

What an impossible novel my life is! Berlioz wrote in 1832 to his friend Albert Du Boys. To his sister Adele, I am absorbed continually by the strangeness, the romanticness of my situation. What was continually absorbing Berlioz in 1832 was in fact his passionate pursuit of the actress Harriet Smithson, who for so long had resisted him, and whom he at last marries. To begin with, the marriage was a happy one, produced an adored son Louis, and released Berlioz's extraordinary creative energies. But Harriet was unable to find work. The marriage became unbalanced. Its end as tragic for them both. Oh to forget to forget he wrote after her death. What can relieve me of memory, blot out all those pages from the book and volume of my heart. The pursuit of love, and its defining place in Berlioz's life, is one of the great themes of *Berlioz: servitude and greatness*. It is only one among many brilliantly traced by the author, Cairns describes the genesis of the famous works of Berlioz's maturity - *Benvenuto Cellini*, the requiem, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Damnation of Faust* and above all the crowning masterpiece *The Trojans*, neglected or mutilated for a century after its composition and which Cairns shows emerging from the classical passions of Berlioz's adolescence - which exceptional insight and understanding. rarely have the creative processes of a great artist been so amply revealed. But Berlioz stands in this volume not simply as a great and revolutionary composer: he was, in the opinion of Hans von Bulow, Sir Charles Halle and many others, the finest conductor of his age, called upon all over Europe to perform above all Gluck and Beethoven as well as his own works. And it is evident, in this book perhaps for the first time, that he was also one of the finest critics and writers about music of the 19th century, in Cairns's opinion the finest until Shaw: no one else combined his knowledge of music and the musical world with his command of language. The power and wit of Berlioz's writing, in his letters as well as his criticism, are one of the delights of the book. Struggles for artistic recognition and some measure of financial security, are the other two great themes of the book.

Brownings Shorter Poems, *The Wanderers Road (Usagi Yojimbo)*, *Bir Zamanlar Evren*, *First Born: Aftermath (First Born Vol. 1)*, *The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA*, *Die For Me: A Novel of the Valentine Killer*, *Punisher (2009-2010)* #15,

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