

John Nelson conducts Berlioz's monumental *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)* in St. Paul's Cathedral to mark 150 years since composer's death, before returning to Strasbourg to record *The Damnation of Faust*



"If only Berlioz had lived to hear this"
The Daily Telegraph on Les Troyens

8 March, 19:30

Berlioz *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)*
St. Paul's Cathedral, London

25, 26 April, 20:00

Berlioz *La Damnation de Faust*
Salle Érasme, Strasbourg

Renowned American conductor and Berlioz expert **John Nelson** follows the success of his multi award-winning *Les Troyens* with further Berlioz projects in London and Strasbourg in 2019. Affirming the strength of the English Berlioz revival over the past century, Nelson will conduct **Berlioz's *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)*** in **St. Paul's Cathedral** to mark **150 years** to the day since the death of the composer, before recording his epic ***Damnation of Faust*** live in concert in **Strasbourg** on **25-26 April**, with a star-studded cast including **Joyce DiDonato** and **Michael Spyres**. 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**, John Nelson conducts Berlioz's monumental *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**, and over 200 singers from the two choirs of

the **Philharmonia** and the **London Philharmonic**.

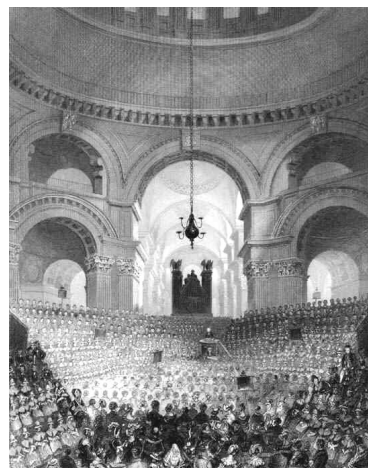
The *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)*, one of his early works, written in 1830 for the soldiers killed in the Algerian campaign, provides a fitting tribute to the composer, who deemed it one of his finest: *"If I were threatened with the destruction of the whole of my works save one, I should crave mercy for the Grande Messe des morts."*

The concert, which takes place on **8 March 2019**, will mark **150 years** to the day since the death of the composer. A recording of the event will be released on **Warner's Erato** in **September 2019**.

On his second visit to London in 1851, Berlioz himself attended a performance in **St. Paul's Cathedral**, attending the annual Charity Children's performance, with over **6,500 children** taking part.

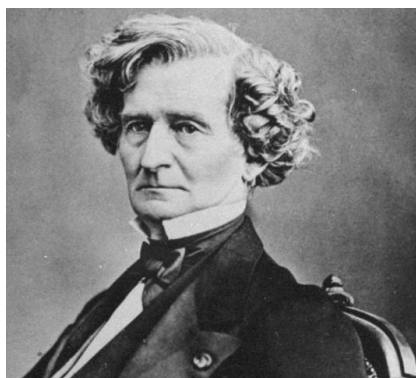
"It was the most amazing thing [...] I have never seen or heard anything as moving in its immense grandeur than this gathering of poor children singing, arranged in a colossal amphitheatre."

- Berlioz, *Feuilleton du journal des débats*
20 June 1851



Awed by the colossal forces used, Berlioz's review of the performance seriously mulled on creating similar spectacles in his native Paris. He later revised his *Te Deum*, first written two years earlier, to include a part for children's voices, and the composer revised his *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)* the following year.

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 heard in St. Paul's Cathedral.

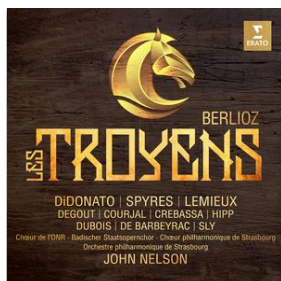


Following the incredible success of the multi award-winning *Les Troyens* release, John Nelson reunites with **Joyce DiDonato** and **Michael Spyres** to record Berlioz's seminal ***Damnation of Faust*** live in concert in **Strasbourg** on **25-26 April**. With DiDonato and Spyres as Marguerite and Faust, **Nicholas Courjal** will play Méphistophélès and **Alexandre Duhamel** takes the role of Brander. The recording will be released on **Warner's Erato** label in **November 2019**.

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.

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"

Listings

Friday 8 March, 19:30

St. Paul's Cathedral, London

Berlioz *Requiem (Grande Messe des Morts)*

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

Box office

www.philharmonia.co.uk

Tel: 020 7921 3907

Thursday 25 April, 20:00

Friday 26 April, 20:00

Salle Érasme, Strasbourg

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

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 150th anniversary of the composer's death.

For more information on any of the above, please contact:

Nicky Thomas Media

101 Bell Street, London NW1 6TL

+44 (0)20 3714 7594 | +44 (0)20 7258 0909

info@nickythomasmedia.com

www.nickythomasmedia.com