

## John Nelson conducts new recordings of Berlioz's monumental *Requiem* and *The Damnation of Faust*



**Friday 20 September**

**Berlioz** *Requiem*

Warners Erato | 9029543064

**Friday 22 November**

**Berlioz** *La Damnation de Faust*

Warners Erato

***"As a concert, this rendition of La Damnation de Faust was unforgettable. As a recording session, expect it to win accolades."***

Musical America

Following acclaimed performances in London and Strasbourg in Spring 2019, renowned American conductor and Berlioz expert **John Nelson** conducts new recordings of **Berlioz's** monumental *Requiem* (**20 September**) and *The Damnation of Faust* (**22 November**) on **Warners Erato**. Nelson follows the success of his multi award-winning *Les Troyens* with these two new recordings. Nelson made his New York City debut with an uncut concert performance of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* at Carnegie Hall in 1973, and has been a foremost interpreter of the composer's music since.

On 8 March 2019, **150 years to the day** since the death of the composer, John Nelson recorded Berlioz's *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)* in **St. Paul's Cathedral** with tenor soloist **Michael Spyres** and tremendous forces of **over 300 musicians**, comprising the **Philharmonia Orchestra** (with 10 timpanists and four brass bands) and over 200 singers from the two choirs of the **Philharmonia** and the **London Philharmonic**. The recording is released on DVD and CD on Warners Erato.

The *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)*, one of Berlioz's early works, provides a fitting tribute to the composer, who deemed it one of his finest: *"If I were threatened with the destruction of the whole of my works save one, I should crave mercy for the Grande Messe des morts."*

**John Nelson** said:

*"Berlioz was not a religious person, but one would never know it from his Requiem or his other religious works ... They are all shot through with the fervour of his childhood's Catholic upbringing. For a believer as myself, every measure resonates deeply with me and I feel there is sincerity, even in the great moments of bombast."*

Berlioz's *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)* is known for the massed forces required for its performance, including four antiphonal offstage brass ensembles playing from each of the four points of the compass, making it particularly suitable to be recorded in St. Paul's Cathedral.

***"spine-shakingly spectacular and the heart-rendingly haunting"***

The Times

***"Something exceptional unfolded in London's iconic cathedral.  
Nelson's direction had an architecture of its own that he  
communicated with admirable clarity"***

Musical America

Reunited with **Joyce DiDonato** and **Michael Spyres**, John Nelson returned to Strasbourg to record Berlioz's seminal ***Damnation of Faust*** with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg. With DiDonato as Marguerite and Spyres as Faust, **Nicholas Courjal** performed Méphistophélès and **Alexandre Duhamel** took the role of Brander. The recording will be released on **Warner's Erato** label on **22 November**.



*Damnation of Faust*, based on **Goethe's** famous tale, tells the dramatic story of Faust, who falls in love with Marguerite then sells his soul to the Devil to save her. First performed at the Opéra Comique in 1846, attempts to stage the work during Berlioz's lifetime proved to be largely unsuccessful. Part opera and part cantata, the work remains unclassifiable, however, its dramatic music makes it uniquely suited to the concert stage.

***"Nelson wove Berlioz' fantastical score miraculously and meticulously, his hands sewing an invisible thread. ... a heavenly way to mark the 150th anniversary of Berlioz' death."***

Bachtrack

## **Success for Les Troyens**



**Gramophone Magazine** – Recording of the Year  
**BBC Music Magazine Awards** – Opera Award  
**Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik** – Opera  
**International Opera Awards** – Best Recording (Complete Opera)  
**Sunday Times** – Classical Recording of the Year  
**BBC Radio 3 Record Review** – Disc of the Week

**Forum Opera:** "The musical event of the year"

**The Times** ★★★★★: "Thrilling power and white-hot invention"

**The Guardian** ★★★★★: "Electrifying Performances"

**Financial Times** ★★★★★: "Majestic, ambitious, extravagant"

**The Telegraph** ★★★★★: "If only Berlioz has lived to hear this"

## Full CD Listings

### Friday 20 September

Warners Erato | 9029543064

**Berlioz** *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)*

**London Philharmonic Choir**  
**Philharmonia Choir**  
**Philharmonia Orchestra**  
**Michael Spyres** tenor  
**John Nelson** conductor

**Wilson Ng** assistant conductor  
**Gavin Carr** chorus master  
**Neville Creed** artistic director  
London Philharmonic Choir  
**Daniel Zelay** sound producer  
**Marvin Ware** recording mixer

Recorded on 8 March 2019 at  
St. Paul's Cathedral, London

### Friday 22 November

Warners Erato

**Berlioz** *La Damnation de Faust*

**Joyce DiDonato** Marguerite  
**Michael Spyres** Faust  
**Nicolas Courjal** Méphistophélès  
**Alexandre Duhamel** Brander

**Gulbenkian Chorus Lisbon**  
**Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg**  
**John Nelson** conductor

Recorded on 25-26 April 2019 at  
Salle Érasme, Strasbourg

## John Nelson



John Nelson is recognised on the international scene as one of America's most eminent conductors. He studied at the Juilliard School in New York, where he received the Irving Berlin Conducting Prize. He has been the Musical Director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Opera Theater of St. Louis, the Caramoor Music Festival in New York and the Chamber Orchestra of Paris.

He has also been the Principal Guest Conductor of the National Orchestra of Lyon, Artistic Advisor of the orchestras of Nashville and Louisville, and is presently the Principal Guest Conductor of the National Orchestra of Costa Rica, the country in which he was born to American missionary parents.

In the course of his career he has conducted virtually all the major orchestras in the United States and Canada, including those of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Montreal and Toronto, and also in Europe, where he has conducted all the major London orchestras, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, the Orchestre de Paris, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Czech Philharmonic, the Budapest Festival Orchestra and all the major

orchestras in Spain. In Asia he has conducted the New Japan Philharmonic, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the Malaysian Philharmonic, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the China Philharmonic and the orchestras of Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hangzhou. His large repertoire has led him to the world's great opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Chicago Lyric Opera, the Bastille in Paris, the Stuttgart Opera, the Grand Théâtre in Geneva, the Dutch National Opera and the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma.

John Nelson is recognised as a great interpreter of the sacred music repertoire. In 1994 he co-founded SOLI DEO GLORIA, an organization based in Chicago that commissions works of sacred music from the world's foremost composers, such as Christopher Rouse, James MacMillan and Roxanna Panufnik.

Maestro Nelson's distinguished discography includes Handel's *Semele* (Grammy Award 1993), Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* (Diapason d'Or 1992) and highly acclaimed DVDs of Bach's B minor Mass and St. Matthew Passion, Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. He also recorded the complete Beethoven Symphonies and Piano Concertos with the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, of which he is Honorary Musical Director.

Last season, his critically-acclaimed recording of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* received the BBC Music Magazine Award for Opera and also the International Opera Award. This has been a great recognition of his work and authority as an outstanding Berlioz specialist. Following this tremendous success, John Nelson will be returning to the Strasbourg Philharmonic, for further recording projects including the *Damnation of Faust* and *Romeo & Juliet*, once again with Joyce DiDonato and Michael Spyres.

Further engagements for the 2018/19 season include Massenet's *Werther* at the Wuppertal Opera, Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* at the Opéra de Nice, performances with Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in Paris' Notre Dame and in Geneva's Victoria Hall, as well as an all Berlioz programme at the Prague Spring Festival to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer's death.

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