

EDOUARD LALO

David C F Wright DMus

Lalo is likely to be remembered as a one work composer namely the popular *Symphonie Espagnole* for violin and orchestra.

I do not think that anyone will class him as a great composer but there are some works by him that deserve attention.

His *Piano Trio no 1 in C minor* is a splendid four movement work although there are some moments in the second movement which sounds like salon music alla Max Jaffa. The work has expressive cello solos, memorable melodies, well-developed material and the music is very attractive. The scherzo is light hearted and infectious and the finale is a fine example of integrated music with a splendid coda.

His earliest works were songs and chamber pieces.

Sir Thomas Beecham adored his *Symphony in G minor* of 1886 and made a recording of it. Other performances of this colourful work have been sadly lacking.



Edouard Victoire Antonie Lalo was born on 27 January 1823 in Lille, northern France. He was a student at the local conservatory but, in 1839, went to the Paris Conservatoire studying with Francois Antonie Habeneck (1781-1849), a violinist and conductor denounced by the ill-tempered and troublesome Hector Berlioz who accused Habeneck of a dreadful performance of his *Requiem*. Habeneck was an admired conductor and noted for his Beethoven symphonies.

Although a French composer, Lalo's music is not French in sound or style but rather Germanic.

He married a contralto, Julie Besnier de Maligny, in 1865. She influenced him to write for the stage. This was a mistake. His operas are too Wagnerian. Listen to three and a half minutes into the overture *Le Roi d'Ys*, an opera based on the Breton legend. It is the Pilgrims chorus from Wagner's *Tannhauser*.

The operas are *Feisque* (1868), *Le Roi d'Ys* (1888) and *La jacquere* (1892). The ballets are *Namouna* (1882) and *Heron* (1892).

There are weaknesses in his work. The *Cello Concerto's* first movement has constant single heavy chords of punctuation, or over-punctuation, which are tiresome. Repetitions are also to the fore in the finale. The slow movement, which is often beautiful, and the wispy scherzo are very successful. This *Concerto* has also suffered from some dire and ghastly performances by Jacqueline DuPre and Julian Lloyd Webber. To hear a good performance of this work, you have to go to Janos Starker or Zara Nelsova.

The orchestral *Scherzo in D minor* also suffers from repeated violent single chord punctuation and this scherzo is also the scherzo in his *Piano Trio no 3*.

Lalo was a string player. With colleagues he formed the Armingaud String Quartet playing the viola or second violin. This will explain why he wrote three, or five, concert works for violin and orchestra, the *Violin Concerto Op 20*, the *Symphonie Espagnole* and the *Concerto Russe Op 29*.

There is also a Norwegian rhapsody and a Romance-serenade both for violin and orchestra.

We have mentioned the Cello Concerto in D minor and there is a Piano Concerto dedicated to the pianist Louis Diemer (1843-1919) for whom Franck wrote his Symphonic Variations and Tchaikovsky his Piano Concerto no 3. Lalo's concerto is attractive but may not be that well-written for the piano, but then not everyone is a Liszt.

Lalo was made a chevalier of the Legion of Honour when he was 65 and died in Paris on 22 April 1892.

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