

## *Benvenuto Cellini*

### Opéra Comique by Hector Berlioz

Libretto by Auguste Barbier and Léon de Wailly

New version and adaptation by Eberhard Kloke

### Editing Report

The period of composition and series of first performances of *Benvenuto Cellini* may be summarised as follows:

1834/35 Berlioz commissions the libretto from Auguste Barbier and Léon de Wailly (with the support of Alfred de Vigny). This libretto is rejected by the Opéra Comique. After re-working and removing the spoken dialogue, the work is nevertheless accepted by the Opéra (director Edmond Duponchel).

The composition process lasted from 1836 to 1838.

The world premiere took place in 1838 after interminable and difficult rehearsals; however, the opera was shelved after only few performances. (**Paris I**)

Diverse revisions, changes (during the rehearsals) and cuts were introduced by Berlioz after the performances. (**Paris II**)

Franz Liszt resolved to put on a performance in Weimar in 1851; Berlioz accordingly revised the score with Liszt's collaboration.

The performances took place in Weimar in 1852 and were a success.

Liszt proposed drastic cuts for a planned, second series of performances, which Berlioz accepted. This work now exists as a three-act version. Berlioz himself conducted a performance of the three-act version (after minor alterations) in 1853 at Covent Garden in London. Subsequent to the London performance he revised and shortened this version yet again. This version (**Weimar**) provided the basis for the piano score prepared by von Bülow and Cornelius.

In October 1856 the opportunity for a production emerged with Tamberlinck, the London Cellini, at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris, which was under new management.

The plan foresaw using prose dialogue again instead of orchestrated recitatives.

This approach – which more or less meant a return to the cradle stage of the work's genesis – was not the least of reasons for the adaptations intended in this present version

Since an original version authorised by the composer doesn't exist, this adaptation now endeavours to produce a new version of *Benvenuto Cellini* out of the available composite material, also by taking the following aspects into account:

Basically, the genealogy of *Benvenuto Cellini*, which is marked by the three versions Paris 1+2 and Weimar, teeters between *opéra comique* and *grand opéra*. The actual intention at first was always to produce a dialogue opera (*opéra comique*); as the various performance perspectives emerged and during manifold negotiations with general managers and music directors, the intention behind the work shifted more and more towards grand opera with orchestral recitatives (*grand opéra*).

Express reference must be made here to David Cairns's detailed remarks on the version used for the audio recording by Colin Davis (quasi a modified version of the **Paris I**) and of course to the foreword *Benvenuto Cellini* by Hugh Macdonald in the critical complete edition of the works.

The development process of the composition of *Benvenuto Cellini* is hence more or less a work in progress – comparable to the development stages of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*.

### A snapshot view of the existing versions **Paris 1+2 and Weimar**

A special characteristic of Berlioz's work method is manifest in his tendency to keep his scores (the respective versions) in a constant flux, consisting of work processes and modifications with a view to real or intended performances. Likewise, he edits aspects during and after an ongoing performance series. So we may speak of a continuous compositional and adaptational process, which always had to be oriented – and frequently caused friction as well – on the wishes of the conductor, the demands of the management of the respective opera houses, and performance outcomes. Hence the existing versions Paris 1+2 and Weimar can be seen as snapshot views taken during a continuous development process.

In the course of revising the work original satirical elements were therefore pushed aside. In addition, variously long dialogue sections had to be forced into recitatives that were in peculiarly incongruous contrast to the music numbers and artificially slowed down the action. The editor's decision is now oriented on creating a unified, dramaturgically sharpened and somewhat shortened complete edition of *Benvenuto Cellini*. This will take into account the authors' original concept of reproducing it as an opéra comique (thus with spoken dialogue). The decision as regards which version (Paris1-Paris II or Weimar) should be chosen for the respective music numbers and their connections, passages and dialogues has been made in keeping with musical and dramaturgical-conceptual considerations. The recitative within the sextet in Act 2 (Scene 3) remains *recitativo accompagnato*, since it seems most apt for the dramatic structure of the large ensemble and guarantees the cohesiveness of the ensemble section.

A characterisation of Berlioz's musical and scenic accentuation can be exemplified in three passages:

1. In the grand finale of Act 1 a mime is enacted which is quasi a parallel to the main conflict between Cellini and his opponent Fieramosca (and Balducci as arbitrator, caricatured as papal treasurer. The outraged Balducci is himself present in the audience.  
On one hand, the double-entendres of the pantomime mirroring reality gives rise to enormous suspense and on the other to a complex, ironic twist of the scene.

2. Act 1 includes the great love duet between Teresa and Cellini, which Fieramosca secretly (and invisibly for Teresa and Cellini) eavesdrops and comments on with musical interventions. There are of course scenic parallels in the Mozart-Da Ponte *Marriage of Figaro*, except that here, in *Benvenuto Cellini*, it is the scheming Fieramosca – invisible, at any rate for the protagonists – who intervenes in interrelationship with Teresa and Cellini. The tenor’s triplet interpolations are taken up and closely interwoven in style with the trio’s musical development. The special fascination is generated by the fact that Fieramosca is ‘invisible’ and simultaneously integrated into the music: a duet as covert trio!
  
3. In the final scene of Act 2 (Cellini’s workshop) Berlioz differentiates the scenic situation of the striking workers by introducing a great decrescendo to characterise the theme of the striking chorus quasi “insecurely, in vacillating three-four time, merging ineluctably into an ostinato of semitones, the ancient slave chain, imaged in tones...  
And even Teresa’s, Cellini’s and Ascanio’s rousing cries have a strangely chilling effect, almost like a plaint, as though they themselves are grieving that the men have to go back to work...”( Ulrich Schreiber, *Geschichte des Musiktheaters*, vol. II, p. 419)

Eberhard Kloke, Berlin, status: May 2020

Translation: Abigail Prohaska

Note:

The first German translation was by August Ferdinand Riccius (1852).

The second German translation was by Peter Cornelius for the second performance series in Weimar (1856).

A modified German translation can be found in the booklet accompanying the recording by Colin Davis.

A further German translation is contained as supplement to the score and piano score of the critical edition by Hugh Macdonald.

Helmut Breidenstein produced a German translation for a concertante performance in 1979 after the London version of June 1853 (modified Weimar version)

**Benvenuto Cellini** Opera by Hector Berlioz  
New version by Eberhard Kloke

Cast Soli and Chorus

BENVENUTO CELLINI, artist/goldsmith	Tenor
GIACOMO BALDUCCI, papal treasurer	Bass
FIERAMOSCA, sculptor in the service of the Pope	Tenor
LE PAPE CLÉMENTS VII	Bass
FRANCESCO, artisan in Cellini's workshop	Tenor
BERNARDINO, artisan in Cellini's workshop	Bass
POMPEO, murderer	Tenor
CABARETIER (INNKEEPER)	Tenor
TERESA, daughter of Balducci	Soprano
ASCANIO, apprentice with Cellini	Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano

A waiter, 3 actors for the mime, 2 murderers                      supernumeraries

Women and children, artisans, citizens, penitents, monks and nobility

The action takes place in Rome in the year 1532

Orchestra scoring: (compared to the Berlioz score:  
minus 1 bn, 1 hp, 3 tpt/crt, 1 gtr)

Ww = 9

2 fl (both with picc)

2 ob (both with eh)

2 cl in B flat, C and A (2nd also bstcl in B flat)

3 bn (3rd also cbn)

Br = 11

4 hn in F (all transposed to 'F')

2 crt à piston in B flat and A (2nd also 2nd tpt in C)

1 tpt in C (2nd tpt alternating with 2nd cornet)

3 tenor-bass tbn

1 cimbasso/cbn (alternative for ophicleide)

pk/perc/hp/gtr = 6

3 pk (2 players), triangle, tambour de basque, military tambour, cymbal, bass drum,  
small anvil, gong;

1 hp, 1 gtr

Strings: string quintet 10-8-6-5-4 = 33

Scoring tutti = 59

Status: May 2020