## LES TROYENS

The Trojans Music by Hector Berlioz Libretto by Hector Berlioz

First Performance: Karlsruhe, December 6, 1890

The Trojans are rejoicing at the apparent withdrawal of the Greek army after ten years of siege. They come out into the plain, examining with great curiosity the gigantic horse the Greeks have left behind. Cassandra, daughter of King Priam, who has been blessed by the gods with the gift of prophecy, and then cursed because no one will believe her, is the only one who foresees doom, except a priest, Laocoon. But when Laocoon tries to destroy the horse, he and his sons are crushed to death by two serpents. Learning of this, the people joyously drag the horse within the gates as a good omen. But Cassandra continues her prophecy of doom, unbelieved even by her lover Choroebus. When the Greeks contained within the horse have opened the gates to the returning army and Troy is sacked, only Aeneas, warned by the ghost of Hector, escapes with his son. Cassandra appears before the women of Troy and persuades them to take their own lives rather than become slaves to the Greeks. As the invading army enters, demanding the Trojan treasure, Cassandra stabs herself and all the women, except a craven few who are allowed to go, follow suit.

Queen Dido, who has fled from Tyre with her court, has established a flourishing city, Carthage, on the African coast. Her sister Anna counsels her to remarry (she is the widow of Sichaeus), but Dido resolves to remain faithful to her husband's memory and to give all her energies to the building of her city. The Trojans arrive under assumed identities and are warmly welcomed. When Narbal, Dido's minister, brings news the larbus and his Numidians have invaded, Aeneas reveals his true identity and repels the invaders. Dido falls in love with the Greek hero, much to the disquiet of Narbal. In a symphonic interlude, The Royal Hunt and Storm, naiads and satyrs disport themselves in the forest until disturbed by the royal hunting party. Dido is dressed as Diana, goddess of the hunt. A raging storm drives Dido and Aeneas into a cave, where presumably their love is consummated. Peace is gradually restored.

The couple watch a celebration, including a ballet and a song by the poet lopas, and Aeneas recounts the history of Troy's fall. After an extended love duet, the couple departs, as the figure of Mercury appears, strikes Aeneas's shield and cries out "Italy!" Both Dido and Aeneas have forgotten their duty. Now the Trojans must depart on their mission, although Aeneas grieves to lose Dido. All her pleas are not proof against warnings from the ghosts of Priam, Choroebus, Cassandra, and Hector, however. The Trojan ships sail away, and Dido determines to die. She mounts a funeral pyre and stabs herself, as a vision of Rome triumphant appears to her and to the revengeful Carthaginians.