

pupils, d'Indy's imposing Wallenstein trilogy was completed the same year, and Franck's *Les Éolides* followed in 1876. The next three years were given to the completion of his oratorio, *Les Béatitudes*, with which he was largely preoccupied through the decade 1869–79, and which he considered his masterpiece. That behind him, he dashed off *Rebecca*, a small oratorio intended to capitalize on the continuing vogue for things Oriental first sparked by Felicien David's *Le Désert* in 1844.

It was almost certainly Duparc who then turned Franck's attention to Gottfried August Bürger's ballad, *Der wilde Jäger*, for the subject of his own 1875 tone poem, *Lénore*, had been taken from another Bürger ballad. Laurence Davies, the eminent critic and author *César Franck and His Circle*, dismisses Bürger's narrative as "a Lisztian tale of adventure about a Count who defies the Sabbath to go hunting," thus trivializing both its import and its musical suggestiveness which Franck rang into ringing bronze in *Le Chasseur maudit*. The errant nobleman pursues the hunt with preternatural savagery while committing the same trespasses for which Satan was banished from heaven -- pride, sacrilege, and defiance. From the distant bells to the fury of the hunt and the count's seizure by demons who condemn him to ride the skies throughout eternity, Franck unfolds the tale with the relish of a savvy raconteur who knows how to call to his aid spellbinding melody, viscerally gripping detail, and richly evocative orchestral color. The work was given its premiere at the 132nd concert of the *Société Nationale de Musique*, *Salle Érard* on March 31, 1883, conducted by Édouard Colonne, where it shared a program with the tone poem, *Viviane* (1882), by his pupil, Chausson.

CHAUSSON · SYMPHONY IN B-FLAT FRANCK · LE CHASSEUR MAUDIT

MUNCH / BOSTON SYMPHONY



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The mid-1880s witnessed the creation of a mighty handful of great French symphonies -- Saint-Saëns' "Organ" Symphony, Lalo's Symphony in G minor, d'Indy's Symphony on a French Mountain Air, and César Franck's Symphony in D minor (begun in 1886 and completed in 1888). Having hit his mature compositional stride during this period, Chausson inevitably wished to add a symphony of his own to the series -- hopefully one that would help him overcome his reputation as an affluent dilettante. His B flat Symphony was begun in September 1889 and completed in December of the following year. Its three-movement layout has prompted comparisons with that of his mentor, Franck -- for instance, both employ the "cyclical" recall of themes from previous movements in the last, and make prominent use of the cor anglais -- though perhaps the most significant common quality between the works is their intense mood of idealism. Chausson's preoccupation with symphonic forms and expression would carry over into his contemporaneous work on his opera, *Le Roi Arthus*, begun in 1886; it suffers somewhat from its self-conscious striving for nobility of utterance in formally wrought (sometimes overwrought) sections of "pure" music.

The Symphony opens with a brooding Lent introduction, the basic melodic shape of which will reoccur throughout the work; having the character of a prolonged sigh, it rises in ever more anxious iterations to a thunderously impassioned statement before giving way to a light, shimmering, syncopated, heraldic first theme (*Allegro vivo*). The following development -- fraught with sudden shifts from minor to major and constant modulations -- is animated by real conviction, as aureately ecstatic moments vie with tempestuous alarms. A brief recapitulation and coda round off the movement with a rare moment of relative triumph.

The second movement (*Très lent*), also with two themes, is a long-breathed lamentation, rising to a passionate climax and ending in the optimistic glow of a prolonged D major chord. In good cyclic fashion, the third movement (*Animé*) opens stormily, with a fanfare-like reminiscence of the first movement introduction ushering in thematic transformations of material from the preceding movements; the first movement's *Allegro vivo* theme receives special emphasis. Development and recapitulation seem to have reached an impasse when the opening motto theme is heard as a chorale -- a Franckian ritual also strategically employed in symphonies by d'Indy and Magnard -- which succeeds by the audacity of being scored for brass choir alone. Conferring a moment of mournful benediction, it is taken up by the orchestra in a grandiose peroration.

Of Wagnerian amplitude, the orchestral writing is graced by a glowing, almost impressionist, richness which compensates for such weaker passages as the repetitive third movement. In its grandeur and gloom, the Symphony is abreath with the aspirations and anxieties of the Franckist table ronde.

Despite his reputation as an idealistic cultivator of "pure" music, Franck was as desirous of success as any other composer. And success in Paris meant either opera or an exciting orchestral work capable of firing the popular imagination, that is, the symphonic poem. During Franck's last and richest creative period, an inordinate amount of time was given to the composition of two operas, *Hulda* (1882-1885) and *Ghiselle* (1889-1890), which, though undone by incredibly mediocre books, contain some of his finest music and which remain almost wholly unknown. The symphonic poem began to take hold among French composers with Saint-Saëns' *Le Rouet d'Omphale* in 1871, followed by Phaëton (1873) and the enduringly popular *Danse macabre* (1874). Among Franck's

Chausson Symphony In B-Flat

Franck Le Chasseur Maudit

Charles Munch Boston Symphony

Symphony In B-Flat Major Op. 20

1 I Lent - Allegro Vivo 11:31

2 II Très Lent 8:26

3 III Animé 11:38

Le Chasseur Maudit

4 A Peaceful Sunday Landscape 2:39

5 The Hunt 5:31

6 The Curse 2:50

7 The Demon's Chase 3:04

Recorded by RCA Boston, Symphony Hall, February 26, 1962

Engineer - Lewis Layton Producer - Richard Mohr



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