

Hymne des Marseillais

H51A for double chorus and orchestra, 1830
H51B for tenor solo, chorus and piano, 1848
Music and text by Rouget de Lisle (1760-1836)

Hymne des Marseillais

1. Allons enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
Contre nous de la tyrannie,
L'étendard sanglant est levé! (bis)
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes
Mugir ces féroces soldats?
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!

Aux armes, citoyens!
Formez vos bataillons!
Marchons, marchons!
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!

2. Que veut cette horde d'esclaves,
De traîtres, de rois conjurés?
Pour qui ces ignobles entraves,
Ces fers dès longtemps préparés? (bis)
Français! pour nous, ah! quel outrage!
Quels transports il doit exciter!
C'est nous qu'on ose méditer
De rendre à l'antique esclavage!

Aux armes, *etc.*

3. Quoi! ces cohortes étrangères
Feraient la loi dans nos foyers!
Quoi! ces phalanges mercenaires
Terrasseraient nos fiers guerriers! (bis)
Grand Dieu! par des mains enchaînées
Nos fronts sous le joug se ploieraient!
De vils despotes deviendraient
Les moteurs de nos destinées!

Aux armes, *etc.*

Hymn of the Marseillais

1. Onward, children of the nation,
The day of glory has come!
Tyranny's bloody banner
Has been raised against us! (repeat)
Do you hear those fierce soldiers
Bellowing in the fields?
They rush into your very arms
To slit your sons' and women's throats!

To arms, citizens!
Form your battalions!
March, march!
May an impure blood
Drench our furrows!

2. What means this horde of slaves,
Traitors, conspiring kings?
For whom these vile fetters,
These long-amassed irons? (repeat)
Frenchmen, for you! What an outrage!
What rage it must provoke!
We are the ones they dare to think
Of forcing back to the slavery of old!

To arms, *etc.*

3. What! Foreign cohorts
Would lay down the law in our homes!
What! Troops of mercenaries
Would defeat our proud warriors! (repeat)
Good God! Enslaved hands
Would force our heads to bow down!
Vile despots would become
The drivers of our destinies!

To arms, *etc.*

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Addendum to *Experiencing Berlioz: A Listener's Companion* by Melinda O'Neal
(Rowman & Littlefield, 2018)

(Hymne des Marseillais continued)

4. Tremblez, tyrans! et vous, perfides,
L'opprobre de tous les partis!
Tremblez! vos projets parricides
Vont enfin recevoir leurs prix! (bis)
Tout est soldat pour vous combattre,
S'ils tombent, nos jeunes héros,
La terre en produit de nouveaux,
Contre vous tout prêts à se battre!

Aux armes, *etc.*

5. Français, en guerriers magnanimes,
Portez ou retenez vos coups!
Épargnez ces tristes victimes,
À regret s'armant contre nous. (bis)
Mais le despote sanguinaire,
Mais les complices de Bouillé,
Tous ces tigres qui, sans pitié,
Déchirent le sein de leur mère...

Aux armes, *etc.*

6, Amour sacré de la Patrie,
Conduis, soutiens nos bras vengeurs!
Liberté, Liberté chérie,
Combats avec tes défenseurs! (bis)
Sous nos drapeaux que la victoire
Accoure à tes mâles accents!
Que nos ennemis expirants
Voient ton triomphe et notre gloire !

Aux armes, *etc.*

4. Tremble, tyrants! and you, faithless ones,
Disgrace of every party!
Tremble! Your parricidal plots
Will find their just reward! (repeat)
All turn soldier to fight you,
And if our young heroes fall,
The earth brings forth new ones,
Ready and eager to do battle!

To arms, *etc.*

5. Frenchmen, as generous warriors,
Strike or restrain your blows!
Spare those sorry victims,
Armed to fight us against their will. (repeat)
But as for the blood-thirsty despot,
For the accomplices of Bouillé,
All those tigers who, without pity,
Rip open their mother's breast...

To arms, *etc.*

6, Sacred love of Country,
Lead, sustain our avenging arms!
Liberty, dear Liberty,
Fight alongside your defenders! (repeat)
Beneath our banners may victory
Come running at your virile voice!
May our expiring enemies
Witness your triumph and our glory!

To arms, *etc.*

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(Hymne des Marseillais continued)

7. Nous entrerons dans la carrière
Quand nos aînés n’y seront plus,
Nous y trouverons leur poussière
Et l’exemple de leurs vertus (bis),
Bien moins jaloux de leur survivre
Que de partager leur cercueil,
Nous aurons le sublime orgueil
De les venger ou de les suivre.

7. We will enter the arena
When our elders are there no more,
There we will find their ashes
And the example of their virtues (repeat),
Far less eager to survive them
Than to share space in their casket,
We will have the proud glory
Of revenging them or dying.

Berlioz set Verse 5 only in Version A and Verse 7 only in Version B.

– Translation by Katherine Kolb

Note: This powerful “War Song for the Army of the Rhine,” as it was originally called, was written by an officer of that army, Rouget-de-Lisle, during the campaign to defend French territory from an invasion by Prussia and Austria, whose sovereigns feared the Revolution might spread. (Bouillé, mentioned in Verse 5, was a hated royalist general who collaborated with the invaders.) The song was nicknamed “La Marseillaise” in 1792 when National Guardsmen from Marseilles sang it during the assault of the Tuileries palace that led to the abolition of the monarchy. Adopted as national anthem under the First Republic in 1795, it was sidelined under the empire and the Restoration, but returned to favor after the Revolution of 1830 when, to the great delight of its composer, Berlioz orchestrated it; he produced a second version during the Revolution of 1848. No record has been found of the performance of either version during his lifetime. – KK

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