**Berlioz, Symphony Fantastique**

**Listening Guide**

Movement IV – ***March to the Scaffold –*** “Convinced that his love is unappreciated, the artist poisons himself with opium. The dose of the narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him into a sleep accompanied by the most horrible visions. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned and led to the scaffold, and that he is witnessing *his own execution*. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now somber and fierce [Theme A], now brilliant and solemn [Theme B], in which the muffled noise of heavy steps gives way without transition to the noisiest clamor. At the end of the march the first four measures of the *idée fixe* reappear, like the last thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.”

0:00 (2:02) – Opening motive (foreshadowing syncopated March – Theme B), muted horns, timpani.

0:25 (2:20) – Theme A – descending minor scale in low strings

0:52 (2:55) – Theme A in violins with low string countermelody

1:18 (3:22) – Last expository iteration of theme A, in pizzicato (plucked) strings with bassoon obbligato

1:37 (3:41) – Theme B – syncopated “diabolical” march theme in brass and woodwinds

“Expository” section repeats

Development section

4:05 – transitional theme in brass with strings and woodwinds

4:14 - Theme A – quietly, with pizzicato strings

4:24 - Theme B – brass again, with woodwinds

4:55 - Theme A – first quietly in pizzicato strings, then louder in brass

5:18 - Theme A - full orchestra in original form, then inverted at 5:39

5:39 - Fragmentation of theme A

5:46 – accelerated tempo

6:25 *– Idée Fixe* melody in solo clarinet (marked “As sweetly and passionately as possible” in the score), cut off by:

6:32 - “the fall of the blade” – loud, abrupt chord followed by pizzicato strings (depicting the bouncing head) and a drum roll

6:35 - Loud, forceful chords close the movement

Movement V – ***Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath***

*Introduction* – “He sees himself at the Sabbath, in the midst of a frightful troop of ghosts, sorcerers, monsters of every kind, come together for his funeral. Strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter, distant cries which other cries seem to answer.”

0:00 – Atmospheric and mysterious orchestral effects interrupted by:

0:32 – A distant fanfare (distant cry)

1:19 – Another fanfare (answering cry)

*Idée Fixe –“*The beloved melody has appeared again but it has lost its character of nobility and shyness; it is no more than a dance tune, mean and grotesque: it is she, coming to join the Sabbath. A roar of joy at her arrival. She takes part in the devilish orgy.”

1:36 – foreshadowing statement – just two phrases of the idée fixe

1:45 – riotous orchestral response (“a roar of joy at her arrival”)

1:56 – The entire idée fixe tune played in grotesque transformation.

2:26 – crescendo leading to

2:48 – “upward” motive – a foreshadowing of the witches’ round dance

2:52 – quiet descending transition to:

3:12 – Funeral bells, heard in three groups of three

*Dies Irae* – “Funeral Knell, burlesque parody of the *Dies Irae*.”

3:42 – phrase 1 of the plainchant in 3 versions

1. tubas and bassoons – slow

4:05 2. horns and trombones – fast

4:14 3. woodwinds – faster – recalling the rhythm of the idée fixe parody

4:21 – phrase 2 of the plainchant in the same 3 versions

4:44 – phrase 3 of the plainchant, again in the same 3 versions

5:18 – transition – “upward” motive

*Witches’ Round Dance* – “The Sabbath round dance and *Dies Irae* are combined.”

5:36 – Four entries of the fugal subject

6:03 – episode 1

6:23 – three more subject entries in stretto

6:40 – episode 2 – loud rhythmic motive

7:23 – fragments of the *Dies Irae*

7:40 – long transition over a drum roll

8:23 – original fugue subject returns

8:31 – subject plus the *Dies Irae*

9:00 – subject appears for the last time in strings *col legno* (played with the stick of the bow)

9:24 – Sudden forceful chords initiate a loud transition

9:41 – recollection of the *Dies Irae* in three versions

9:50 – Coda – very loud conclusion