



Fantastique! The Life and Loves of Hector Berlioz

Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th July, 7.30pm

fortyfivedownstairs (with Livestream)

Written by Karen Van Spall and Lucy Esdale

Performers:

Melanie Hillman - Marie
Recio

Karen Van Spall, mezzo
soprano

Coady Green, piano

Adam Miller, baritone

Setting: Present day. Marie returns to share
a bit about her life with Hector Berlioz



Programme:

L'Origine de la harpe by Hector Berlioz

Text by Thomas Gounet after Thomas
Moore's *Irish Melodies*

La mort d'Ophélie by Hector Berlioz

Text by Ernest Legouvé after William
Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

**L'idée fixe – Andante amoroso d'après une
mélodie de Berlioz, S395** by Franz Liszt after
Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*

Le coucher du Soleil by Hector Berlioz

Text by Thomas Gounet after Thomas
Moore's *Irish Melodies*

Du bist wie enie Blume by Franz Liszt

Text by Heinrich Heine

Absence by Hector Berlioz from *Les nuits
d'été* Text by Théophile Gautier



Widmung by Robert Schumann

Text by Friedrich Rückert

Villanelle by Hector Berlioz from *Les nuits d'été* Text by Théophile Gautier

Le spectre de la rose by Hector Berlioz from *Les nuits d'été* Text by Théophile Gautier

Les Deux Grenadiers by Richard Wagner

Text by Heinrich Heine

L'Inconnue by Hector Berlioz from *Les nuits d'été*

Text by Théophile Gautier



Additional background notes to our story

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

Louis-Hector Berlioz was born in the commune of La Côte-Saint-André in the département of Isère, in south-eastern France. It was expected that he would follow in his father's footsteps and become a physician, but his passion was always music composition. Although completing his medical degree in Paris in the mid-1820s, he never practised as a doctor but instead enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire to obtain more formal music tuition. To prove his talent to his sceptical family, he spent several years attempting to win the Musical Composition category of the Prix de Rome (France's premiere arts competition). In 1830, on his fourth attempt, he was finally successful. It is said that he was finishing off his winning entry to the sound of gunfire as the July Revolution erupted on the streets of Paris.

Throughout the whole of Berlioz' life, the political situation in France (and much of Europe) was unstable. The Napoleonic wars, during which time most of continental Europe was under French influence, was followed by the Bourbon restoration (1814-1830) and then the July Revolution of 1830. The July Monarchy (1830-1848) was a period of constant turmoil and infighting between conservative and republican factions and finally erupted in the 1848 Revolution. This inspired



democratic revolts against authoritarian regimes in other countries throughout continental Europe. It was against this backdrop that Berlioz and his friends and contemporaries created, cavorted, and copulated. That they lived on the edge and their personal lives were somewhat unconventional, even by contemporary standards, speaks to the tumultuous period in which they lived. One can only speculate as to what the creative output of Berlioz, Liszt, Chopin, Meyerbeer and all their other friends may have been had they lived in more sedate times.

Marie Recio (1814-1862)

Berlioz second wife, Marie-Geneviève Martin, was born in Châtenay-Malabry on the outskirts of Paris, the daughter of a French army colonel and his Spanish mistress. The period into which she was born was one of relative peace after 20 years of war.

The revolutionary and Napoleonic wars had led to a significant shift in French society, economics and way of thinking. In this new environment, women were enabled to move up through the ranks and, while the first 'step' may have been predicated on securing employment, beyond that was the expectation to make a career of 'marrying well'. Intelligent and shrewd, Marie understood her position and the importance of creating her own opportunities for success. In this she was supported by a mother who well understood the situation having done similar herself.



Marie didn't suffer from any illusions regarding the quality of her voice – she was aware that her voice was reasonably good, but not great, and she did not particularly enjoy being on stage. Music performance was initially a necessity to earn a living and gain an introduction to the society where she may find a husband. Subsequently, it became her 'business' in terms of supporting and promoting her lover (and then husband).

-Lucy Esdaile

Our Team



Lucy Esdaile is a failed viola player with qualifications in engineering and finance who once travelled the world managing technology projects for a large mining company. More recently, she remembered that managing the university orchestra, keeping her opera friends organised and reading music history had been a lot more fun and joined The Parlour to rediscover her creative passion and use her skills for love, not money. Writing and production involvement with The Parlour includes Grainger at Home, Reminiscence: Liszt and Love, She and He - My Life with Chopin and Wagner in Paris.



Melanie Hillman continues to forge a professional and diverse presence across the theatre arts. Following early training as a dancer, including appearances with the Queensland Ballet Company, she subsequently studied singing at the Australian National University and enjoyed appearances with the Canberra City Opera and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. In addition to her Bachelor degree in Music, Melanie gained a Bachelor of Musical Theatre from WAAPA in 2000. Credits during this time include *Summer Rain*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. As a cabaret performer she wrote and performed *Perfect Relationships* in successful seasons at His Majesty's Theatre in Perth. She has developed and toured children's theatre *First Stage*, and *Alice in Wonderland*, and is a founding member of *Concrete Cloud Theatre Company*. Her television credits include *Offspring*, *House Husbands*, *Killing Time* and *Neighbours* and films include *Traveller*, *Ransom's Bride* and *Giant Leap Project*. In 2012 Melanie worked as assistant director to Nadia Tass for *The Production Company's Promises*, *Promises*, and in 2014 she directed the new Australian musical *Essence of Passion*. She is Co-Artistic Director of *Watch This* and along with performing and directing, Melanie teaches vocal and theatre skills at schools and Monash University.



Karen Van Spall graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Arts in Music, University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Music Performance (Honours) and has a Master of Arts (Arts Management) from RMIT. She performed regularly as a guest artist of Opera Australia, soloist for Victorian Opera and various orchestras. Roles for Opera Australia's national touring company include Suzuki, Kate Pinkerton, Mercedes and Carmen (understudy). Other roles include; Dorabella, Second Lady and Third Lady (Magic Flute), Mother and Secretary (The Consul), Dryade (Ariadne auf Naxos) Floßhilde (Rheingold), Slave (Salome), Lola (Cavallaria Rusticana), Mercury (Thespis) Marianne (Le Chatte). She created the role of "Therese Rein" (Rain). Australian premieres include Offred's Mother in The Handmaid's Tale and Estelle in The Puddle of Youth. Karen performed in "Wagner in Paris" for Opera Australia's "Melbourne Ring Festival". She is an experienced recitalist and has performed widely as soloist in sacred concert and orchestral works. Karen enjoys creating engaging musical experiences for audiences as a singer, writer or producer and occasionally all three. In 2015 she formed "The Parlour" with Adam Miller as a vehicle to explore the potential of Art Song as a theatrical, agile and evolving genre.



Adam Miller graduated with Distinction and a DipRAM from the Opera Programme at London's Royal Academy of Music. Before moving to London, he was a Young Artist at Opera Queensland and then continued his language and vocal studies in Milan, Italy. He has performed a number of operatic roles, including Germont (*La traviata*), Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Figaro (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) and Marcello (*La bohème*), working with companies such as Scottish Opera, Opera Australia, English Touring Opera, Opera Queensland, UK Opera, OzOpera and Melbourne's own CitiOpera. When not singing operatic roles, he has had an equally distinguished career on the concert platform, having performed countless oratorios and concerts around Europe and Australia. With The Parlour, Adam has performed as a principal artist in shows including *Wagner in Paris*, *Reminiscence: Liszt and Love*, *She and He: My Life with Chopin* and *Grainger at Home*. Recently, Adam was featured on Henry Choo's operatic album, *Bright Poet*.

THE PARLOUR



Coady Green is acknowledged as a major talent on the international concert circuit, having been described as “a virtuoso pianist with sensitivity, intelligence and charm”, (Musical Opinion, London). In 2005, Coady relocated London after winning almost all the most prestigious awards and prizes that Australia had to offer including a Winston Churchill Fellowship and numerous awards from the Australia Council of the Arts. He frequently performed at major UK venues and established a prominent teaching career at Goldsmiths College and the Royal College of Music. He was twice the recipient of a Geoffrey Parsons International Prize (2008, 2012). He established the International Liszt Society Piano Prize in London and is regularly on competition juries in Australia and abroad. He regularly performs in major concert venues and at festivals throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and America and is a frequent guest lecturer. His ensemble Duo Eclettico with saxophonist Justin Kenealy is the most active classical saxophone and piano duo in Australia. He is currently preparing the 2022 release of the premiere recording of the complete Anton Rubinstein piano etudes and preludes for British label Toccata Classics. In addition to this, Coady teaches and lectures at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne.



With countless thanks to some very special friends
of *The Parlour* who inspired and enabled this
production.

Thanks also to 3MBS Fine Music,
fortyfivedownstairs, Julie Houghton and
Christopher Smith.

