

# The Berlioz Belles



Symphonie fantastique's final movement, *Songe d'une nuit de sabbat*, is almost never performed as written because Berlioz called for an enormous pair of bells: 18' and 24' in diameter for the C and G bells, respectively. And getting them to toll required the services of 14 percussionists, each of whom needed a special insurance policy rider due to the peril involved in playing the instruments. But on August 8, 1998, the Dinklaker Community College Orchestra mounted a performance of the piece that indeed used those big bells. Making the production work were "the Berlioz Belles," members of the college's campanology club seen here in rehearsal. Regrettably, when the conductor cued their page 108 entrance, the Belles in their enthusiasm yanked the rope too hard. Both bells broke away from their housing and plummeted onto the instrumentalists who were unluckily seated beneath them, proving that the piece's ending cannot be successfully performed without violas, trombones, oboes, and harps.