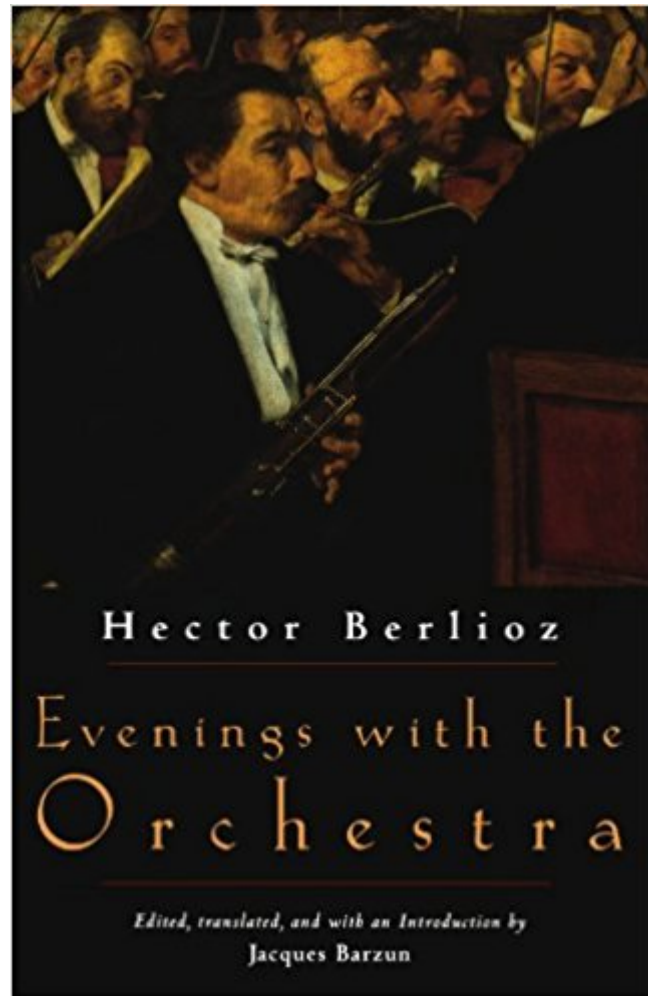


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Evenings With The Orchestra



Synopsis

During the performances of fashionable operas in an unidentified but "civilized" town in northern Europe, the musicians (with the exception of the conscientious bass drummer) tell tales, read stories, and exchange gossip to relieve the tedium of the bad music they are paid to perform. In this delightful and now classic narrative written by the brilliant composer and critic Hector Berlioz, we are privy to twenty-five highly entertaining evenings with a fascinating group of distracted performers. As we near the two-hundredth anniversary of Berlioz's birth, Jacques Barzun's pitch-perfect translation of *Evenings with the Orchestra* "with a new foreword by Berlioz scholar Peter Bloom" testifies to the enduring pleasure found in this most witty and amusing book. "[F]ull of knowledge, penetration, good sense, individual wit, stock humor, justifiable exasperation, understanding exaggeration, emotion and rhetoric of every kind." "Randall Jarrell, *New York Times Book Review*" To succeed in [writing these tales], as Berlioz most brilliantly does, requires a combination of qualities which is very rare, the many-faceted curiosity of the dramatist with the aggressively personal vision of the lyric poet." "W. H. Auden, *The Griffin*

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Customer Reviews

Two hundred years ago this week, Louis-Hector Berlioz was born. This, then, is a time for me to comment on a few of his works, some of them "favorites by acclamation" and others simply those in which I find special merit. When Berlioz died, in April, 1869, an obituary in the *Musical Times* read, in part, "...there can be little doubt that he will be remembered by his able and acute contributions to

musical criticism than by any of the compositions with which he hoped to revolutionize the world."Anyone familiar with Berlioz's "Memoirs" already knows that he could write with flair, and often with a trenchant sense of humor as well. And, while no one these days takes that Musical Times obituary notice seriously, in terms of evaluating his compositional vs. his critical contributions to music, it is true that Berlioz was a significant contributor to the art of musical criticism. He lived and wrote during a time when the *feuilleton* (an essay often bathed in scathing wit) was the main in-print vehicle for criticism in the arts, and he was one of its most able and knowledgeable practitioners, using the medium for rendering his critical judgements on the musical matters of the day. (As a side note, credit for the *feuilleton* is often - but mistakenly - given to Heinrich Heine, the German poet, who wrote many such essays when in Vienna. But Heine had earlier been a friend of Berlioz's while in Paris, and it seems clear - at least to this writer - that the *feuilleton* migrated from Paris to Vienna, with Heine as its means of transport.) "Soirées de l'Orchestre" (the original French title of these works) can be variously translated as "Evenings with the Orchestra" or "Evenings in the Orchestra."

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