



# SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

Hector Berlioz (1830)



## POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Increased orchestral size and techniques
- Programme music
- Treatment of the symphony
- How the music reflects the narrative
- Idee fixe

## MOVEMENT I

### STRUCTURE:

- Starts with a slow introduction leading into sonata form.
- idee fixe acts as a structural foundation.

### HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Starts in C min. then C maj, returning to C min.
- Chromaticism in melody and harmony obscures tonality.
- Modulates to A $\flat$ major followed by long tonic pedal.
- Perfect cadences establish the key.
- Diatonic and functional chords with chromatic harmony.
- Diminished 7th chords
- Occasional dissonance with 4-3 suspension
- Dominant 7th chords.
- Exposition section ends with a V7 in C major
- Movement ends with a series of plagal cadences.

### CONTEXT:

- French composer crucial in development of Romantic music. Wrote on a large scale, increasing orchestra size and performance techniques. Mostly self-taught until he pursued career in composition at the Paris Conservatoire, where he was inspired by Beethoven's compositions.
- Symphonie Fantastique: an example of programme music, ('to be considered as the spoken text of an opera, which serves to introduce musical movements and to motivate their character and expression.') telling story of a tortured artist poisoning himself because of hopeless love.
- Uses idée fixe, a recurring theme acting as a structural foundation of the work.
- 5 movements, unconventional as usually symphonies of the time were in 4 movements. Each movement has a descriptive title.

### RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- Largo introduction: simple quadruple time, changing to simple duple time.
- Frequent tempo changes.
- Highly varied rhythms: quaver and crotchet triplets, sextuplet semiquavers
- Idée fixe begins with an anacrusis,
- Rests and pauses in the Intro fragment the melodic line.
- Movement ends with rhythms of longer duration, eg. tied semibreves
- Cross-rhythms
- Syncopation
- Moto perpetuo crotchets

### TEXTURE:

- Varied and frequently changing textures.
- Begins with homophonic texture: with wind section.
- Monophonic texture
- Unison writing with idée fixe
- Octaves
- Dialoguing/exchanges with first violins and lower strings
- Melody-dominated homophony.
- On/off beat accompanying figure
- Homophonic chordal texture

### SONORITY:

- Large symphony orchestra
- Strings con sordini, then senza sordini. Violins: punta d'arco, pizzicato and con arco, double stopping, tremolo, divisi writing
- Timpani player: Both sponge and leather drumstick heads used, drum rolls
- Performance directions: Semi-staccato, portato, legato, staccato
- Idée fixe: Directed to be played *canto espressivo*, 2nd subject theme is directed to be played *dolce*

### MELODY:

- Idee fixe appears in all 5 movements, here as 1st subject of exposition. Elements are used throughout this movement. (eg. ascending 4th)
- 2nd subject shares similarities with the idée fixe
- Counter melodies based on ascending and descending arpeggios
- Ascending sequence
- Repetition for heightened emphasis
- Scalic melodies
- High melodic material until cello takes the lead.
- Ornamentation: acciaccatura and a trill
- Extreme leaps