

# The New Criterion

## Music

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## Opera note

by [James Penrose](#)

James F. Penrose on *Les Troyens*, by Hector Berlioz.

*Les Troyens*, by Hector Berlioz,  
at the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

There are two varieties of Berlioz. The first is the “subscription concert” Berlioz: the composer known for his concert overtures, the *Symphonie Fantastique* and, on a good day, the *Harold en Italie* viola concerto. The characteristics of this variety are vivid orchestral textures, memorable themes, agreeable brevity, and lots of noisy bits. Then there is the “private” Berlioz. This is much bigger category and runs from the vaguely familiar (*Les Nuits d’été*) to the lesser known (*L’Enfance du Christ*, *Roméo et Juliette*) on its way to the obscure (*Lélio*). Works of the “private” Berlioz suggest a predisposition for the voice, avoidance of the sonata form, a more pronounced degree of literary inspiration, and a more extended d ...

**James Penrose** writes about music for *The New Criterion*.

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