



FRANCK

Le Chasseur Maudit

César-Auguste-Jean-Guillaume-Hubert Franck (10 December 1822 – 8 November 1890) was a composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher who worked in Paris during his adult life. He was born at Liège, in what is now Belgium. He studied privately in Paris from 1835; after a brief return to Belgium, and a disastrous reception to an early oratorio *Ruth*, he moved to Paris, where he gained a reputation as a formidable improviser. In 1858 he became organist at Sainte-Clotilde, a position he retained for the rest of his life. He became professor at the Paris Conservatoire in 1872 and took French nationality. After acquiring the professorship Franck wrote several pieces that have entered the standard classical repertoire, including symphonic, chamber, and keyboard works.

Many of Franck's works employ cyclic form, a method to achieve unity across multiple movements. This may be achieved by recall, of an earlier material into a later movement, or as (in Franck's output) where all of the principal themes of the work are generated from a germinal motif. His music is often contrapuntally complex, using a harmonic language that is prototypically late Romantic, showing a great deal of influence from Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. In his compositions, Franck showed a penchant for frequent, graceful modulations of key. This modulatory style, along with his idiomatic method of inflecting melodic phrases are among his most recognizable traits. The key to his music may be found in his personality: his friends record that he was "a man of utmost humility, simplicity, reverence and industry." Louis Vierne, a pupil and later organist *titulaire* of Notre-Dame, wrote in his memoirs that Franck showed a "constant concern for the dignity of his art, for the nobility of his mission, and for the fervent sincerity of his sermon in sound. . . . Joyous or melancholy, solemn or mystic, powerful or ethereal: Franck was all those at Sainte-Clotilde."

Le Chasseur maudit (*The Accursed Huntsman*) is a symphonic poem by César Franck. The work was inspired by the ballad *Der wilde Jäger* (*The Wild Hunter*) by the German poet Gottfried August Bürger. It tells the story of a Count of the Rhine who dares to go hunting on a Sunday morning, in violation of the Sabbath. As the piece begins, the count defiantly sounds his hunting horn, despite the warnings of the church bells and sacred chants which call the faithful to worship. Deep in the woods, the count is cursed by a terrible voice which condemns him to be pursued by demons for eternity. Franck's orchestration evokes the dark, fantastic atmosphere of the infernal chase. The conclusion of the piece recalls the macabre *Songe d'une nuit de sabbat* of Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830). Franck completed *Le Chasseur maudit* on 31 October 1882, and had the work premiered on 31 March 1883, at the Salle Érard, in a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique conducted by Édouard Colonne.