Ludwig van Beethoven is one of the most well known and influential composers of all time. He had a massive impact on the Western art music tradition and was an influential figure in the transition from the classical to the Romantic period. Hector Berlioz was a French romantic composer who was heavily influenced by Beethoven. This essay will examine and explore the level of influence Beethoven had on Berlioz.

Berlioz first heard the works of Beethoven through the exhibitions of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, which was a French orchestra that was created to perform contemporary pieces. Berlioz wrote in this Memoirs that “Beethoven opened before me a new world of music, as Shakespeare had revealed a new universe of poetry.” (Berlioz, p. 104) Berlioz seemed to regard Beethoven with nothing but admiration. In his writings, he deifies him as a pinnacle of the musical arts. He holds him up as an example of pure greatness. He constantly describes him as a genius and as possessing supernatural skill far above any of his contemporaries.

However Berlioz’s relationship with Beethoven was more than simple admiration. Berlioz saw himself and wanted others to see him as Beethoven’s successor. However living up to this self-endowed mantle created extreme pressure. Mark Evan Bonds writes that “Berlioz viewed Beethoven both as an inspiration and as an obstacle, both as a model to
be emulated and a precursor to be overcome.” (Bonds. p.419) Harold Bloom calls this
need to further what others have achieved before you the “anxiety of influence.” (Bonds. p.419) It was a desire to not simply imitate Beethoven but to expand on his ideas and
create something of his own.

When Berlioz presents himself as either the confronter of Beethoven or as Beethoven’s successor it is difficult to know, if this is a constructed narrative or his true feelings. Most of our information on Berlioz’s personal relationship with Beethoven comes from works he himself published. Chief amongst these are his memoirs. Berlioz’s memoirs were initially published in serialised chapters in various French journals of the time. Therefore, Berlioz’s memoirs provide an imagine of Berlioz he wished to present to the public. At this time Beethoven had become incredibly popular in France and the public were eager to crown a successor to his legacy. By placing a highly romanised version of himself as Beethoven’s heir, Berlioz was able to capitalise on this popular narrative.

Berlioz sought to further what Beethoven had achieved with the symphonic form. The way in which he intended to improve upon the symphonic form was to bring narratives into symphonies, in the form of program music. This is according to Mark Evan Bonds, an idea that was inspired by the “heroic” aesthetic of Beethoven’s middle period. (Bonds. p. 444) He writes that “the idea of writing a “heroic” symphony—a work associated with a single protagonist, be he real or imagined— is... directly indebted to Beethoven’s Eroica.” (Bonds. p.443) Thus, Berlioz incorporated this aspect into his symphonic works and would write large programs for his works explaining what he envisioned narratively.

Berlioz published his response to Beethoven heroic symphonic, Symphonie fantastique in 1830 three years after Beethoven’s death at the age of fifty-six. To understand how
Berlioz was influenced by Beethoven, it is important to understand how the rest of French society and how French music as a whole was influenced by Beethoven. The initial response to Beethoven in France was not positive. The year was 1807 when Beethoven’s First Symphony had its French debut in Paris, the response to the work was extremely negative. It was seen as “barbaric” German music lacking in the subtlety and nuance of French music. It is reported that the audience actively laughed and mocked Beethoven’s Eroica at its French premier. (Johnson, p.24) Berlioz wrote that Beethoven’s Second Symphony gained a slightly better reception in 1821 when the slow movement was removed and the orchestra performed the Allegretto from Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony in its place. By the time of Beethoven’s death in 1827 his music was still unpopular in France and few orchestras performed it. However, all of this changed on the ninth of March 1828 when Beethoven’s Eroica was performed at the recently created Societe des Concerts to mass critical acclaim. The musical periodical Journal des Debats wrote that “a revolution has just occurred in the musical world” by which they mean the French musical world as the Eroica was already well recognized in Germany and twenty-three years old at this point. (Johnson, p.24) Commentators couldn’t recollect their prior complaints of Beethoven’s music. Some Commentators placed blame on other French critics for their treatment of the composer over the past twenty years. This sudden shift in popularity is described by James H. Johnson, who writes that Beethoven’s work was original “reviled as chaotic and incoherent and then worshiped as divine truth, Beethoven’s symphonies transformed themselves in the minds of French audiences from an unknown tongue to the most intimate language of the soul.” (Johnson, p.23) This “revolution” in the French attitude towards Beethoven occurred only a single year after the composer’s death and could be a response to his passing. However, James H. Johnson has a different idea, he writes that, “what made that recovery aesthetically possible in the minds of his hearers, along with a host of other cultural patterns, accounts
for Romanticism.” (Johnson, p.35) By this he means that it was at this point in time the aesthetic tastes of the French audiences were changing, and the foundations for Romanticism had been laid, that had not been there a few years before. This quick shift in public perception of Beethoven in France mirrors Berlioz initial discovery of Beethoven. In Berlioz’s book *A Critical Study of Beethoven's Nine Symphonies*, he begins with his first impression of hearing Beethoven. He describes it like an epiphany, a moment of sudden and great revelation. By reading his analysis of Beethoven it is easy to see which aspects inspired and influenced him. Berlioz found inspiration in the way in which Beethoven created heroic narratives through his use of melody and form. However, much of the text is simply and impersonal look at Beethoven’s works, rather than the more romantic view of Beethoven he portrays in his memoirs. Symphonie fantastique was Berlioz’s first attempt to expand upon Beethoven's legacy and assert himself as his spiritual heir. Berlioz’s admiration and wish to take up his mantle was equally sudden. Berlioz describes his first encounter with the music of Beethoven as only being a couple of years before he published Symphonie fantastique.

There are many similarities and differences between Symphonie fantastique and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This makes a good case study on some of the ways in which Berlioz was influenced by Beethoven. In Robert Schumann’s review of Symphonie fantastique he wrote about how the two pieces seemed to draw on similar elements. Schumann wrote that Symphonie fantastique seemed to be in some ways an “imitation” of the Ninth Symphony.” (Bonds. p.455) Schumann believed that when Berlioz wrote this piece he was not familiar with the work of Beethoven, because of this he put the similarities down to similar sensibilities. However, Schumann made an error, his date for Symphonie fantastique was a decade too late, and Berlioz was certainly familiar with the works of Beethoven by this point. (Bonds. p.456) Had Schumann been aware of this, He
would have most likely placed Symphonie fantastique as a tribute to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

Schumann draws attention to the way in which Berlioz uses melody in a similar way to Beethoven. In the First Movement Berlioz presents a series of melodies that have been written without symmetrical structure that instead emerge and disappear as quickly as they come. It is also important to look at the differences between the works. Although Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony does not have a program Mark Evan Bonds writes that people of Berlioz’s time still saw it as a heroic symphony. (Bonds. p.443) This makes these differences essentially insignificant, and by using the program it replicated the heroism he saw in Beethoven works. There is also significant differences in orchestration, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony was one of the first composition to use voices in a symphony. Symphonie fantastique has no such choral element. The number of movements between the pieces differs, with Symphonie fantastique boasting five moments instead of the four that are in Beethoven’s Ninth. Despite this difference of structure, they remain in style very similar. The structure seems to be far more influenced by Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, which shares it’s five movements and has for each movement descriptive headings that put one in the mind of program music.

It is important to acknowledge Beethoven’s influence is only one of a number on Berlioz. Berlioz had already published music by the time he discovered Beethoven, and he was massively influenced by other composers that he was familiar with. The composers Carl Maria von Weber and Christoph Willibald Gluck were huge influences. Gluck moved to the French capital of Paris in 1773, where he published a series of operas, which were extremely influential on French music. Berlioz references many of Gluck’s works in his Treatise on Orchestration, including his operas Iphigénie en Tauride and Alceste. The German composer Carl Maria von Weber was another influence. Berlioz referenced Weber
many times in his Treatise on Orchestration. As a tribute, Berlioz orchestrated his piano work Invitation to the Dance in 1841. One lesser influence was the French composer Étienne Méhul. Méhul wrote primary opera but also delved into symphonies and songs. It appears that these symphonies had an impact on Berlioz's pieces. For example, Berlioz employs musical cyclic form in many of this symphonic works including Symphonie fantastique. Cyclic form refers to the reference of melodic phrases from previous movements to create a more unified whole. Sometimes a single theme may appear in all movements in different guises. This is what occurs in Symphonie fantastique with the *idée fixe* motif appearing in all five movements. Étienne Méhul is considered to be the originator of the cyclic form. (Charlton) The earliest known example of this technique is his Fourth Symphony, which was rediscovered in 1979. (Charlton) However, Beethoven did also employ cyclic form, for example, he recalls aspects of other movements in both his Ninth Symphony and his Fifth Symphony. Berlioz was certainly imitatively familiar with both composers, as Méhul was massively influential to French music at the time. Despite these other influences, Berlioz seems to still hold Beethoven above all other contemporaries. In Berlioz's writings, he does not refer to the likes of Gluck, Weber, Spontini or Méhul with anything like the same reverence of Beethoven. Bond even writes that the main reason Berlioz wrote symphonic works was to “confront Beethoven” (Bonds. p.455)

The influence of Beethoven is possibly unmatched by any other musician. Although hundreds would attempt to claim the mantle of being his successor, it seems that in the Western Art Music cannon there is only one Beethoven. His influence on Hector Berlioz is one such example of his far-reaching legacy. Berlioz seemed to essentially worship his genesis, and revered him far more any of his contemporaries. However, he also saw Beethoven as an obstacle whose achievements had to be transcended to achieve the
goal of similar greatness. Berlioz sought to transcend what Beethoven had achieved with the heroic symphony by introducing a program to his symphonic works. Despite an initial negative reaction to Beethoven’s music in France, by the time of Berlioz, Beethoven’s music was revered. Berlioz capitalised upon this by presenting himself as Beethoven’s successor. This interesting relationship between these two great composers, who never met, was coloured by the interesting paradox of Berlioz attempting to imitative Beethoven while attempting to separate himself from him, by creating something new.

Works Cited:


Charlton, David. *Interview with Professor Charlton*. BBC Radio 4’s Today. 8th of


Broadcast on: October 20th, 2017. Could not load feed. Error #5. In 2017, Musk purchased the domain X.com from PayPal for an undisclosed amount, explaining it has sentimental value.[59][60]. SpaceX Main article: SpaceX. In 2016, Musk founded The Boring Company to construct tunnels.[137] In early 2017, they began discussions with regulatory bodies and initiated construction of a 30-foot (9.1 m) wide, 50-foot (15 m) long, and 15-foot (4.6 m) deep "test trench" on the premises of SpaceX's offices as it required no permits. [138] A tunnel beneath the Las. Other Harry Mulder Inthemix Friday 20 oktober 2017 ADE mix The House Sound of The Hague. 2:46:51. 43 13.