

Roman Carnival Overture, Op. 9

HECTOR BERLIOZ

B. December 11, 1803, La Côte-Saint-André, France

D. March 8, 1869, Paris, France

Premiered February 3, 1844 in Paris with the composer conducting.

Scored for two flutes, one on piccolo, two oboes, one on English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, cymbals, tambourine, triangle and strings (approx. 9 minutes).

*Roman Carnival Overture features music from Berlioz's opera, *Benvenuto Cellini*. Although the opera fizzled after its premiere in 1838, the overture was met with a decidedly warmer reception and soon became one of Berlioz's most popular works, both in its orchestral form and as a four-hand piano arrangement.*

The work follows Berlioz's favorite overture format with a rousing opening section that quickly makes way for a slower one, culminating in a fast, jubilant ending. A burst of festive music taken from the opera's carnival scene sets the work in motion after which an extended English horn solo begins the slower section with music from the love duet. This theme passes through the violas and horns as the faster carnival music begins to reassert itself with quick, scalar themes in the woodwinds announcing its full-fledged return. The work continues to build in intensity after this point, although Berlioz introduces a few surprises along the way, including one point at which the music builds to a climax only to introduce a fugal section, delaying further the overture's triumphant, glorious conclusion.

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra first performed Berlioz's *Roman Carnival Overture* on Dec. 10, 1915, with Weston Gales conducting. The DSO last performed the pieces on Feb. 25, 2006 during a Young People's Concert with DSO Resident Conductor Thomas Wilkins conducting.

DSO SHOP @ THE MAX RECOMMENDS:

Berlioz, *Roman Carnival Overture*, Paul Paray conducting the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Mercury Living Presence B0005304.

Program note by Sarah Gerk, a graduate student in musicology at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance.