had given such minute directions about. As to the opera of "Benvenuto Cellini," it had no success either in Paris or in London, but, strange to say, it had a most remarkable success in Weimar ; in fact, its success there was as remarkable as its failure had been in London and Paris : so much so, that there was a dinner given to Berlioz, and songs were sung in chorus in his honour in French and German, besides which three verses in Latin, to music composed by Raff. As regarded the removal of his first wife's bones, he related the story in his own Memoirs. It was a very ghastly one, and he could scarcely relate it—he certainly could not do so in the terms in which he himself described the scene. Alexandre, the manufacturer of harmoniums, was a great friend of Berlioz, and at the death of his second wife, seeing that she had a very simple tomb at Montmartre, he bought a piece of ground, and had a vault

and tomb constructed, which he made a present of to Berlioz. Berlioz, therefore, had to assist at the disinterment of his second wife, whose remains were placed in this new tomb. Eight years afterwards it was decided that all the bodies should be removed from the small cemetery of Montmartre, as the churchyard was to be utilised in some other way, and Berlioz received a summons to see that the remains of his first wife should be disinterred and removed. He, therefore, one grey morning, as he described it, proceeded alone to the cemetery, where there was one of the civic guard waiting for him. A new coffin was lying at the top of the grave, and on his arrival the gravedigger went into the grave to remove the coffin; in raising it the lid gave way, and the remains were exposed to view. The head became detached, the gravedigger took it and placed it in the coffin, and then went back and took up the remaining portion—enshrouded as it was in the grave-clothes—and placed it in the coffin also. Probably, Berlioz at that moment remembered the words of Shakespeare: "Alas! poor Yorick," for when he saw the gravedigger with the head of his wife in his hand, he said, "Alas! poor Ophelia." The disinterment having taken place, he followed the remains of his first wife to the new vault, where his two wives are now deposited. With regard to the number of stringed instruments taking part in an orchestra, Berlioz was very particular, giving the number of violins, tenors, and basses which he considered necessary for the balance of power; and, most certainly, he selected the best instrumentalists he could get. With regard to his knowledge of instruments, there was no one more severe on himself than he was: for, as he has stated in his *Memoirs*, he burnt many works after they had been performed with success. It was his constant habit to go into orchestras and sit with the different performers, watching them and turning over the pages for them. In this way he learnt the capability of each instrument; besides which he got several instrumentalists to come to his house, where they played together little things which he wrote for them to see what they could accomplish. For instance, he had asked both Chopin and himself whether such and such passages could be played on the piano; in fact, he neglected no opportunity of making himself acquainted with all that practically could be done.

Professor MONK moved a vote of thanks to Dr. Macfarren for presiding, which was carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned.

[Since the above was in type, "Benvenuto Cellini" has been revived at Hanover, under the direction of Dr. Hans von Bülow, with indubitable success.—G. A. O.]