



HECTOR BERLIOZ

Symphonie fantastique

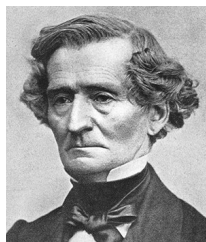
THE
CLEVELAND
ORCHESTRA
WELSER-MÖST

BERLIOZ

BERLIOZ

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

Composed 1830



One has only to read Berlioz's letters from 1829 to glimpse the torment of a composer whose mind was bursting with musical ideas and whose heart was bleeding.

The object of his passion was Irish actress Harriet Smithson, whom Berlioz had seen on the stage two years before in the roles of Juliet and Ophelia. Since then, he had viewed her only at a distance, while she was still unaware of his existence. How was this all-consuming passion to be expressed?

The dilemma was resolved early in 1830 when he suddenly realized he could represent this dramatic episode in his life as a program symphony, with a demonic, orgiastic finale in which both he and she are condemned to hell. The symphony was speedily written down in little more than three months and performed for the first time later that year. Even after Berlioz

had, by a strange irony, met and married Smithson three years later — it was not a happy union, however — the symphony's dramatic program remained.

All five movements contain a single recurrent musical theme, the *idée fixe*, or obsession, which represents the artist's love and is transformed according to the context in which the artist finds his beloved. After a slow introduction (Reveries), the *idée fixe* is heard as the main theme of the opening movement's Allegro section (Passions).

In the second movement (A Ball), the artist glimpses his beloved amidst a crowd of whirling dancers. Throughout the third movement (In the Country), two shepherds call to each other on their pipes, with the music depicting the stillness of a summer evening, the artist's passionate melancholy, and his agitation caused by the beloved's appearance.

In his despair, the artist has poisoned his beloved and is condemned to death. The fourth movement

portrays the March to the Scaffold, as he is led to the guillotine before the raucous jeers of the crowd. In his last moments, he sees the beloved's image before the blade falls.

In the final movement (Dream of the Witches' Sabbath), the artist finds himself a spectator at a sinister gathering of specters and weird, mocking monsters of every kind. The *idée fixe* appears — horribly distorted by the high-pitched E-flat clarinet — bells toll, and the religious *Dies irae* (Day of wrath) chant is coarsely intoned by bassoons and tubas. The witches' round-dance gathers momentum before the symphony ends in a riot of brilliant orchestral sound. ■

— Hugh Macdonald

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE AT A GLANCE

Born

December 11, 1803, in La Côte-Saint-André, Isère, France

Died

March 8, 1896, in Paris

World Premiere

December 5, 1830, at the Paris Conservatoire, conducted by François-Antoine Habeneck

Cleveland Orchestra Premiere

April 10, 1924, led by Nikolai Sokoloff

Orchestration

2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1st doubling E-flat clarinet), 4 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, percussion (cymbals, bass drum, snare drum, bells), 2 harps, and strings

The Recording



THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
conducted by **FRANZ WELSER-MÖST**

HECTOR BERLIOZ
Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14

- Track 1 – I. Reveries — Passions: Largo —
Allegro agitato e appassionato assai 13:38
- Track 2 – II. A Ball: Allegro non troppo 5:50
- Track 3 – III. In the Country: Adagio 14:17
- Track 4 – IV. March to the Scaffold: Allegretto non troppo 6:27
- Track 5 – V. Dream of the Witches' Sabbath: Larghetto 10:11
-

*Recorded live in Mandel Concert Hall
at Severance Music Center
in Cleveland, Ohio,
on May 2, 3, and 4, 2024*

*Recorded at 24bit 96kHz PCM
Stereo and Dolby Atmos mixes available*

About the Orchestra

Now in its second century, The Cleveland Orchestra, under the leadership of music director Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, is one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world. Year after year, the ensemble exemplifies extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. *The New York Times* has called Cleveland “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

Founded by Adella Prentiss Hughes, the Orchestra performed its inaugural concert in December 1918. By the middle of the century, decades of growth and sustained support had turned it into one of the most admired globally.

The past decade has seen an increasing number of young people attending concerts, bringing fresh attention to The Cleveland Orchestra’s legendary sound and committed programming. More recently, the Orchestra launched several bold digital projects, including the streaming broadcast series *In Focus*, the podcast *On a Personal Note*,

and its own recording label, a new chapter in the Orchestra’s long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. Together, they have captured the Orchestra’s unique artistry and the musical achievements of the Welser-Möst and Cleveland Orchestra partnership.

The 2024/25 season marks Franz Welser-Möst’s 23rd year as Music Director, a period in which The Cleveland Orchestra earned unprece-

dented acclaim around the world, including a series of residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra, and a number of acclaimed opera presentations.

Since 1918, seven music directors — Nikolai Sokoloff, Artur Rodziński, Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Franz Welser-Möst — have guided and shaped the ensemble’s growth and

sound. Through concerts at home and on tour, broadcasts, and a catalog of acclaimed recordings, The Cleveland Orchestra is heard today by a growing group of fans around the world.

For more information, please visit clevelandorchestra.com. ■



Photo Yevhen Gulenko/Human Artist

The Cleveland Orchestra

Franz Welser-Möst MUSIC DIRECTOR

Kelvin Smith Family Chair

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Franz Welser-Möst

Franz Welser-Möst is among today's most distinguished conductors. The 2024/25 season marks his 23rd year as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra. With the future of their acclaimed partnership extended to 2027, he will be the longest-serving musical leader in the ensemble's history. *The New York Times* has declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst's direction to be "America's most brilliant orchestra," praising its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

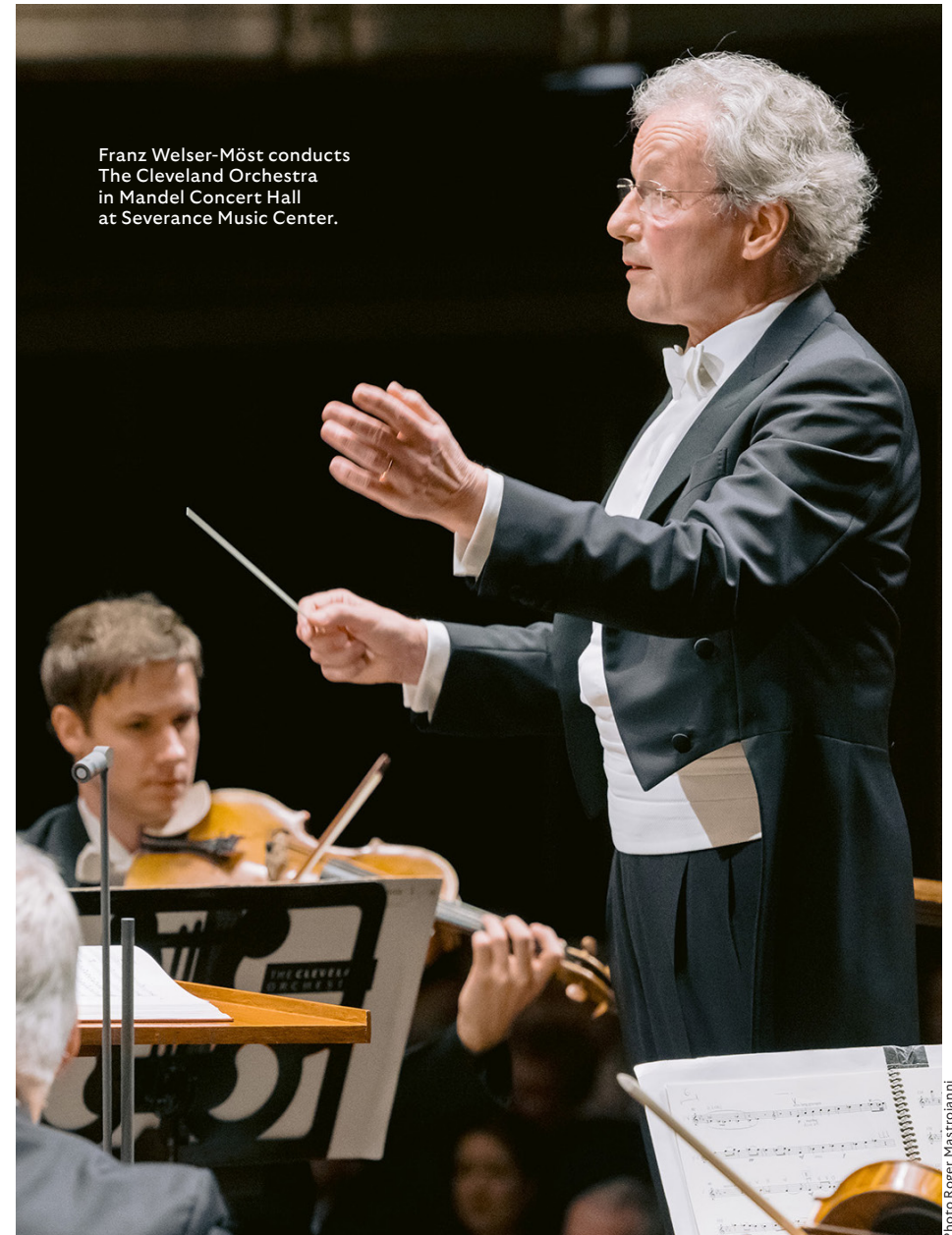
With Welser-Möst, The Cleveland Orchestra has been praised for its inventive programming, ongoing support of new music, and innovative work in presenting operas. To date, the Orchestra and Welser-Möst have been showcased around the world in 21 international tours together. In 2020, the ensemble launched its own recording label and new streaming broadcast platform to share its artistry globally.

In addition to his commitment to Cleveland, Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic as a guest conductor. He has conducted its celebrated New

Year's Concert three times, and regularly leads the orchestra at home in Vienna, as well as on tours.

Welser-Möst is also a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival where he has led a series of acclaimed opera productions, including *Rusalka*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Fidelio*, *Die Liebe der Danae*, Reimann's opera *Lear*, and Richard Strauss's *Salome*. In 2020, he conducted Strauss's *Elektra* on the 100th anniversary of its premiere. He has since returned to Salzburg to conduct additional performances of *Elektra* in 2021 and Puccini's *Il Trittico* in 2022.

In 2019, Welser-Möst was awarded the Gold Medal in the Arts by the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts. Other honors include The Cleveland Orchestra's Distinguished Service Award, two Cleveland Arts Prize citations, the Vienna Philharmonic's "Ring of Honor," recognition from the Western Law Center for Disability Rights, honorary membership in the Vienna Singverein, appointment as an Academician of the European Academy of Yuste, and the Kilenyi Medal from the Bruckner Society of America. ■



Franz Welser-Möst conducts The Cleveland Orchestra in Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center.

Photo: Roger Mastrolanni

Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center

Home of The Cleveland Orchestra



Photo Roger Mastroianni

Hailed among the world's most beautiful concert halls when it opened as Severance Hall in 1931, Severance Music Center has served as home to The Cleveland Orchestra for over 90 years. Its famed acoustics have helped shape the Orchestra's renowned sound and refined performance style. The building was named to honor John Long Severance (president of the Orchestra's board of trustees, 1921–36) and his wife, Elisabeth, who donated most of the money for its construction.

Designed by Cleveland's Walker & Weeks, the building's elegant Georgian exterior was constructed to harmonize with the classical architecture of the surrounding University Circle neighborhood. The interior of the building reflects a combination of design styles, including Art Deco, Egyptian Revival, Classicism, and Modernism.

An extensive renovation and expansion of the facility was completed in January 2000, including careful enhancements to the clarity and

warmth of the 2,000-seat concert hall's acclaimed acoustics, a project designed by David M. Schwartz Architects and Jaffe Holden Scarbrough Acoustics.

More recently, the main performance space has been augmented with a state-of-the-art robotic video camera system to capture and create a new generation of streaming programming. In 2021, the concert space was named in recognition of a generous grant from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, whose gift is funding the video equipment outfitting along with other initiatives to further The Cleveland Orchestra's ongoing success and to expand its reach for audiences around the world in the 21st century. ■



Acknowledgements

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