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Between Beethoven and Mendelssohn: Biographical Constructions of Berlioz in the London Press

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In 1853 a writer for the London-based periodical *Fraser's Magazine* remarked that Berlioz's "heroic temperament" could be "read legibly in the noble style of his compositions. His own life forms to these works the most interesting accompaniment and commentary."[1] The linking of life and work in Berlioz's case is nothing unusual. Indeed, Berlioz arguably encouraged it through his program notes blurring fiction and biography, his published autobiographical writing,[2] and even in his music criticism; his personality vividly penetrated every page, and the writer himself regularly appeared as a protagonist.[3]

I would like to thank Peter Bloom and Leanne Langley for their feedback on early versions of this article. Any mistakes of fact or interpretation are my own. This research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust. Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2484-1990.

[1]Although the author is not credited, it was likely Edward Holmes. See "The Music of the Season—Present and Prospective," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (May 1853): 577. Autobiographical readings were not unusual in nineteenth-century music criticism. Mark Evan Bonds (*The Beethoven Syndrome: Hearing Music as Autobiography* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019]) examines the factors that converged around 1830 that meant listeners began to hear music as a form of "wordless autobiography."

[2]Berlioz published a number of autobiographical fragments. See Pierre Citron, "The *Mémoires*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 125–45 at 129–30 for details of these. These fragments formed the basis, alongside new material of his *Mémoires*. He wrote the majority of the book between 1848 and 1854, though he continued to make additions and revisions until sending it to the printer at the beginning of 1865. For full details of sources and chronology, see the introduction of Peter Bloom's new critical edition, *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz de 1803 à 1865 et ses voyages en Italie, en Allemagne, en Russie et en Angleterre écrits par lui-même* (Paris: Vrin, 2019), particularly 29–52.

[3]Texts from *Les Soirées de l'Orchestre* and *Les Grotesques de la Musique* often featured Berlioz's personal interactions with other musicians and were sometimes based on events and anecdotes from his life. For a comprehensive discussion of Berlioz's music criticism, see Katherine Kolb Reeve, *The Poetics of the Orchestra in the Writings of Hector Berlioz* (PhD diss., Yale University, 1978), and Kerry Murphy,

 19th Century Music, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 80–99. ISSN: 0148-2076, electronic ISSN: 1533-8606 © 2020 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions. https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2020.44.2.80.

However, a particular set of circumstances unique to London meant that critics based in that city persistently used Berlioz's biography to further their own agendas while also promoting his music.

London critics were arguably more interested in Berlioz's life and stories than in his compositions. Extracts from Berlioz's writings were often reprinted in the London press, ensuring that the public became familiar with the man, if not his work. The nature of the London musical press at this time, as a handful of self-interested people with specific axes to grind, is one of the reasons for the use of biography as a critical prism.[4] In the hands of such individuals, biography was a valuable narrational weapon. Another reason, specific to Berlioz reception, was the absence of repeat expert performances in London leading to public familiarity with his music during the composer's lifetime.[5] This was due partly to a lack of appetite from the main orchestral institutions and general public, partly because the considerable and expensive rehearsal time involved in mounting a performance was simply impractical, and partly because Berlioz (especially in the 1830s and early 1840s before he had visited London) discouraged it because of his skepticism about English performance standards.[6] Yet Berlioz still received considerable press coverage in the city. Key to this coverage was his cultivation of local critics, who respected him as a colleague and counted him as a friend. They drew on their personal friendships with Berlioz, recounting biographical material, much of which they had had from the mouth of the composer himself.

The past few decades have seen an explosion of interest among musicologists in examining Victorian press responses to music, yet biography is thus far an under-used tool. In this article, I argue that biographical tropes and approaches offered a powerful means to shape the desired narrative. Individuals were transformed through biography into symbols promoting the critic's agenda. Specifically, when writing about Berlioz's London performances, critics employed biographical ideas and narratives that enabled them to use the composer as a means to shape local debates about the future of London's orchestral institutions. I argue that biography is central to our understanding of Berlioz's critical reception in London. At the same time, the story of Berlioz's varying depictions in the London press highlights the ebb and flow of power relationships between subject and author in biography.

The "Berlioz" constructed by London critics is a paradoxical figure who is at once rebellious, reclusive, and eccentric, while also a sociable, respectable member of the establishment. This "Berlioz" is both familiar and alien. He bears more than passing resemblance to the figure portrayed in the composer's own autobiographical writing, but there are also aspects that are specific to the London context and the agendas of a handful of individual critics.

The critical response is most evident during Berlioz's five visits to the city between November 1847 and July 1855. Berlioz's first visit to London arose from an invitation from fellow Frenchman, Louis Jullien, to conduct the 1847–48 opera season at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Jullien made a compelling offer; Berlioz was to be paid handsomely and was also promised the opportunity to conduct four concerts of his own works and commissioned to compose an opera. A long-term engagement was envisioned: Berlioz signed a six-year contract. Alas, it was too good to be true. It soon became painfully clear that Jullien was bankrupt

Hector Berlioz and the Development of French Music Criticism (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988). To some extent, this was a product of the expectations of music criticism in Paris in the 1830s and 40s. The work to be discussed often functioned as a jumping off point for the writer's imagination. Such criticism focused more on the writer's emotional response, rather than analytical evaluation. For a fuller discussion of contemporary styles of music criticism in Paris, see Murphy, *Hector Berlioz*, 11–22.

[4]Leanne Langley reminds us of the importance of understanding the context that colored critics' responses, including "hobby horses, interpersonal rivalries and other hidden agendas." Leanne Langley, "Gatekeeping, Advocacy, Reflection: Overlapping Voices in Nineteenth-Century British Music Criticism," *Cambridge History of Music Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 147–69 at 163.

[5]That would come later; enthusiasm for Berlioz's music did not really take off in England until the 1870s. See Leanne Langley, "Agency and Change: Berlioz in Britain, 1870–1920," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 132/2 (2007): 306–48.

[6]For example, see Hector Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale Vol. II 1832–42* (hereafter *CG*), ed. Pierre Citron (Paris: Flammarion, 1972–2003), 679–80 (letter 741 to an unknown correspondent, January 1841) in which Berlioz discusses the performance of some of his overtures in London under Louis Jullien in 1841.

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and could not pay Berlioz or the other members of the company. Berlioz's hopes were disappointed. His contract with Jullien ended abruptly, he suffered financial losses, and the number of performances he had been offered was drastically curtailed.[7] Nonetheless, he still made some headway in building his reputation in London circles and put on two successful concerts of his own music, which would hold him in good stead for later visits.

Berlioz's second visit to London (10 May–28 July 1851) was as a judge of the instruments category at the Great Exhibition. He did not conduct any of his music at this time. His third and most successful visit (4 March–30 June 1852) resulted from an invitation from the music publisher and impresario Frederick Beale, who approached Berlioz to conduct all six of the concerts of the inaugural season of the New Philharmonic Society. The fourth and most controversial visit (14 May–9 July 1853) saw Berlioz conduct his first and only concert with the Philharmonic Society, but this was overshadowed shortly afterward by the noisy demonstration during the London premiere of *Benvenuto Cellini* at Covent Garden. During the final visit (8 June–7 July 1855), he became desirable to both the "old" and New Philharmonic Societies but, frustratingly, was unable to capitalize on this. An early invitation from the NPS to conduct two concerts meant he was unfortunately unable to accept the slightly later invitation from the Philharmonic Society to conduct their whole season, as the NPS refused to release him.

[7]For a fuller description of this visit, see Lord Aberdare, "England and Berlioz," in *Berlioz: Scenes from the Life and Work*, ed. Peter Bloom (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 174–98; A. W. Ganz, *Berlioz in London* (London: Quality Press, 1950), 15–81, David Cairns, *Berlioz Vol. 2: Servitude and Greatness 1832–1869* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 398–420; and Bloom, *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*, 750–53. Berlioz's depiction of Jullien was unfair and damaged Jullien's reputation. See George Biddlecombe, "Berlioz and the London Scene," *The Musical Voyager: Berlioz in Europe*, ed. David Charlton and Katharine Ellis (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 26–43. For more on Jullien, see Adam von Ahn Carse, *The Life of Jullien: Adventurer, Showman-Conductor and Establisher of the Promenade Concerts in England, together with a History of Those Concerts up to 1895* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1951).

The Next Beethoven: Berlioz, the Anti-establishment Figure

The Romantic, larger-than-life "Berlioz" that the composer fashions in his *Mémoires* and other forms of "life-writing" is an outsider: an anti-establishment figure who cannot submit to the rules of the Paris Conservatoire. He finds it almost impossible to make headway in the main institutions of Parisian musical life: the *Opéra* and the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*. He refuses to make concessions to mediocrity, and he finds conservative, narrow-minded enemies wherever he goes, those who are incapable of understanding his music, and are even afraid of it. From Cherubini to Habeneck, these are powerful members of the establishment who thwart Berlioz's plans, frustrating him when he is on the brink of success.

The "Berlioz" described by London critics also has several of these qualities, but if anything they are further exaggerated. He often appears as a friendless individual who came before the public without official patronage, without the support of a school, and even without traditional training. Possibly the first piece attempting to publicize Berlioz and his music in England was published in *Musical World* in 1837 and written by a friend: the journalist, and later organizer of the Musical Union chamber music series, John Ella. Ella described Berlioz as a recluse, recalling that his "reserved manners made him unsocial and unpopular with his comrades," and remarking on his eccentric appearance.[8] This is far from the gregarious networker of the *Mémoires*, who, even though he is stymied by a handful of powerful individuals, has many loyal supporters and friends. Similar themes are evident in *Fraser's Magazine*, which ran a long piece (probably written by Edward Holmes, who had likely met Berlioz by this point and quickly became one of his greatest champions in London) on the composer following his departure from London after his first visit to the city in the autumn of 1848.

[8]John Ella, "Music in Paris in 1837," *Musical World* (15 December 1837): 211. For more on Ella and his importance in London musical life, see Christina M. Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture: John Ella and Chamber Music in Victorian London* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007).

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The piece included a biographical sketch that painted Berlioz as a rebel who "outraged the professors of the Conservatoire"[9] through his willingness to break the rules of harmony and counterpoint. We are told "the academy disowned him, and he disowned the academy"[10] because of the academy's closed-mindedness toward his musical innovations.

Crucially, Holmes drew comparisons between Berlioz's anti-establishment position and Beethoven's, arguing that both faced similar struggles for recognition. He also drew attention to Berlioz's apparently reclusive nature and eccentric appearance, further contributing to this Beethovenian image. Biographical positioning supported the article's broader argument, identifying Berlioz, rather than Mendelssohn, as the successor to Beethoven, precisely because of his outsider status and rebellious nature:

> The successor of Beethoven must be animated by a fortitude equal to his genius. If we consider the prosperous musicians of the day, Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn, we shall find their good fortune greatly favored by circumstances and position in society. Both members of opulent and distinguished families, in which the art was cherished and cultivated from their infancy—introduced by degrees from the admiration of the private circle to that of the public, they naturally assumed positions of importance at the head of orchestras. But when a young man, unknown to fame, destitute of family influence, and not ushered into public with the favorable prepossessions of a coterie—not even playing any instrument, arrives by his own exertions at the same eminence, it excites wonder and interest.[11]

The writer then emphasized Berlioz's untraditional educational background—switching from medicine to music and learning the guitar rather than the piano, concluding that "the young man who assayed to take up the pen of Beethoven was a composer, and nothing more."[12] A later portrait would even describe Berlioz's practice of composing without an instrument in terms that called to mind Beethoven's deafness. Accordingly, Berlioz devised "new effects in composition, and new harmonies which he never heard *but with the ear of the mind*, for he plays no instrument."[13] Despite the fact that we are informed of Berlioz's credentials: he attended the most prestigious musical institution of the time, and he won the coveted Prix de Rome, the ultimate marker of excellence awarded by the French government, the reader is still left with the impression of Berlioz as a rebellious composer, the horror of the establishment who breaks all of the rules: "He may be a bad model for royal academies, and the horror of professors of thorough bass; but, *nascitur non fit*, he is a musician of the true Parnassus breed."[14] This aspect of Berlioz's character and compositional style would have a particular resonance within the London context. For Holmes, Berlioz's music spoke to a broader demographic than those whose work obeys the rules, because its emotional effect was so vivid. Instead of seeking "official" approval from professors and respectable institutions, Berlioz's music was democratic rather than exclusive; it "moves the heart of man" and "transports us by emotions of grandeur, tenderness, or grace."[15]

Overall, this article positioned Berlioz as a rebellious, democratic genius in the model of Beethoven, and like Beethoven he also suffered and achieved greatness through sheer determination. In the London context, his treatment by Jullien contributed to this conception. The article opened by discussing Berlioz's recent disappointment:

> The most disastrous contingent of the failure of Jullien in his late operatic scheme at Drury Lane was the disappointment which it involved to the distinguished composer Berlioz. . . . What can make amends to the aspiring author of orchestral symphonies, overtures, &c. for the mortification of success just within the grasp?—success which only wanted

[9][Edward Holmes], "Hector Berlioz," in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (October 1848): 424. Similarly, Holmes drew further comparisons with Beethoven and wrote that Berlioz had "shaken the throes of professors in the Conservatory, and won in a battle in which every unworthy art and ungenerous imputation have been used to put him down" in "A First Impression of the Genius of Hector Berlioz," *The Atlas* (12 February 1848).
[10][Holmes], "Hector Berlioz," *Fraser's Magazine*: 422.
[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.
[13][Holmes], *Fraser's Magazine* (May 1852): 527.
[14][Holmes], "Hector Berlioz, " *Fraser's Magazine*, 422.
[15]Ibid., 421–22.

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time to confirm, and repetition to popularize it. . . . Nature has given him genius—the freshness, the vigor, the lion-port of the great composer are his: but with these gifts on the one hand, he has received from her on the other no slight share of the personal suffering and disappointment in which every distinguished master fulfils his career.[16]

For the most part, however, the London press, particularly the circle of critics surrounding James William Davison, pitted Berlioz not against Jullien, but against the city's premiere institution for symphonic music: the Philharmonic Society. Interestingly, this was not an enemy that Berlioz himself constructed through his own life-writing (he was far more likely to depict individuals like the Italian opera conductor Michael Costa as obstacles and personal rivals), but was specific to the London press, or at least some of its most prominent music critics. Berlioz counted James Davison (editor of *Musical World* from 1843 until 1885 and chief musical writer for the *Times* from 1845 until the late 1870s)[17] as one of his closest friends in London.[18] Berlioz was grateful to Davison for using his influence to gather support for his music. Howard Glover, who was music critic for the *Morning Post* from 1850 to 1865, and Charles Rosenberg, correspondent for *Musical World*, were both part of Davison's circle and echoed many of Davison's comments regarding the Philharmonic's treatment of Berlioz. This treatment coincided with a time when London critics were hotly debating the programming strategies of the Philharmonic, particularly questioning the neglect of new music, both native and foreign, and its exclusive approach to ticket sales. They clamored for a more open, public orchestral institution to rival the Philharmonic Society.

London's musical infrastructure had made strident leaps forward during the first half of the century. Part of this progress was due to the founding of the Philharmonic Society in 1813 by distinguished London musicians, including Clementi, John Cramer, and George Smart. The founders intended to fill a musical gap in London, offering top-quality orchestral concerts.[19] Their aims were ambitious: the Society was to become one (performing) part within an overarching Royal Academy of Music having several other (non-performing) parts yet to be established, modeled along the lines of the Royal Academy of Arts. It was to be a national institution, combining teaching, scholarship, and concertgiving.[20]

The initial incorporation of teaching into the remit of the Society underlines its ambition to invest in and educate a new generation of native composers to rival those of the Continent. These plans were never realized. Instead, they were stymied by the French harpist N. C. Bochsa, who exploited "a brief skirmish between established patronage systems and the emerging music profession"[21] by persuading Lord Burghersh, the Earl of Westmoreland, to found the Royal Academy of Music in 1822.[22] However, at its head were aristocratic amateurs rather than professional musicians, leading to longstanding institutional weaknesses and an uneasy relationship with the more professional Philharmonic Society.[23]

[16]Ibid., 421.

[17]For an overview of Davison's music journalism, see Peter Horton, "Avoiding 'Coarse Invective' and 'Unseemly Violence': English Music Criticism 1850–1870," in *British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought, 1850–1950* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 9–37, especially 16–24.

[18]It is likely that they first met in August 1845 at the Beethoven festival in Bonn.

[19]Ian Taylor has argued that the perception that the period just prior to the founding of the Philharmonic Society was one of orchestral inactivity is a myth. See Ian Taylor, *Music in London and the Myth of Decline: From Haydn to the Philharmonic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Leanne Langley has discussed the original aims of the Philharmonic Society. Important motivations were to give members the opportunity of a stake in property ownership, and convey professional status on them at a time when the music profession was changing rapidly. Leanne Langley "A Place for Music: John Nash, Regent Street and the Philharmonic Society of London," *Electronic British Library Journal* (2013): 1–48 at 16.

[20]For details of the Society's plans for a Royal Academy, see Langley, "A Place for Music," 16 and 43–44.

[21]Leanne Langley, "Sainsbury's *Dictionary*, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Rhetoric of Patriotism," in *Music and British Culture, 1785–1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich*, ed. Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65–98 at 66. For details of Bochsa's role, see 77–79.

[22]W. W. Cazalet, *The History of the Royal Academy of Music* (London: T. Bosworth, 1854), especially 2–23.

[23]Some of these inadequacies, such as the lack of facilities, including a lack of practice rooms (several students had to practice in the same room), freezing conditions, poor catering standards, and a disordered music library are evidenced in the Academy's minutes. For example, see "Royal Academy of Music Committee Minutes, Vol. 1 1822 to 1828," and

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Leanne Langley has argued that the amateur foundations of the Royal Academy set serious music teaching in England back by decades.[24] A sense of national inadequacy remained, eventually leading to the founding of the Royal College of Music in 1882.[25] However, by mid-century, at least two Royal Academy students had distinguished themselves: George Macfarren and William Sterndale Bennett, and several other British composers were active in London.

Perhaps if the Society had developed its educational arm, indigenous composers would have been showcased more regularly in Society performances.[26] Instead, the directors decided that London's place on the musical map might be secured by continuing to provide a fertile home for foreign artists. This could be achieved by offering a diverse range of performances at the best venues, given by high-quality performers, and by commissioning new works, most famously by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Spohr. The improved performance conditions coupled with the relative political tranquility the city offered compared with many places on the Continent meant that London's desirability to foreign musicians increased.

However, by the 1830s the Society had become the focus of regular, blistering criticism in the press, which came to a head during the late 1840s and 50s: precisely the time of Berlioz's activity in London. Davison's periodical, *Musical World*, led the attack. Davison lambasted the leadership of the society, complaining of managerial incompetence, the directors' lack of musical standing, the opaque processes through which they were selected, declining performance standards, stale programs, and the lack of support for contemporary composers, both foreign and native. He also criticized how the directors deliberately restricted the outreach of the Society by not allowing individual public ticket sales. A particularly scathing and sarcastic piece appeared in March 1851; the writer attacked the "compactly allied *clique* of professors" who were "despotic."[27]

Davison had a long-standing grudge against the Philharmonic. He disapproved of the appointment of Costa as the Society's conductor in 1846, particularly as his close friend William Sterndale Bennett had been overlooked for the post. Relations between Sterndale Bennett and Costa were antagonistic, culminating in June 1853, when Costa refused to conduct Bennett's Piano Concerto No. 3. This was doubly hurtful to Davison, as the refusal symbolized a snub not only to his friend but also to his wife, the pianist Arabella Goddard, who was to perform the solo part. Davison was a powerful enemy and several voices within the London press followed his lead. His music criticism of the 1840s and 50s consistently positioned the Philharmonic as conservative, backward, and amateur. Davison and others expressed frustration that this institution had potential to compete with other European symphonic centers, but was currently failing in its national duty.

Vehement criticism of the directorate continued through the 1850s. Davison clearly had a personal vendetta against the Philharmonic, but the *Musical World* was not the only newspaper to raise concerns. In January 1855, a reporter for *Athenaeum* complained that

> when the list of Philharmonic Directors elected for this season was made known we remarked, that it could be in no respect accepted as representing the state of music in London. There was small hope that progress could be insured, or even the success of past seasons maintained under such governance, —small chance of enterprise in the selection of new music, —or of reforms calculated to insure year by year a more perfect execution of classical masterpieces, supposing these sufficient to keep together a conservative public.[28]

The Philharmonic Society's neglect of new music around midcentury was partly a product of a conservatism and fear of the unknown that became

"Royal Academy of Music Committee Minutes, Vol. 8 1839 to 1843," No. 8, especially 45 and 181, Royal Academy of Music Library.

[24]Langley, "A Place for Music," 44.

[25]Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton, "Introduction: Trends in British Musical Thought, 1850–1950," in *British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought, 1850–1950* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 1–7 at 6.

[26]The Society did continue to support indigenous composers through their affiliated publishing arm, The Harmonic Institution.

[27]*Musical World* (15 March 1851): 161.

[28]*Athenaeum* (13 January 1855): 56.

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entrenched as the Society matured.[29] The original founders were respected, professional musicians, who made bold choices in their programming and commissioning decisions. By midcentury a new group of directors was at the helm, consisting of the amateur gentlemen lambasted in the *Musical World* and the *Athenaeum*. The problem was that, at the same time as they fostered international ambitions, they were a parochial bunch. None were distinguished composers themselves and none had the knowledge of musical developments on the Continent to enable them to make decisions that would take their Society into the future and reestablish its stuttering reputation. There is no better example of this than in the misjudged appointment of Wagner to conduct the 1855 season. None of the committee members were familiar with Wagner's music or conducting style, but the controversial appointment was offered anyway as the directors were desperate to appoint a big-name foreign musician at short notice, even one that had no conducting reputation. The results were embarrassing for both parties.[30]

All in all, the directors of the Philharmonic Society were fearful of programming contemporary music because they could not easily judge its quality and because they were fearful of antagonizing their exclusive subscription audience. Accordingly, they began to trot out the same old favorite repertoire, under-rehearsed, and at a high price to a narrow section of the public. The critic for the *Morning Post* (probably Howard Glover, a friend of Davison) despaired:

> Why do their [the Directors'] programs afford such slender evidence of research? Why do they discover such timidity or prejudice with respect to the production of new works? . . . We are also inclined to believe that they might, with much honor and advantage to themselves, engage Mr. Sterndale Bennett, Mr. Charles Horsley, Mr. Macfarren, or some other eminent British musician to write works for them; or if the committee are unable to see merit in any but foreign productions, there are Spohr, Molique, &c., amongst the classics of the day, with Schumann, Gade, and Berlioz amongst the romantics and fantastics, with heads and pens at their disposal. . . . If the leading composers of the Continent and this country knew the London Philharmonic to be conducted with enterprise, liberality, and judgment, new works of great merit would doubtless be sent in . . . the Philharmonic Society might soon become a protector to the living as well as guardian to the fame of departed genius.[31]

By the time Berlioz arrived in London, the Philharmonic Society had been the subject of a considerable press campaign led by the *Musical World* and the *Morning Post* to paint it as conservative, out-of-touch, insulated, and restrictive. Meanwhile, these same critics printed biographical portraits of Berlioz that painted him as the exact opposite: modern, original, anti-establishment, rebellious, and democratic, his music speaking to a broad audience. In short, a Beethovenian genius. When the Society failed to invite Berlioz to conduct during his stay in London, the two narratives, the conservative institution and the rebellious struggling composer would map neatly onto one another. Indeed, Berlioz would come to represent a useful stick with which to beat the Philharmonic.

Despite the disappointments of his first London visit, Berlioz still managed to put on two successful concerts in London that showcased his own music on 7 February at Drury Lane and on 29 June at the Hanover Square Rooms. These concerts received overwhelmingly positive responses in the press. Reviews tended to use biographical tropes, framing these concerts within a narrative of Berlioz struggling against opposition from a conservative, establishment faction, represented by the Philharmonic Society. Pitting the society against an individual was a powerful rhetorical strategy, more so than generalized criticisms of an institution.

[29]There were, of course, other historical reasons, too; we can also see similar patterns emerging in other cities around midcentury, as William Weber has shown. See William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). In the specific case of the Society, the retrenchment was also affected by a lack of funding for rehearsals, a loss of confidence after their new building burned down in 1830, and a lack of vision in deliberately restricting their own outreach by not allowing individual public ticket sales.

[30]See Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 87–92 for details.

[31][Howard Glover], *Morning Post* (11 March 1851): 3.

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Charles Rosenberg (partial and enlisted to Davison's campaign) wrote a review for the *Musical World* that placed the frustratingly shortsighted restrictiveness of the Philharmonic Society at odds with the breadth of Berlioz's appeal to all of musical London:

> To Berlioz himself it must have been one of the most gratifying personal triumphs [the concert at the Hanover Square Rooms]. The manner in which his presence in London has been ignored by the Philharmonic Society could not fail to hurt a man who is no less sensitive than are ordinarily the Sons of Genius. Yesterday, however, musical London was fairly pitted against the implied taste of the Philharmonic Society. Never was a more musical and critical audience collected in any concert room. Musicians of every class: Balfe and John Parry—Henry Smart and Wallace—every species of professor and every sort of critic—men who analyze music, and men who content themselves with enjoying it—classicists and romanticists, &c., &c., were there; and never did I see an audience who took so lively an interest in the success of any *beneficiaire* as did his brethren of the pen . . . in that of Berlioz.[32]

Having outlined some of the particular successes of the concert, Rosenberg went on to remonstrate with the Philharmonic. His outrage seemed to stem from embarrassment about how the incident might be viewed on the Continent:

> I therefore adhere to my previously expressed opinion, that, considering the position assumed by, and to a certain extent conceded to the Philharmonic Society, it was a culpable negligence on their part—the more culpable, because willful—not to have offered Berlioz the advantages of their organization to interpret some one of his larger works. . . . In a word, the European standing of Hector Berlioz ought to have rendered it unnecessary for him to submit to a revision of it at the hands of the Philharmonic. Nor is it probable that they will have an opportunity of redeeming their error, as Berlioz will, it may be presumed, find it more to his advantage to make gold in America . . . than to be elbowed into the ditch by mediocrity in England. Should this be so, the Philharmonic will find it difficult to wipe out the stain left on them by their present treatment of so eminent a man.[33]

[32]Charles G. Rosenberg, *Musical World* (1 July 1848): 420.
[33]Ibid.

Davison's campaign used the "Berlioz" he had already constructed as a rhetorical device to increase pressure on the Philharmonic. Berlioz's position as an outsider, lacking in wider public appreciation was well known, established through biographical pieces comparing him to Beethoven, and concert reviews depicting him as a suffering artistic genius. This "Berlioz" was now pitted against the fusty Philharmonic and he was repeatedly portrayed as a talented foreign composer who had been unfairly snubbed by London's conservative musical establishment: another struggle to add to his already Beethovenian biography. The campaign culminated in an open letter, again written by Rosenberg and published in the *Musical World*.[34] The following two issues of the periodical repeated the plea.[35] When Berlioz left London, critics writing in the *Musical World*, but also elsewhere, lamented that he did not receive more recognition during his stay. The writer for the *Musical Times* adopted similar themes, highlighting Berlioz's poor treatment, his originality, and similarities in his reception to that of Beethoven, but did not go so far as to criticize the Philharmonic.[36]

Intriguingly, Berlioz himself made little of the treatment he had received from the Philharmonic. The *Mémoires*, which Berlioz began to compile during this visit to London do not discuss the incident, focusing instead on Jullien and Drury Lane. This was actually characteristic of the way Berlioz dealt with his failures in London, distorting events and transferring blame onto another individual, in order to protect his image on the Continent. For example, he unfairly painted Jullien as an incompetent buffoon, and he blamed Michael Costa, for organizing a cabal at the London premiere of *Benvenuto Cellini* in 1853.[37] Laying

[34]Letter from Charles G. Rosenberg, *Musical World* (8 April 1848): 231.
[35]*Musical World* (15 April 1848) and *Musical World* (22 April 1848): 259.
[36]"Brief Chronicle of the Last Month," *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 3 (August 1848): 34.
[37]Berlioz described the Drury Lane episode in *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*, 750–53, while Costa's "cabal" is the subject of 777–78. Jullien also provided the inspiration for the ridiculous opera conductor who plans to produce *Robert le diable* in six days in "Ninth Evening: The Paris Opéra and London's Opera Houses: A Moral Study," in *Evenings with the Orchestra*, trans. and ed. Jacques

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blame with an individual surely made more compelling reading than criticizing an institution. Berlioz did mention the Philharmonic's snub in a slightly sneering letter to August Morel, but otherwise his correspondence contains little trace of it. Berlioz wisely let others fight this particular battle, if he even thought of it as such:

> The newspapers are still full of me and my doings; but the resistance of the committee of the Philharmonic Society is an odd business. They are all *English Composers*, and Costa is at the head of them. Well, they have engaged Mr. Molique and they are giving the new symphonies of Mr. Hesse and others; but it seems that they are in holy terror of me. Beale, Davison, Rosenberg and some others have an idea of forcing them to engage me. I am doing nothing about it. We must wait and see.[38]

On leaving England, Berlioz sent a farewell letter to Davison, to be published in the *Musical World*. Here he played up to the popular image of himself as a suffering artist, this time within the context of facing the repercussions of having to leave the safe haven of London to return to France following the 1848 revolutions. Again, there is no mention of the Philharmonic Society as an enemy. Instead, Berlioz praises the discerning public and press he has encountered in London:

> I am going to return into that country which is still called France, and which, after all, is my own. I am going to see by what means an artist can live, or how long it will take him to die, in the midst of the ruins underneath which the flower of his art is crushed and buried. But, however long the torture which awaits me may endure, I shall preserve till the end the most grateful remembrance of your excellent and skillful artists, of your intelligent and attentive public, and of your brethren of the press who have lent me so noble and so constant a support.[39]

He was again remarkably close-lipped on the subject of the Philharmonic when writing a substantial report on musical life in London when he visited in 1851 as a judge at the Great Exhibition. The report, published in the *Journal des Débats* on 31 May 1851 and reproduced in *Evenings with the Orchestra*, praised several London musical institutions, but Berlioz's only comment on the Philharmonic was: "Among other musical institutions of London I must also mention the Old Philharmonic Society of Hanover Square, which has been famous for too long a time to need comment from me."[40]

It is likely that Berlioz did not want to scotch the possibility of future invitations from the Philharmonic Society and so was deliberately reticent about the incident. He well understood the expense and risks involved in performing his music with an ensemble unfamiliar with it, to a new audience. He likely had little expectation that the Philharmonic would issue an invitation during this first visit, but rather intended to prepare the ground for future visits and performances. It is clear from his correspondence that he had high hopes of attaining a permanent position in London.[41] His farewell letter suggests he had public relations firmly in mind, as he played on English sensitivities and aspirations about the place of London in the European musical landscape. Indeed, he argued that the future of music was safer in London than on the Continent during times of revolution:

> Yes—our muse, terrified by all the horrible clamors which resound from one end of the continent to the other, seems to me secure of an asylum in England, and the hospitality will be all the more splendid the more frequently the host remembers that one of his sons is the greatest of poets, that music is one of the diverse forms of poetry, and that on the same liberty which Shakspere [*sic*] used in his

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Barzun (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 105–17. George Biddlecombe has discussed Berlioz's depiction of both embarrassments, arguing that Berlioz used "character assassination" in both cases to distance himself from events, and drawing on a range of contemporary sources to demonstrate the inaccuracies in Berlioz's accounts. See Biddlecombe, "Berlioz and the London Scene," in *The Musical Voyager*, 26–43.

[38] *CG Vol. III 1842–50*, 535–36 (letter 1191 to Auguste Morel, 24 April 1848).

[39] Hector Berlioz, "To the Editor of the *Musical World*," *Musical World* (8 July 1848): 433. Copies of the letter also appeared in the *Morning Post* and *Athenaeum*. The original can be found in *CG Vol. III*, 555–56 (letter 1209, dated 5–8 July 1848).

[40] Hector Berlioz, "Twenty-First Evening: The Study of Music," *Evenings with the Orchestra*, 242.

[41] For example, see his letter to Joseph d'Ortigue (15 March 1848) in Hugh Macdonald, *Selected Letters of Berlioz* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995), 249, in which he states: "My only hopes for a musical career are centred now on England or Russia." Again, these plans should be understood within the context of the instability of Continental Europe during the 1848 revolutions.

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immortal conceptions, depends the entire development of the music of the future.[42]

Certainly, this flattering vision of the future chimed with the aspirations of many prominent figures in London's musical life (and particularly the Philharmonic Society). Berlioz had left the door open for future interactions, even while London critics depicted his first visit as a standoff between a lone, brave composer of new music and the conservative forces of the Philharmonic.

The Next Mendelssohn: Berlioz and the New Philharmonic Society

Out of the repeated criticisms of the Philharmonic Society for declining standards, for deliberately restricting their outreach, and for neglecting talented native composers and new music, grew a new London concert society, which was intimately related to Berlioz. From early 1850, rumors of this new society appeared in the press.[43] Much of the press spin at the time, again produced by Davison and his circle, strongly argued that the Society was set up in direct opposition to the "Old Philharmonic," as it now became known. A series of articles in *Musical World* positioned the new society as a rival, born out of the Old Philharmonic's inadequacies. A rather hyperbolic article reported on the first season, describing it as a "bitter pill" for the older society, and predicting that the founding of the NPS represented a "new epoch in this country."[44] Correspondents in *Athenaeum*, less closely associated with Davison, also positioned it in the same way.[45]

Certainly, the Society's proposed mission was distinctive: to offer performance opportunities to contemporary and native composers. And it delivered on these promises. The first concert (24 March 1852) closed with the first part of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* Symphony. The second concert included works by two English composers: Wylde's Piano Concerto in F Minor and *The Island of Calypso: An Operatic Masque* by E. J. Loder. The third repeated the extracts from the *Roméo et Juliette*. The fourth concert was praised for the excellent performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The fifth included Berlioz's *Les francs-juges* Overture and a "Recitative and Air" by English composer and organist Henry Smart. The final concert of the inaugural season opened with a repeat of Beethoven's Ninth and closed with a selection of extracts from Berlioz's *Faust*. It also included a selection from a cantata entitled *Prayer and Praise* by Wylde and a "Serenade" from Julius Benedict's opera, *The Gipsy's Warning*. These new and little-known works were heard alongside more familiar music by Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Rossini.

The NPS circulated a prospectus ahead of its first concert:

> It is proposed, not only to extend a knowledge of the productions of the greatest masters, by a more perfect performance of their works than has hitherto been attained, but likewise to give to modern and native Composers a favorable opportunity for establishing the worth of their claims upon the attention and esteem of a discerning public.
>
> Exclusiveness, the baneful hindrance to all progress of Art, will not be tolerated in this Society. To exclude works of living Authors, because they have not the excellencies of those of the illustrious dead, is as absurd as to deny the advantages of the discovery of new countries, because they do not possess the civilization and beauties of ancient Rome or Greece.[46]

The prospectus issued a direct challenge to the stale programming practices of the "Old" Philharmonic. It touched on issues on which the Philharmonic Society had been publicly criticized, and the new society even had the audacity to appropriate the older society's name. However, it is unlikely that most observers viewed the NPS as a rival. There was room in London society for both organizations, as they offered different things. As Edward Holmes,

[42]Berlioz, "To the Editor of the *Musical World*," *Musical World* (8 July 1848): 433. Copies of the letter also appeared in the *Morning Post* and *Athenaeum*. The original can be found in *CG Vol. III*, 555–56 (letter 1209 to Davison, dated 5–8 July 1848).

[43]The history and governance of the New Philharmonic Society are shrouded in mystery. Concert programs and accompanying program notes and prospectuses are held at the British Library and the Royal College of Music Museum, but otherwise, documentary records are scarce.

[44]*Musical World* (27 March 1852): 201–02.

[45]*Athenaeum* (23 February 1850): 212.

[46]*Prospectus of the New Philharmonic Society and Programme of the First Concert with Words, Notices, &c.* (London: Cramer, Beale, and Co., no date [probably 1852]).

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writing in *Fraser's Magazine* observed: "The spirit which has animated the projectors of this society in founding it is far from one of factious opposition to the body of which it has borrowed the name."[47] Holmes fully admitted "the valuable services of this institution [the "old" Philharmonic Society] as a school of the highest instrumental art" but argued that its repertoire is rather confined, and that developments in instrumental music call for a higher degree of technical excellence, which can be offered by the New Philharmonic Society.[48] Such nuances did not align with the story that Davison and his circle sought to tell. Instead, they exaggerated the differences between the two societies in order to further their agenda. Once again, Berlioz became embroiled in Davison's personal grudge and a central character in the unfurling drama. And once again, Berlioz's "role" in the story would both affect and be supported by his biographical press depictions.

The New Philharmonic Society (NPS) was established jointly by Dr. Henry Wylde, an aspiring composer and concert manager, and Frederick Beale of the Cramer and Beale publishing company. Both men served as jurors alongside Berlioz, judging the instruments category at the 1851 Great Exhibition. Charles Fox, an engineer, and close friend of Wylde, provided the bulk of the initial financial backing.[49] Fox's company, Fox, Henderson & Co., was responsible for building the Crystal Palace that housed the Great Exhibition. The establishment of the NPS was born out of a desire shared by Wylde, Fox, Beale, and Berlioz to expand London concert life by giving concerts in a large venue with affordable tickets, enticing a broader public than the audience who typically attended the "old" Philharmonic concerts. The NPS would perform new music to a higher standard than previously experienced, which was only possible through generous financial backing. All involved would benefit in different ways. For Berlioz the enterprise would enable him to secure regular employment in London conducting a first-rate orchestra, Wylde would use the Society to promote himself and his compositions, and Fox hoped to see the Crystal Palace remain at Hyde Park as a financially lucrative concert venue.[50] Rivalry with the Old Philharmonic was a minor motive, if indeed it were a motive at all.

The New Philharmonic's first season, as we have seen, genuinely offered something new, with contemporary foreign and home-grown works featured on all programs. Fox's financial backing ensured that the ensemble was large and well rehearsed, and although the NPS did not secure the Crystal Palace, the alternative venue, Exeter Hall, was far larger than the Old Philharmonic's Hanover Square Rooms. All of this led to higher standards of performance than London concertgoers had previously experienced and a wide repertoire at reasonable prices, enabling the NPS to reach wider audiences than its older counterpart (the first concert attracted an audience of around 1500). All seemed to point to a new, more open era in London concert life.

Berlioz was the obvious choice to conduct the first season. During his visit for the Great Exhibition he cemented his friendship with Beale, made Wylde's acquaintance, and was likely closely involved in the planning of the Society. The New Philharmonic's aims also echoed those of the *Société Philharmonique*, which Berlioz had founded in late 1849,[51] and there were numerous overlaps in the repertoire performed by the two societies, further suggesting a connection. Accordingly, Beale invited Berlioz to conduct all of the concerts of the inaugural 1852 season, including the opportunity to showcase some of his own works. Clearly, a number of reasons made Berlioz a natural choice of figurehead, yet London critics reported that the reasons for his appointment were that he represented modernism as well as continental prestige, and

[47] [Edward Holmes], "Opening of the Musical Season," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (May 1852): 525.
[48] Ibid., 525–26.
[49] Fox had actually used his influence to secure Wylde's place as a juror. See Leanne Langley, "'Unequalled Music': Berlioz, 1851 and the New Philharmonic Society," *Berlioz Society Bulletin*, no. 208 (2019): 3.

[50] For more details, see Langley, "Unequalled Music," 1–9.
[51] Papers relating Berlioz's society are preserved in the Chapot collection at the Hector Berlioz Museum in La Côte-Saint-André, and its progress was also followed closely in the French press. The progress of the *Société Philharmonique*, and its pledge to produce new compositions, was followed in *Athenaeum*. See *Athenaeum* (30 March 1850): 353.

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he had been publicly snubbed by the rival "Old" Philharmonic.

The NPS was certainly more open to contemporary music than the older society, but its "modernism" must be understood in relative terms. London was not Weimar, where premieres of the latest works of Wagner were heard before anywhere else. Even London's supporters of new music were skeptical about the rumored developments in harmony, program, and form issuing from the Continent. For Berlioz to be successful in London, it was crucial that his music was not seen as part of this new compositional school. Once again, Berlioz's outsider status, already established in biographical press reports from his first visit to the city, would be essential to his gaining acceptance. This time, rather than set him apart from the establishment, it would separate him from the emerging school of composers later known as the "New Germans,"[52] but for now dubbed the "aesthetic school" by English critics. Schumann (whom many saw as a pretender to the throne of Beethoven and a threat to traditional forms[53]) and Wagner were seen as its leaders.[54] Most English critics at this time were skeptical; some were openly hostile.[55] The English response to the "aesthetic school" typically criticized experimentation for experimentation's sake, decried the apparent lack of respect for traditional approaches to form, melody, and harmony, and argued that pretentious aesthetic theories were merely a means of disguising creative poverty.[56] Instead, Davison, Chorley, Charles Gruneisen (*Morning Post*), and Campbell Clarke (*Telegraph*) argued that the future should be forged along Mendelssohnian lines, rather than the more controversial break with the past apparently represented by the "aesthetic school."[57]

Berlioz benefited from his outsider status when these criticisms were raging. Although London listeners understood his music to be new, original, and challenging, they did not expressly associate Berlioz with the emerging "aesthetic" school.[58] The *Fraser's Magazine* article from his first visit had created an image of Berlioz as friendless, unsupported by a patron or group. When he returned to the city in 1852 the press continued to depict Berlioz as a solitary figure: "a wanderer without a school, a people, or even a nation."[59] Similar ideas were repeated in *Musical World*: "He does not come out under the auspices of a coterie, or the patronage of the Philharmonic Society, but appeals at once to the suffrages of the public."[60] Not only did this contribute to the already familiar image of Berlioz as a lone, suffering artist, it also suggested that he was not allied to a compositional school.

During the 1852 NPS concerts, London audiences had their most substantial opportunity

[52]Franz Brendel coined the term "New German School" in 1859, but the compositional developments associated with the school were developing from the late 1840s, and regularly discussed in the German press throughout the 1850s. Berlioz's music was sometimes appropriated by the New Germans in their writings, but he had serious doubts over some of their aesthetic ideas.

[53]*Music during the Victorian Era: From Mendelssohn to Wagner, being the Memoirs of J. W. Davison, Forty Years Music Critic of "The Times,"* ed. Henry Davison (London: W. Reeves, 1912), 141. For an example of the contemporary English response to Schumann, see the long review of Schumann's *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*, which was performed at a Philharmonic concert in April 1853. *Musical World* (9 April 1853): 225–27.

[54]Dibble and Horton, "Introduction," 2.

[55]For more on English critics' responses to the New German School, see Peter Horton, "Avoiding 'Coarse Invecture,'" 15–26.

[56]Many of these themes can be found in reviews of a new oratorio, *Jerusalem*, by British composer Henry Hugh Pierson, who was understood to be part of the "aesthetic school." See *Musical World* (2 October 1852): 628. The author writes, "Mr. Pierson belongs to the 'word-painting' school, or the 'aesthetic,' as the admirers of Richard Wagner, Robert Schumann, &c. have dubbed it. . . . It is the barrenness of the age that has created this school—an attempt to hide poverty of invention and insufficient knowledge under a deceptive veil of mystery, which, lifted up, discloses nothing but hollow outlines of a skeleton."

[57]This piece in *Athenaeum* is indicative of some of these widely held views: "We have been always at variance with those who hold that Music can only be continued by destruction, and who maintain that, to be new in symphonic writing, it is necessary to begin where Beethoven ended,—forgetting that subsequent to the close of his career and the diffusion of his last works, such events have taken place as the disinterment of Bach and the acceptance of a genius in Mendelssohn, entirely distinct from Beethoven's, and, in some sort, retrogressive." See *Athenaeum* (26 April 1856): 527.

[58]Berlioz's acceptance into London musical life was significantly helped by his personal skepticism of aesthetic theories. He never attempted to create a metaphysical system to explain his compositional approach. In this he would have been in sympathy with British critics. Jacques Barzun, "Berlioz as Man and Thinker," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, 11–19 at 14.

[59]Davison, *Music during the Victorian Era*, 148.

[60]*Musical World* (27 March 1852): 197.

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to hear Berlioz's music. London critics had long been conditioning listeners to position Berlioz's music, even its most original aspects, within a classical lineage. John Ella in an article from 1845 compared Berlioz's "picture or descriptive music" to Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and Mendelssohn's music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, arguing that Berlioz's innovations built on theirs.[61] This pattern continued in 1852, even among less supportive critics than Ella. Reviewers sometimes complained that Berlioz's symphonies lacked cohesiveness, but they nonetheless related his music to the classical masters, particularly Beethoven, and noted that there were "no painful harmonies"[62] in contrast to the experimental chromaticism of the "aesthetic school." Another reviewer found that Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* Symphony represented "that freedom from conventions, of which Beethoven was in his later works the perpetual advocate and the highest authority,"[63] placing Berlioz's innovations in a direct line from Beethoven's. A critic for *Musical Times* compared Berlioz's British musical institutions' incomprehension of Berlioz's originality to the early reception of Beethoven.[64]

Some reviewers were concerned about the amplified role of the program and saw this as an obstacle to his acceptance, but even so, they recognized talent, even genius in his work. The critic for the *Athenaeum* (the periodical that was the most reserved toward Berlioz's music), for example, felt that the *Roméo et Juliette* Symphony required the listener to have too much prior knowledge of the play, comparing the work unfavorably with Beethoven's and Mendelssohn's music: "There is a wider and loftier poetry in the unexplained beauty and fancy of Beethoven's Symphony in C minor and of Mendelssohn's Symphony in A minor, than in the necessarily disproportioned attempt to explain a tragic drama." Even critical reviews like this one demonstrate that London critics placed Berlioz's music within this acceptable tradition rather than cast it as an example of the "aesthetic school." The writer praised Berlioz's genius as an orchestrator, but feared that this had led him to "underrate *matter* as unimportant when compared with manner" and that his neglect would be an obstacle to his music's "permanent acceptance among musicians."[65] The criticism was meant constructively, the author believing that Berlioz could address this lack and achieve greatness.

Generally, London critics agreed that Berlioz's music represented contemporary innovation, but his music was a continuation of, rather than a break from, the musical past. In response to the pretentious systematizing and Idealism represented by Wagner and his followers, constructions of Berlioz increasingly stressed his pragmatism and traditionalism. During the first NPS season, London critics positioned him as representing a future for music that was less threatening and abstract than that offered by the new "aesthetic school." For some, he was even a potential successor to their beloved Mendelssohn. This positioning was also reflected in NPS programs; alongside his own music, Berlioz conducted Beethoven works in all six concerts of the first season of the New Philharmonic Society and Mendelssohn works at four of them. He became recognized as the best interpreter of Beethoven London had yet witnessed,[66] and a sympathetic conductor of Mendelssohn's music,[67] in contrast to Wagner, who caused offence through the lack of respect he showed Mendelssohn's music when he conducted the Philharmonic Society in 1855.[68]

Intriguingly, London critics began to associate Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* with another "Italian" Symphony: Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 in A Major. John Michael Cooper has found that, prior to Berlioz's visit to London in 1853 at which time he conducted *Harold en Italie* with the Philharmonic Society, English audiences did not associate Mendelssohn's Symphony in A with an Italian program. After this visit, the

[61]John Ella, "Berlioz in Vienna," *Morning Post* (25 December 1845): 5.
[62]*Musical World* (27 March 1852): 198.
[63][Edward Holmes], *Fraser's Magazine* (May 1852): 527.
[64]"Brief Chronicle of the Last Month," *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 3 (August 1848): 34.
[65]*Athenaeum* 3003 (1852): 361–62.
[66]It was reported that the Berlioz performance of Beethoven's Ninth in 1852 with the NPS was the first time that that work had been performed in London in a way that did it justice. See *Musical World* (12 June 1852): 370–71.
[67]*Musical World* (5 June 1852): 356.
[68]Davison, *Music during the Victorian Era*, 167–69.

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second movement appeared in a new edition entitled "Mendelssohn's Pilgrims' March," echoing the title of the movement of Berlioz's symphony that was most popular with London audiences.[69] In this way, music publishers supported the linking of Berlioz and Mendelssohn that had been circulating in the press and on concert programs. In fact, the association can be dated at least to the previous year; when Berlioz conducted Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 with the NPS the program drew attention to the Italian scenes it depicted.[70] Similarly, *Harold en Italie* had been referred to as Berlioz's "Italian" Symphony ever since he first conducted it in London in 1848.[71] It seems that the two symphonies began to converge in the minds of London audiences and critics. They continued to think of the two works as related, dealing with similar subject matter, later into the century, and it was deemed appropriate that they were sometimes programed together as "two Italian symphonies."[72] Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* shaped the reception of Mendelssohn's symphony and vice versa.

Critics' evaluations of Berlioz's music, were, once again, colored by biographical writing. The rebellious, eccentric, reclusive, Beethovenian Berlioz still appeared in press descriptions, but was coupled with another paradoxical aspect of his character: the gentlemanly, pragmatic, and sociable Mendelssohnian side. It seems likely that these characteristics had become particularly important because Berlioz was now taking on a more prominent role in London's musical life than he had in 1848, and his friends in the press sought to help him achieve his goal of finding long-term employment in London, possibly as a regular conductor of the NPS, by making him a palatable figure to musical London.

Even the timing of Berlioz's first visit to London predisposed English critics to think of him as the next Mendelssohn. To some extent, Berlioz had encouraged associations between himself and England's most beloved adopted composer since his first visit. Berlioz arrived on 4 November 1847 and immediately heard that Mendelssohn had died that day. As well as mourning his friend and colleague, he was aware of the possibilities Mendelssohn's death could open up for him in England. He soon afterward wrote to influential critic and Mendelssohn enthusiast Henry Chorley offering condolences and regretting the "harsh blow delivered to the cause of worthy and serious music."[73] Berlioz admired Mendelssohn both personally and professionally, perhaps more so than has previously been acknowledged,[74] but he was also a pragmatist. A few months later, he wrote to both August Morel and his sister Nanci that "everyone" had told him that there was an excellent position for him in London because of the vacancy left by Mendelssohn.[75] He wrote to Davison, "Help me and show me only a little of the interest you showed Mendelssohn."[76] He also emphasized his personal friendship with Mendelssohn and openly declared his admiration for Mendelssohn's music. For example, again to Davison he wrote,

> I looked out for you the other evening at Exeter Hall, like hunting for a diamond in the sand. I wanted to say to you something you know as well as I do, that Mendelssohn's Symphony is a masterpiece, struck in a single instant, like a gold medal. I know of nothing so new, so alive, so noble and so expertly crafted in the freedom of its inspiration. Only the Paris Conservatoire is unaware of this magnificent composition; it'll discover it in ten years' time.[77]

This is not to suggest that Berlioz invented his admiration for Mendelssohn's Symphony (he did

[69]John Michael Cooper, "Mendelssohn and Berlioz: Selective Affinities," in *Mendelssohn Perspectives* ed. Nicole Grimes and Angela R. Mace (Oxford: Ashgate, 2012), 113–43 at 131.
[70]*Prospectus of the New Philharmonic Society and Programme of the Fifth Concert with Words, Notices, &c.* (London: Cramer, Beale, and Co., no date), 8.
[71]For example, see *Athenaeum* (12 February 1848): 170.
[72]See "Two Italian Symphonies," *Musical World* (18 April 1889): 255.
[73]*CG Vol. III*, 468 (letter 1139 to Henry Chorley, 12 November 1847).
[74]The friendship between the two composers and similarities in their compositional approaches are documented by John Michael Cooper. See "Mendelssohn and Berlioz," 113–43.
[75]*CG Vol. III*, 503 (letter 1162 to August Morel, 14 January 1848), and *CG Vol. III*, 505 (letter 1163 to Nanci Pal, 14 January 1848).
[76]*CG Vol. III*, 510 (letter 1166 to Davison, 21 January 1848).
[77]Translation in Macdonald, *Berlioz: Selected Letters*, 251 (letter 225). The original is in *CG Vol. III*, 531–32 (letter 1187 to James William Davison, dated 17 March 1848).

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mention the occasion to other non-English friends, such as d'Ortigue), but rather that, within the context of London's musical life, he occasionally found it useful to exaggerate his appreciation of the music and his personal friendship with the composer in a similar way to other composers who published stories of encounters with Beethoven as a means of endorsement.[78]

Whether Berlioz encouraged the practice or not, English press reports repeatedly emphasized the relationship between Berlioz and Mendelssohn. A popular anecdote appeared in the London press from Berlioz's first visit onward that provided evidence of their friendship. As part of a series of travel essays reporting on his German tours of 1842–43 Berlioz had published an episode that highlighted Mendelssohn's generosity when he helped Berlioz put on a performance of his music in Leipzig. The story emphasized the warmth of their friendship, which extended back to their first meeting in Rome in 1831. It concluded with an attractive image of the two conductors swapping batons as a marker of their esteem for one another.[79] This particular anecdote was central to the 1852 press campaign because it emphasized something that Berlioz had in common with Mendelssohn: that they were both talented conductors. Musical London at this time thought of Berlioz as a conductor first, composer second (or even third, as he was also well known in the city as a critic, his writing regularly translated in music periodicals), and the role the critics sought for Berlioz was as a conductor.

Musical World chose to print a longer version of this biographical episode, containing further evidence of Mendelssohn's generosity, professionalism, and gentlemanly behavior. This version was published during Berlioz's 1852 visit to conduct the NPS. This created the impression that Berlioz was endorsed by the golden child of English musical life: the traditional, conservative Mendelssohn himself.[80] Similarly, the famous anecdote of Paganini bestowing on Berlioz a gift of 20,000 francs on hearing his music was also circulated in the English press to convey second-hand endorsement from Beethoven, because Paganini reportedly gave the gift "in token of his admiration for the genius of a man upon whom, he said, the mantle of Beethoven had fallen."[81]

Toward the end of the NPS season, and London's most prolonged exposure to Berlioz's music, *Fraser's Magazine* published a substantial piece on Berlioz, again coupling biographical material with an evaluation of the *Roméo et Juliette* Symphony. This differed markedly from the 1848 piece, in that the writer now described a surprising duality in Berlioz's character in which creative genius was coupled with his minute "attention to the details of the orchestra, examining every desk, learning each player's name, and preparing himself for the exact spot whence each sound expressed in his score should issue." In this piece, Berlioz appeared simultaneously as a Beethovenian, anti-establishment, creative genius and a Mendelssohnian, sociable, professional pragmatist. The Mendelssohnian aspects came across most visibly in Berlioz's activity as a conductor. The writer noticed that "the personal regard which is felt for Berlioz by artists, is found in the care which they bestow on his works, and is greatly enhanced by his polished and winning manners."[82] The writer marveled that one day Berlioz could be alone, silently writing music and the next "directing hundreds of musicians with ease and promptitude. The capacity of practical activity—of thought and action which nature so often disjoins in people, forms a powerful feature of the musical individuality of Berlioz."[83] He continued to offer examples of how Berlioz's eccentric, imaginative and inventive nature was balanced by his practicality and intelligence, which saved him from becoming "one living

[78]See K. M. Knittel, "Pilgrimages to Beethoven: Reminiscences by His Contemporaries," *Music & Letters* 84 (2003): 19–54.
[79]See "Dr Mendelssohn and Hector Berlioz," *Morning Post* (22 January 1848): 6. Berlioz included this anecdote in *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*, 521–33.

[80]*Musical World* (12 June 1852): 370–71.
[81]"Theatres and Music," *John Bull* (6 December 1845): 786. The story tended to be repeated when Berlioz was present in London. It was mentioned in "Of Music in Italy and Other Matters," *Fraser's Magazine* (August 1849): 161.
[82]*Fraser's Magazine* (May 1852): 527.
[83]Ibid.

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in dreams and abstractions."[84] The piece as a whole depicted Berlioz as a capable conductor, without losing the allure of the Beethovenian creative genius. All in all, it constructed Berlioz as the perfect figurehead to lead a significant new forward-thinking, but respectable institution in London's musical life, paving the way for a permanent future in the city.

Between the Two Societies

Unfortunately, the expectation that Berlioz would be appointed as conductor of the NPS on a permanent basis was not to be realized. The self-promoting Henry Wylde was jealous of the attention that Berlioz received and of his greater skill with a baton. Accordingly, he decided against re-engaging Berlioz, instead inviting P. J. von Lindpaintner and Louis Spohr to conduct the 1853 season. This caused a permanent break with the outraged Beale who lobbied for Berlioz. The 1853 season failed to achieve the critical, popular, and financial successes of the previous year.[85] Despite this setback, Berlioz still visited London in 1853. He had finally received the much-anticipated invitation to conduct a concert with the old Philharmonic. Accordingly, in February 1853, George Hogarth, the Society's secretary wrote to Berlioz, mentioning a plan to perform his music and requesting he send the score and parts for his *Le carnaval romain*. When the directors heard Berlioz was to visit London anyway to conduct the London premiere of *Benvenuto Cellini* at Covent Garden they instead offered him the opportunity of conducting one part of a concert himself.[86]

Once again, the ground for Berlioz's visit was prepared in the press, with Edward Holmes penning a substantial piece in *Fraser's Magazine* in May 1853. An extract was reprinted in *Musical World*.[87] Again, Holmes struck a balance between the troubled Beethovenian genius and the capable Mendelssohnian conductor, positioning Berlioz as a good long-term prospect for musical London.[88] Some critics placed Berlioz's visit within the context of a battle between the forces of musical conservatism and modernism, as they had the previous year. The *Morning Post* critic began his review of the concert by reminding the reader of the supposed rivalry between the old and the new philharmonic societies: "It must now be evident to all who take an interest in musical matters that the old and new Philharmonic societies are animated by a jealous spirit of rivalry."[89] Thanks to this rivalry, the author continued, the old Philharmonic has shaken off its lethargy and "started into new life, full of action and enterprise." Accordingly, the directors capitalized on the newer society's error in not re-engaging Berlioz: the old Philharmonic "pleased to find its young rival tripping, was shrewd enough to profit" by it, and "Berlioz, formally the nightmare of dozing committee men was at once engaged."[90] Once again, he was depicted as someone who had to suffer through adversity before emerging triumphant in London, the critic lamenting that "Berlioz would most assuredly never have figured in their orchestra as he did last night, if he had not been scurvily treated by the new."[91]

The reviewer suggests that the directors of the old Philharmonic had invited Berlioz as soon as they realized that he would not be conducting the NPS orchestra. His invitation is taken as proof of the old Philharmonic's attempt to compete and modernize. In reality, Berlioz was no longer such a risky prospect to the old Philharmonic. He had had significant success in London with the NPS, he had proven himself as a skillful conductor, he had support within the London press, and there was now enough public interest in his music to make its performance viable. The Philharmonic and

[84]Ibid.
[85]For more details of the remaining seasons of the NPS (which lasted until 1879), see Langley, "Unequalled Music," 6–9.
[86]The correspondence between Hogarth and Berlioz is preserved in the British Library. See Letter Books, containing copies of letters from the Society, 1850–58. MS Royal Philharmonic Society Archive: Correspondence RPS MS 330, British Library.
[87]*Musical World* (28 May 1853): 333–34.
[88][Edward Holmes], "The Music of the Season: Present and Prospective," *Fraser's Magazine* (May 1853): 574–80.
[89]*Morning Post* (31 May 1853): 5.
[90]Ibid.
[91]Ibid.

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NPS players were largely drawn from the same group, so Berlioz and the Philharmonic directors could be confident that the musicians would already be familiar with Berlioz's music. Equally, the Society's directors now also had some familiarity with Berlioz's music, enabling them to choose one of his least risky works which would not require excessive rehearsal time.

The resulting concert, which included *Harold en Italie*, an extract from the *Flight into Egypt* and *Le carnaval romain* Overture was mostly well received, but the critics were not as unanimous as they had been on past visits.[92] The *Musical World* and *Morning Herald* were positive and framed the concert within similar Beethovenian narratives of triumph over adversity and conservatism as those of previous years. Davison's article in *Musical World* crowed that the "old Philharmonic" was "latest in the field, as usual" but that the performance was "satisfactory in every respect" and the concert "one of the most remarkable ever given" by the Society (because it had programed the music of a living composer).[93] The Paganini story was referenced in the discussion of *Harold en Italie*, Berlioz's originality praised, arguing that it set him apart from other composers,[94] and the review claimed a hard-won triumph for Berlioz: "The mist of prejudice, which, for so long a time has hidden the merits of this original and imaginative composer from the general view, is being rapidly dispelled."[95] *Musical World* also reprinted a review from *Morning Herald*, which echoed these sentiments, describing Berlioz as one of "the most remarkable musicians in Europe," and recounting the Beethovenian story of his "daring and original thinking" overcoming "opposition and objection," again emphasizing familiar biographical narratives over musical criticism.[96]

Clearly, Berlioz still enjoyed the support of Davison and some of his circle. They fell back into using the same biographical narrative strategies they had adopted in previous years to promote the composer, particularly emphasizing his Beethovenian struggle. However, there is less evidence of a sustained promotion campaign across different publications as there was during previous visits. The *Morning Post*, for example, was more critical. It was full of the story of Berlioz's position within the battle of the two societies, yet when it came to Berlioz's music, the reviewer objected to "the want of melody and coherence" and lamented the lack of development and clear formal structures, concluding that "in the great art of design Berlioz is deficient; but in the secondary one of coloring, he displays a rare amount of skill."[97] In this case, criticism of Berlioz's music was overshadowed by the reviewer's comments on the Philharmonic Society. Berlioz was a useful symbol, representing reform and modernism, enabling the critic to vent a grievance, but beyond that, the critic was unsure about Berlioz's music. Similarly, the reviewer for the *Athenaeum* found "aspiration and originality" in Berlioz's music that was "too frequently spoilt by apparent incompleteness."[98] Overall, the biographical narratives that had been so helpful in enabling Berlioz to gain a foothold in musical London were now overshadowing coverage of his actual music.

Berlioz's final visit to London from 8 June until 7 July 1855 came during a time of crisis for both societies. Michael Costa unexpectedly resigned as conductor of the old Philharmonic Society, leaving them scrambling to find a conductor for the 1855 season. Meanwhile, the NPS had been struggling ever since Beale had resigned over Wylde's decision not to re-engage Berlioz as

[92]Berlioz reported favorably on the concert to his publisher: see *CG Vol. IV*, 323–25 (letter 1601 to Brandus). A positive review appeared in *Illustrated London News* (4 June 1853): 442, while there was a mixed review in *Athenaeum* (4 June 1853): 682. In the end, any success was quickly overshadowed by the noisy demonstration at the London premiere of *Benvenuto Cellini* on 24 June 1853, described in Berlioz's *Mémoires*. Bloom, *Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz*, 777–78.

[93][James Davison], *Musical World* (4 June 1853): 348–49. This article was based on an almost identical one Davison had published in the *Times* two days earlier. See [Davison] "The Philharmonic Societies," *Times* (2 June 1853): 5.

[94][James Davison], *Musical World* (4 June 1853): 349.

[95]Ibid.

[96]*Musical World*, "Berlioz at the Philharmonic" (4 June 1853): 357.

[97]*Morning Post* (31 May 1853): 5.

[98]*Athenaeum* (4 June 1853): 683.

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conductor. Standards had fallen and Wylde was losing financial backing. Both societies looked to Berlioz to help pull them out of the ensuing chaos.

The Philharmonic Society's loss of Costa could have been an opportunity to appoint an English conductor, but the Society wanted a figurehead with continental prestige.[99] To the chagrin of the London papers, the Society scrambled around trying to find a replacement asking any continental musician they could think of rather than appoint a native.[100] Berlioz was high up the list and offered the opportunity of conducting the entire 1855 season.[101] Unfortunately, he had already promised to conduct two concerts for the New Philharmonic that season, and a clause in the contract guaranteed exclusivity. Berlioz begged Henry Wylde to release him, but Wylde refused.[102] Berlioz was now desirable to both societies, but, out of sheer bad luck, fell between both. In the end Wagner was appointed even though he was an unknown entity both as a conductor and as a composer; the directors knew he was the man of the hour, but only his writings were known in London at the time.

During this final visit, Berlioz did not receive the extensive press coverage he had enjoyed on previous occasions. This was partly because he was only engaged to conduct two concerts on a relatively short visit. Berlioz was no longer an unknown, so there was no need to use his biography to introduce him to the London public. Equally, with Wagner at the helm of the old Philharmonic, the critics had concerns beyond the "battle" between the old and new societies and all they represented. The press coverage was confused and contradictory. Critics now felt compelled to compare Berlioz to Wagner while both were present in London. This meant that the critics' message that Berlioz was an isolated figure, not part of a school, and separate from the "aesthetic" school in particular, was now confused. Comparisons with Wagner were potentially damaging and the *Musical World* and *Morning Post* tried to quash them. Yet in doing so, both papers put out contradictory messages.

The *Musical World* criticized the NPS program for remarking that *Roméo et Juliette* and *Childe Harold* contained characteristic features of the "New School" and that Berlioz in France and Wagner in Germany were its "acknowledged chiefs." The critic denied that Berlioz had anything to do with the school and that comparisons with Wagner were insulting, again comparing Berlioz to Mendelssohn as a conductor:

> Herr Wagner has made a signal failure in this country, as a composer and as a *chef d'orchestre*. M. Berlioz, on the contrary—in Exeter-Hall at any rate—has achieved as signal a triumph in both capacities. . . . M. Berlioz is one of the best [conductors] in Europe, the best, perhaps, since Mendelssohn, who, in this, as in every other manifestation of art-practice, excelled all his contemporaries as greatly as he excelled them all (even Herr Wagner) in genius and imagination. . . . Under these circumstances, the fact of placing M. Berlioz and Herr Wagner in juxtaposition, as "acknowledged chiefs" of a "new school" . . . conveys a slight, rather than a compliment to M. Berlioz. . . .[103]

The critic for the *Morning Post* also found the comparison insulting, but rather than deny that Berlioz was part of the new school, he instead argued that he was its founder, writing:

> We regretted to see in the official program of the society, which usually includes analyses of the various works performed . . . a comparison drawn between M. Berlioz and Herr Wagner, which appeared to place these gentlemen on equal ground. The resemblance goes no further than this, that both professedly belong to the ultra-modern romantic school of instrumental music; but here is the difference: M. Berlioz is the originator of that school, a consummate master of instrumentation, and a poet in his art. Herr Wagner is a follower, a mediocre musician, and although, perhaps, a poet in imagination, is quite unable to express his ideas in music.[104]

[99]The press, particularly Davison, lambasted the eventual decision to appoint Wagner, and the fact that native musicians were once again passed over. See Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic*, 89 and [Davison] "Philharmonic Concerts," *Times* (14 March 1855): 11.
[100]For example, see *Athenaeum* (20 January 1855): 87–88.
[101]Berlioz's correspondence with Hogarth about this opportunity is preserved in the British Library: MS Royal Philharmonic Society Archive: Correspondence RPS MS 330.
[102]He described the "disastrous" situation in letter to Davison: *CG Vol. IV*, 660–61 (letter 1859, 23 December 1854).

[103]*Musical World* (16 June 1855): 379.
[104]*Morning Post* (18 June 1855): 5.

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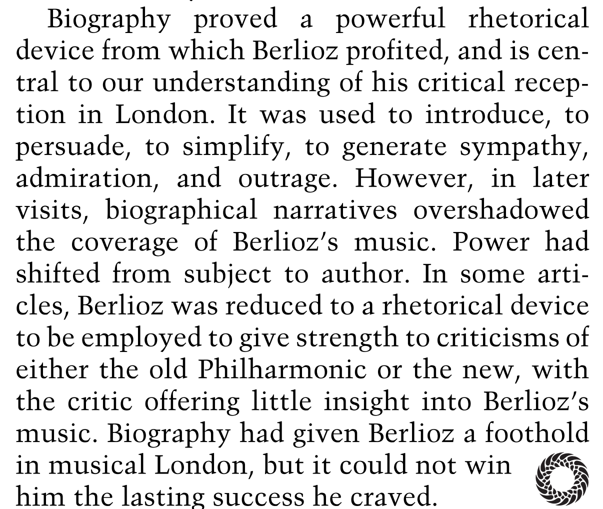
Both papers included positive reviews of both concerts Berlioz conducted with the NPS.[105] However, both focused more on Berlioz's skill as a conductor rather than his compositions, suggesting that even Berlioz's greatest supporters in the London press still saw him as someone who could be an excellent conductor of London musical societies, rather than a representative of the future of music.

During his final visit to the city, Berlioz was overshadowed by the presence of Wagner, whose engagement was longer and more prominent. Wagner represented a greater potential threat to musical London, and Berlioz's reception suffered not only because the critics were more interested in writing (mostly negatively) about Wagner at this time, but also because Berlioz was tainted by association. The following years would see a number of attempts to bring Berlioz to London for various conducting opportunities, but none came to fruition. A mixture of bad luck and personal and institutional rivalries meant that Berlioz never managed to consolidate his success in 1852 into a permanent position.

Berlioz had close relationships with several of London's most influential critics. From his first visit to the city, these critics launched a sustained campaign across several periodicals intended to ease his path. London press depictions of Berlioz were adaptable to suit competing needs. Accordingly, they could be paradoxical. The "Berlioz" that emerges is often similar to that of his own life-writing, but he can also be surprising in ways specific to the London context. Biography was an important rhetorical device frequently employed by Berlioz's supporters. They used it to introduce a relatively unknown figure, distilling those aspects of Berlioz's character that resonated with widely shared Romantic conceptions of musical genius (i.e., the Beethovenian aspects). At the same they used biography to shape the desired narrative, transforming Berlioz into a symbol that could be used to promote their agendas: a hatchet job on the old Philharmonic Society and its replacement by the NPS. As the critics' aims changed, so too did their use of Berlioz's biography. In 1852 they adapted it, reprinting biographical episodes that highlighted Berlioz's friendship with Mendelssohn, the "Mendelssohnian" aspects of his character and conducting abilities, and the traditional lineage of his musical innovations, in order to position Berlioz as a central figure in London's musical society.

Biography proved a powerful rhetorical device from which Berlioz profited, and is central to our understanding of his critical reception in London. It was used to introduce, to persuade, to simplify, to generate sympathy, admiration, and outrage. However, in later visits, biographical narratives overshadowed the coverage of Berlioz's music. Power had shifted from subject to author. In some articles, Berlioz was reduced to a rhetorical device to be employed to give strength to criticisms of either the old Philharmonic or the new, with the critic offering little insight into Berlioz's music. Biography had given Berlioz a foothold in musical London, but it could not win him the lasting success he craved.



[105]See *Musical World* (16 June 1855): 379, *Musical World* (7 July 1855): 435–36, *Morning Post* (18 June 1855): 5, and *Morning Post* (14 June 1855): 5.

Abstract.

In 1853 a writer for the London-based periodical *Fraser's Magazine* remarked that Berlioz's "heroic temperament" could be "read legibly in the noble style of his compositions. His own life forms to these works the most interesting accompaniment and commentary." The linking of life and work in Berlioz's case is nothing unusual. However, a particular set of circumstances unique to London meant that critics based in that city persistently used Berlioz's biography to further their own agendas while also promoting his music. In this article, I argue that, when writing about Berlioz's London performances, critics employed biographical ideas and narratives that enabled them to use the composer as a means to shape local debates about the future of London's orchestral institutions: the Philharmonic Society and its latest "rival": the New Philharmonic Society.

Biography proved a powerful rhetorical device from which Berlioz profited and is central to our understanding of his critical reception in London. It was used to introduce, to persuade, to simplify, to generate sympathy, admiration, and outrage.

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However, I reveal that in later visits biographical narratives overshadowed the coverage of Berlioz's music. In some articles, Berlioz was reduced to a rhetorical device to be employed to give strength to criticisms of either the old Philharmonic or the new, with the critic offering little insight into Berlioz's music. Biography had given Berlioz a foothold in musical London, but it could not win him the lasting success he craved. Keywords: biography, Berlioz, London, press, Philharmonic

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