

THE FANTASTIC IN MUSIC

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SUMMARY. In this article, we aim to capture some of the ideas that have influenced the great minds of European compositional art and the sources of inspiration drawn from the realm of the fantastic, alongside a theoretical perspective on the concept.

Keywords: Fantastic, fairy-like, unreal, phantasm, Goethe, Balzac, Gautier, Edgar Allan Poe, novella, Don Juan, Faust, Mozart, Weber, Spohr, Berlioz, Wagner

The term "fantastic" comes from ancient Greek, where the adjective *phantastikos* means the ability to "create images" or "imagine," along with an entire lexical family: *phantasia* meaning "image" or "idea" and *phantasma* designating an "apparition" or "ghost." All European languages have adopted this root with minor phonetic variations: French: *fantastique*; Italian: *fantastico*; German: *phantastisch*; English: *fantastic*; Russian: *fantastika*; Romanian: *fantastic*, each developing its own nuances. The first recorded use of the term in Romanian belongs to Miron Costin in the "Chronicle of Moldavia from Aron Vodă onwards." In the Romanian Explanatory Dictionary (DEX), we find several definitions²: *Fantastic* (adjective): 1. That which does not exist in reality; created or imagined by the mind. 2. That which seems a figment of the imagination. 3. (Regarding people) Whose ideas or deeds have a fanciful or bizarre character. In the *Larousse* dictionary, it is defined as "unreal" or "non-existent in reality," with an additional sense of "chimerical."

Elements of fantastic thought have marked humanity's literary creations since their origins. Purely fantastic literature is a more recent artistic phenomenon. The fantastic short story becomes autonomous only at the end of the 18th

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² <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/fantastic> (accessed on 05.08. 2024)



century and the beginning of the 19th century when it manages to break away from the excesses of miracles and parables. The gothic novel substantially contributed to the establishment of the fantastic category in Romanticism. Fantastic creations imply a more subtle, discreet art capable of carefully calculating its effects, enhancing suspense, and developing a sophisticated technique of narrative progression.

We can list several European and American authors of fantastic literature. Starting with France: Charles Nodier, Balzac, Prosper Mérimée, Théophile Gautier, as well as specialized authors like Mathias Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, and Jean Lorrain. Jules Verne introduced a new form of the fantastic based on unprecedented themes such as technical inventions, time travel, the existence of parallel worlds, and life on other planets.

These creations will foreshadow the emergence of a new literary genre, in line with the new configurations of the contemporary world: science fiction literature.

In Germany, the fantastic gained prominence through the emergence of the "cult fairy tale," seen in the works of writers like Adelbert von Chamisso, Achim von Arnim, Novalis, Ludwig Tieck, Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, and E.T.A Hoffmann.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, authors like Thomas de Quincey, the Irishman Sheridan Le Fanu, Bram Stoker, and Oscar Wilde represent the genre. In the early 19th century, American literature was strongly influenced by the English Gothic novel. In this context, authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, and especially Edgar Allan Poe established the short story and novella as privileged forms of expression. Later figures like H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, Ambrose Bierce, and Richard Matheson carried this legacy forward. Edgar Allan Poe excelled in all forms of the fantastic genre.

Alexander Pushkin introduced the fantastic into Russian literature with his famous novella "The Queen of Spades." From this point on, the fantastic became a favorite genre in Russian literature, exploiting the immense variety of native folktales and legends. Encouraged by Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol published fantastic stories, as did Dostoyevsky.

The concept of the fantastic gradually expanded beyond literature and was adopted by other artistic fields such as music, sculpture, painting, and later cinema. Based on the ideas of Tzvetan Todorov³, Alexandru Tănase in his book *Essays on the Philosophy of Literature and Art* explores the fantastic phenomenon and its development. "In my view, the fantastic

³ A semiologist, linguist, and literary critic of Bulgarian origin was one of the main theorists of the fantastic.

originates—as a possibility, as a tendency—in the very historical, cultural, and epistemological condition of man as a subject of knowledge and as a cultural valuator. The fantastic would disappear as a possibility only in a completely mechanized world, in a society of robots for whom everything is calculated and transcribed into mathematical formulas, where neither life, nor spirit, nor the axiological tension of values exist—thus, nothing capable of generating doubts, enigmas, or mystery⁴."

Roger Caillois, a writer, philosopher, and essayist who researched dreams, highlights an essential idea in his work regarding the fantastic: "The existence of the fantastic is explained not by the infinite number of possibilities but by their limits, however numerous they may be. There is no fantastic where nothing can be counted and nothing is fixed; that is, where the possible elements are not susceptible to being counted.

When anything can happen at any time, nothing is surprising, and no miracle can evoke wonder. On the contrary, in a world considered immutable, where, for example, the future cannot have repercussions on the past, an event that seems to contradict this law becomes unsettling.⁵" Many literary models within the vast framework of world literature have been sources of inspiration for the birth of cultivated romantic music, composed roughly between 1820 and 1916. In the history of music, and not only, this period is called Romanticism.

Ada Brumaru wrote: "In the 19th century, music and literature approached each other (Beethoven created a precedent by giving a musical interpretation of Schiller's *Ode to Joy* in the finale of the Ninth Symphony, writing stage music for Goethe's tragedy *Egmont*, the *Coriolan* overture, etc.). When this connection was not direct, it manifested in the ideas and feelings generated by the romantic spirit, which became characteristic of both arts.⁶"

The ideological concept of romantic music is closely linked to that of romantic literature. In their creations, composers attempted to suggest, through the specific means of musical language, feelings of love, dreams, passion, nature, inaccessible landscapes, legends, and fairy tales with their spirit and inclination toward the fantastic. Romantic music introduced novelties in terms of forms and means of expression, as well as crystallizing new musical genres such as the symphonic poem, scenic suite, overture, and programmatic symphony, musical drama in a new sense, and program music.

⁴ Tănase, Alexandru. *Eseuri de filozofie a literaturii și artei* (Essays on the Philosophy of Literature and Art), Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, p. 95.

⁵ Caillois, Roger. *În inima fantasticului* (In the heart of the fantastic), Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1971, p. 46

⁶ Brumaru, Ada. *Romantismul în muzică* (Romanticism in Music), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1962, p. 41.

The Choice of Fantastic Themes in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Creation⁷

The Opera *Don Giovanni*

We cannot continue our research into romantic composers and their successors, as well as works inspired by fantastic literature, without mentioning two of Mozart's creations. These works fit, by their choice of literary subjects, within the scope of our research: the operas *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*.

Don Giovanni is an opera in two acts (10 scenes). The librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte found his inspiration in an ancient medieval legend widely spread in the literature of many European countries. The Spanish writer Tirso de Molina was the first to write a play based on this subject, dating back to 1630. Molière, Goldoni, Lenau, Pushkin, and many others later dealt with the same theme. Mozart's merit lies in defining the typical image of Don Giovanni, a characterization that Goethe would later achieve with his depiction of Doctor Faust.

The comparison between these two myths of human creative spirit—Don Giovanni and Faust—was expressed by the German writer Dietrich Christian Grabbe in his book *Don Giovanni und Doctor Faustus* (1829). Through his music, Mozart paid significant attention and dramatic-musical emphasis to Don Giovanni's theme. The opera is subtitled *The Punished Libertine*. We will not delve into an analysis of Mozart's music or a philosophical-aesthetic analysis of the main characters of this musical masterpiece, which Wagner called "the opera of operas." We will focus strictly on the connection between the drama and the theme of the fantastic, attempting to frame the dramaturgical development within the sphere of the myth of death and the gothic fantastic.

One of the most oppressive aspects of the fantastic is represented by the appearance of death and its representation in visual art and literature through ghostly apparitions or characters from the afterlife. In Mozart's work, we encounter both facets: death as punishment for the actions of the protagonist. Although he is warned that he will be punished, Don Giovanni defies the arrival of his end. The final, imminent, and inevitable denouement that will bring about the death of the protagonist takes place in an atmosphere specific to the fantastic.

This situation is part of the fantastic universe because it introduces a tragic rupture in the natural flow of the world through the extraordinary disappearance of the protagonist. The state of panic and fear, the tense and horror-filled

⁷ Austrian composer, born in Salzburg in 1756 and died in Vienna in 1791.

atmosphere, the introduction of the impossible into the human universe—these elements generate the fantastic. The conversation Don Giovanni has with the statue of the deceased emphasizes even more the contrast between the natural and the unnatural, guiding us toward the fantastic element.

The disdain with which Don Giovanni confronts the Commander, and proudly accepts death without any regrets or fear of death, reflects the fantastic nature of the work. Don Giovanni's disappearance into the flames symbolizes the appearance of Satan claiming the lost soul—another core element of the fantastic.

The Opera *The Magic Flute*

An opera in two acts (12 scenes). The libretto, by Emanuel Schikaneder, was inspired by a fairy tale entitled *Lulu in Dschinnistan or The Magic Flute* from the collection of stories by the German poet Wieland. In contrast to *Don Giovanni*, the fantastic in this work is of a different nature. We are dealing with a miraculous and fairy-like fantastic. The forces of evil and darkness are represented by the Queen of the Night, her three fairy attendants, and the black character Monostatos. On the other side, we have the forces of good and light, represented by Sarastro, Tamino, Pamina, Papageno, and Papagena, along with the three priests.

The symbols and elements of the fantastic include the snake, the birdman, fairies, birds, animals, forest dwellers, enchanted instruments, and magical bells. Disappearances and miraculous appearances, the ambiguity of states where the natural and supernatural confront each other, all convey the fairy-tale aspect of this fantastic work. "The fairy-like aspect of tales introduces us into a parallel world of magic, governed by its own logic and coherence, almost like another familiar reality to us."⁸

These states are reflected in the masterful music that the genius of Mozart bestowed upon this fantastic subject. "The fairytale world is a miraculous universe that adds itself to the real world without harming or destroying its coherence. In other words, the fairy world and the real world intertwine without conflict or contrast."⁹ Despite the fantastic theme of the action, its meaning is deeply realistic and human, symbolizing humanity's eternal aspiration for a better life. Mozart's music pays homage to a serene life, which unfortunately the great creator did not enjoy, and emphasizes the victory of good and brotherhood over evil and discord.

⁸ Tănase, A. *Eseuri de filozofie a literaturii și artei* (Essays on the Philosophy of Literature and Art). Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, p. 52.

⁹ Caillois, Roger. *Eseuri pentru imaginație* (Essays for imagination), Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975, p. 145.

Carl Maria von Weber¹⁰

He is the creator of the German national romantic opera. Weber had a rich artistic career as a composer, pianist, conductor, and writer. He is considered the first romantic artist, both through his creations and his multifaceted activities as a composer, pianist, conductor, and excellent writer.

The Opera *Der Freischütz*

This opera was composed between 1817 and 1820 and consists of three acts (six scenes). With this masterpiece, Weber opened a new chapter in the history of romantic music and, at the same time, programmatic music. The literary subject, which serves as a source of inspiration for the fantastic theme, features the devil as the central character, unseen spirits, and the forest and night as symbols of fantastic literature. These elements are evocatively represented in Weber's music with extraordinary suggestive power.

The composer brought the orchestral ensemble to the forefront with his mastery of orchestration, enriching music's suggestive capacity. This becomes apparent from the opera's overture, a highly effective piece that is performed with great success in symphonic concerts.

The atmosphere of the gothic and fantastic is expressed through remarkably expressive and suggestive orchestral means. Weber worked for almost three years on this opera, which premiered on the Berlin Opera stage on June 18, 1821.

The final resolution of the dramaturgy is similar to the conclusion of *The Magic Flute*. As in that opera, the forces of good triumph over the dark forces, and good prevails. Once again, we encounter the miraculous and fairy-like fantastic specific to fairy tales, but also the demonic fantastic. The "Faustian" theme represents the core of the story developed by the composer: a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for happiness. A young hunter named Max sells his soul to the devil to obtain enchanted bullets that always hit the chosen target. "It is indeed difficult to find in the old or new schools a score as perfect in every respect as *Der Freischütz*; so interesting from beginning to end; whose melodies are fresher, whose rhythms are more captivating, whose harmonic inventions are more numerous and distinctive, and whose use of vocal and instrumental forces is more energetic without effort, and more delicate without affectation.

From the beginning of the overture to the last chord of the final chorus, I find it impossible to imagine a single measure that could be omitted

¹⁰ German composer and conductor, born in Eutin in 1786 and died in London in 1826.

or changed without feeling something desirable was lost. Intelligence, imagination, genius shine everywhere with such force that only the eyes of an eagle could bear them without exhaustion, mitigated by an inexhaustible, restrained sensitivity that envelops the listener.¹¹"

The Opera *Oberon*

The subject chosen for this opera is based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and was first performed in 1826. *Oberon* belongs to a totally different category of the fantastic than *Der Freischütz*. The former relates to the fairy-like and miraculous fantastic, while the latter falls under the gothic and demonic fantastic, dark and violent. In *Oberon*, the real blends with the supernatural so subtly that it is almost impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins. Everything is transposed and subordinated to music that is entirely unique, full of charm and grace.

As a typical representative of Romanticism, Weber - a brilliant writer - knew how to capture the specific atmosphere of the story. The melodies, harmonic progressions, modulations, rhythmic structures, and, not least, the instrumentation reflect the atmosphere of the fairy-like and miraculous fantastic. We will quote a few lines from Hector Berlioz, one of the greatest musicians and analysts of the world, regarding the instrumentation in *Oberon*: "I will only say that Weber's instrumentation is of admirable richness, variety, and novelty. Distinction is its dominant quality; no means are rejected by taste, no brutality, no nonsense. Everywhere there is a charming color, a lively yet harmonious sonority, a restrained force, and a profound knowledge of the nature of each instrument, of their various characters, of their sympathies or antipathies for the other members of the orchestral family; everywhere, finally, the most intimate relationships between the stage and the orchestra are preserved. There is no effect without purpose, no unmotivated accent."¹²

Most romantic composers, among whom Weber is counted, possessed a vast culture. Some of them demonstrated real literary talent in addition to their innate musical abilities and their mastery of musical language. If we evoke the names of great composers such as Schumann, Berlioz, Liszt, Gounod, or Wagner, we cannot overlook the real literary qualities they exhibited. We will continue in our analytical approach by selectively presenting several musical creations of valuable composers and trying to place them within the thematic framework we have chosen.

¹¹ Berlioz, Hector. *În Lumea cântului* (In the World of Music), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 155.

¹² Berlioz, Hector. *În Lumea cântului* (In the World of Music), Music Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 166.

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy¹³

One of the great German romantic artists, Mendelssohn was a multifaceted musician—a composer, pianist, and one of the greatest conductors of his time, who gave a new direction to the art of conducting.

The work we wish to highlight in our analytical approach was composed in 1842 as stage music for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the same subject that inspired Weber to compose *Oberon*. Mendelssohn's conception of the fantastic does not feature dark or demonic elements. We could classify his music as belonging to the fairy-like and miraculous fantastic. Filled with fantasy and humor, spontaneity and tenderness, Mendelssohn's music induces the dreamlike atmosphere he imagined with the innocence of youth when he created this masterpiece. "The perfect transparency of the sonic texture, the finely graded color palette, the exceptional fluency of the masterfully curved melodic line, the sparkling lyricism, and the unprecedented virtuosity of the instrumentation demonstrate the inventive and artistic power of a 17-year-old adolescent."¹⁴

Hector-Louis Berlioz¹⁵

Berlioz, who would become one of the greatest composers in the world, originally studied medicine. He abandoned his medical studies in 1826, the year he became a student at the Paris Conservatory. In our analytical approach, we will not focus on his training and professional ascent but rather on the artistic elements relevant to the theme of the fantastic in his work. Berlioz was also an eminent music critic of his time. Some have argued that Berlioz the writer and chronicler was superior to Berlioz the composer.

We will not delve into these claims, but regardless of the polemics surrounding his multifaceted talent, we can all appreciate his artistic manifestations—whether as lovers of music or as those who appreciate literature and possess a deep understanding of literary texts. The work that is of maximum interest to our subject is his *Symphonie fantastique*.

¹³ German composer, born in Hamburg in 1809 and died in Leipzig in 1847.

¹⁴ Berger, Wilhelm Georg. *Muzica simfonică romantică 1830-1890* (Romantic Symphonic Music (1830-1890), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 74.

¹⁵ French composer, conductor, writer and music critic, he was born in La Cote-Saint-Andre in 1803 and died in Paris in 1869.

The *Symphonie Fantastique* or "An Episode in the Life of an Artist"

"In the history of the symphony, there are crucial moments when a masterpiece appears like a wandering star in the firmament of creation—impossible to predict, sensational, and difficult to measure, yet entirely natural. The emergence of such a phenomenon—a rare, enigmatic star—illuminates an epoch and marks a new stage, as it burns brightly across the consciences of composers. Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* represents such an artistic achievement.¹⁶"

The symphony was first performed in Paris in 1830, conducted by Habeneck. Franz Liszt was present at the premiere. The symphony's program was written by Berlioz himself and should be presented before each performance: "A young musician of morbid sensitivity and a fiery imagination poisons himself with opium—in an act of despair caused by an unhappy love. The dose of narcotic, too weak to cause his death, plunges him into a deep sleep in which he experiences the strangest visions. The beloved woman has become for him a fixed idea, which he hears and finds everywhere."¹⁷

The symphony consists of five parts:

1. **Reveries and Passions**
2. **A Ball**
3. **Scene in the Fields**
4. **March to the Scaffold**
5. **Dream of a Witches' Sabbath**

Before attempting to classify each part within the various types of the fantastic, we will insert a quote from Elie Faure and comment on it from the perspective of a music creator: "Delacroix is probably the only one who, without being defeated, sought outside the eternal symbols of the Greek myth and the Bible—within modern literature and history—for endless excuses to express his passion. This outpouring of languages—faiths, music, poetry, painting—is a new phenomenon in which Romanticism most often finds its main challenge, but also where, for two or three people—Delacroix, Baudelaire, Wagner, sometimes Hugo, sometimes Berlioz—it reaches the height where it can claim to touch the invisible region where all forms of faith dwell and mingle in the highest symbolism.

¹⁶ Berger, Wilhelm Georg. *Muzica simfonică romantică (1830-1890)* (Romantic Symphonic Music (1830-1890), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 43.

¹⁷ Extract from the general score from the Breitkopf and Hartel edition.

Among all, the painter is the one facing the most danger because if he loses sight of the object for even a second—the architectural form of earth and sky, the volume's depth and the solidarity of the lines—his entire sentimental world is exposed to danger, and his imagination loses its grounding in reality.¹⁸

This is a point of view we cannot fully agree with because we believe the composer is just as, if not more, exposed to danger compared to the painter.

The musician has a sound representation in his mind and does not necessarily depend on an external visual stimulus to construct his creative act. The painter is more closely tied to the external stimuli in interpreting and stylizing them, while the composer's reality is abstract. For the composer, the poetic idea is unique to him, and the fullness of sensations is far superior in the musical creation process.

Returning to our initial idea—the relationship between literature and music in the conception of Romantic composers—we see it as a complete fusion of all the constituent elements. Through the specific means of musical language, composers transformed their chosen subject matter into poetic ideas of great value.

They did not seek to make music a mere commentary on the chosen literary text but to convey and express a concrete poetic message that stands independently on a new logic. The creators aimed to build their works, approaching the expressive power specific to literature.

In the *Symphonie fantastique*, all species of the fantastic are evoked. Starting with the dreamlike fantastic, based on dreams, the main character is immersed in a deep sleep induced by opium. Throughout the five parts, Berlioz's music reflects the strange and surreal, suggesting the subconscious's abysses, absurdity, gothic horror, and demonic elements. The most remarkable thing is that Berlioz did not use words to convey the atmosphere of the fantastic genres; instead, the entire atmosphere is suggested and generated purely by the music.

The dream, with its impulses from the depths of the subconscious, becomes for Berlioz's character a new reality, a parallel universe to reality - a bizarre world where the strangest, metamorphosed events take place. Delirious anxieties, states of fury, jealousy, tenderness - all are vividly expressed through Berlioz's music. He was a keen observer of the human soul, fully aware of its depths, and he knew how to transpose these states into music and make them resonate effortlessly in his creations.

¹⁸ Faure, Elie. *Istoria artei / arta modernă* (History of Art / Modern Art) (part two), Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1970, p. 45.

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The main theme of the symphony, called the "beloved theme," returns cyclically, becoming the guiding motif of the entire work. The drama of the whole composition is dominated by the obsessive presence of the beloved.

E.g. 1

The Symbol Theme:

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, starting at measure 72, features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The piano part includes markings for *poco sf* and *p*. The second system, starting at measure 82, features an orchestral arrangement with parts for Flute (Fl.), Violins (Vns), Alto (Altos), and Violas and Cellos/Basses (Vlles et C.B.). The Flute and Violins parts have markings for *sf* and *dolce*. The Alto and Violas/Cellos/Basses parts have markings for *sim.*

90 I *J animez*

Fl. *cresc. poco a poco* *cresc.*

Vns *cresc. poco a poco* *cresc.*

Altos *cresc. poco a poco* *cresc.*

Viles et C.-B. *cresc. poco a poco* *cresc.*

97 I *animez* *retenu* *a tempo*

Fl. *sf* *dim.* *p* *poco f* *p*

Vns *sf* *dim.* *p* *poco f* *p*

Altos *sf* *dim.* *p* *f*

Viles et C.-B. *sf* *dim.* *p* *f*

104 I *un peu retenu*

Fl. *sf* *p* *sf*

Vns *sf* *p* *sf*

Altos *p* *f* *p* *sf* *p* *sf* *p*

Viles *p* *f* *p* *sf* *p* *sf* *p*

C.-B. *p* *f* *p* *sf* *p* *sf* *p* *pizz.*

Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie Fantastique*, Part I. ms 71-110.

This is the conclusion reached by Berger regarding the first part of the symphony: "The first part, viewed in its entirety, reveals the creative development of classical concepts regarding the harmony of means of expression, clarity of exposition, beauty and balance of the architectural form, and stylistic harmony of the writing. The consistent use of orchestral sections follows a hierarchy in which the function of the string ensemble is predominant... Berlioz achieves all this with a Beethovenian orchestra, featuring four bassoons but no trombones, only two timpani, two flutes, oboes, clarinets, cornets, trumpets, four horns, and a string ensemble saturated with at least 60 string

players.¹⁹ A dream marked by passion, specific to its feelings, an obsessive struggle between reality and fantasy—all musically realized by Berlioz with a rich imagination.

Part Two: A Ball

According to the program written by the composer, the protagonist finds his beloved at a ball. The orchestral novelty here is that Berlioz introduces two harps into the symphonic ensemble. Percussion and bassoons are omitted, with only the four horns, used occasionally, an oboe, two flutes, and two clarinets remaining. The waltz is introduced for the first time in the history of the symphony. This waltz is abruptly interrupted at one point by the appearance of the beloved's theme from the first part. We can imagine that the dream is interrupted by reality—producing a sensation of disorientation between sleep and wakefulness, between happiness and suffering—a clash between fear and hope. The second part's theme reappears, and in the final coda, the entire orchestra participates in this dance-like apotheosis.

Part Three: Scene in the Fields

From the perspective of our chosen theme, the third part introduces us into the realm of **fantastic realism** and **atmospheric fantasy**. The juxtaposition of these terms might seem unnatural—realistic fantasy? Generally, any form of artistic manifestation is based on the real, by reference to this concept as a term of reference. As an argument in favor of this idea, we can cite A. Tănase: "For although the real is not always a form of the fantastic, the latter is, almost without exception, a form of the real.

The question is not whether to demonstrate the presence of the real in fantastic art but to decipher the degrees and forms of the real in this art.²⁰ For the third part, Berlioz was inspired by Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, creating a synthesis between the second and fourth parts of Beethoven's model, achieving an original result that was in line with his personality and the specific means of romantic expression. Nature is represented sonically in this beautiful musical page—two shepherds intone a pastoral song, a dialogue between the English horn and oboe, calm and serene.

¹⁹ Berger, Wilhelm Georg. *Muzica simfonică romantică (1830-1890)* (Romantic Symphonic Music (1830-1890), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest 1972, p. 50.

²⁰ Tănase, A. *Eseuri de filozofie a literaturii și artei* (Essays on the philosophy of literature and art), Eminescu Publishing House, 1980, p. 88.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system, measures 20-27, includes parts for Flute I (Fl.), Horns (Hb.), Clarinet in A (C. A.), Violins (Vns.), Alto Saxophone (Altos.), and Violas (Vlies.). The second system, measures 28-32, includes parts for Flute I (Fl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (Sib)), Violins (Vns.), Alto Saxophone (Altos.), and Violas (Vlies.). The score contains various dynamics (pp, sf, p, ppp) and performance instructions such as 'I solo', 'Le hautbois rentre à l'orchestre.', and 'Prenez le hautbois.'

Hector Berlioz, Symphony Fantastic Part III. ms 20-32

Throughout the musical discourse and dramaturgy, new dramatic tensions arise, contrasting between the thematic motif symbolizing the hero, played by low strings and bassoons, and the motif symbolizing the beloved, rendered by the flute and oboe. These tensions reach their peak but gradually calm down. The ending of the programmatic statement, as written by Berlioz, is justified by his music: "His heart is filled with dark premonitions. One of the shepherds repeats his simple melody; the other no longer responds. The sun sets... distant sounds of thunder... solitude... silence."²¹

²¹ Extract from the general score from the Breitkopf and Hartel Edition.

These literary ideas are musically expressed through the English horn, whose song remains unanswered, while the harsh blows of four timpani, increasing and then decreasing, gradually fade away in the final moments, as if trying to find a response from the other shepherd. As we mentioned at the beginning of our analysis of the third part, its categorization in terms of the fantastic places it within **atmospheric fantasy**.

Supporting this claim is the programmatic statement provided by Berlioz, from which the specific atmosphere of this type of fantastic is evident. From the musical discourse of the third part, through the melody of the English horn, the hero's loneliness is portrayed, and the timpani foretell an imaginary storm that represents the hero's despair. Everything leads toward a dark ending, but Berlioz resolves this tension in a classic way, alleviating the imaginary conflict by resolving it in the bright key of C major.

The Fourth and Fifth Movements: March to the Scaffold and Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

The last two movements of the symphony constitute a new beginning in the history of symphonic music—revolutionary music that breaks the classical symphonic cycle's laws. "With a single gesture, he [Berlioz] eliminates all barriers and becomes the quintessential Romantic composer, the mentor of the generation of Romantics who follow him: he has the titanic force to be entirely a radical innovator in the last two scenes characteristic of *Symphonie Fantastique*. Here, he writes an epic.²²" In the fourth and fifth parts, we encounter the **gothic fantastic**, based on the myth of death. "One of the most overwhelming aspects of the fantastic is the depiction of death."²³ In the fourth part, Berlioz's hero dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned, led to the scaffold, and witnesses his own execution. Musically, this march is based on chordal structures divided into four voices in the double basses, marked by pizzicato, creating an irreversible march. The timpani and horns play significant roles. As the procession approaches, the theme characterizing Berlioz's hero is first introduced by the low strings.

²² Berger, Wilhelm Georg. *Muzica simfonică romantică (1830-1890)* (Romantic Symphonic Music (1830-1890)), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 55.

²³ Tănase, A. *Eseuri de filozofie a literaturii și artei* (Essays on the philosophy of literature and art), Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, p. 65.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes three staves: Bns (Bassoon), Aitos (Alto Saxophone), and Viles et C.-B. (Violins and Cello/Double Bass). The Bns staff begins at measure 18 and features dynamics *p*, *mf*, and a section marked 'unis. solo'. The Aitos staff has dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The Viles et C.-B. staff has dynamics *dim.*, *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The second system includes two staves: Aitos and Viles et C.-B., with dynamics *dim.*, *p*, and *pp*.

Hector Berlioz, *Symphony Fantastic Part IV* ms 17-32

At the moment of maximum culmination, this theme is taken up by the brass instruments—trombones and tubas—and later by the entire orchestral ensemble. The music in this part is one of the strangest ever written in the history of the symphony up to that point. The orchestration is equally unprecedented: four horns, two cornets, two trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, four timpani, cymbals, and a bass drum. In the final moments of this part, the beloved's theme reappears as a flash of thought before the final blow. "One of the greatest masters of fantastic literature, E.T.A. Hoffmann, said: The base of the ladder you climb into the regions of fantasy must be well anchored in life so that anyone can climb it."²⁴

This is precisely what Berlioz achieves in music. In his works, the fantastic is rooted in reality, drawing from the accomplishments of his predecessors, without exceeding the limits of the possible, yet expanding its boundaries.

In the final part of the symphony, Berlioz achieves something extraordinary in the history of the genre - he transforms the beloved's theme from a lyrical, cyclically obsessive melody present throughout the earlier parts into a grotesque theme played by the clarinet.

²⁴ See p. 62.

21 Allegro (♩=112)

P. Fl.

Fl.

Hb.

C1. (Ut)

Bns

Cors (Ut)

Tromb.

Oph.

Timb.

G.C.

ppp

tr

tr

tr

cresc. poco a poco

III

(sur les deux timbales)

p

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

Hector Berlioz, *Sinfonia Fantastică* Partea V. ms 21-28

The musical discourse turns into a cacophony, a dance that unleashes the final section—a *rondo* of the sabbath, a true witches' dance. The beloved throws herself into the midst of this dancing orgy. As a novelty in the symphonic genre, Berlioz introduces bells, parodying the *Dies irae* chant.

Everything unfolds in a delirious atmosphere. All forms of the fantastic—gothic horror, the exaltation of night, the midnight hour, exploration of the subconscious, contrasting episodes—are fully realized through the entire orchestral ensemble. Every instrument is used with maximum efficiency and ingenuity, serving the dramatic meaning of the musical discourse.

The conclusion is truly monumental, of tremendous force and unmatched complexity. But the surprise is just as great—instead of a deeply disturbing, oppressive ending, Berlioz shatters the horrific nightmare he created with such suggestive power. The finale is presented in a luminous and optimistic manner. The fantastic dream world, where subconscious impulses created a new, bizarre reality through musical metamorphoses, disappears. "The music is far greater than this trivial subject.

Berlioz, with his exalted mind and literary capacities, explored both possible solutions in his symphonic masterpiece—the classic-romantic in the first three movements and the romantic-classic in the last two. Both perfectly plausible paths originate in the slow introduction, the very beginning of all beginnings. Only under the impulse of that Romanticism, which advocated a new attitude and new problems in the literature of the time, did Berlioz break through the realm of 'characteristic music,' emphasizing the modality of programmatic music in its highest form—the symphony genre.²⁵

The fantastic in music is a subtle and often enigmatic form of exploring the limits of reality and suggesting parallel universes, mythologies, and dreamlike worlds. Whether through unusual harmonies and timbres, programmatic music, or modern composition techniques, fantastic music succeeds in inducing a sense of wonder and escape from everyday life.

Thus, it proves to be not just a refuge for the imagination but also a profound expression of the human need to explore the unknown and find beauty in the mysterious. From the works mentioned above to contemporary film music, such as that of John Williams, the fantastic in music offers us the opportunity to explore the boundaries of the unknown and become captivated by the power of the imagination.

Through its unique combination of sounds and symbols, fantastic music creates a bridge between reality and dreams, allowing us to experience deep emotions and travel through worlds that exist beyond ordinary perceptions.

Conclusion: The Legacy of the Fantastic in Music

The exploration of the fantastic in music, from Weber and Mendelssohn to Berlioz and beyond, has left an indelible mark on the history of Western music. Each composer approached the fantastic from different perspectives—whether through the use of gothic themes, as in *Der Freischütz*, or the dreamlike fairy-tale quality of Mendelssohn's works, or the deeply personal and psychological journey depicted in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. These works demonstrate how music can transcend the limitations of the material world, creating spaces where the boundaries between the real and the imagined blur, allowing listeners to experience the awe, mystery, and fear that the fantastic evokes.

In more contemporary contexts, the legacy of the fantastic continues to influence composers, particularly in film scores. Composers like John Williams have drawn from the rich traditions of Romantic composers, using

²⁵ Berger, Wilhelm Georg. *Muzica simfonică romantică (1830-1890)* (Romantic Symphonic Music (1830-1890), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest 1972, p. 57.

music to evoke otherworldly settings and larger-than-life characters, helping to transport audiences to faraway realms filled with mystery and adventure. The fantastical elements in his music for films such as *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *E.T.* echo the same themes explored by composers like Berlioz, as music serves to deepen the emotional and imaginative experience.

The fantastic in music is not just a theme; it is a tool that enables composers to tap into the depths of the human psyche. Through harmonic invention, unusual timbres, and dynamic contrasts, music can conjure images of the supernatural, the mystical, and the impossible. It serves as a reflection of humanity's eternal quest to explore the unknown, express the inexpressible, and imagine worlds beyond the limits of our reality.

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