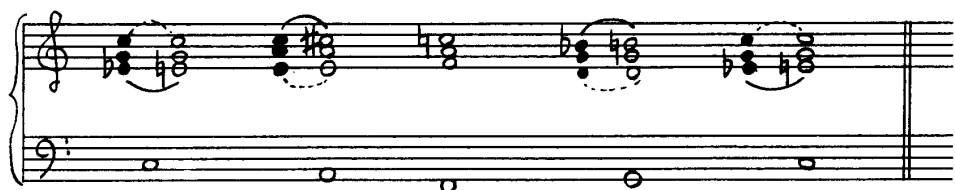
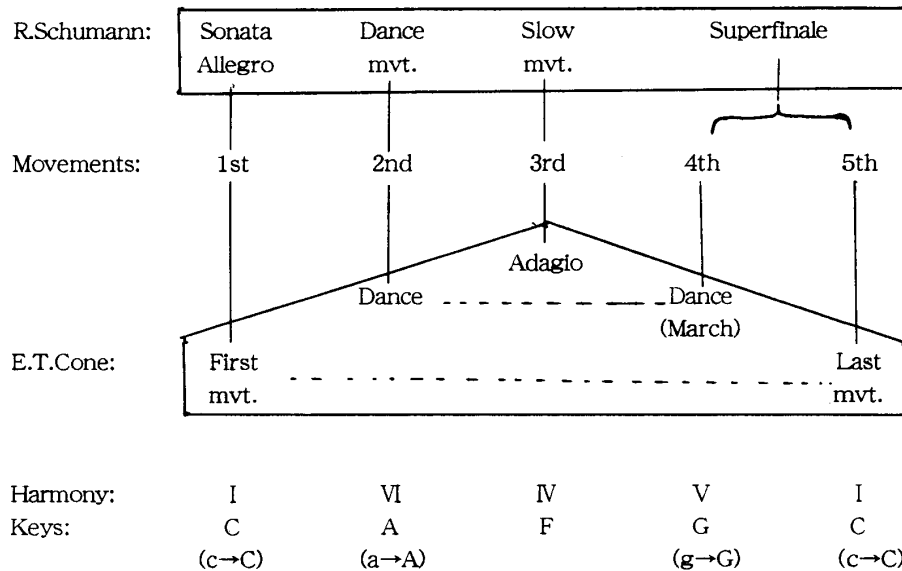


Formal Aspects of the Fifth Movement of *Symphonie fantastique* by Hector Berlioz

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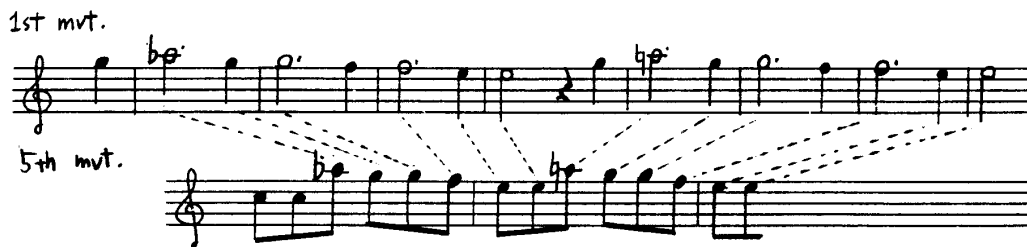
There are two outstanding papers on the analysis of *Symphonie fantastique* by Hector Berlioz; one is written by Robert Schumann, and the other by Edward Cone¹⁾. Schumann tried to correlate the movements of the *Symphonie fantastique* with those of the classical symphony. He pointed out the resemblance of the first three movements²⁾ to the sonata allegro, dance movement, and slow movement, respectively, and he combined the last two movements into one superfinale. In fact, Berlioz himself seems to have had the same idea at first, but finally, he decided to give independent roles to the last two movements. Cone took this decision of Berlioz into consideration, and he put the long Adagio at the center, flanked by two dance movements, between the first and the last movements:

Ex.1 General Plan of «Symphonie fantastique»



As can be seen above, although there is a transition from minor to major within most of the movements, the key relationship between the movements forms a big cadence; I-VI-IV-V-I in C major. Whereas the overall key plan is very clear, the rapid shift from minor to major within each section is characteristic throughout the whole work. For example, this major-minor effect is already seen in the first “idée fixe”. The phrase (G A-flat G F E) (mm.86-90) is immediately followed by the next phrase (G A-natural G F E) (mm.90-94). Giving the same effect, these motives are varied at the end of the final movement(mm.497-499);

Ex.2



The *Symphonie fantastique* is unified into a single unit by the “idée fixe” as well as by the general key relationships. Therefore, the final movement cannot be examined without relating it to the preceding movements. However, the final movement has its own particular fascination, which makes the listener feel this movement being so continuous and developmental. “Continuity and ambiguity” in formal as well as tonal structure, is the most important key word for understanding the essence of the nineteenth century romantic music. To clarify the secret of developmental continuity which characterizes the final movement, some basic questions are raised. How is the movement divided into big sections? What are the themes, and how do they work? What combines the units? And finally, why and how is this movement so developmental?

SECTIONAL DIVISION

The question of how the movement is divided into sections is the first big problem in this movement. My division of the final movement is into two big sections; mm.1-240 and mm.241-524:

Ex. 3

	level	Theme	mm.	Harmony	Time	motive	cadence
1st Section	I - 1	Introduction	1 - 20	A [#] A ^b A ^b G	C		
	I - 2	I. F. (var.) transition	21 - 64	C → E ^b	6/8	Idée fixe (C C G)	$\left(\begin{array}{c} C; V \\ I \end{array} \right)$ overlapping
			65 - 126	C (C A ^b G) ↓ G			
I - 3	Dies irae	127 - 240	C			Dies irae	
2nd Section	II - 1	Fugal Sect. dissolution	241 - 413	C	↓	Idée fixe	
	II - 2	F + D. I	414 - 495	C		Idée fixe + Dies irae	
	II - 3	Closing	496 - 524	C		Idée fixe	C; V ₂ I

Two reasons can be considered for this division. First, at m.241, Berlioz sets a big clear cadence for the first time and the fugal theme in C major, the key which Berlioz chose for the final movement, begins at this moment. Secondly, even though several new materials appear in mm.1-241, this section as a whole is harmonically unstable. In other words, it does not represent stable tonic section, instead, it functions as a huge dominant on G. From these points of view, it seems that the big changing point clearly begins at m.241.

Each large unit contains three subsections, as seen in Ex. 3. Brief analyzation of each level helps to find out the function of the themes as well as the devices used to combine those units.

First Large Unit

Level I-1: mm.1-20

The first level of mm.1-20 (Level I-1) is an introduction, which begins with a diminished 7th chord. This unit, consisting of two phrases, sequentially related, prepares for the entrance of the tonic at m.19. The bass line shows descending chromatic scale (A-sharp, A-natural, A-flat, G). At m.5, the first diminished 7th chord is temporarily resolved on G as follows:

Ex. 4

The musical notation for Example 4 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and shows chords at measures 1, 5, 6, 11, 12, 17, and 19. The lower staff is in bass clef and shows a descending chromatic scale: A-sharp (m.1), A-natural (m.5), A-flat (m.17), and G (m.19). Vertical dashed lines connect the bass notes to the chords above them. The chords are: m.1 (diminished 7th), m.5 (G major triad), m.6 (diminished 7th), m.11 (C major triad), m.12 (diminished 7th), m.17 (diminished 7th), and m.19 (G major triad).

Here, harmonic resolution is not complete yet. For the chord at m.5 is not I, but I_4^6 . And also A-flat in the Double Basses makes the chord heard unstable. The first diminished 7th chord should be resolved on I in B minor in a traditional sense. However, Berlioz wanted to keep the harmonic movement toward I in C major. He did not resolve completely the first chord in m.5, but continued chromatically to m.6. At m.11, the first phrase seems to be resolved on C, and the listener expects a start of the C major unit, but again, Berlioz did not want to resolve. He combines the C major chord with the elements of the next diminished 7th chord, to avoid a simple-cut use of a simple tonic key. At m.19, this introductory section is once again resolved on I_4^6 , still not on I, of the C major chord.

Ex. 5



As shown in Ex. 5, even though there is a temporary solution at m.5, overall harmonic movement is characterized by its chromatic descent, toward I_4^6 of C major at m.19.

Level I-2: mm.21-126

After the repetition on the note C in the Horn, the variation of the *idée fixe* begins with a solo Clarinet in C. This is the beginning of the second level (Level I-2). But when the theme on I in C major moves to V, an outburst on E-flat major suddenly interrupts. This unit, from m.21 to m.39, turns out to be a preparation for the next complete statement of the 6/8 theme by a Clarinet in E-flat from m.40. This time, the theme is not only stated completely, but is also harmonized. The proportion of the phrasing of this statement is just the same as the first *idée fixe* in the first movement:

Ex. 6

The image shows a musical score for 'Idée fixe' in G major, 6/8 time. The score is divided into four systems, each with a treble clef. Above the first system, the text 'Idée fixe' is written. Brackets above the notes indicate measure groupings: 8 measures in the first system, 7 in the second, 4 in the third, and 8 in the fourth. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Some notes are marked with accidentals (sharps and flats) and some are grouped with slurs or triplets.

The phrase structure of the original *idée fixe* are consisted of 8-7-4-4-4-5-8, here the number of measures becomes just half; 4-3.5-2-2-2-2.5-4-(4).

The transitional section begins from m.65 and here the key changes; VI in E-flat major becomes I in C major, and then moves to VI and V at m.76. From this point, a huge dominant section on G begins. The interesting textural characteristics here are the continuity and the usage of the motive, which later will become the fugal theme. The descending figure of mm.86-101 is derived from mm.78-82, with augmentation in dotted half notes, and the descending chromatic figure of m.120 is derived from the same motive, rhythmically diminished into eighth notes. Between these three descending figures, he inserts the fragments of the fugal theme and also inserts the C-C-G ostinato motive in the Glocken. This ostinato motive is tonally related to the opening interval of a 4th in the *idée fixe*:

Ex. 7

Idée fixe

C-C-G Ostinato

Fugal theme

This C-C-G motive represents a simple harmonic progression of I-V in C minor-or-major. Because of this, although each phrase is resolved on C, soon after, this ostinato always ends on G, so our impression is that the music is continuous and requires more stable resolution. Such effective use of the interval of a 5th (or 4th, when it is inverted) turns out to be a favourite device for the nineteenth century romantic composers. The reason for this is simple. Because the interval of a 5th lacks the mediant, which decides its tonality by putting E-natural or E-flat in the key of C, for example, one can not tell the key until the mediant is heard. Like Beethoven has already shown in his ninth Symphony, this device of “unstable 5th” certainly helps create tonal ambiguity.

Level I-3: mm.127-240

The third level is characterized by the famous borrowing of the “*Dies irae*.” “*Dies irae*” theme begins from m.127, overlapping with the note G of the C-C-G ostinato motive.

Ex. 8

The diagram illustrates the structure of a musical unit. It features three phrases and two sections:

- 2nd phrase:** A musical staff with notes and rests. Below it are the counts: (14) (7) (3) + (1).
- 1st phrase:** A musical staff with notes and rests. Below it are the counts: (21) (11) (5) + (1).
- 3rd phrase = 1st phrase:** A musical staff with notes and rests. Below it are the counts: (20) (10) (5) + (1).
- Introductory Section:** A box containing the text: "Fug. Fug. descending arpeggio & chromatic".
- Closing Section:** A box containing the text: "Fug. → Real Fugal Section".

Measure numbers are listed below the sections:

mm. : 102 127 163 187 221 241 -

Ostinato : A series of 8-measure units, each represented by a bracket with an upward arrow and the number 8. The units are connected by dashed vertical lines.

Rests : A series of rests of varying lengths: 3, 5, 4, 3, 5, 8, 4, 2. These are connected by dashed vertical lines to the corresponding units in the Ostinato row.

As Ex. 8 shows, this unit consists of two phrases of the *Dies irae*. Each phrase has three patterns of dotted half-notes (♩), dotted quarter-notes (♩), quarter-notes & eighth-notes ($\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$), and one-measure ascending scale which ends the phrase (↗). As the first phrase is repeated after the second phrase, this unit can be considered as a well-balanced, in other words, a symmetrical unit supported by the ostinato motive which ends on G.

Between the 8-measure ostinato units, the rests are inserted symmetrically as well. By making the intervals shorter, Berlioz accelerates the ostinato movement, which effectively leads into the next section. This is also one of his devices for keeping the music on-going in a smooth and a dramatic way.

Another effective device for creating no gap between sections is his use of fragmentation of the themes. Before the next big fugal section begins at m.241, he utilizes the fragments of the fugal theme not only in the introductory section (mm.102-126), but also in the closing section (mm.221-240) (see also Ex. 8).

Furthermore, he changes the orchestration for the fragments each time they appear. First, he uses the Viola soli (mm.106-109), next the Violas with an Oboe solo (mm.115-117), and finally, the Strings (mm.222-232) which gradually joined by the winds (Brass from m.224, Timpani from m.232, Woodwinds from m.236), culminating in an outburst of the whole orchestra at mm.239-240.

At the end of the closing section, Berlioz develops the fragments and produces a big dominant chord at m.239, which coincides with the culmination mentioned above. This dominant quickly resolves on C at m.241. This is the first time Berlioz employs a nice clear big cadence in this movement. But still it is not like a classical type, because the upbeat of the fugal theme overlaps with the cadence, which eventually gives no space between the first and the second large units.

Second Large Unit

Level II-1: mm.241-413

This fugal section clearly punctuates the movement into half, and here begins the fourth level. The motive of the fugal theme is derived from the variation of the *idée fixe* as seen in Ex. 9.

Ex. 9

The image shows a musical score for three staves: two treble clefs and one bass clef. The top staff contains a melodic line with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together. The middle and bottom staves contain rhythmic accompaniment, primarily consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes. Dashed lines connect the notes in the top staff to corresponding notes in the middle and bottom staves, illustrating the fugal entries of the theme. The notation is in a common time signature, and the key signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be C major or a related key.

And also the first four notes of this fugal theme (G A B C) is related to the first 4th of the idée fixe (Ex. 7). This figure (x) is seen at m.76 and is used in sequence to construct the latter part of the fugal theme:

Ex. 10



The syncopated figure(y) in Ex. 10 is also seen in m.78. Therefore, the original elements which construct the fugal theme are exposed before the real statement of the idée fixe as well as derived from it⁽³⁾.

Berlioz starts the fugal section with lower Strings and gradually builds up the texture, finally involving full tutti forces. But like in Level I-3, he fragments the flowing fugal theme from m.306. This is another technique that Berlioz employs in order to avoid a clear cadence. After the fragmentation of the fugal theme, at m. 348, he inserts the fragments of *Dies irae* again, but this time on G rather than on C . This motive is both a musical reminiscence as well as a preparation for the subsequent musical culmination at m.414.

The way he combines the fugal theme with the *Dies irae* theme polyphonically is quite a new technique and different from the first movement. In the first movement, he states the idée fixe three times (mm.72-111, 234-280, 412-441); every time increasing the number of the instruments and giving more rhythmical activities to make the sound thicker. He brings the culmination in the first movement, by heightened repetition of the idée fixe. Here in the final movement, he does not employ the idée fixe itself many times as he did in other movements. He employs it only in the second subsection of the first large section (Level I-2). After that, he parodies the *Dies irae* and he produces the fugal theme which is derived from the

idée fixe. And he combines the two themes instead of repeating the variation of the idée fixe. The culmination is also part of an overlap, i.e., at m.404 Strings begin the fugal theme without resolution, which is overlapping with the resolutive section by the Winds(mm.403-408).

Level II-2: mm.414-495

Then, during the answer of the fugal theme, the *Dies irae* theme, played by the whole Wind section except Flutes, joins. After this polyphonic combination of the two themes, Berlioz brings back the syncopated rhythm motive (motive y, in Ex.10) at m.435, utilizing as a short bridge to the last statement of the fugal theme in A minor from m.447.

The last statement of the fugal theme, is not actually stated fugally, but rather homophonically. Berlioz treats this theme in an extremely interesting way in terms of the orchestration technique. He ornates the theme with the trills on the downbeats. This theme is supported, first by the beating rhythm by the Violins and Violas with "col legno battuto (beating with the wooden part of the bow)" from m.444, and secondly by the lower Strings' pizzicato. "Col legno" is a new performing technique, whose peculiar sound was a complete surprise for the early nineteenth century audience.

In this way, this whole section of mm.444-466 depicts the "Witches' Sabbath" scene so effectively, especially by the use of effective tonal colour.

Level II-3: mm.496-524

Finally, Berlioz gives a short but nice clear cadence at m.496, and initiates a simple Coda section with harmonically simple repetition of I and V. This Coda section, the last subsection of the second large unit, might be called the real culmination because of its real *ff* tutti by the whole orchestra, in the Tonic key (clear C major) for the first time at the very end in this 5th movement.

CONCLUSION

These events demonstrate how Berlioz builds this final movement so continuous and developmental. Short summary of the characteristics of this movement might be helpful to review my points. First of all, from the formal point of view, this movement has its peculiarity because it has a long introductory section till the main C Major fugal theme begins, and even if this main theme begins with a clear cadence, it is still overlapped. And every new material begins either without resolution, with sudden key changes, or with overlapping. Therefore the only nice clear cadence, although a short one, happens at the very end before the Coda begins. For this reason, we might not divide into two sections before the Coda. However, the fugal theme in C major should be regarded as a main theme in this movement, because of its melodic connection to the *idée fixe*, and its harmonic stability. It proves this division seems to be quite reasonable.

Moreover, the important technique that Berlioz shows here is that he suggests the coming themes in advance by inserting their fragments. This technique is very effective for unifying the movement as one big unit and, of course, for making music continuous and organic. The symmetrical treatment mentioned before is also important for organizing each unit beautifully.

One interesting issue is why he uses the *Dies irae* theme in the final movement. A well-known suggestion is that it is effective for the program of *Symphonie fantastique*; the parody of the hymn song in the funeral rites of the catholic church. Not only for that programatic reason, it is also effective for the process of combining each element. That is, this plainchant theme is so flexible in any sense: melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically. In particular, it fits the I-V chordal progression of both the Glocken ostinato and the polyphonic combination section.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that his technique of combining different elements and fragmentation results in a very “developmental” process. Within the larger formal units, there is no textural repetition at all⁴⁰. The music keeps changing constantly. As shown in the earlier example (Ex. 3), there is not a single section of the same themes. Starting from the Introduction, thematic material keeps changing ; [Introduction] - [(varied) idée fixe] - [*Dies irae*] - [Fugal theme (motivically related to idée fixe and the C-C-G ostinato)] - [Fugal theme + *Dies irae*] - [Closing] . Such constant transformation of the thematic material, deriving from one after the other, generates formal continuity in this movement.

At last, one final emphasis should be made. It is the rhythmic tendency of this movement. Melodic, harmonic and rhythmic events keep happening faster and faster. For example, the diminutions of the *Dies irae* phrases are like microcosmic versions of this larger tendency.

Above examination reflects the notion toward more and more organic music construction, the notion toward architectonic unity, that characterizes the nineteenth century romantic music.

NOTES

(1) Robert Schumann, "A Symphony by Berlioz" (1835). Edward T. Cone, "Schumann Amplified: An Analysis" (1971). Both articles are included in the "Berlioz: Fantastic Symphony," *Norton Critical Score* (New York: Norton, 1971), edited by E.T. Cone.

(2) In the MS, Berlioz labeled the last two movements as the First and Second Parts of "the Vision." But in the end, he decided that these movements are just as independent as the other three.

(3) Motives x and y in the Ex.10 are both tonally derived from C-C-G ostinato interval. In addition, this interval is originally derived from the first two notes of the *idée fixe* (G-C).

(4) The only exception – a small one – is the repeat of the first phrase of the *Dies irae* of mm.127-162; and even here the ostinato figure is phrased differently.

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