

WGS — 8127-2 / STEREO / WESTMINSTER GOLD SERIES

BERLIOZ · ROMEO & JULIET · PIERRE MONTEUX  
COMPLETE REGINA RESNIK · ANDRE TURP · DAVID WARD





# BERLIOZ

## ROMEO & JULIET

### PIERRE MONTEUX

REGINA RESNIK · ANDRE TURP · DAVID WARD

Side One		
Part 1.	Introduction – Prologue – Strophes – Scherzetto	(18:41)
Side Two		
Part 2.	Romeo Alone – The Capulets' Feast	(13:00)
Part 3.	Scene of Love	(18:42)
Side Three		
Part 4.	Queen Mab Scherzo – Funeral convoy – Romeo in the Capulets' Tomb	(25:34)
Side Four		
Part 4.	(continued) Finale	(19:20)

"AMEN, AMEN, AMENISSIMEN" Hector Berlioz wrote to his friend, Georges Kastner, in September, 1839. After seven months in which he had enjoyed the unaccustomed luxury of almost uninterrupted work free from the pressing distractions of copying parts, rehearsing, or reviewing concerts of music by other, and nearly always vastly inferior composers, Berlioz had finished what he chose to call a dramatic symphony, *Roméo et Juliette*. "I have finished, quite finished, what might be called altogether finished; not another note to write," he wrote exuberantly. For its sold-out première two months later in the hall of the Paris Conservatory Berlioz was his own conductor, and the success of the new work was quickly evident in the unprecedented fact that two more performances followed in the same season, an event which no previous symphony had ever precipitated.

Paris, at the height of the Romantic Age, was prepared for the advent of the new *Roméo*. Musicians of genius, both greater and lesser, hailed it, Richard Wagner, at the age of 26, heard one of the three performances in that year, and called it "the revelation of a new world of music." In Prague, where Berlioz conducted excerpts from the new symphony, Franz Liszt proposed a toast to the French composer's "erupting crater of genius." (In fact, a gift of 20,000 francs from famed violinist Niccolò Paganini made possible the uninterrupted months of work on *Romeo and Juliet*. Paganini sent the money with a note proclaiming, "Beethoven is dead, and Berlioz alone can revive him.")

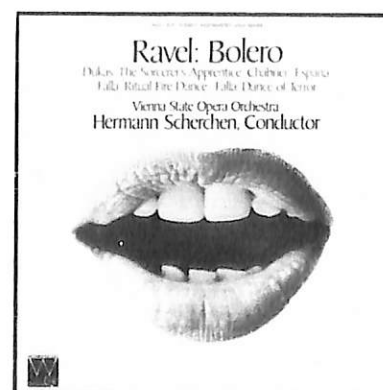
Shakespeare and Virgil had long been twin idols in the artistic thought of Berlioz. In their writings he found inspiration for three of his greatest masterpieces. From childhood he had venerated Virgil, a veneration that eventually produced *Les Troyens*. From his adult passion for Shakespeare came not only *Roméo et Juliette*, but also *Béatrice et Bénédict*, the *King Lear* overture, and the neglected splendors of his music for *Hamlet*.

With Paganini's munificence in hand, Berlioz turned to *Roméo et Juliette* to create a work in a unique form. The composer himself knew best how differently he was writing than anyone had written before. Berlioz was introducing to a Paris which hardly knew Beethoven's ninth symphony a symphonic version of *Roméo et Juliette* that was a symphony and a drama all in one, a symphony with a narrative, soloists and chorus. His reasons for his decision are logically stated in the preface to the symphony which he wrote in 1847 when *Roméo et Juliette* was first published:

"Although voices are often utilized in it we have here not an opera in concert form nor a cantata but a symphony with choruses." Of the purely instrumental delineation of the famous love scene and the tragic vault scene, he wrote, "If in the famous balcony scene and in the funeral vault the dialogue between the lovers, Juliet's asides and the passionate pleading of Romeo are not sung; if, in a word, the duets are entrusted to the orchestra, the reasons are several and easily grasped. The first—and this would suffice by itself—is that the work is not an opera but a symphony. Secondly, duets of this character have been composed for voices a thousand times before and by the greatest masters. It was therefore the part of prudence, as well as a challenge, to attempt a new mode of expression. Lastly, since the very sublimity of the love story made it a perilous task for the composer to depict it, he chose to give his imagination a wider latitude than the positive meaning of words would have allowed; he resorted instead to the instrumental idiom, a richer, more varied, less fixed language, which by reason of its very indefiniteness, is incomparably more powerful for the present purpose."

The text for the vocal passages is by a friend of the composer's, the poet Emile Deschamps, in whose translations Berlioz had first heard Shakespeare in French. For the most part his language is poetically and emotionally inadequate. But the music is at once the most impassioned and the most restrained we have yet heard from Berlioz. For pure orchestral eloquence he never surpassed the magical poetry of sound he found for the love scene. Nor did he, or for that matter, did Mendelssohn with whom he once discussed Queen Mab as material suitable for an orchestral scherzo, ever write a more scintillating or virtuosic display vehicle than the fiendishly difficult scherzo that occupies the classic symphonic position in *Roméo*.

A lack of romantic inspiration never afflicted Berlioz. His fear was rather that he might sometime let the true depth of his emotions betray him in his composing. In



WGS-8131 – RAVEL – BOLERO – Dukas – Sorcerers  
Apprentice



WGS-8120 – LISZT – Hungarian Rhapsodies (1-4-5)

1856, he wrote to the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein. "Another danger that besets me in composing the music for this drama (Les Troyens) is in the fact that the feelings I am called upon to express are inclined to move me too deeply. This can bring the whole matter to naught. Passionate subjects must be dealt with in cold blood. This is what held me back so much in writing the adagio of Roméo et Juliette, and the reconciliation scene in the last movement. I thought I should never come to grips with it."

The form in which he ultimately cast his dramatic symphony was the classic, four-movement symphonic structure he revered in Beethoven. But within that framework, Berlioz hesitated at no innovation that would intensify the effect of his chosen medium. Opening instantly upon the atmosphere of strife between Verona's famed warring families, an orchestral introduction sets a scene at whose height brasses in somewhat more dignified manner advise us that the Prince has again intervened between the belligerents. Then the symphony's first voices, those of a small chorus and contralto soloist, begin the narration that explains the agitated instrumental prelude. The chorus continues with the description of Romeo's first sight of Juliet and his visit to her balcony. The contralto's final verses describe the first, rapturous agreement between the ill-starred lovers.

One of the finest moments in the score follows as Berlioz gives us a brief vocal scherzetto inspired by Mercutio's quick-silver portrait of Mab, "la messagère fluette et légère!" This is the tenor soloist's only appearance, undoubtedly the shortest in all symphonic literature, and even this he must share with the chorus as it echoes his breathless flight. A transition passage gradually lessens the pace as Berlioz prepares us for the Love Scene to come by giving us a fleeting sight of Romeo once more alone. We hear the sound of the ball at the Capulets, and the song of the departing guests, marvelously assigned to the voices of young men heard as they leave the ball, walking home in the late night hours through the empty streets, singing of the gaiety of the ball and the beauty of the young ladies of Verona.

The extended Love Scene that follows is without rival in all instrumental literature. For its muted sounds Berlioz finds voices in cellos and woodwinds that become the very sounds and scents of the Veronese night. Berlioz may say, as he does in his Memoirs, that his dramatic symphony resembles Shakespeare's tragedy very little. Yet in this scene we have "the nightingale, and not the lark" until "more light and light it grows." The slow move-

ment thus ended, Berlioz turns again to the image of Queen Mab for his full-scale scherzo. Unimpeded by voices, he writes a passage of unprecedented brilliance, to say nothing of hurdles it tosses nonchalantly at the orchestral players.

Once the scherzo is over, Berlioz plunges us at once into the final tragedy. He breaks it into sections that begin with a funeral march depicting the grief of the Capulets at what they think to be the death of Juliet. There follows one last purely instrumental passage reminiscent of the instrumental interjections that dot the vocal portions of the finale of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony. We hear Romeo's frenzied unbelief at Juliet's supposed death, and then, as Berlioz follows the so-called "Garrick ending," we visualize the lovers dying before each other's eyes. Finally, after the two families erupt in a final outburst of mutual rage, Friar Laurence, last of the three soloists to be heard, enters with his reconciliation oath, in which double and small chorus join.

DAVID WARD—Born in Dumbarton, Scotland in 1922. David Ward's early training was in the direction of schoolmaster. After a stint in the service during World War II, however, his continued interest in music led him ultimately to a job with the Sadler's Wells Chorus and promotion as a principal of that company. Performances at Glyndebourne and Edinburgh were followed by guest appearances at Bayreuth and Covent Garden, and he is currently active with both these companies now.

PIERRE MONTEUX—At the time of this classic recording has passed his 87th birthday, and for over half a century had been one of the most admired, respected, and beloved conductors in the world, the acknowledged master interpreter of "French" music. He had shone in every realm of orchestral conducting: in the world of ballet, as conductor of Sergei Diaghileff's Ballet Russe, he led the premiere of Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps" at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1913 when it provoked an unprecedented riot. As an opera conductor he was on the stand at the Metropolitan Opera's 1918 opening night which fell on November 11, 1918. He led Caruso and Louise Homer and the entire audience in the singing of "The Star Spangled Banner," and "La Marseillaise," and every other appropriate national anthem. As a symphony conductor, he had held his authoritative hands over the Boston Symphony, which he rebuilt between 1919 and 1924, after its wartime demoralization; the San Francisco Symphony, which enjoyed its finest hours under Monteux, and over countless other orches-

tras fortunate enough to enjoy him as a guest for various intervals.

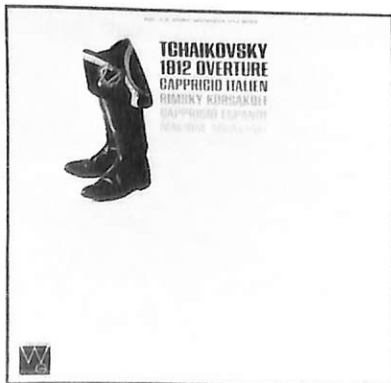
REGINA RESNIK—Regina Resnik has had an active career both as soprano and alto since her debut at the Metropolitan Opera, with whom she is still associated, in September 1944 as Leonore in *Trovatore*, and in 1953 in Bayreuth she received the highest appreciation of her German style. After having sung 40 soprano parts, a transition to a mezzo soprano gradually took place in her voice so that today she belongs to the small circle of internationally renowned alto singers.

ANDRE TURP—Canadian born Andre Turp joined Covent Garden early in 1961 and is the company's principal lyric-spinto tenor. London was quick to acclaim his voice and style, as were other companies, including the Paris, Maggio Fiorentino and San Francisco.



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WGS-8125—TCHAIKOVSKY—1812 Overture—Capriccio Italian



WGS-8111—VAUGHN WILLIAMS—Green Sleeves and Theme From Tallis



