# Harold in Italy (Condensed)

# Written in 1834 and Commissioned by the world famous Violin player, Paganini to feature a Strad Viola he had recently acquired. Paganini rejected it after seeing only the first movement citing that there weren’t enough virtuosic passages for him to be featured.

# Berlioz continued with the piece and had modeled the character Harold after the Poem *Childe Harold*. He wanted the Harold to be a “melancholy dreamer who sticks to his sentimental nonsense and everything is foreign to him, he is present in the action but does not participate in it.

# The use of the viola as the solo is interesting as it can be considered an “outcast” instrument, this is also being a social commentary on the romantic idea of the hero and an individual’s place in society during this time. An interesting note about the staging of this piece coincides with the program and the viola’s role in the piece.

# The soloist starts out next to the harp representing a divine nature. His separation from the orchestra is representative Harold’s departure from society. Harold himself is on a quest to find himself. After spiritual enlightenment is found in the end of the mountain song, he reminisces the journey he has made while being contrasted to the worldly “sinners” in the Orgy. Finally, he realizes that worldly issues can not be ignored in the way that the brigands theme overtakes his reminiscing and he decides to transcend the world and live peacefully due to his own recent pilgrimage. This happens as the soloist moves into and becomes lost in the staging of the last movement.

# 1 movement

## The theme can be looked at in two sections, first being the descending 3rds (sounds like “Daisy Bell” written 40yrs later) and a second section identified by a chromatic line in the first phrase. The movement begins with H’s theme long and drawn out as an awakening setting in A minor (ii of the tonic). After this the chromatic theme is introduced in a pastoral setting due to it’s 6/8 time. This part of Harold is then developed more. The recap of the beginning theme builds up from the low strings and finishes the movement

# 2nd movement

## This movement depicts Harold observing a group of pilgrims passing by him. Here is an example of how Harold doesn’t participate in the surroundings. The viola theme is drawn out longer in a dreaming state, never to adhering to the pilgrim’s canto but instead is plays as counterpoint to the melody. The only other way that the viola can be considered affected is the technical passage once the procession has passed, the dedication of the pilgrims is reflected in this strict etude passage.

# 3rd movement

## This section is set in a pastoral setting due to it’s time signature, use of a drone, and reed instrumentation. The way that Berlioz transformed the original theme here is to place the it over it’s relative major (C major) thus changing the character of the melody. Still long flowing melody in a loving fashion. The two melodies (love song and Harold) converge and Harold for the first time plays a melody that is not his own.

## Harold plays the love theme drawn out in rhythmic augmentation to denote an awakening

# 4th movement

## Here, all themes are restated by Harold but always interrupted by the bandit’s theme. By now the soloist has moved position on stage symbolizing the way that Harold has become absorbed by this group and is no longer able to stand out as an individual.