BERLIOZ *Roman Carnival* Overture

By

Hector Berlioz (1803 – 1869)

*Click here to watch the BSO perform this piece.*

Janna Comeau and Paul Pitts

**About the Composer**

“Hector Berlioz, in full Louis-Hector Berlioz (born December 11, 1803, La Côte-Saint-André, France—died March 8, 1869, Paris), French composer, critic, and conductor of the Romantic period, known largely for his *Symphonie fantastique* (1830), the choral symphony *Roméo et Juliette* (1839), and the dramatic piece *La Damnation de Faust* (1846).”

Berlioz wrote many works based on literary themes. His opera *The Trojans* (*Les Troyens*) is based on Virgil’s *Aeneid*; his *The Damnation of Faust* is based on Goethe’s story of a scholar who forms a pact with the devil, and several pieces were inspired by Shakespeare’s plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (the composer’s opera *Beatrice and Benedick*), *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*. Berlioz had some famously stormy relationships and used music to work out the problems of his love life, pouring his emotional thoughts and fantasies into his creations.” Emotion and fantasy in music is a major component of the Romantic period of music history.
Lesson

1. INTRODUCTION

Play the *Roman Carnival* Overture and discuss with the students what they heard. Explain that an overture is a piece of music played by an orchestra at the beginning of an opera or a musical or simply as a piece to open a concert. Berlioz wrote this piece using music from his opera *Benvenuto Cellini*, which was inspired by the memoirs of a 16th-century Italian artist. In his *Roman Carnival* Overture Berlioz displays his love for Italian musical styles. The first theme of the overture is a salterello, a fast Italian dance. The second theme is based on a love duet from the opera.

2. DEVELOPMENT

Distribute the folk songs, blank music paper, and crayons/pencils. Sing through the folk songs, so that students remember how the simple melodies sound. As a class, select different measures or sections of the folk songs to craft a new song. When the melody is complete, create lyrics together and then sing the class song. Have the students break into small groups to create their own songs to share with the class. Students may also work individually. Below is an example of a folk song:

*Frere Jacques/Brother John*
EVALUATION

Students can be evaluated on the completion of their compositions and performance of the “O’ Teresa” theme.

Students can be evaluated on their engagement during the discussion on Roman Carnival, how quickly they recognize the change in the tempi, and how they respond and comment on the open questions about the music, how it makes them feel, etc.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Explore and listen to other examples of borrowed musical themes. George F. Handel’s Theodora Overture trio borrows from the trio to Componimenti musicali per il Cembalo by Gottlieb Muffat. J. S. Bach’s Harpsichord Concerto in F minor’s second movement borrows from the opening of the beginning of Telemann’s Flute Concerto in G.

Interesting Article about borrowing music in a contemporary way and plagiarism.


Other Examples of Saltarellos

Saltarello

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NliUqWZIExc

Saltarello I del Manuscrito de Londres, Artefactum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU8QFeDZyvg

Footnotes

1. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hector-Berlioz
2. https://www.mfiles.co.uk/composers/Hector-Berlioz.htm
5. https://www.britannica.com/art/saltarello