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**FRANCK**  
**Orchestral Music Vol. 1**  
**Symphony in D minor**  
**Le Chasseur maudit • Les Éolides**

**Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**Roberto Benzi**



## César Franck (1822 - 1890)

Belgian by birth, French by adoption and largely German in parentage, César Franck was born in 1822 in the Walloon district of Liège. Franck showed such early musical precocity that his father resolved to make the most profitable use of his son's talents by compelling him to the career of a virtuoso pianist. Study at the Liège Conservatoire was followed, in 1837, by a period at the Paris Conservatoire, which he left in 1842 to return to Belgium and to the concert platform. Two years later the family was back again in Paris, where Franck failed to make an impression either by his compositions or his appearances as a performer.

Franck's relative failure as a virtuoso pianist and his association with Félicité Saillot Desmousseaux, whose parents were actors in the Comédie-Française, led to a breach with his own family. In 1848 he married, continuing to earn a living by teaching and as an organist, while slowly developing his powers as a composer. It was principally as an organist, with phenomenal powers of improvisation, that he was to succeed in Paris in these middle years of his life, with appointment in 1858 to the church of Ste.Clotilde, with its new Cavaillé-Coll organ. In 1871, after a period in which he had won the loyalty and affection of a group of pupils led by Duparc, and in which his music had been performed under the auspices of the Société Nationale, he was appointed to the position of professor of organ at the Conservatoire.

From the mid-1870s onwards Franck devoted himself to composition, influenced in particular by hearing, in 1874 Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, which made a profound and lasting impression on him. His organ classes were influential among a group of young composers, in particular his pupil Vincent d'Indy, who proved the most loyal and devoted of apostles.

The 1880s saw the composition of a number of important works, including the *Symphonic Variations*, the *Violin Sonata*, the *Piano Quintet*, the *Quartet* and the *Symphony*.

Franck died in 1890, after a short illness. It was after his death that his work came to be appreciated by a wider public, while his influence on a whole school of French composers continued.

Keith Anderson

## Le Chasseur maudit

### Les Éolides

#### Symphony in D minor

"Franck's art," his student and disciple Vincent d'Indy wrote in 1906," was an art of clear truth and luminous serenity. His light was entirely spiritual, excluding the least touch of violent colour; for although Franck was an 'expressive' artist, he was never a colourist in the true sense of the word..." For Paul Dukas, writing in *La Chronique des Arts* (1904), Franck's musical language was "strictly individual, of an accent and quality hitherto unused, and recognizable among all other idioms. No musician would hesitate as to the authorship of one of his phrases, even if it were unknown to him. The character of his harmony and his melodic line distinguish his style ... as clearly as with Wagner and Chopin."

Historically, as Ravel reminded his readers in a review published in *Cahiers d'aujourd'hui* (February 1913), French music at the turn of the century was a severely partisan, factional phenomenon, broadly divided into two opposing schools of philosophy and expressive means: "the Old comprises the disciples of César Franck (d'Indy, the Schola Cantorum composers, Duparc, Dukas and others), and Claude Debussy may justly be considered the principal initiator of the New". Notwithstanding this, artistic cross-over and open admiration for the other was not unknown, witness d'Indy's interest in *Pelléas et Mélisande* . Famously, one *hommage* to the greatness of Franck, in the Easter issue of *Gil Blas* (13th April 1903), came from no less acid a voice of the New than Debussy himself: "In Franck," he declared, "we find a real devotion to music. We must take it or leave it. Nothing in the world could have made him alter any part he considered right and necessary, however long it may have been - we just have to sit through it ... Franck is united with other great musicians, those to whom every sound had an exact meaning taken in its context: each sound is used in a precise way, and it asks nothing but to be taken for what it is. This is exactly why he is so different from Wagner, who is uniquely beautiful but impure and seductive. César Franck serves music without seeking any glory. What he takes from life, he puts back into art with a modesty that is almost selfless. When Wagner takes something from life, he conquers it, treads it under his feet, and forces it to proclaim the name of Wagner louder than the loudest trumpets of fame".

Franck's five narrative symphonic poems span more than forty years, from the mid-1840s to the late-1880s. The third, *Le chasseur maudit* (The Accursed Huntsman, 1882), once very successful, was first heard in public in Angers before being first performed in Paris under Edouard Colonne at the Société Nationale on 31st March 1883 to a long ovation; not a reception Franck experienced often. The music sets a romantic ballad, *Der wilde Jäger*, by the German Gottfried August Bürger (1747-94). "It is Sunday morning. In the distance are heard the joyous ringing of bells and the chanting of the faithful. Sacrilege! The savage Count [Hackenburg] of the Rhine

[Drönmling] sounds his hunting-horn. Tally-ho! Tally-ho! The hunt takes its course across grain fields, meadows and moors. 'Stop, Count, I beg you! Listen to the faithful singing'. 'No!' Tally-ho! Tally-ho! 'Stop, Count, I entreat you. Take care'. 'No!' And the chase goes hurtling on its way like a whirlwind. Suddenly the Count finds himself alone; his horse cannot move, his horn will not sound. A grim implacable voice curses him: 'Sacrilegious man,' it cries, 'be hunted for ever by hell itself'. Flames leap up from all sides. Seized by terror, the Count flees - faster, ever faster - pursued by a pack of demons, by day across abysses, by night through the sky". Musically, acknowledging the ballad's structure, this tale unfolds in four sections: The Peaceful Sunday Landscape; The Hunt; The Curse (intoned unearthily by solo tuba/clarinet); and The Demons' Chase (an infernal acceleration).

Published posthumously, *Les Éolides* (summer 1875-7th June 1876), the second of Franck's symphonic poems, was introduced to the Société Nationale by Colonne on 13th May 1877. Franck based the music on verses by Leconte de Lisle (*Poèmes antiques* , 2nd edition Paris 1874), but otherwise left no clue as to its Parnassian programme. The poem, in Rosa Newmarch's words (1929), is "addressed to the Breezes, [the six] daughters of Æolus, and describes the flight of these 'cool messengers' over the Southern lands; caressing with 'capricious kisses' mountains and plains; absorbing the honey-perfume of Hymettus; sighing love upon the lips of Theocritus; secretly allied to the sweet flute of Virgil and the Sicilian reeds". Laid out for orchestral forces including cymbals and harp but without heavy brass, the music (A major) follows a five-part sonata-related design: a) introduction, presaging material to be heard later; b) exposition (three themes, the first two essentially languid, chromatic and *Tristanesque*); c) development; d) recapitulation based on first theme; e) coda, reprise of fragmented first and second subjects. Initially well received - "a genuine little masterpiece" (*Gazette musicale* ) - a Lamoureux revival (26th February 1882) met with hisses and derision. "Instead of the spring-breezes we had expected, M[onsieur] Franck takes us away and exposes us to the full blast of the *mistral* . It augurs ill for the future" (*Le Ménestral* ).

The three-movement *Symphony in D minor* (summer 1887-22nd August 1888), inscribed "to my dear friend" (and pupil) Henri Duparc, was Franck's last orchestral composition. D'Indy related how the occasion of the chilly first performance, at the Paris Conservatoire under Jules Garcin, Sunday 17th February 1889, Lamoureux having refused to take it on, was against the wishes of the orchestra: "the subscribers could make neither head nor tail of it, and the musical authorities were in much the same position. I inquired of one of them - a professor at the Conservatoire, and a kind of *factotum* on the Committee - what he thought of the work. '*That* , a symphony?' he replied in contemptuous tones. 'But my dear sir, who ever heard of writing for the cor anglais in a symphony? Presumably this unidentified gentleman had no time for Berlioz's *Fantastique* either; Dvořák's *New World* was yet to come. Cyclic unification and the Beethovenian importance Franck placed on tonality rather than melody are central to the work. Notably audible is his recurrent use

of dotted rhythmic figures and syncopated accents on the weak beats of the bar - the former illustrated in the first movement by the opening two bars of the *lento* motto by the lower strings; the latter by the climactic second subject (the so-called "faith" or "Credo" motif, a short-long-short pattern). The development of themes *between* movements is virtually non-existent. When Franck recalls material in the finale, he quotes rather than metamorphosizes, on his own admission drawing his inspiration like the groundswell of his coda more from the model of Beethoven than Liszt, the Ninth rather than *Faust*.

Orchestrally, the music is scored for modestly Romantic forces, double woodwind, cor anglais, bass clarinet, four (chromatic) valve horns, two trumpets and *two cornets-à-pistons*, three trombones and tuba, kettledrums, harp and strings. Franck achieves some splendid moments with these forces - from the harp, *pizzicato* string chords and solo cor anglais of the central *Allegretto* to triumphantly brazen tutti resonances, via Brucknerian terraces of block sounds and colours reminiscent of different organ registrations.

The architecture is personal. The first movement is nearly as long as the second and third combined, sign-posted by an opening and closing motto idea, *Lento*, that turns out to be the first subject. The second movement is an episodic, dance-like *Allegretto* in B flat minor/major, telescoping elements of meditative lyric movement and intermezzo/scherzo in the manner of Berwald and Tchaikovsky, not forgetting Franck's own *Grande Pièce Symphonique* for organ. A finale in the tonic major is the optimistic crown of the work where Franck overcomes doubts and uncertainties. All is bright and positive, with a closing peroration affirmed in a dazzling blaze of D major sunrise colour that has lost nothing of its impact with the passing of time. Franck himself provided a detailed, if routine, analysis of the work, published after his death. More revealing was what he had to say to his composition student Pierre de Bréville, particularly concerning the unusual duality of the middle movement - "an *andante* [sic] and a scherzo. It was my great ambition to construct them in such a way that each beat of the *andante* ... should be exactly equal in length to one bar of the scherzo, with the intention that after the complete development of each section one could be superimposed on the other. I succeeded in solving the problem".

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## The Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra

The Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra was established in 1889 and is based in Arnhem, capital of the province of Guelderland, the Netherlands. Conductors such as Carl von Garaguly (1959-1970) and Yoav Talmi (1974-1980) played an important rôle in the artistic development of the orchestra during the last three decades. Apart from these, Guido Ajmone-Marsan, Georges Octors and Elyakum Shapirra have dedicated themselves convincingly to guarantee the artistic level of the orchestra during the last few years. In the meantime the orchestra has gained a great deal of attention, nationally as well as internationally, through a series of remarkable concerts, radio and television broadcasts, recordings and concert tours. With the start of the Jubilee season 1989-1990 Roberto Benzi was engaged as principal conductor and artistic advisor. The orchestra employs 88 musicians.

## Roberto Benzi

Roberto Benzi was born in Marseille in 1937. His parents., Italian musicians, quickly discovered that their son had a special musical talent. They taught him music theory and piano. Barely ten years of age, he received lessons from the well-known Belgian conductor André Cluytens. A year later he conducted a large symphony orchestra. after which he performed in many European cities as a child prodigy. At the age of 21 he conducted Bizet's *Carmen* for the first time at the Paris Opéra. Since 1960 he has been much in demand as a guest conductor. He conducted the Philadelphia, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Minnesota orchestras, and the orchestra of the New York Metropolitan Opera. In the Netherlands he became well known as guest conductor at the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. From 1973 to 1987 Roberto Benzi was chief conductor of the Orchestre de Bordeaux-Aquitaine. From March 1991 until March 1996 he was also connected with the Dutch National Youth Orchestra, as artistic manager. Since the season of 1989-1990 he has been chief conductor and artistic advisor of the Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra.



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STEREO

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César  
**FRANCK**  
(1822-1890)

# Orchestral Music Volume 1

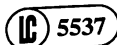
**Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**Roberto Benzi**

DDD

Playing  
Time  
**67:58**

- |          |                                   |                |
|----------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Le Chasseur maudit</b>         | <b>15:51</b>   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Les Éolides</b>                | <b>11:10</b>   |
|          | <b>Symphony in D minor</b>        | <b>(40:41)</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Lento - Allegro non troppo</b> | <b>18:37</b>   |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Allegretto</b>                 | <b>11:17</b>   |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Finale: Allegro non troppo</b> | <b>10:42</b>   |

MADE IN  
U.S.A.



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Producer/Engineer: Gary Cole  
Music Notes: Ateş Orga

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