

Marlow U3A Music Appreciation Group, May 2011

Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

1. How the Chorale began

2. Examples of Romantic
Orchestral Chorales

3. Saint Saëns and the
Orchestral Chorale

1527 - 1932

Chorale: Definition

- ♪ The congregational hymn of the Protestant church in Germany, with origins in plainchant
- ♪ Usually characterised by simple, even-paced melodies
- ♪ Its use peaked after the Reformation.

How the Chorale Began

- ♪ Martin Luther was much involved in the creation of the new hymns, writing some 36 himself (the most famous is *A mighty fortress is our God*).



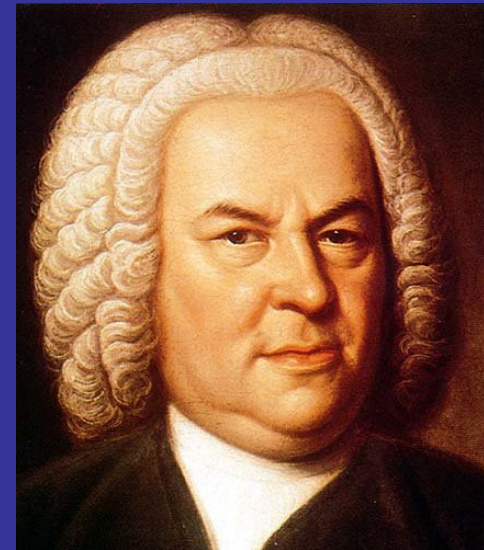
Video: Martin Luther and JS Bach

Chorale: Definition

- ♪ **Strictly speaking, the word ‘chorale’ means both the text and the melody of a hymn, but often the term is used to describe the music alone.**
- ♪ **The tune can be a single-line melody or a fully harmonized version, as in the four-part settings of Bach.**

Chorale: JS Bach

- ♪ J S Bach was perhaps the last great exponent of the chorale before it entered into decline during the Enlightenment
- ♪ He produced a monumental collection of choral and instrumental settings, including four-part harmonisations.



Chorales in 19th Century Choral Works

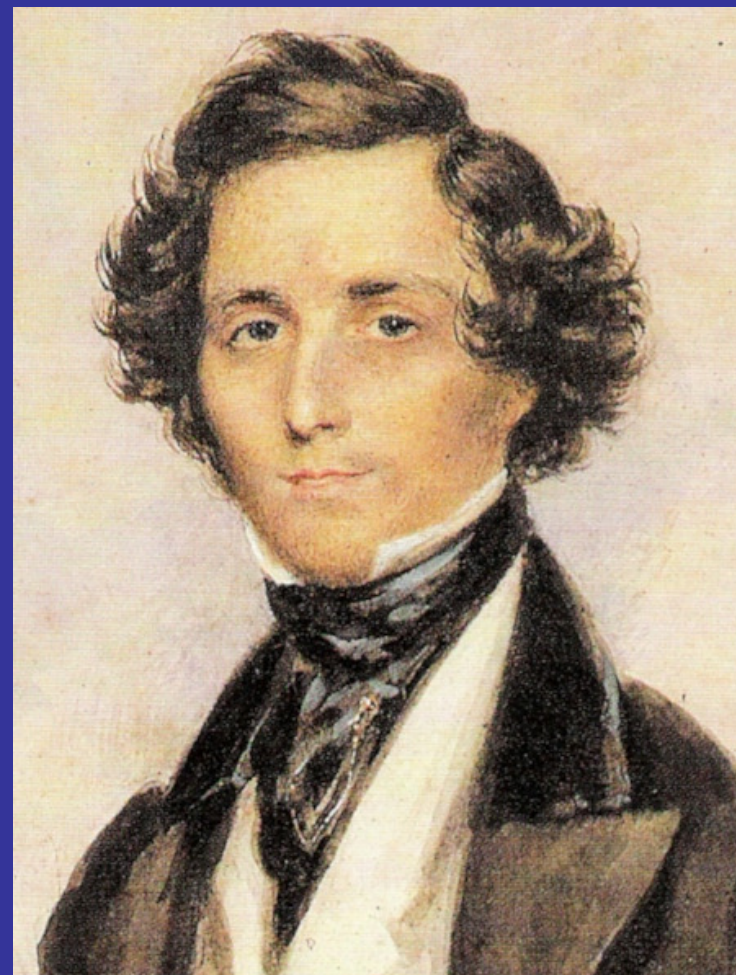
- ♪ Is the famous tune in the Finale of Beethoven's 9th Symphony a Chorale?
- ♪ Chorales are frequently found in Mendelssohn's oratorios.

Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

♪ Felix Mendelssohn

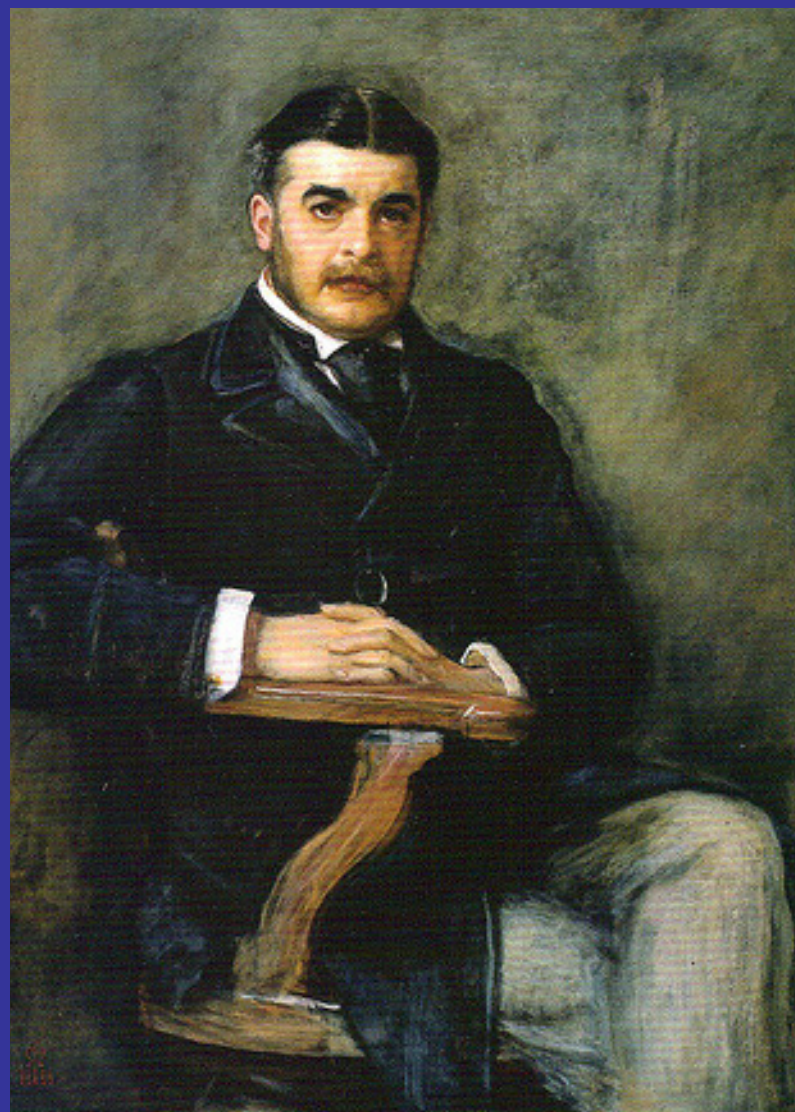
*Symphony No.5
(Reformation)*

*The fourth movement
opens with Martin
Luther's chorale "A
Mighty Fortress is Our
God", and it returns
powerfully at the end
of the coda.*



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

♪ **Sir Arthur Sullivan**
Overture in C
(In Memoriam)
premiered in October
1866 at the Norwich
Festival, in honour of
his father, who died
suddenly just before
composition began



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

♪ Sir Arthur Sullivan *Overture in C (In Memoriam)*

Andante religioso



Musical score for the beginning of the Overture in C (In Memoriam) by Sir Arthur Sullivan. The score is in C major and 4/4 time, marked *Andante religioso*. It features a piano introduction with a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of chords and a melodic line. The bass staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with quarter notes and chords.



Continuation of the musical score for the Overture in C (In Memoriam) by Sir Arthur Sullivan. This section shows the development of the piano introduction, with both treble and bass staves featuring more complex chordal textures and melodic lines. The music is characterized by sustained chords and flowing melodic passages.

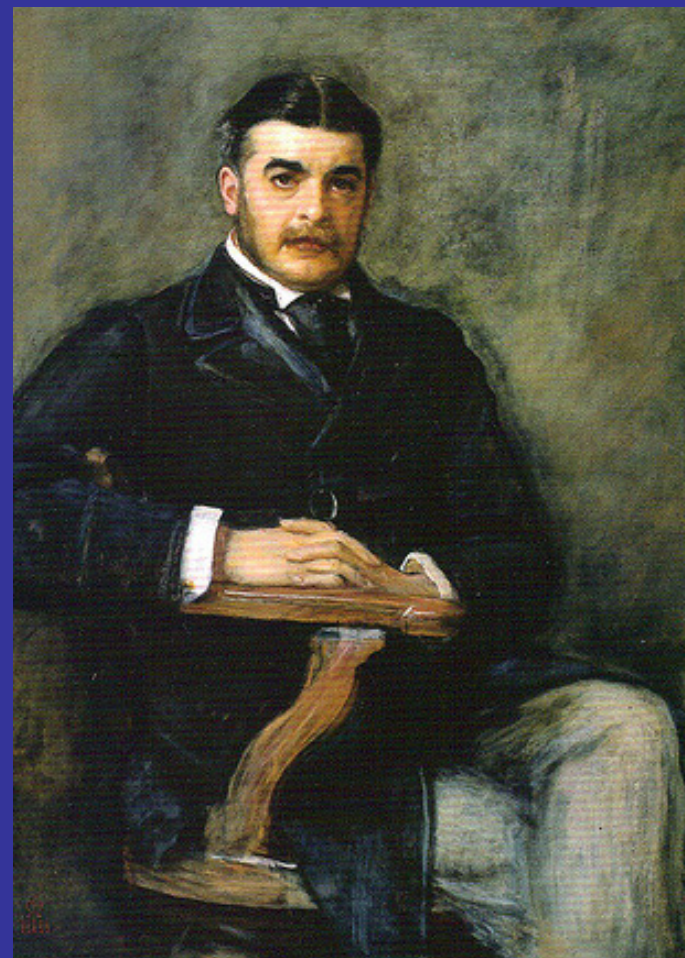
Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

♪ Sir Arthur Sullivan

*Overture in C
(In Memoriam)*

*Sullivan's overture
enjoyed considerable
popularity in his lifetime*

*The opening theme
reaches its grandest
restatement in the
closing bars*



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

♪ Robert Schumann *Symphony No.2*

The chorale theme introduced midway through the finale is integrated with the opening theme of the first movement, also a chorale, in the symphony's concluding passages.



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

- ♪ Johannes Brahms
*Variations on the
St. Anthony
Chorale*



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

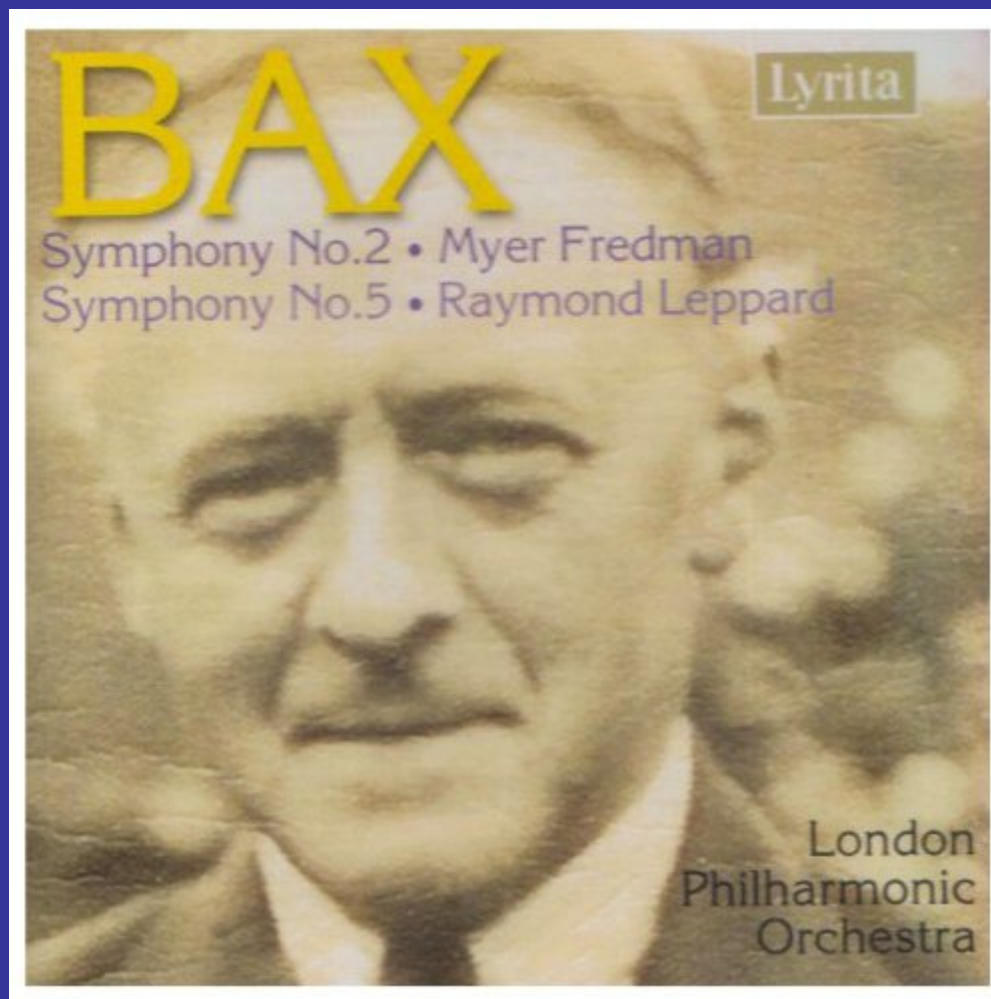
♪ Johannes Brahms
*Variations on the
St. Anthony
Chorale*

Theme attributed
to Haydn, but may
have been by
Pleyel



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

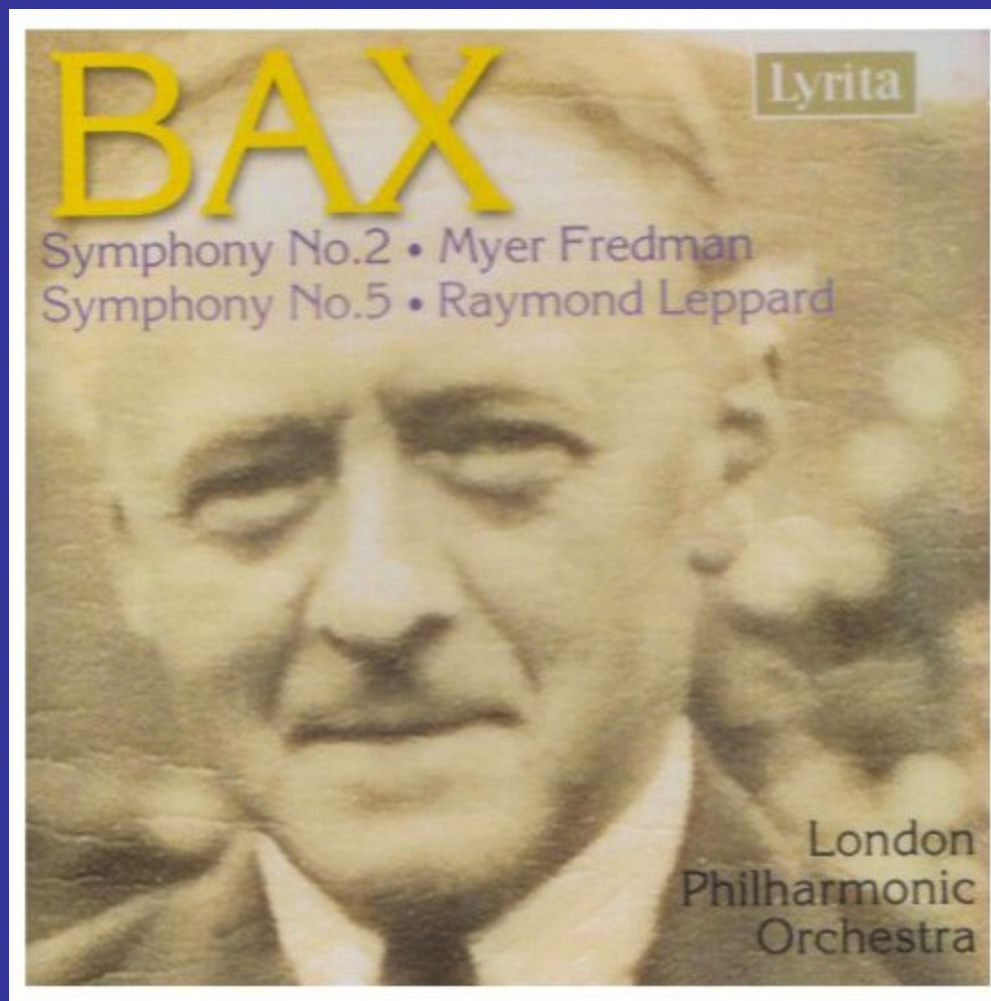
- ♪ Sir Arnold Bax
*Symphony No.5
in C sharp minor
(1932)*
- ♪ *"One of my
darkest and
stormiest works"*
- ♪ Epilogue and
Coda of Third
movement



Chorales in Romantic Orchestral Works

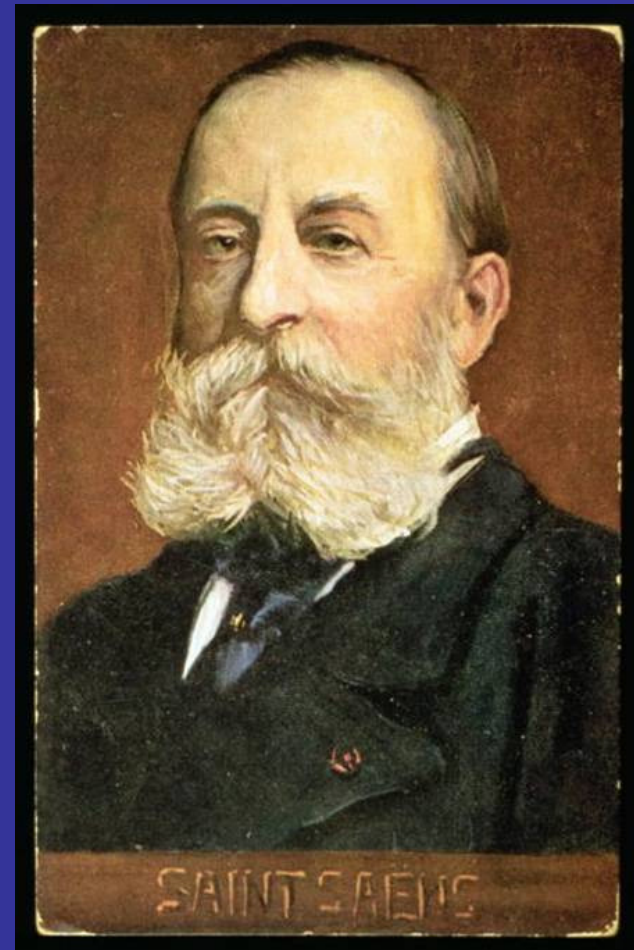
“Bax's Fifth Symphony includes a popular finale and epilogue in which a grandly reiterated chorale theme builds to a brilliant climax”

- Grove



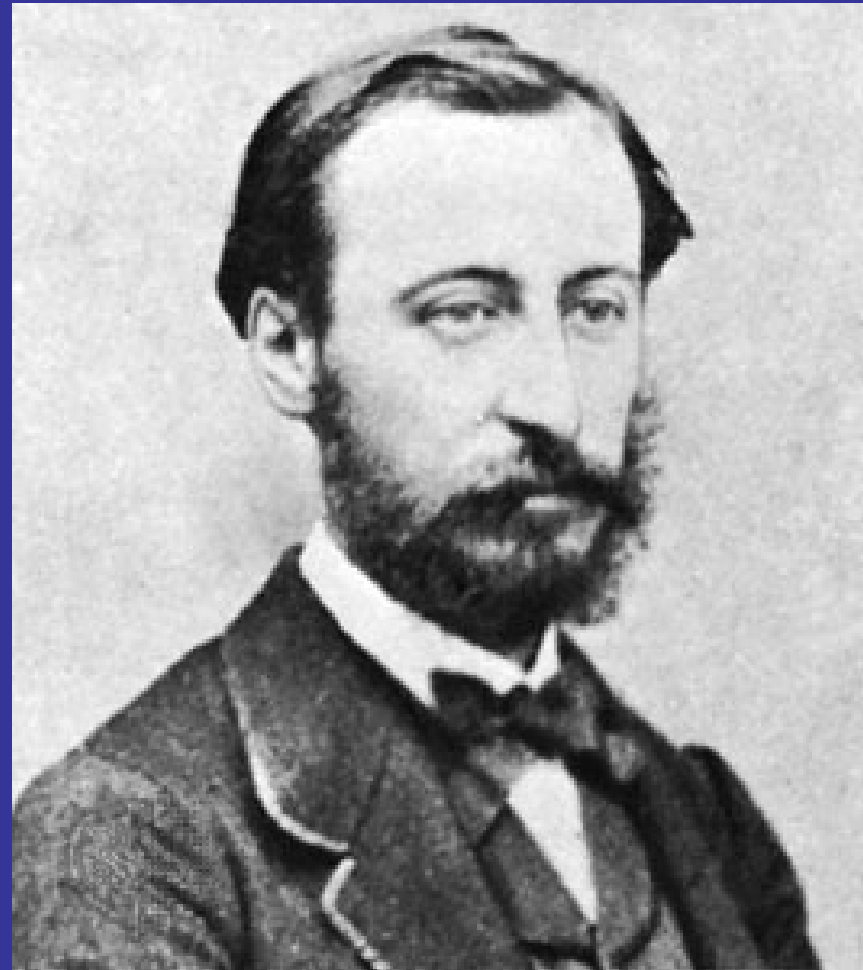
Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

- ♪ Short Biography
- ♪ Examples of chorales in two of his major works



Saint Saëns

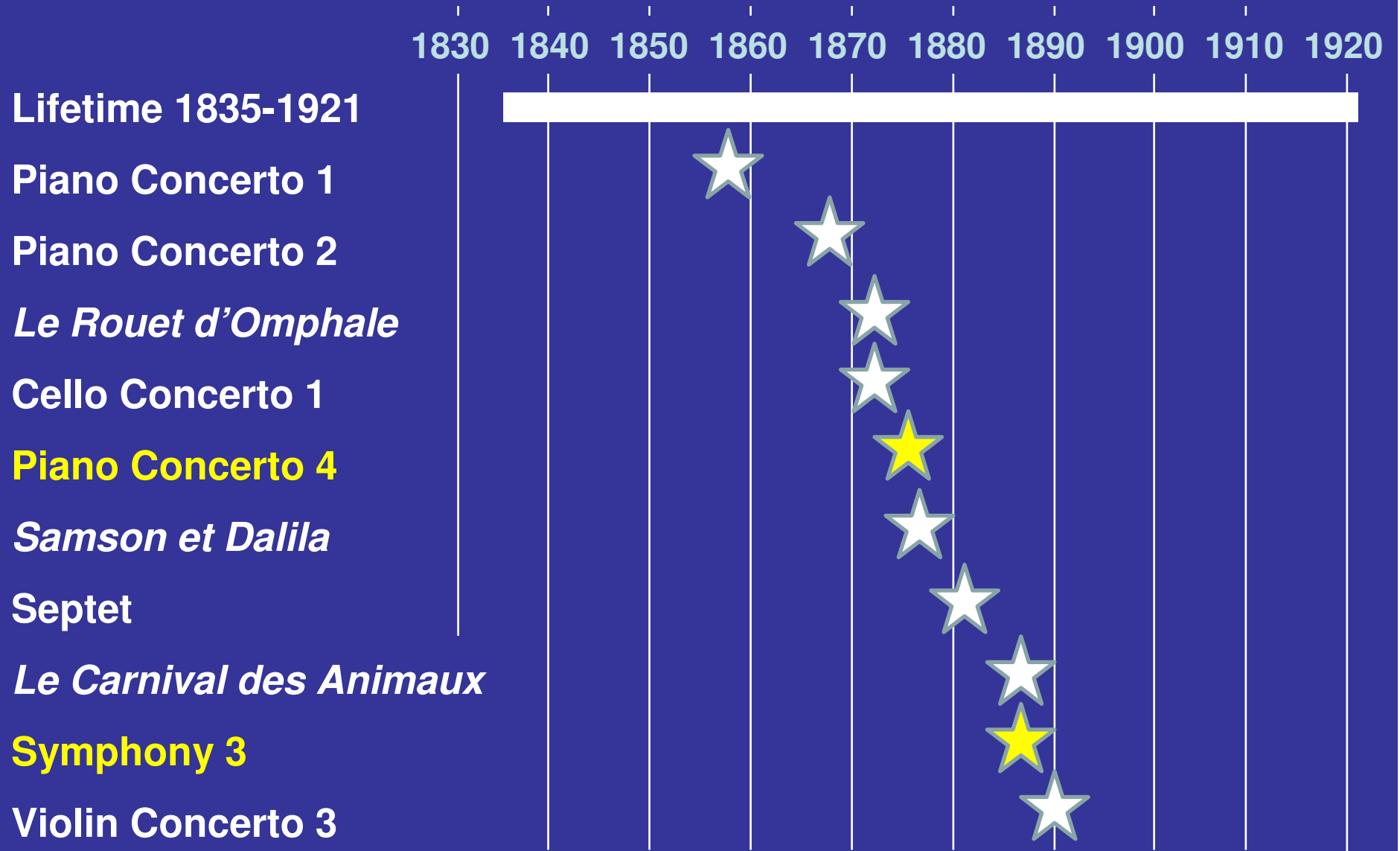
- ♪ As a young man, he was keen on progressive works by composers such as Schumann, Liszt and Wagner



Saint Saëns

- ♪ He became a traditionalist, steadfastly composing in the Romantic style
- ♪ Many of his major and finest works were concertos (10), symphonies (3) and sonatas at a time when these genres were ignored by his French contemporaries.

Saint Saëns Timeline and Major Works



Saint Saëns

- ♪ Thus he became the “Grand Old Man of French Music”
- ♪ The radical musical developments of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (e.g. Debussy, Stravinsky) horrified him



Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

Chorales feature in two of his major works:

♪ Piano Concerto No.4 (1875)

♪ Symphony No.3 (1886)

Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

Symphony No.3 (1886)

- ♪ The first part of the chorale theme is hinted at in the first movement**
- ♪ It is not until the final movement that the complete chorale is heard – first quietly, and then with the full orchestra including organ!**

Saint-Saens Symphony 3: Chorale Theme from Finale - Maestoso

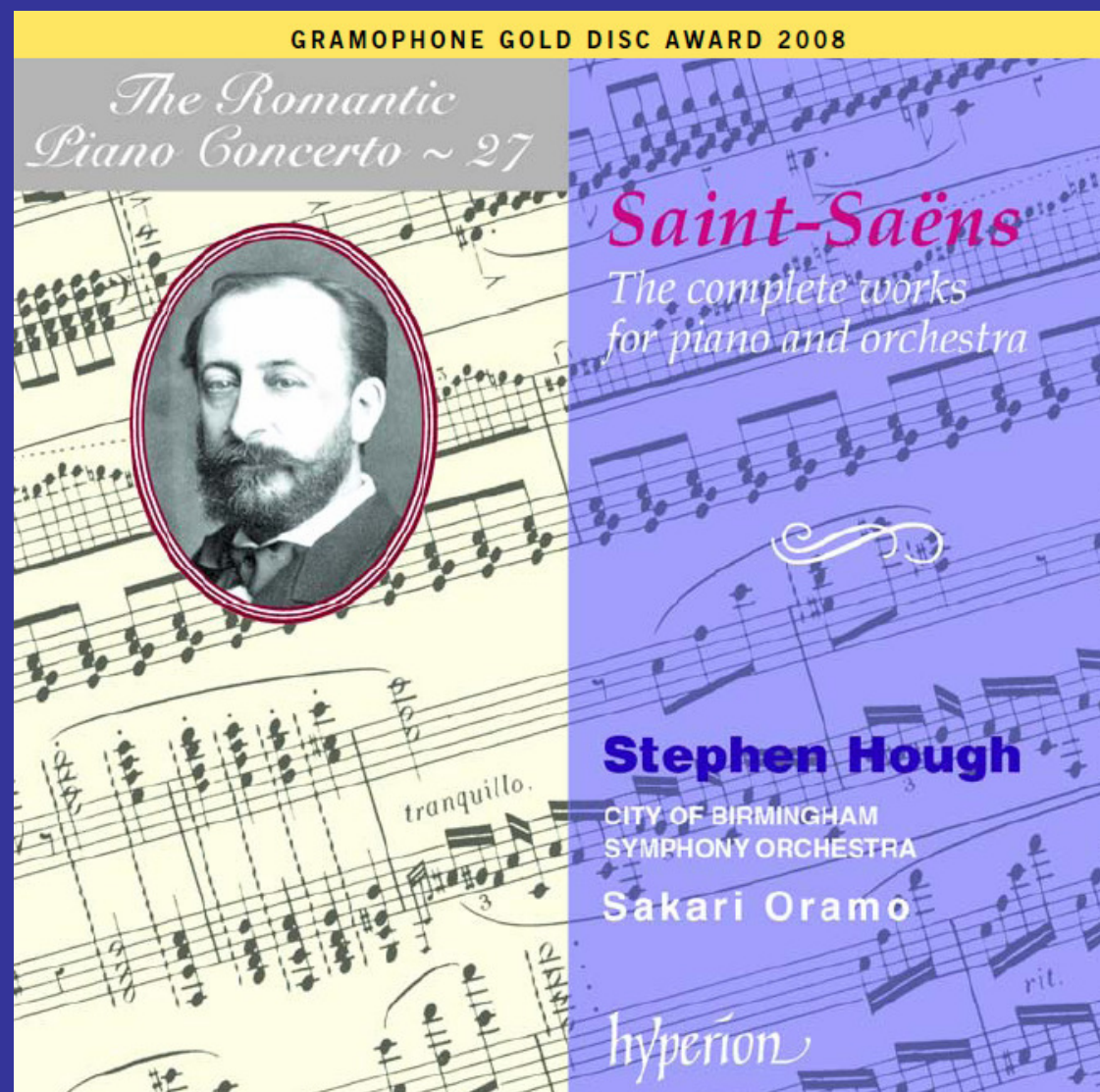
The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves feature a series of eighth notes in the first half, followed by a half note with a fermata. The piece concludes with a double bar line. Vertical accents (*v*) are placed above the first and last notes of the half note with a fermata in both staves.

The second system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and begins with a vertical accent (*v*) above the first note. The lower staff is in bass clef and also begins with a vertical accent (*v*) above the first note. Both staves feature a series of eighth notes, followed by a half note with a fermata. The piece concludes with a double bar line. Vertical accents (*v*) are placed above the first and last notes of the half note with a fermata in both staves.

The third system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and begins with a sharp sign (#) on the first line. The lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves feature a series of eighth notes, followed by a half note with a fermata. The piece concludes with a double bar line. A fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking is placed in the upper staff. Vertical accents (*v*) are placed above the first and last notes of the half note with a fermata in both staves.



Saint Saëns Piano Concerto No.4





REUTERS

Hough's CD is Gramophone's most popular

By Michael Roddy

LONDON | Thu Sep 25, 2008 10:41am EDT

(Reuters Life!) - British pianist Stephen Hough's recording of Saint-Saens piano concertos was named most popular classical CD of the last 30 years on Thursday, but he wasn't expecting a run on the record stores.

The music magazine Gramophone announced the surprise choice of a Briton's recording on a small label (Hyperion) of music by a lesser-known 19th-century French composer, with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Finnish conductor Sakari Oramo, at a ceremony in a posh London hotel.

Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

Piano Concerto 4: (1875)

- ♪ The first movement *Allegro moderato* begins with several variations on a broad theme

Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

Piano Concerto 4: First Movement

- ♪ The “celestial chorale” theme is heard serenely on woodwind part-way through the first movement



Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

Piano Concerto 4: First Movement

- ♪ The first phrase of the “celestial chorale” theme is heard romantically on the strings
- ♪ It then receives the grandiose “big-chord” treatment

Saint Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale

Piano Concerto 4: Second Movement

- ♪ This begins with a scherzo section:
Allegro vivace – lively and playful
- ♪ The *Andante* section follows,
containing a short fugal passage and a
reminder of the chorale theme
- ♪ There is no break between the second
and third movements.

