

dance. The gentle strumming of the harp and pizzicato strings gives way to a more searchingly chromatic consequent melodic strain, attired in attractive sixteenth notes. The middle (scherzo) section of the movement offers a delightful, contrasting dotted melody in E flat major. Throughout this movement, pauses in the rhythmic flow (indicated by fermatas) are used in a graceful manner. The Finale (Allegro non troppo) is altogether more exuberant in tone, beginning with bright wind attacks against a solid background of octave Ds in the strings. A sudden shift to pianissimo is made for the highly syncopated but still flowing main theme (cellos and bassoons, dolce cantabile). As this melody is taken through the characteristically Franckian chromatic depths, both the main theme of the Allegretto and the "faith" motif from the first movement (now offered a more tender treatment) return to fulfill the Symphony's cyclic element. On its second appearance in this movement, the Allegretto theme takes on a power and volume that one wouldn't think possible given its gentle contours during the middle movement. The happy opening melody returns to make a joyous end.



César Franck

Symphony In D Minor

Charles Munch
Boston Symphony Orchestra



The most brilliant of Belgian composer César Franck's compositions were written during the final decade of his life; the Symphonic Variations for piano and orchestra, the famous Violin Sonata, the D major String Quartet, and, perhaps most important, the Symphony in D minor are all the products of a single, remarkable five-year period. The Symphony, by no means an immediate success with critics or audiences, has nevertheless become so fused with the popular image of César Franck that it is nearly impossible to think of him without also thinking of this 40-minute orchestral juggernaut. And yet the work is by no means an empty audience-pleaser: as with all of his final compositions, the Symphony shows a superb synthesis of Franck's own uniquely rich harmonic language and cyclic themes with the traditions of Viennese Classicism that he had come to revere later in life (principally through the music of Beethoven).

Franck casts his Symphony in the still-rather unusual three-movement mold. A richly chromatic Lento introduction (almost agonizingly slow) presents the funda-

mental motivic unit of the first movement: a three-note dotted figure that moves down by semitone and then moves back up again by any either minor third or perfect fourth. The Allegro non troppo body of the movement takes off with a strident, fortissimo utterance of that same basic three note idea and its answer. An angry descending figure imitated at the half-bar, and a more searching, melodic idea round off the material, but Franck, refusing to be bound by tradition, cuts off the motion after just 20 bars to make another go at the introduction, this time a minor third higher (in F minor). Once again, the Allegro non troppo is achieved, and this time the body of the movement is allowed to work itself out. Over the course of the action, a new and triumphant melody (initially in F major) is introduced: this idea, sometimes known as the "faith" motif, will return in the Finale to powerful effect. The B flat minor second movement (Allegretto) displays characteristics of both slow movement and scherzo. The gentle, triple meter dance tune of the English horn (an instrument whose inclusion in a symphonic work was strongly objected to by the Parisian critics of the day) has something of the feel of a Medieval French ballad or

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1 First Movement: Lento - Allegro Non Troppo 16:53

2 Second Movement: Allegretto 9:23

3 Third Movement: Allegro Non Troppo 10:12

Engineer – Lewis Layton Producer – Richard Mohr
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