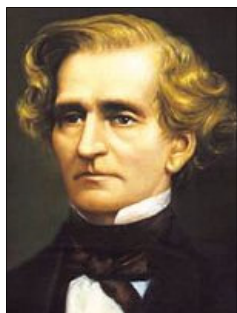


## H. Berlioz, *L'Enfance de Christ*, Op. 25, *La fuite en Egypte* (ouverture)



**Louis Hector Berlioz** (December 11, 1803 – March 8, 1869) was a French Romantic composer, best known for his compositions *Symphonie fantastique* and *Grande Messe des morts* (Requiem). Berlioz made great contributions to the modern orchestra with his *Treatise on Instrumentation* and by utilizing huge orchestral forces for his works; as a conductor, he performed several concerts with over 1,000 musicians. At the other extreme, he also composed around 50 songs for voice and piano.

At a party thrown in September 1850 by a friend from his *Prix de Rome* days, Joseph-Louis Duc (1802 - 1879) - architect of the column in the *Place de la Bastille* - Berlioz, perched against the corner of a card-table and ignoring the game of whist being played thereon, inscribed a small four-part *Andantino* for organ in Duc's album and facetiously signed it "Pierre Ducre." For a concert of the newly formed *Société Philharmonique*, 12 November, he rewrote the piece for chorus and small orchestra as *Adieu des bergers à la Sainte Famille* (the shepherds' farewell to the Holy Family) - to a text of his own devising, ascribing the work to "Pierre Ducre, master of music to the Sainte Chapelle, 1679." The hoax took. And when the work was repeated in December critics praised its "pure and simple style" while declaring that "Berlioz could never do anything like that!" Before the year was out he had preceded it with a charmingly severe fugal overture *dans le style ancien*, and rounded it off with a tenor solo narrating the angel-watched rest of the Holy Family at a desert oasis, *Le Repos de la Sainte Famille*. Taken together, the three pieces were collectively titled *La Fuite en Égypte* and continued to be attributed to the fictional choirmaster of Sainte Chapelle until the work's publication by Richault in 1852 - the title page reads "*attribué à Pierre Ducre, Maître de Chapelle imaginaire, et composé par Hector Berlioz.*" To the work's dedicatee, John Ella, director of the London Musical Union, Berlioz gleefully recounted the whole business in an open "*correspondance philosophique*" reprinted in *Les Grotesques de la musique* (1859). *Le Repos de la Sainte Famille* was first heard in London at a concert of the Philharmonic Society under Berlioz's direction, while the complete *Fuite en Égypte* was given a resplendent première 31 November 1853 in Leipzig by the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and choral forces drawn from the surrounding region, under Berlioz's baton. Spurred by the kindness of his Leipzig hosts and the enthusiasm of Liszt for the new work, Berlioz soon added to *La Fuite en Égypte* another panel, *L'Arrivée à Saïs*, in January 1854, and by July, with *Le Songe d'Hérode*, he had completed his *trilogie sacrée*, *L'Enfance du Christ*.