Giacomo Meyerbeer
Orchestral Works

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Orchestral Works:
The Incidental Music to *Struensee*, *Fackeltänze*, Overtures, Marches, Ballet Music

Piano Score

Compiled and Introduced by

Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Giacomo Meyerbeer. Copy of a painting by Carl Begas, commissioned by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia (1853) as part of a series on the illustrious men of the realm. The composer is wearing the Order of Merit and holding the manuscript of the Coronation March from *Le Prophète*. The original portrait was lost during the Second World War.

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INTRODUCTION

Meyerbeer's Orchestral Works

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864) was an opera composer *par excellence*, and wrote little orchestral music independent of his famous scores. When he did, it was usually in response to a commission for a particular occasion. His juvenile compositions included seven instrumental works, all of which are now part of his unrecovered *Nachlass*, missing since being hidden away during the Second World War.

1. *Variations for Piano and Orchestra on Bernhard Anselm Weber's March from 'Die Weihe der Kraft'* (1807)

2. *Composition for Small Orchestra* (1809)

3. *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1811)

4. *Overture for Violin and Piano* (1811)

5. *Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra* (1812)

6. *Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra* (8 July 1812)

7. *Entr'acte in D major* (for 2 violins, violas, doublebasses, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns) (8 February 1831)

This volume brings together a collection of Meyerbeer's orchestral works. He is remembered as one of the great figures of 19th-century opera—a master of brilliant vocalism, impassioned drama and vivid orchestral power and colour. His operas are noted for their precise construction and urgent propulsion, and never linger for long in music for its own sake. Nevertheless, the orchestral passages are integral to the dramatic logic: brief thematically pertinent preludes and precise introductions to the individual acts, always providing a sense of colour and purpose. The operas are also famous for their ballets as an integral aspect of the dramaturgy of the grand French style, but even here the music is kept within strict temporal control. Some of these dance sequences (like the Ballet of the Nuns in *Robert le Diable* and the Skaters' Ballet in *Le Prophète*) became very famous in themselves, and, in the case of the former, were of seminal influence on the development of the Romantic Ballet, both in musical and conceptual terms. Other orchestral episodes from the operas also enjoyed great independent popularity—like the resplendent Coronation March in *Le Prophète* and the exotic Marche Indienne in *L'Africaine*. The former continues to be Meyerbeer's most widely known composition. All these works have been gathered together in this volume to constitute orchestral suites from the French operas—both the grand operas and the smaller *opéras comiques*. The two latter works *L'Étoile du Nord* and *Dinorah* each have an extended overture.

1. *Struensee* (1846)

Meyerbeer's most substantial orchestral work, however, is the incidental music he wrote for his brother, Michael Beer's, tragedy *Struensee* (1846). The overture is Meyerbeer's crowning achievement in orchestral writing, and the rest of the incidental music is enthralling in its drama, passion and pathos. Meyerbeer's new incidental music to his brother's play is made up of an overture and twelve pieces, some of them short, others more extensive.

1) The **overture** (*Andante religioso quasi allegretto*, D-flat major, 4/4—*Allegro appassionato*, C minor, 6/8—E-flat major—*Andante religioso quasi allegretto*, B major, 4/4—*Allegro appassionato*, A minor, 6/8—C minor—*Allegretto moderato*, C major, 4/4) which musically depicts the rise of the ambitious upstart, from his parental home to highest office in the land, and then his fall, uses the themes of intrigue and love from the individual scenes of the incidental music, and concludes with a victorious apotheosis: the solemn theme associated with the hero's father Pastor Struensee and the noble, religious ideal, with its rich writing for the harp. In the introduction this theme, variously transformed, is taken through a series of five brief variations:
a) D-flat major, 4/4, the theme rhythmically altered in staccato chords for trombones, trumpets and horns;
b) E major, 2/4, harmonically rich and lyrical, for violoncellos, with violas and basses (*il canto espressivo*) (see No. 12 *The Blessing*);
c) D-flat major, 4/4, staccato treble chords over a ground bass in octaves;
d) A major, 4/4, the theme presented by ophicleide and trombone in staccato quavers, then under rich chromatic crotchet treble chords and echoing quaver figures;
e) D-flat major, 4/4, four-part legato chords (in similar, contrary and oblique motion) separate into a truncated treble quaver variant in octaves, over a flowing bass in semiquaver triplets.
The theme represents the enduring legacy of Struensee's vision, in spite of his personal weakness and tragedy. It is opposed by the dark, weaving theme of sexual and political intrigue—the first subject of the formal exposition. This is characterized by a sinister upwards-turning sextuplet that ends in a dotted figure (double semiquaver-quaver). Both elements are elaborated, petering out in a series of iterative echoes, ending in silence. At this point, the motifs are counterposed by the second subject—an aspiring, emotional melody, very Tchaikovskian in contour and contained feeling, that represents the illicit but heroic love between Struensee and the Queen. Struensee, her doctor, becomes her favourite regardless of social status, and gains the highest power in the Danish state. Something of the innately doomed nature of this love is captured in the tenuous, downward pull of the melodic shape (descending on the oboes and clarinets in octaves by degrees from the tonic to the dominant), its fragile and melancholic colouring essentially capturing the personality of the Queen—generous, ardent, noble, with a conscience calm and serene. Its brief measure speaks of sentiments both profound and discreet.

But in the development, the motifs of political reality become the dominating feature: the curling sextuplet spreads its baleful tendrils into every aspect of the texture, quashing the second subject to the point of brutal destruction. At this point there is silence—followed by a change of key as Pastor Struensee's theme reappears in B major, spreading a calm, which, however, is gradually, by way of a delicate series of descending *con delicatezza* strings, taken over by a recapitulation of the

theme of intrigue *mezza voce*. A new development seems to begin, this time not in conflict with the formal second subject (the Queen), but with the melody of the introduction (Struensee). The intrigue theme seems to win, the sextuplet-tendrils and the emphatic dotted motif dominating strongly and obsessively, dying away into the iterated semi-quaver-quaver motif.

Now the second theme proper of the exposition (that of the Queen's doomed love) gently reasserts itself, over its agitated restless bass, reinforced on the horns, reaching a sad effusion on the oboes. But it is again quashed by the power of the first theme launched *tutti*. A climax is reached, the intrigue motif triumphant, rolling all before it in a series of quaver parallel octave hammerings on E that end in a terrible low octave pedal point, extending for 12 twelve bars on very deep augmented F's. It seems to spell disaster, the intrigue quietly asserting its dominance as it rises on the violas over the pedal.

But quite suddenly, there is a change of rhythm and key into tonic major: the Struensee melody of the introduction is heard in a transposed form, in bright treble guise with shimmering high arpeggios and vigorous harp writing. The whole builds up gradually with subtle variation until the transmuted theme is powerfully announced in this brilliant new variant, expanding and sustaining itself into a resplendent climax. "Le péroraison est resplendissante, évocatrice; on le dirait, d'une victoire d'âme," (the peroration is splendid, evocative; one could call it a victory of the soul) (Lionel Dauriac, *Meyerbeer* [Paris: Felix Alcan, 1913; 2nd ed., 1930], 134).

2) In the ***Melodram* composed for act 1 scene 12** where the father of the protagonist, the country parson Struensee, is introduced, Meyerbeer uses the first theme of the overture, taken from his unused music for the opera *Noëma, ou Le Répentir* (by Eugène Scribe and Henri Vernoy de Saint Georges, 1846) where it was to represent a vision of heaven. In the play it is likewise associated with a religious ideal, with a righteous view of the world, with a series of family values that ultimately relate to a pastoral heredity. It opposed by the sinister theme of sexual and political intrigue, familiar from the overture.

The last part shows Struensee thinking of the Queen, his heart pounding at the mention of her name. The love theme from the overture fixes the association, and is immediately challenged by the unexpected entry of his father, the pastor Struensee, his tranquil and portentous theme confirming the symbolic juxtapostioning.

3) The **entr'acte to act 2, No. 3 (*Der Aufruhr*)**, represents the revolt of the Norwegian Guards, an event that marks the beginning of Struensee's fall from power. It is dominated by the love theme which is launched rapturously, and then passes through thunderous timpani rolls into a quiet stately melody that is fraught with tragic intimation. This dies away and moves into the Danish folksong "König Christian stand am Mast" (King Christian stood at the mast), which is given in several variant forms, both choral and instrumental, and in varying degrees of power, before trailing away into nothing. The Danish anthem was included at the special request of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who had hoped that Meyerbeer would paraphrase it in the overture, an idea that the composer did not take up.

4) **No. 4 is for scene 12, *Marsch und Chor***, a triumphant repeat of "König Christian" representing the onward rush of Struensee's crisis as he is obliged to withdraw his orders. The piece also covers scene 15, *Königin Mathilde*, depicting the Queen's involvement in her dangerous liaison. As she leaves the stage, a deep sinuous theme,

ruminating in the bass, induces a sense of unease and menace, indicating the danger of the situation. The music rises and falls in eerie reflection, and soon the danger materializes as the queen mother Julie and the privy counsellor Count Rantzau enter, walking in deep conversation. They represent Struensee's nemesis personified.

5) & 6) The theme is resumed in **No. 6 *Melodram zur lezten Szene II. Akt*** which shows the finalization of the conspiracy against Struensee initiated by the Queen Mother and Rantzau. They have agreed to arrest Struensee at one in the morning, during the Court ball. The serpentine musings die away *pianissimo*.

7) Act 3 opens with the **second entr'acte, No. 7 (*Der Ball*)**, a brilliant extended polonaise that conjures up the masked ball at the palace during which Struensee, at the apogee of his influence, is arrested and imprisoned. The events offstage are vividly depicted in the music, as the stately, sumptuous progress of the dance is dramatically interrupted and broken.

8) Act 4 begins with **No. 8 (*Die Dorfschenke*)**, the third entr'acte, a country dance in a village inn, with Nordic overtones, a musette with peasant drone—a *pastorale* in fact. The great events of state are discussed in a little country inn far away from the tumults of Copenhagen.

9) The introduction to act 5, **the fourth entr'acte No. 9**, depicts Struensee's imprisonment, with the return of the solemn theme associated with his father and the idealistic values he represents (the compressed theme and variations that open the overture), dying away into sad reflection.

10) This is a **melodrama for scene 3**, where the psychological state of Struensee is further developed **(*Der Traum Struensees*)**, depicting his dream of the love shared with Caroline Matilda whom he has now lost (a gentle, remote variant on the love music) enclosed by the theme of conspiracy, as Rantzau enters. It passes into the theme of benediction as Rantzau contemplates the sleeping prisoner before awakening him to harsh reality, and the love theme flits by.

11) **No. 11 (*Trauermarsch*)** is for scene 7, the death march that accompanies Struensee to his execution, very simple and fraught, remarkably Mahlerian in feel.

12) **No. 12 *Melodram zur gleichen Szene* (*Die Segnung*)** follows on immediately. A solo violoncello (*con espressione doloroso*) marks the entry of Struensee's father. Three cellos accompany the blessing of the son by the father, as Struensee kneels in front of the pastor. The theme of benediction marks their final embrace.

13) The last scene **No. 13 (*Der letzte Augenblick*)** sees the resumption of the funeral march as Struensee is led off to his execution, which happens offstage. The drums roll, the old man kneels in silence, and the play ends with bright radiant harmonies as the curtain falls.

2. The *Fackeltänze* (*Marches aux Flambeaux*) (1844-58)

Meyerbeer was also asked to write instrumental music for public occasions, most especially for the Prussian Royal Family. On 11 June 1842 he accepted the post of *Generalmusikdirektor* (general music director) to the King of Prussia, and subsequently endeavoured to bring the Royal Opera in Berlin up to the standards of the Dresden Court Opera, also working to increase the benefits for the members of the Court ensemble. Part of his Royal duties involved the provision of music for a ceremony particular to the Prussian court, the torch dance. He provided four stirring *Fackeltänze* for these torchlight processions held at the Hohenzollern nuptial celebrations, where the music would be played by 130 trumpets and trombones of the Prussian Army Music Corps as the Court moved slowly through the hall in many processional lines. The music was arranged for the brass by Wilhelm Friedrich Wieprecht, who had reorganized the Prussian military band and advised Spontini, Meyerbeer and Berlioz on arranging their wind and brass compositions. Meyerbeer immediately provided versions for the full symphony orchestra.

The first was the *Fackeltanz no. 1 in B-flat Major* (1844), the most popular of the four such ceremonial dances Meyerbeer was to write (the others being in 1850, 1853, and 1858). These orchestral works enjoyed great popularity for many decades, and were published in full score (by Bote & Bock in Berlin, as well as in miniature by Guidi in Florence). Piano arrangements of these "torch dances" were issued by the London house, Cramer, Beale & Co., who called them by their French nomenclature, and reversed the order of Nos. 2 and 3. Each edition was prefaced by the following description of this genre: "The *Marche Flambeaux* was composed by Meyerbeer on the occasion of the betrothing of a Princess of Prussia. The composition of this kind of Morceau belongs to a ceremony of the Middle Ages, and is still observed in the German Courts. On the day of the betrothing of a prince or princess royal, it is the custom for each of the betrothed, with torch in hand, to make a tour of the salon several times, and to pass before the sovereign; the prince giving his hand to a lady, and the princess hers to a gentleman of the Court. All the guests follow the betrothed couple, who change partners each time until all present have walked around the room with them. The March is always in 3/4 time. It is a slow movement in the style of a polonaise, and scored for a military band."

Meyerbeer provided works in processional polonaise style, full of grandezza, dramatic gesture and affecting lyricism. He used the concept of "heroic minuet" developed by Spontini extensively in these works, having also already used this style in *Les Huguenots* (the entry of the Catholic Court in act 2) and in *Ein Feldlager in Schlesien* (in the overture and finale). The *Fackeltänze* are all in extended rondo form, with grand, stately main themes in typically dotted rhythm and iterative semiquaver chordal phrases derived from fanfares, that add a sense of ceremony and stately progress. The recurrent main idea is interspersed with regular contrasting sections, usually more flowing and lyrical, often in minor keys, and distinguished by expansive melodies, echo effects, instrumental recital with heavy chordal punctuation (trombone recitatives in Nos. 1 and 3), strongly drawn bass lines that sometimes carry the melody, and an often surprisingly emotional sense of melodic development. The very distinct coda is invariably in different brisker rhythm and quickly builds up to an increasingly exciting concluding peroration.

1) ***Fackeltanz* No 1 in B-flat major** for the wedding of Princess Marie of Prussia with Crown Prince Maximilian of Bavaria (1844)

The opening theme is very majestic, and the whole piece resplendent and magisterial. It has always been the most popular, and is still regularly heard on German radio. It was recorded into the 1950s. It has an extended trombone recitative that was influential on Delibes in the mazurka in *Coppélia* (1870)

2) ***Fackeltanz* No. 2 in E-flat major** for the wedding of Princess Charlotte of Prussia with the Crown Prince of Sachsen-Meinigen (1850) (*Troisième Marche aux Flambeaux*)
This is the shortest and most vigorous, with very lyrical waltz interludes and developed bass melodies, with a completely new theme in the coda very reminiscent of the famous Coronation March in *Le Prophète.*

3) ***Fackeltanz* No. 3 in C minor** for the wedding of Princess Anna of Prussia with Crown Prince Friedrich of Hesse (1856) (*Deuxième Marche aux Flambeaux*)
This is by far the longest of the dances, and the only one in a minor key. The structure is extended ABA-CDC-ABEBA-FGF-A-HIJ. The D-section is extensively developed with transition, the E-section another trombone recital, the F-section a very lyrical melody with trumpet counterpoint and a transition to a very emotional development of the melody. The coda (H) begins with dotted rhythms, passes into an expansive melody, and finally swings into a frenetic waltz rhythm. The work became very popular in France and was recorded frequently in the early days of the 78 rpm.

4) ***Fackeltanz* No. 4 in C major** for the arrival of the newly wedded Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia and Princess Victoria (the Princess Royal) of England (1858)
The last of the dances is the most rhythmically skipping in its iterative main theme, and in its interludes the most reflective. It is written in the open key of C, very unusual for marches using brass instruments, a fact that gave the composer some concern, lending a certain muffled tonal effect to the whole. The Coda is an arrangement of "God Save the Queen", in honour of Princess Victoria, the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria. The melody is played over a busy staccato bass counterpoint and interspersed with the lively recurring opening theme.

It is interesting to read Meyerbeer's own opinion in his Diaries

> Thursday 10 June 1858. "...To a military concert by Wieprecht in which my new Fackeltanz in C major was also played, and which I heard for the first time. The key of C major does not suit the timbre of the brass instruments as much as the key of B major; it seems to me that the tonality does not strike one as pregnantly and brilliantly as in my Fackeltänze [No.3] in c minor and [No.1] in B-flat major. Indeed, it sometimes seems really melancholy. The public applauded only moderately..." (The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer [Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2004], 4:83)

3. Fest-Marsch zu Schillers 100jähriger Geburtstagfeier (1859)

(Festival March for the Centenary of Schiller's Birth) (1859) (Berlin: Schlesinger; Paris: Brandus; Florence: Guidi, 1860).

Celebrations of Schiller's centenary were held in Paris where the writer enjoyed popularity in the first half of the 19th century, in the context of the development of the Romantic lyric, drama and novel under Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. It seemed natural for the committee for the celebrations to invite Meyerbeer, encompassing both French and German traditions, to contribute the musical side of the festivities. The composer had lived on and off in Paris since 1824, had written his hugely popular and influential operas in the French language, and was regarded by the French as one of their own (a situation that began to change afer the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and turned into decisive rejection after the First World War of 1914-18). Meyerbeer provided a cantata "Wohl bist du uns geboren" for tenor, chorus and orchestra to a text by Ludwig Pfau that had been translated into French by the playwright Henri Blaze de Bury.

The festivities were held on 10 November 1859 at the Cirque de l'Impératrice on the Champs-Élysées, and began with the Schiller March Meyerbeer had provided. The work is slow and stately, the very dignified and leisurely opening theme in E-flat for violins, flutes and clarinets capturing the solemnity of the occasion and the high seriousness of the subject as dramatist. The trio in B-flat floats a cantabile melody for clarinets and bassoons over a vibrant shimmering accompaniment— particularly striking in its obligato writing for two harps (playing treble arpeggios and bass chords) who are instructed to perform with fervour (*Les harpes doivent toujours jouer avec beaucoup de vigeur*). The harps dominate the mood of contained lyrical ecstacy, and reflect the celebration of the subject as poet. The coda is a tout de force that unleashes the full power of the hitherto restrained orchestra, building up to its culmination in a remarkable series of semiquaver chordal triplets that bring the celebration to a grandiose and breathless conclusion.

4. Krönungsmarsch für zwei Orchester aufgeführt in Königsberg während der Krönungszuges nach der Kirche seiner Majestät dem König Wilhelm I vom Preussen (1861)

(Coronation March for Two Orchestras performed in Königsberg during the Coronation Procession to the Church of His Majesty King William I of Prussia (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1861; Paris: Brandus, 1862)

Meyerbeer's last big commission for the Royal Family was the Coronation March he was asked to write for Prince Wilhelm, the younger brother of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. The Prince had long served as regent during the king's mental decline. On the latter's death, Wilhelm was crowned king at the ancient seat of the monarchy's power, in Königsberg in East Prussia (now Kaliningrad). The commission, though a great honour for Meyerbeer, came as a burden to the composer whose health had begun to decline. He nevertheless produced a fine work of pomp and circumstance, using the ancient Venetian Baroque practice of disposing double choirs at different vantages (as in the music of Gabrielli). Meyerbeer uses alternating orchestral rather than choral forces (as in the *concerto grosso*), with a smaller group of brass instruments (*concertino*) in interplay with a large symphony orchestra (*ripieno*). The

concertino instruments comprise timpani, military drum, cornettino, soprano, alto and tenor cornets, trumpets, baritone tuba, and bass tuba (or their saxhorn counterparts). This re-employment of an old tradition had already been put to dynamic theatrical use in the act 1 finale of *Il Crociato in Egitto* (1824), the act 3 finale of *Les Huguenots* (1836), and, most influentially, the Coronation March in act 4 of *Le Prophète* (1849).

In the Königsberg March Meyerbeer utilizes the flamboyant Baroque practice to transfigure the pathos and opulence of *grand opéra* into a triumphal national celebration of Prussian identity. Fanfares for trumpets and horns lead into a *maestoso* statement of the main theme for full orchestra, a strongly dotted processional melody that on its completion is broken up by celebratory fanfares from the concertante band. The firsr trio provides a sinuous theme on sliding semiquaver and demisemiquaver triplets for the strings, clarinets and bassoons. The main melody and its *concertino* fanfares return, and then give way to the second trio, in B-flat and dominated by a melody (*dolce e cantabile*) for the violins and flutes that is contrasted and then counterpointed with a rising and falling dotted figure in the strings. It is broken into briefly by the main theme and its concertino fanfares before returning for a lyrical reworking over throbbing notes in strings and woodwinds that leads into a development of all the ideas in increasing speed and loudness until a highpoint is reached in preparation for the coda. The coda, in the key of E-major, uses the popular Prussian song (a second national anthem) “Ich bin ein Preusse, kennt ihr meine Farben” (I am a Prussian, You know my colours), announced on the clarinets and bassoons with the two orchestras in dynamic interplay, and excitement building up in peroration until the end. The scene was set for Richard Wagner’s contribution in 1871 when his *Kaiser Marsch*, written for the elevation of the Prussian king to Emperor of the newly united German Empire, transformed the sound world of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* into an unctuous, luxurious festive pathos.

5. Fest-Ouvertüre im Marschstil für die Londoner Weltanschauung (1862)

(Festival Overture in March Style for the London Exhibition) (Paris: Brandus; Florence: Ricordi and Guidi, 1862; Berlin and Posen: Bote & Bock, 1863)

In 1861 Meyerbeer, virtually the most famous composer of his time, was invited by the Committee of the London World Exposition to write the German musical contribution for the opening of the London Exhibition in the Crystal Palace in 1862 (with Auber representing France and Verdi Italy). Meyerbeer had visited London on several occasions in his life, and was admired by both Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. He was asked by the London Philharmonic Society to conduct the work himself in the Crystal Palace, the exposition hall of glass and steel, a marvel of the age. Although he feared the loss of many of his finer points of orchestral colouring and tonal nuances in the vast space of the hall, the details were not so important on this festive occasion which saw the composer applauded and honoured. His Festival Overture in March Style provides a series of four variants on the march genre, each depicting an aspect of assertion and identity—civic, religious, military and national, in which generic elements of the Baroque suite and structural elements of the Classical symphony are the shaping subtexts.

1) ***Marcia trionfale*** (*Allegretto moderato*, C major-G major-Cmajor, 4/4) (ABA-ACA-BDB-ACA). This opening section is a full scale ternary march with an

expositional introduction. It begins with drum rolls, and immediately presents the whole piece in miniature, a vigorous bold assertive staccato theme for the low strings and bassoons, contrasted with a soft serene *dolce* treble for the high woodwinds, in parallel thirds and fourths. The first theme returns to be discussed canonically and builds up to a major restatement in parallel octaves with rhetorical repetitions, gestures and fanfares leading into a second dotted theme and a splendid climax. The fervour subsides for the G major trio, with the second theme of the introduction now returning, always *dolce con delicatezza* and *cantabile* in an expansive development of the melody, a lovely middle section variant making way for a beautiful restatement of the theme in luxurious treble octaves over soothing arpeggios.

2) ***Marcia religiosa*** (*Andantino*, F major, 4/4) Long slow rolls on the timpani and side drums introduce the slow movement, a melody in a double descending dotted quaver-semiquaver sequence (related to the main melody of the march) that finds repose in three rising crotchets, the whole repeated four times in various timbres, colours and harmonic variants, before reaching a long serene middle section with legato treble writing over running demisemiquaver figures in the bass, rising in high octave treble chords to the dying conclusion.

3) ***Pas redoublé*** (*Allegro con spirito*, C major, 4/4). The mood changes dramatically with a bright summonsing quaver sequence in parallel octaves, a descending semiquaver figure becoming on its fourth repetition the opening phrase of a rising and falling quaver staccato of a skirling quickstep march melody over a buoyant series of staccato bass chords in third and octaves that then becomes the opening fanfare figure, all very bright, light and scherzo-like. The fanfare figure is boldly restated by the full orchestra in double octaves before the repetition of the quickstep. The repetition of the fanfare figure is suddenly truncated and resolved into an extending descending quaver triplet figure in wide octaves punctuated by full chromatic quaver chords. This initiates an extended development section with the various elements of semiquaver turn, quickstep theme and descending quaver figure bandied about until a long low tremolo on F sees the quickstep and treble cascade suddenly being pulled back by a series of treble triads in first inversion and a rising dotted figure in the bass.

4) ***Thème du Chant National ("Rule Britannia")*** The twelve-bar development culminates in a broad octaval statement of the national song "Rule Britannia". This is immediately broken in upon by the cascading quaver-motif, the melody having almost to find its way through this rushing repetitious figure which seems to win out with the return of the quickstep and the punctuating quaver chords.

The cascading figure descends to the lower C of the bass clef where it suddenly becomes the first note of a low restatement of "Rule Britannia" which now becomes part of a 33-bar fugal fantasia, the bass line forming a *cantus firmus* for canonic overlapping statements of the melody—at various levels and in various stages of completeness. The mood of knotted complexity suddenly changes with the *leggero* re-entry of the quickstep theme, itself now truncated to brilliant high repetitions of the turning semiquaver figure. The *Pas redoublé* appears in the low bass, with "Rule Britannia" alluded to in the treble, this being repeated ever higher until suddenly broken by the returning low tremolo on F.

The national song is now bandied about in the treble, before a grand crescendo in huge minim chords sees the theme fully enunciated under bright high tremolos. The semiquaver-turn-motif now becomes a bright rushing treble figure, decorating the top

line *leggerissimo* while "Rule Britannia" is played *ben marcato* below This breathless peroration culminates in a full orchestral statement in double octaves of the opening ambit of the national song that then dissolves to rise to a rapid and decisive cadence on the double quaver chords of the quickstep.

This grandiose festive piece is full of variety, surprises and subtle orchestral colours. Like all this composer's work, this fine composition is waiting to be rediscovered.

The Operatic Suites

The dramatic situation and the human voice were Meyerbeer's special inspirations, with the vocal assets of particular interpreters a very particular source of stimulus. But he by no means neglected the orchestral portions of his opera scores. He was known from the very beginning of his career for the care of his orchestrations and the imagination of his instrumental effects. In his first opera *Jephtas Gelübde* he featured four solo bassoons (to express the hero's anguished deliberations) and guitars (to achieve a sense of the exotic in the priests' music). In *Robert le Diable* he wrote for four solo timpani (in the tournament), four solo bassoons (in the Ballet of the Nuns), and with sensitivity for the cor anglais and the harp in combination (in Isabelle's cavatina), while in *Les Huguenots* he used solo viola d'amore (in Raoul's romance) and famously introduced the bass clarinet into the operatic orchestra (as solo accompaniment to the *Interrogatoire* in act 5). He also daringly used unusual tonal combinations, instrumental colours in association with certain characters, and created a special orchestral colour for every dramatic situation.

Meyerbeer's operas each have some special orchestral writing, particularly associated with introductions, moments of special drama, and the dance—to which he made a special contribution. These various pieces have been brought together to constitute orchestral suites from the operas.

6. *Robert le Diable* (1831)

1) **Overture** (*Andante maestoso*, c minor 4/4)
Beginning with his last Italian opera, *Il Crociato in Egitto*, Meyerbeer had begun replacing the formal operatic overture with a succinct and dramatically pertinent prelude. The introduction to *Robert le Diable* is still designated *ouverture* by the composer, but in its concise and vigorous statement provides a truncated but dramatic entrée to the action. It is essentially monothematic, focussing on the theme of Bertram's Evocation to the dead nuns to rise from their graves ("Nonnes qui reposez"). After a dull C minor roll on the drums, the motif is announced powerfully on the trombones, like an anticipation of the call of doom on Judgment Day. A tremolo on G sees a quiet and very low statement of the theme broken in upon by a descending semiquaver staccato figure in the treble over very powerful dotted chords in the bass. These dotted chords become an ostinato on bass octave chords of G over which a brief rising and falling semiquaver theme of sadness and yearning is repeated four times. This theme will be heard again at the beginning of act 5 on the eve of the eschatological denouement, and has been likened to the cry of the affrighted soul at the gates of Hell. The descending treble figure breaks in upon this uneasy reflection with a swirling anxiety, initiating a series of variations on Bertram's Evocation—from deep bass octaves to a variety of high thin woodwind statements, the variant themes crossing and knotting with each other as the semiquaver figure swirls around it some

eighteen times, the bass answered by the treble *pianissimo*, all in a flattened remote form. There is suddenly a *fortissimo* restatement of the motif in chromatic bass octaves, the semiquaver figure solidifying into big dotted octave chords as the first descending part of the theme is given some seven times in sharpened bass octaves before a final unison *tutti* trumpets out the whole theme *fff* in great treble chords over very low tremolos on F. Nothing captures the "cold and deathless" supernatural atmosphere that the young conductor Richard Wagner found in this work more than this brief prelude which conjures up a range of moods. It shows Bertram's motif passing through a spectrum of guises before its true unabashed meaning is finally realized—as though a parable of his role in the opera as he moves from unknown knight, through tempter and master of dark magic to the fullness of his demonic mission in act 5.

2) ***Pas de Cinq***

The ballet music in *Robert le Diable* is very prominent and was to be of particular influence on the history of the development of ballet in the Romantic era. The *Pas de Cinq* occurs in act 2 and fits the more traditional sense of a danced divertissement, forming as it does part of the festivities surrounding the tournament, as the people make merry. It falls into five sections with coda:

a) *Andantino quasi Allegretto* (B-flat—G major 4/4). A high airy theme of two brief descending quaver figures and two concluding semiquaver triplets over rocking arpeggios, with a middle section of rapid staccato quaver triplets, and iterative semiquaver figures, before a return to the opening theme.

b) *Allegro moderato* (B-flat—G major, 6/8). This is a light happy piece (*scherzando leggiero*) with its strumming double beat with *fermate* and little semiquaver skip on the second and fourth beat (A), a more lyrical second subject (B), a return to the first subject (A), then a repeat of A and B in the changed key of G.

c) *Moderato* (E-flat, 4/4). This is a processional movement, in strong dotted chords, first over low tremolos, then over heavy descending staccato octaves for the trombones.

d) *Allegro leggiero* (B-flat, 2/4). There is a return to the sequence of reiterated staccato single semiquaver notes, rising, falling in lovely thirds, until a held trilled note on b^{ii} deliquescing into turned semiquaver clusters on the woodwind sees a *cantabile* solo for the horns in thirds, repeated eight times, unfolded under these triplet sequences.

e) *Allegro moderato* (C minor-E-flat, 6/8). A change of rhythm and key sees a succession of dotted chords interspersed with alternating reminiscences of the first and second movements.

f) Coda (E-flat, 6/8). Deep octaves in G initiate the coda, with its return to G and motor rhythm of lifting quaver thirds, and its subtle recall of elements of all the preceding movements, but with its own new contribution in a rising melody largely in a chain of thirds. All is repeated with a *presto* conclusion, making for a musically charming display of melody, rhythm and affecting harmony.

3) **The Ballet of the Nuns**

The most sensational moment of *Robert le Diable*, and the reason for its crucial place in the history of ballet, is the famous scene in act 3 scene 3 where, in the moonlight amidst the ruins of the monastery of St Rosalie, Bertram summons up the spirits of nuns who have died in carnal sin to seduce Robert into the arts of black magic by stealing a sacred branch from the grave of the saint. In dramaturgical conception,

choreographic innovation and musical imagination, this scene was to be foundational to the whole development of Romantic ballet. Part of its effectiveness within the opera itself lies in the tacit contrast it forms with the *Pas de cinq* in act 2. The latter is a traditional formal set of dances, charming and diverting, but with no innate dramaturgical logic. Nothing could be more different to the Ballet of the Nuns, which is integral to the storyline, and in its integration of instrumental and vocal music, dance, mime and mise en scène attains a perfect realization of the Romantic aesthetic ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk.* As orchestral suite, the work is best arranged as:

a) ***Valse infernale*** (*Allegro moderato,* B minor—D major 3/8; *Allegro con spirito,* B major, 12/8).
This piece became famous as an expression of one of the great Romantic motifs, the infernal waltz conducted by Satan, an image of the black comedy of human existence where the dark Lord of Misrule holds sway in the usually malicious unpredictability of life. This is of course strictly speaking a vocal piece, but because of its waltz character and melodic appeal, has often been performed as an orchestral piece, closely associated with the Ballet of the Nuns. In fact the dance suites derived from Meyerbeer's score attached the *Valse infernale* to the ballet, as the first movement in a suite of four dances. This is how it is reproduced here in the version of the ballet music (prepared by Max Schultze for the Collection Litloff). The thematic and dramaturgical importance of the piece however is dependent on its earlier placement in act 3, where it establishes important musical and thematic elements crucial to a proper understanding of the scenario and the music. It is the moment in the opera where Bertram reveals his full demonic nature for the first time, where he is called upon by the powers of darkness to complete his damnation of Robert, where with all the anguished ambiguity of the dark Byronic hero/anti-hero of Romanticism, he reveals his paradoxical love for his son—a love that can express itself only in securing his ruin. Meyerbeer, in depicting the confrontation with the underworld, eschewed a direct presentation of Hell, preferring initially to elicit *frisson* through the acoustical impression of distance and depth (from the cavern of St Irene). The invisible chorus of demons makes present the dark forces, but their otherness is emphasized by the spatial dimension, as they sing through speaking-trumpets positioned under the prompter's box, where they produce an eerie undefined sound. In *Rober*t, despite the tempest that erupts when Bertram descends into the cavern, nature remains essentially a neutral playground, and horror is found in people themselves. Thus the companionable popular dance of bourgeois society, the waltz, becomes the vector of inverted values, deformed into the *Valse infernale*.

The famous piece begins with the Four Strokes of Hell, the four lengthened crotchets associated with Bertram's demonic alignment. It is followed by the off-stage chorus of demons, singing from the Cavern, in the basic style of a peasant *Ländler*: the simple nature of their line and the droning bass a hallmark of folk music, and the simple orchestra (a *concertino* of 3 trumpets, 3 horns, 3 trombones, drums, triangle and piccolo) like a village band, but now rendered alien by spatial and sonic detachment: the chromatic harmonies in the bass, and the elfin skirls and trills on the piccolo. This is contrasted with a passage of rising and falling semiquaver triplets that suggest the storm in Bertram's heart and that about to break out in nature, while the chorus of demons sings on imperturbably. Bertram then gives way to the force of his feeling, and in the heart of his self-revelation sings of his love for his son in the expansive and emotional central melody of the piece, the thirds moving into octaves and the key briefly switching to D, before the demons sing over the trilled piccolo

sounds again. In the vocal version of the piece the key and tempo change to Allegro con spirito 12/8 as Bertram deplores his assigned lot in bringing his son to ruin, before entering the Cavern amidst smoke and fire.

b) ***Procession des Nonnes*** (C minor, 3/4). After Bertram's famous Evocation, will-o'-the wisps flicker on the ancient gravestones in high shimmering strings. The stage directions observe: "The tombs open, the nuns emerge, covered in their shrouds, and slowly advance in procession to the front of the stage". The music of their necromantic resurrection is indeed very spooky, gentle falling notes on the cellos and basses followed by soft chords on the horns, trumpets, trombones and timpani, repeated four times in differing expanding and contracting harmonies, with a gentle tap of the tam-tam adding mystery to the last chord. The emergence from the graves is accompanied most eerily of all by two solo bassoons playing in thirds, creating a sound that is both hollow yet subterranean, perfectly capturing an alien, sepulchral, slightly frightening mood. The whole process is repeated three times before the nuns are assembled and can begin their dance in the moonlight.

c) ***Bacchanale*** (*Allegro vivace*, F major-D major, *alla breve con moto—Allegro vivace*, D major, 6/8). The stage directions give detailed instructions: "Bertram's will has conferred the instincts of passion to the hardly animated corpses. The nuns recognize each other again, and give evidence of their pleasure. Héléna, their abbess, encourages them to make the most of the passing moments, and to give themselves over to pleasure. This directive is immediately obeyed. From their graves they retrieve the objects of their profane enjoyments: amphora, dice, and other such items. Some make offering to an idol, while others shed their long robes and crown themselves with cypress wreaths, so as to dance more freely. Soon they are absorbed only in their hedonistic pleasures, and their dance becomes an ardent bacchanale".

Meyerbeer endeavoured to instil a special nuance, an 'other-worldly' quality, to this supernatural music. It is meant to have a light, elfin effect, and he left specific instruction for the players: "All the instruments should play with the greatest delicacy, lightly and staccato. The *sforzandi* should hardly be marked." The themes are on the one hand fleet and buoyant, like the opening theme, with its downward staccato quaver runs, given to the high woodwinds and triangle; this is contrasted, on the other hand, immediately with an angular, awkward dotted motif for the lower strings and bassoons, creeping upwards, and expanding into a broad theme, a variant of the same idea in legato crotchets, for the violas, cellos and bassoons. Both try to capture the nature of the necromantic nuns: an instilled airy quality that is slightly mechanical in its iterated runs; and a dark grotesque hobbling. The first reflects their fragile delusional beauty, conjured up by Bertram; the second relates to their reanimation, and betrays their diabolical character as creatures of an infernal activity. The latter quality is soon emphasized by the threefold occurrence of "the four strokes of Hell", a series of four graced minims, that are associated with Bertram's demonic power. The interplay of these two types of motifs dominates the whole extended dance with the first theme establishing itself as a rondo subject, its downward runs and trills imparting and intensifying the slightly automaton-like nature of the nuns, and eventually, as the bacchanal gets under way with the change to 6/8, becoming, in a series of ten furious cascading string runs down two octaves that then suddenly rush upwards to launch the new frenetic movement, the motor force and melodic material of the second part. The downward-descending semiquaver runs are everpresent, however much integrated into the syntactical flow of the music. Even here in this

section, under the iterative figurations in the high strings that dominate this part, the creeping second theme manifests itself, and in the lovely horn fanfares under the trilled high woodwind, one discerns Bertram's Leitmotif from the ballad in act 1. The nature of this piece, especially the brilliance of the high string writing, with its *leggiero* semiquaver figurations, repetitions, runs, and embroidery, was of influence in the shaping of ballet music generally.

d) ***Airs de Ballet***

i) ***Premier Air de Ballet: Séduction par l'ivresse*** (*Allegro*, G major, 4/4). The individual *ballabile* make up the process of seduction. The first is by drunkenness ("The nuns present a chalice to Robert while surrounding him and drinking greedily themselves"). The format is the simplest: a melodic sequence for two horns in sixths, fourth and thirds is punctuated at increasingly quick intervals by upward semiquaver runs of a fifth, these rapidly becoming downward runs so typical of the nuns' music, just as their Abbess turns her personal attention to Robert—which sees the return of the halting pauses and slightly creepy dotted rhythms that suggest the supernatural reality behind the mask of beauty. As Robert accepts the chalice and they lead him towards the magic branch, the resumption of the main theme is almost overwhelmed by the characteristic downward runs played by all the woodwind.

ii) ***Deuxième Air de Ballet: Séduction du jeu*** (*Allegro moderato*, E-flat major—c minor—E-flat major, 3/4): the Nuns now try to excite him with gold and gambling: "Héléna and the Nuns seek to excite Robert's passions anew." The form of the dance is now a brisk waltz, a pointed staccato quaver theme on the violins and violas, oboes and clarinets, with bassoons and horns providing the typical waltz rhythm. The busy main theme, which relates back to the busy string figurations of the Bacchanale, smooths into a lovely legato variant on the flute, clarinets and bassoons, over rocking arpeggios, before the return of the sinister dotted motif, and the beginning of the gambling, a semiquaver figure in trilled thirds for violins and clarinets (repeated some eight times) representing the casting of the dice, something that relates back to the string figures in the Bacchanale, and even further to the orchestral figures in the act 1 finale where Robert is similarly the subject of Bertram's temptation through gambling.

iii) ***Troisième Air de Ballet: Séduction de l'amour*** (*Andante cantabile*, A major, 4/4): the Nuns, led by Héléna, surround Robert and try to inflame his senses. The third movement is really a *Pas de seul d'Héléna*, who dances to a sumptuously languorous and melancholic melody for the solo violoncello, that later becomes a duet with the flute—a long voluptuous and beguiling interplay of instruments. She allows the blandished Robert to kiss her, but leads him to the branch which he now breaks from the statue of the saint.

iv) ***Choeur dansé*** (*Allegro*, d minor,4/4): "The moment Robert breaks the branch, thunder sounds, the Nuns turn into ghosts, demons emerge from the earth, and dance in glee around Robert in a disordered circle. He forces a path through the spectres by waving the branch." Low tremolos on A see the fourfold repetition of the Four Strokes of Hell and the return of the opening music of the Bacchanale, the descending theme of the nuns and the grotesque creeping dotted motif now rendered *fortissimo* by the whole orchestra as the demons sing out in long notes (minims and semibreves). As the infernal powers celebrate their temptation, the recurrent downward trend is reversed as the runs now surge upward in their cries of triumph.

Through the whole scene—from Bertram's Evocation, through the flickering will-o'-the-wisps, the rising of the nuns from their graves, their orgiastic Bacchanale in the moonlight, the entry of Robert, the sequence of seductive dances, to the final chorus of demons who reclaim the nuns for the underworld—the action moves almost seamlessly from one event to the next. Unresolved cadences provide the necessary structural-tonal transitions, as well as certain recurrent dramatic and orchestral motifs (the mechanical beauty and underlying grotesquerie of the nuns in the Bacchanale), unifying the dances and increasing the internal logic of the drama, and serve as unifying and framing devices. There is a powerful melodic and instrumental dynamic at work as well. On the one hand there is the cold, cadaverous, surreal music of the *faux* resurrection for solo bassoons, music that reveals the true demonic character of the nuns. On the other hand, there is the languorous and melancholic music for the *Séduction de l'amour*, when the Abbess Héléna seeks to win Robert by the promise of erotic rapture. Once the branch is plucked, all mystery and beauty vanish, however. The demons emerge from the earth celebrating the triumph of darkness, to an exultant recasting of the Nuns' Bacchanale.

7. *Les Huguenots* (1836)

1) **Overture** (*Poco andante*, E-flat major, 4/4; *Allegro con spirito, alla breve*)
Like *Robert le Diable*, *Les Huguenots* has a short overture, more a brief prelude based on a single theme that captures the essence of the story. Meyerbeer responded to the librettist Eugène Scribe's dramatic vision of this tale of religious conflict in his use of Martin Luther's Reformation hymn ("Ein'feste Burg is unser Gott") (a sure stronghold is our God) as the theme of spiritual idealism. While the hymn was used by other composers in sacred works (Bach) and symphonies (Mendelssohn), it usually remains a prosaic and formal reminiscence. Meyerbeer turns it into a fully developed *Leitmotif* used throughout the opera, and succeeds in transforming it into something deeply poetical and even mystical. In the overture it is presented in many different guises, to represent the spirit of religion in all its forms: solemn, loving, tender, inflamed, militant, deformed, rendered grotesque in militancy. It is announced immediately with organ-like richness and sonority, a fine example of Meyerbeer's orchestral style and handling of motif. The theme of the hymn is subjected to a series of brief, melodic, rhythmic and orchestral variations that depict the varying characteristics of the Huguenots: from dignified religious solemnity, through tender moods of love, devotion and sadness, to furious, almost deforming bellicosity. It illustrates several orchestral traits: rich brass and woodwind writings in which the low pitches of clarinet and bassoon and the warm tones of the cor anglais are prominent; high pitched divided violin figurations, the division of each string part into two sections, the one playing pizzicato, the other arco. The final part of the overture subjects the theme to acceleration of time and tempo, with the orchestra playing a brassy *tutti*. The hero Raoul de Nangis makes his appearance in the overture by *Klangmotif*: (sound motif) in the opera he is associated with the high strings, and in the overture the first theme is immediately followed by a filigree figure for the violins (*con delicatezza*) that emerges out of the chorale, and continues to counterpoint the gentle variants of the hymn that follow, an aural image of Raoul's idealistic nature in both religion and love.

Each act of *Les Huguenots* is introduced by a short but thematically pointed prelude that captures the essential elements of the action.

2) **Entr'acte to act 2** (*Andante cantabile,* G major,12/8). This provides a tone picture of the idyllic beauty and peace of the Chateau and gardens of Chenonceaux where Queen Marguerite de Valois hopes to initiate plans for peace in the religious conflicts tearing France apart. The prelude is dominated by a rising bass semiquaver figure for the violas and cellos, which is answered and then counterpointed by a motif for the woodwind (flutes and clarinets in parallel thirds with oboes). The sinuous string figure captures the rippling of water (the palace is built over the Loire River), the legato stasis of the second subject a sense of summer serenity and warmth. The pastoral mood is further underlined by the solo flute which takes over the upward-turning string figure and extends it into a long elaborate cadenza that is like the twitter of birdsong, a cypher for the pastoral. Both the woodwind melody and then the string motif are brought into the postlude in variation, with the rising string figure now reversed into a gentle descending cascade. The stylized emblems turn Chenonceaux into a Virgilian *locus amoenus* (place of safety and delight) surrounded by danger, a situation underlined by the decorative writing of Marguerite's big scene and aria with prominent harp obligato ("Ô beau pays de la Touraine") which consolidates the delicate otherworldliness, the atmosphere established by the instrumental prelude.

3) **Entr'acte to act 3** (*Allegro vivace,* D major, *alla breve*). The introduction to act 3 is very different, loud and boisterous. It sets the scene for the depiction of the busy streets of the Pré aux clercs in late Medieval Paris, where the busy crowds in holiday mood on a Sunday afternoon will soon be caught up in the partisan hatred and confrontation of the Wars of Religion. Four appoggiated minims in octaves of A for the whole orchestra capture attention, and are followed by a bright high quaver figure for woodwind and strings (*leggiermente*) that whips up a sense of excitement, this mood intensified after a repeat of the opening sequence by rushing strings rising in semiquaver phrases over the bassi and trombones (that move into powerful chromatic octaves), to A in alt, with the whole then dissolving into a rising quaver figure that leads into the opening chorus (C'est le jour du dimanche").

4) **Entr'acte to act 4** (*Allegro appassionato,* F-sharp minor, 4/4). This brief prelude of only 17 bars nevertheless captures the mood of growing anguish and crisis that will break in act 4. Reiterated quaver notes on f for the violas establish an ostinato for 8 bars (then changing to an octave higher) that is broken into by small barely rising figures (quaver-semiquaver-crotchet) characterized by an augmented fourth that on the third repetition rises by way of crotchet chords to another augmented triad. The pattern is repeated, with the triple note figure taking over the line in rapid and rising iteration, with growing chromatic pointing, until it resolves itself in a series of parallel dotted octaves on the dominant, to make way for Valentine's recitative, where it forms the commentary to her agitated concerns. Exactly the same idea and practice can be seen in the prelude and opening scene of Act 2 of Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*.

5) **Entr'acte to act 5 and Ball** (*Allegro,* F minor, 6/8) gloomily takes up the stretta and bell motifs of the *Grand Duo* in act 4, and depicts Raoul's fraught passage from the heights of romantic love through the bloody streets where the massacre of St Bartholomew's Eve has begun. Another ostinato is set in motion (low staccato quaver octaves on C with strong pause of two *fermate*), with the signal bell of the massacre ringing at the beginning of every fourth bar. Over this shuddering *moto perpetuo* the theme of the stretta of the act 4 duet is mournfully unfolded, the love union it represented reflected in the unbroken thirds of the melody. With the end of the

ostinato the thirds, reflected in the bass line, eventually take on a life of their own, and become part of a rising pattern of reiterative excitement leading straight into the ball depicted at the beginning of the new act. At the rising of the curtain, the Huguenot nobility are dancing a *minuetto maestoso* (F major, 3/4) of splendid dignity (with its skip on the first beat, rich chordal writing and emotional rise on the second bar, *ff pesante*, and for full orchestra). All is in honour of the marriage of Marguerite de Valois and Henry of Navarre. The triviality of the dance after the music of the massacre is synonymous with the carefree unsuspecting mood of the Huguenots, a foil to the seriousness of the situation. The progress of this dance is twice arrested by the forceful fourfold ringing of the alarm-bell with the whole orchestra, to which all present listen with surprise, but unconscious of its import. The repetition of the bell, striking the ear with the dominant sound, naturally leads one to expect an inquiry, but again it is unheeded, and the gaieties resume with the utmost unconcern. The minuet is resumed, finally leading to a gavotte (*Allegro con spirito*, B-flat major, 2/4), with skip on the second beat, the brisk theme on oboes and clarinets repeated on the trumpets, with a middle section where the melody moves into the bass and the treble is given to reiterated high graced octaves on D. The pattern is reversed before the repeat of the opening section *leggermente*. A stretta (*Più mosso*) sees the melody played in thirds and octaves over powerful octaves in the bass. A sense of strain and tension begins to emerge in the iterative nature of the writing, the treble line moving into upward chromatic runs over great repetitive chords in the bass. All suddenly breaks off with the bell ringing on D over deep timpani rolls and the crash of the tamtam. Meyerbeer has conjured up the dignified character of the age in these courtly dances, while subtly using the dance music to depict the growing crisis outside.

6) ***Danse bohemienne*** **(Gypsy Dance) (act 3)** (*Allegretto moderato*, C major, 4/4; *Allegro con moto*, A major—C major—A major; Coda: *Allegro*, A major, 2/4—*Allegro moderato*, C major 6/8—*Allegro*, A major, 2/4)

The act 5 ballet had shown the creators using a convention of danced divertissement for dramatic ends (as in act 3 of *Robert le Diable*). But ballet in its more conventional application also is used in *Les Huguenots*, when the Gypsies dance in act 3. However, even here, ballet becomes more than just another divertissement. In *grand opéra* the chorus had remained bound up with a dramaturgy determined by private conflict. In *Les Huguenots*, however, the chorus appear for the first time as representatives of social forces and parties, whereby the religio-political antagonisms of the historical process are viewed socially, almost as from beneath. The action realizes this to perfection in the Pré-aux-Clercs scene in act 3 where the very generic conventions which demanded an act 3 ballet are harnessed to the new dramaturgy: thus when the pagan Gypsy troupe suddenly burst onto the scene, the danced interlude postpones the partisan conflict temporarily by functioning as a distraction for the hostile parties that is remote from all religious controversies.

This attractive ballet from the middle of the Pré-aux-clercs scene in act 3 presents a suite of dances for a group of travelling Gypsies who distract the angry crowds from their partisan disputes. It is a cheerful melodic piece in an introduction and four parts and a coda. After the brisk introduction, the main rondo theme (five crotchet notes on a^{ii} followed by a double quaver triplet) resembles the tapping and shaking of a tambourine. This is the principal recurring theme varied in the second subject, and then followed by the third melody, a measured motif in staccato crotchets with a quaver skip on the second beat, in bass octaves, which serves as a bonding device that rounds off each section. Each section presents suitably varied ideas, with the most

startling change of mood reserved for the ternary coda: a strongly rhythmical figure for the trombones and horns (semiquaver-demisemiquaver double crotchet with a tiny pause between beats) provides the bass for a bold trumpet melody, *ben marcato*. The middle section contrasts in its light staccato semiquaver figurations for woodwind and strings, followed by the violins alone, before the resumption of the trumpet theme and its exciting peroration.

8. *Le Prophète* (1849)

1) ***Marche du sacre*** (Coronation March) (*Tempo di marcia molto maestoso*, E-flat major, 4/4)

This is the most famous music Meyerbeer ever wrote and the piece that survived all the decades of neglect and the Nazi ban of 1933. It also shows off Meyerbeer's orchestral finesse to the full, and his most famous use of the double orchestra modelled on the Baroque practice of double choirs or the concerto grosso. In *Le Prophète* the full orchestra (*ripieno*) is made up of piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass-clarinet, 4 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trombones, ophicleide (the bass brass instrument before the invention of the tuba), 4 trumpets (both natural and piston), timpani (3 in the act 3 finale), 2 harps, bass drum, cymbals, side drum, triangle, antique cymbals (played by the choirboys in the cathedral scene), organ, and enough strings to balance the winds. The stage band (*concertino*) in the *Marche du Sacre* consists of 18 saxhorns of varying sizes (not to be confused with saxophones, also invented by Adolph Sax), 2 *cornets à cylindres,* 2 *trompettes à cylindres* and 2 side drums (*tambours militaires*).

The resplendent march marks the highpoint of the career of John of Leyden (Jean de Leyde), the innkeeper, who has become the figurehead of the Anabaptist insurrection which took over the city of Münster in 1534 where he was crowned king of the New Zion in the Cathedral. As divine prophet he must deny all earthly ties and even disown his mother who recognizes him. Meyerbeer was working on the opera in early 1848 and witnessed the revolution in Paris at first hand. The opera presents something of his own unique reflections on the political upheavals of the time. The sweeping first theme with its great octave chords immediately became famous, particularly because of the attractive skipping triplet on the first beat. The drama of the stage band and its interaction with the main orchestra, the fanfares from the stage, the affecting nature of the trio—brought out by the *cantabile* melody which is repeated in octaves—exert an emotional effect which is intensified by the variation of the melody in the second trio, with its own unique harmonies and orchestration. The return of the opening theme in the dominant at the centre, and the intensive exchange of fanfares between the two orchestras at the final reprise, with their unison performance of the breathless coda that carries the modified theme in alt, convey an irresistible élan and sense of triumph.

The procession into the Cathedral is marked at the various stages of the march by the entry in order of: an officer and 6 soldiers, 2 heralds, an officer and 6 soldiers, 6 choirboys, 8 young girls, 6 choirboys, an officer and 6 soldiers, 6 civic officials, the Bürgermeister, 3 heralds, 2 peasant pages, 2 electors with their pages, another 2 electors with pages, 6 knights, 4 pages, 6 flower girls, the chief herald, the 3 Anabaptists, and the Prophet himself.

2) **Orchestral Suite: Jean de Leyde**
a) **Coronation March (*Krönungsmarsch*) (act 4)** (*Maestoso*, E-flat, 4/4)
b) **Peasant Waltz (*Bauerntanz*) (entr'acte to act 2)** (*Allegro*, E-flat, 3/4)
The small suite arranged by Max Schulze for the Collection Litloff provides a reflection on the underlying themes of the opera, as vested in the troubled hero. It intersperses his ambiguous earthly triumph with his true pastoral calling. A simplified version of the Coronation March leads into the rough Peasant Waltz (with its heavy rhythms and diatonic tonality) that opens act 2, set in Jean's inn in Leyden—the venue of his temptation by the Three Anabaptist leaders. Meyerbeer successfully conveys the Germanic atmosphere and nature of the social setting by the style of the music.
c) **Chorus of Children (*Kinderchor*) (act 4)** (*Andantino*, D major, 2/4)
This is followed by the Chorus of Children who greet the newly crowned King of Zion at his moment of glory. Their mysterious other-worldly chant is accompanied by various treble figures and arpeggios on the organ, with regular chimes from their finger bells, the orchestra then joining in later. All this precedes Jean's utterance of the fatal words of hubris: "Je suis l'Élu, je suis le Fils de Dieu".
d) **Pastorale (act 2)** (*Andantino pastorale*, B-flat major, 9/8)
Then comes the arrangement of Jean's beautiful Pastorale in act 2 ("Pour Berthe"), when he tells his Anabaptist tempters that his true destiny lies not in grand political ambition, but rather in humble union with his beloved fiancée.

3) ***Les Patineurs*** **(Ballet of the Skaters**)
In act 3 of *Le Prophète* peasants from the countryside around Münster arrive over an icy lake on snowshoes to supply the rebellious peasant army of the Anabaptist movement with food during the siege of the city. The dances Meyerbeer wrote for this picturesque scene provide another example of his brilliant orchestral technique, and moreover, demonstrate sparkling qualities of wit and melodiousness. He wrote contemporary dances that would have been familiar to audiences of his time (waltz, redowa, quadrille, galop) that are conceived and developed along very different formal lines to the simple dance in act 2. The ballet with its winter setting and beautiful sets in the style of the many winter genre scenes by the Breughels caused a sensation, not least because of the use of roller-skates to simulate skating movements in some of the dances. The usual lavish decorations were covered during the ballet: younger children emerged first at the back of the stage, then older children in the middle, then finally adults at the front. With all groups wearing the same costume, an illusion of perspective was successfully created.
a) ***Premier air de ballet: Valse*** (*Allegro con spirito*, D major, 3/8).
This dance with its strongly dotted semiquaver and demisemiquaver figures leaping up and down the stave and heavy waltz rhythm provides an exuberant opening, full of energy and glitter. The middle episode, with its powerful trombone motif in bass octaves and contrasting *leggiero* treble, gives the whole a rough rustic nature, a further statement on the act 2 peasant dance.
b) ***Deuxième air de ballet: Pas de la Rédowa*** (*Andantino quasi allegretto*, B-flat major, 3/8)
The second dance, a Bohemian folk type, has a completely different style. The rhythm is the same but much crisper and perkier, the melody fleet and stylish, with several other movements following in rapid succession and with changes of key providing variations on this mercurial mood : E-flat major (*détaché et marqué*)—B-flat—G major (*très doux et délicatement*)—B-flat. The coda (*Allegro vivace*, B-flat, 3/8—G

major—E major—B-flat) provides a delightful change of rhythm, with lovely semiquaver runs alternating with staccato quaver figures, and a sudden change to 2/4 before the brilliant finale with its cascades of semiquaver figures.

c) ***Troisième air de ballet: Quadrille des patineurs*** (*Allegro moderato*, G major, 6/8)

This is a return to the heavier style of the waltz, the summonsing opening D giving way to quaver thirds in the bass that begin a fervent ostinato over which a sextuplet demisemiquaver turn rises a fifth to a consolidation on three reiterated d^{iii}'s, in a highly original figure that captures the sliding motion of the skaters. The innate virtuosity of the piece is emphasized when the order of treble and bass are reversed in the second subject, and the lower strings take over the turning demisemiquaver figure, now rushing downwards with ostinato in high bright chords. Lighter sparkling subjects intervene between the return of the first subject in rondo fashion: the first over a droning bass is characterized by skips on the second beat and trills and staccato downward runs (all *leggieramente*); the second (E major, *doux et légèrement*) has a *louré* pedal point on low E (a technique of bowing in which several notes are taken in one stroke of the bow but are slightly detached from one another, like a bagpipe drone), with cascading slurred semi- and demisemiquaver figures moving down and up the scale in the treble. The powerful rondo theme is resumed in its appropriate key of G before launching into the Coda. Tight semiquaver triplet arpeggios form a leisurely melody in contracting chords and a skip on the fifth beat, resolving in a striking repeated high figure descending by thirds. On its repeat, the *doux et légère* melody is relaunched *ff con vigore*, with the sliding skater-motif turned into a brilliant peroration dissolving into a shimmering sequence of semiquaver triplets that brings the whole to a breathless conclusion.

d) ***Quatrième air de ballet: Galop*** (*Allegro moderato*, E major—A major—E major—C major—E major, 2/4)

This dance completes the pattern of alternation by returning to the delicate light style of the redowa. It is a rondo dominated by a reiterated fivefold melody—a quicksilver pattern of falling and turning semiquaver triplets over a spiky staccato quaver rhythm (bass note and octave chord), all *doux et légèrement.* This alternates with a series of four varied secondary subjects—serene legato melodies, filigree figurations with affecting harmonies (like sequences in thirds). The coda speeds up the tempo and subjects the rondo theme to melodic variation, with recurrent downward octave runs on the trombones, high bright treble *ostinati*, creating a brilliant and virtuosic orchestral montage, like flashing crystals and swirling snowflakes.

9. *L'Étoile du Nord* (1854)

1) **Overture** (*Tempo di marcia maestoso*, E-flat major, 4/4—B-flat major, *dolce e staccato*—E major—C major, *dolce e cantabile con espressione*—E-flat major, *Tempo di marcia—Plus vite*)

The same ternary overture was used for the operas *Ein Feldlager in Schlesien* and *L'Étoile du Nord*. The double worlds presented in both works, and the bifurcated stylistic realization of both, is reflected in the overture, as it captures the brassy and pompous military spirit of political determinism (represented by Frederick the Great and Peter the Great), and contrasts this with the mystical pastoral idyll of prophecy—the spiritual destiny eventually aspired to at the end of both operas (by the heroines Vielka and Catherine). The military sphere dominates these operas, and is announced emphatically in the overture with its portentous dotted rhythms and obsessive upward rushing chromatic demisemiquaver octuplet figures. It is the exotic sphere of the alien

Vielka which stimulates the composer most, and causes him to produce the most original and tinted part of this score. The overture abruptly leaves the military mode, enharmonically moving into a spritely appoggiated theme for violins, flute and piccolos, buoyed up on spiky rhythms (B-flat major, *dolce e staccato*). This is a romantic allusion to the Gypsy element in the story. But it is the mystical dimension that is given full expression in Vielka's dream vision at the end of the opera. It is captured perfectly in Meyerbeer's most beautiful melody, the long, open, pure C major *cantabile*, the central theme of the overture, where oboes, horns and cellos play over upward rippling harp arpeggios, a consoling theme that looks forward in reassuring beauty. It plays an even more prominent role in *L'Étoile du Nord*. The principal theme is the Motive of the Star, first heard as the middle section of the overture, which is associated with the maternal prophecy of Catherine's destiny. This long-breathed *cantabile* appears again as the theme of her prayer in the act 1 finale, and so is identified decisively with the forces of benign and manifest providence. The military themes are recapitulated before the onset of the coda. Here a new motif appears in the contest of alternating orchestra and stage band (behind the closed curtain), in another instance of Meyerbeer's reinvention of the Venetian Baroque brass choirs. The stage orchestra is made up of 10 instruments: 3 *cornets à pistons*, 2 small saxhorns, 2 *trompettes à pistons*, baritone, bass and contrabass saxhorns. The theme is taken from the finale of the opera, and is used in the final chorus of celebration to mark Catherine's coronation as Empress of Russia, the Star of the North.

In act 3 a mortified Peter is now true ruler, and in a position to see the scene more clearly. He finds Catherine, her sovereign reason clouded by suffering, and through the agency of a staged masque (the recreated Karelian village) and the loving cooperation of their friends, *he* is able to rescue *her* now, by bringing about the social psychotherapy which enables Catherine to find her true self again. Their union is a double crowning (of marriage and coronation) that represents the harmonious integration of the two opposing worlds and a celebration of true values.

2) ***Entr'acte et Introduction to act 2*** *(Waltz)* (*Allegro moderato pesante*, E-flat major, 3/8)

After the appoggiated opening summons, repeated four times, this virtuoso orchestral display piece gets underway, using the opening call note of E dropped by an octave to introduce the main subject, a downward demisemiquaver slide into a mobile bass theme of falling staccato quavers and semiquaver triplets and skips. Played on the bassoons and lower strings, it is very heavy and masterful, especially with the emphatic octave quavers on D in the treble hammering out the second and third beats of the rhythm. This is a rumbustious waltz for soldiers and peasants, that captures something of the crude vigour of the military camp. The sense of power and almost a straining of contours is re-emphasized in the restatement of the theme in double octaves, but four apart (in alt and in the lower bass), for the lower strings and piccolos. After a great gathering of energy in a rising sequence of triads over four bars, the dance commences with the third reprise of the main subject, varied by a more delicate filigree second subject in descending semi- and demisemiquavers (*doux et légèrement*) over a pedal on low C, twice repeated before the rising sequence of triads and the restatement of the main theme ends in a silent bar. The coda now begins (*Un peu plus vite*, 2/4), a variant of the second theme, again contrasting with the main subject in its *leggiero e staccato* dotted and very mobile motif which gives way to fluid *con delicatezza* strings figurations before the resumption of the dotted motif and

the brisk emphatic final bars.

3) ***Chanson de la Cavalerie (Hussar's Song)*** (*Allegro con spirito*, E-flat major, 3/8)
The mobile dancing mode is continued in the song for the Hussar, all parallel staccato thirds and octaves for the brass but rendered softly and lightly (*à demi voix et légèrement*), and reaching a climax in its "hopping" refrain. The whole comes across like a dance, paradoxically presenting a military mood with elegance and style, like a cavalry dressage.

4) ***Entr'acte to act 3*** (*Allegro scherzoso*, G minor—G major, 4/4)
Act 3 is characterized by the restored pastoral, announced immediately in the charming, gracious prelude, and Péter's nostalgic evocation of childhood and lost happiness ("O jours hereux") (O happy days). The prelude spins out a restrained rising motif, a crotchet on d^{ii} turning in semiquavers, rising an octave to descend in a dotted sequence down to f^{ii} (all *dolce e leggiermente*), full of motion on striding octave chords in the bass, a certain disquiet reflected in the minor tonality. The second subject in the dominant softens the rhythm into rustling tremolos and arpeggios, with a gentle melody full of expression, with the dotted restlessness smoothed into a legato of phrased leisurely quavers and emollient harmonies. After a double repeat of the opening subject, the second melody is repeated in the tonic major of G, undergoes a process of low variation that sees the return of opening subject in inversion, the striding quavers in the treble, the dotted falling melodies in the low bass. All resolves into rising minim chords that sustain the major key optimism while capturing a sense of expectation.

Les Patineurs (1937)

Much of the orchestral music in *Le Prophète* and *L'Étoile du Nord* has enjoyed a disguised fame over the past 70 years because of its arrangement by the English composer, conductor and critic, Constant Lambert (1905-51) into a suite that has become one of the most popular ballets of the 20th century, *Les Patineurs*. The ballet was first produced at Sadler's Wells Theatre London on 16 February 1937, with choreography by Frederick Ashton, and costumes and scenery designed by William Chappell. It has no connected story: the dances form a series of incidents such as one might observe on a winter's afternoon at a gathering of skaters. The dancers continually give the impression that they are wearing skates.

Four of the items from *Les Patineurs* are from *L'Étoile du Nord* and four are from *Le Prophète*. The former is set in Finland and Russia at the time of the struggle between Peter the Great and Charles XII of Sweden. Nos. 1 and 2 are from the beginning of act 2, dances performed in the Russian camp; No. 3 is heard during the overture (*dolce e cantabile con espressione*) and is used at the end of act 1 as the prayer of Catherine Skavronski (destined to be the Tsar's bride) when she leaves home to join the Russian army in her brother's place. No. 6 is the prelude to act 3, set in the Tsar's palace in St Petersburg. Nos. 4, 5, 7 and 8 form the Skaters' Ballet in act 3 of *Le Prophète*, which shows the winter camp of the Anabaptists besieging Münster by the side of a frozen lake.