

Charles François Gounod

A Research and Information Guide

Timothy S. Flynn

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Charles François Gounod

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Preface

Charles Gounod (1818–1893) is credited with being among those composers who laid the foundation for the modern style of French music, which was influential upon composers well into the twentieth century. His musical style displays a suavity, an “emotional charm,” and a sweetness extolled by many critics and musicians alike.¹ Although best known during his life as a composer of opera and sacred music, Gounod is also recognized as the “first *mélodie* composer of genius” and consequently became a significant influence upon an entire lineage of song composers from Saint-Saëns and Fauré to Debussy and Ravel.² Celebrated during his lifetime as both a savior of sacred music and a master of opera, it is rather surprising that this important composer, who wrote in literally every genre of his day, has been relegated to footnotes in music history and is remembered for a limited number of compositions. It is the hope that this tool will inspire and support a renewed interest in this valuable composer whose music and place in history is worthy of re-evaluation.

The purpose of this tool is to offer a glimpse of some of the more important primary and secondary sources available pertaining to the life and music of Charles Gounod. This source is divided into two main sections: general studies, which explore musical and cultural elements concerning the period of Gounod’s rather long life; and the remainder of this volume is devoted to the music and biography of the composer himself. This second section is appropriately subdivided into the following categories: scholarly materials which explore Gounod’s biography (both primary and secondary sources); material pertaining to his vocal music (opera, sacred music and song); writings which investigate the instrumental music (organ, orchestral and chamber); and finally a section which examines Gounod as a writer of articles, essays, and correspondence.

In addition, this volume presents a catalog of musical manuscripts culled from a variety of sources, including valuable musical manuscripts found in the Northwestern University Music Library; and a list of letters, both to and from Gounod, which are held in various libraries in the United States and Europe. Other appendices include a selected discography organized by genre; a listing of Gounod’s French songs; a listing of his piano compositions, including those originally composed for the piano and others which Gounod himself arranged for that instrument; and a chronology of his Mass settings. The indices that follow will enable the user to search composers, compositions, authors and translators mentioned throughout the annotations. While this source is not