



The Romantic Period (1820 – 1900)

Lecture by Kenny Lim



Composer's role

- Inspired by **Beethoven**
- “Free artist” mindset
- Create extended works with no immediate prospects for performance
- Due to French revolution and Napoleonic wars, aristocrats could no longer afford to maintain private opera houses, orchestras, and “composer in residence”
- Middle-class rise due to industrial revolution, public orchestra and opera houses are formed
- Some composer had wealthy patrons support

Romanticism in Music

- Continued to use the musical forms of the preceding classical era
- Preference for **expressive, songlike melody**
- Linked more closely to the other arts, particularly to **literature**
- Romantic period music are **very diverse**



Characteristic of Romantic Music

- Individuality of style
- Nationalism and exoticism
- Expressive aims and subject
 - Expressive tone color
 - Colorful harmony
- Expanded range of dynamics

Form: Miniature and Monumental

- Composer expressed themselves both in musical miniatures and in monumental compositions.
- Miniature works are meant to be heard in the intimate surroundings of a home; they met the needs of the growing number of people who owned pianos.
- Monumental works call for a huge number of performers, lasts for several hours, and were designed for large opera houses or concert halls.
- New techniques were used to unify such long works
- Thematic transformation: character of the theme is transformed

The Art Song

- Composition for **solo voice and piano**
- Originally written to be **sung and enjoyed at home**
- Fused intimately with **poetry**
- Favored poets such as **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe & Heinrich Heine**
- Composers would interpret a poem, translating its **mood, atmosphere, and imagery into music.**

Song forms

- Strophic form – repeats the same music for each stanza of the poem
- Through-composed form – new music for each stanza
- Modified strophic form – main melody is repeated for two/three stanzas but has new/varied material when text requires

Song Cycle

Romantic art songs that are sometimes grouped in a set, is called a song cycle

**Stanza – A group of lines of poetry forming a unit. (Cambridge dictionary)*

Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)



“It bears within it the seeds of everlasting youth.” – Schumann
on Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony*

- Composed more than **600 songs**, alongside symphonies, string quartets and several other works
- Famous compositions: *Gretchen am Spinnrade (Gretchen on a spinning wheel)*; *The Erlking*
- His songs embrace an **enormous variety of moods** and types
- His melodies range **from simple, folklike tunes** to complex lines that suggest **impassioned speech**.
- Uses **imaginative harmonies** to provide **poetic moments** in music: *unexpected dissonances, abrupt shifts to contrasting keys*.

- Erlkonig (The Erlking: 1815)
- Die Forelle; 1817

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

- His works are **intensely autobiographical**, usually linked with **descriptive titles, texts, or programs**.
- The **first music reviewer**
- Usually organizes his music in to **sets or cycles** – *Carnaval (Carnival)*, *Kinderszenen (Scenes of Childhood)*, *Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces)*
- His works are full of extramusical references
- Composed piano works, art songs, symphonies and chamber music
- Has great gift for melody
- Eusebius and Florestan



Fantasiestücke Op. 12 (Fantasy Pieces for Piano; 1837)

- Aufschwung (Soaring; 1837)
- Warum? (Why? 1837)

Frederic Chopin (1810 – 1849)



- Poet of the piano
- Unique melodic gift creates the illusion that the piano is singing, no composer has made the piano sound as beautiful as Chopin
- Most pieces are short, but Chopin evokes an infinite variety of moods, from melancholy to heroism.
- Elegant and graceful music
- Works such as Mazurkas and polonaises

Nocturne in E-flat major, Op. 9, No. 2

- Nocturne = night piece
- Slow, lyrical, intimate composition for piano

Etude in C minor, Op. 10, No. 12 (Revolutionary; 1831?)

- Etude is a study piece designed to help a performer master specific technical difficulties
- Inspired by the Russian takeover of Warsaw in 1831

Polonaise in A flat major; Op. 53 (1842)

- A stately processional dance for the Polish nobility

Franz Listz (1811 – 1886)



- Handsome
- Virtuoso
- Hungary's greatest pianistic showman in history
- Found new ways to exploit the piano: demand an unprecedented range of dynamics ; rapid octaves and daring leaps
- *Transcendental Etude No. 10 in F minor (1851)*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)



- Music was deeply rooted in classical tradition
- Extremely talented, on par with Mozart
- Rekindled Bach's music
- His music reflects his elegance and balance personality
- Wrote all form of romantic music except opera
- *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor (1844)*

Programme Music

- Instrumental music associated with a **story, poem, idea, or scene**
- The nonmusical element is usually specified by a title or by explanatory comments called a ***programme***.
- Became **prominent** in the romantic period, when music was closely **associated with literature**.
- Artist in all fields were intoxicated by the concept of “**union of the arts**”. Poets wanted their poetry to be musical, and musicians wanted their music to be poetic.
- Most romantic **program music** was written for **piano or for orchestra**
- Orchestral program music: **program symphony, concert overture, symphonic poem and incidental music**.

Program Symphony

- A symphony with a program
- Composition in several movements, each movement has a descriptive title
- Berlioz's Fantastic Symphony
 - (1) Reveries, Passion
 - (2) A Ball
 - (3) Scene in the Country
 - (4) March to the Scaffold
 - (5) Dream of a Witch's Sabbath

Hector Berlioz (1803 – 1869)



- Extraordinarily imaginative in treating the orchestra, creating tone colors never before heard.
- Abrupt contrast, fluctuating dynamics, and many changes in tempo
- Sound effects
- *Symphonie fantastique* (*Fantastic Symphony*)
- Invented new forms:
 - “**Dramatic symphony**” *Romeo and Juliet* (1839): Orchestra, chorus and vocal soloists
 - “**Dramatic legend**” *The Damnation of Faust* (1846): Combines opera and oratorio

Fourth Movement: March to the Scaffold

Allegretto non troppo

“He dreams that he has murdered his beloved, that he has been condemned to death and is being led to the scaffold. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now somber and fierce, now brilliant and solemn, in which the muffled sounds of heavy steps give way without transition to the noisiest outbursts. At the end, the idee fixe returns for a moment, like a last thought of love interrupted by the death blow.”

Concert Overture

- Only one movement
- Usually in Sonata form
- Modeled after the opera overture, but the work is not intended to usher in a stage work; it is an independent composition.

Symphonic poem or tone poem

- One movement
- Either in sonata, rondo, or theme and variations – as well as irregular forms
- Flexibility of forms distinguishes it from Concert overture

Incidental music

- Music intended to be performed before and during a play
- Interludes, background music, marches, and dances are all incidental music (as are today's movie scores)

Nationalism

- A revolutionary political movement, nationalism led to the unification of lands.
- The national past became a subject of intense historical investigation, and there was new enthusiasm for folksongs, dances, legends and fairytales.
- Composers gave their works a distinct national identity.
- Composers used folksongs and dances to create original melodies with a folk flavor
- Operas and program music were inspired by history, legends, and landscapes of their native lands.

Bedrich Smetana (1824 – 1884)



- His works based on folk songs, dances and legend of his native Bohemia
- *The moldau* (part of *Ma Vlast*)

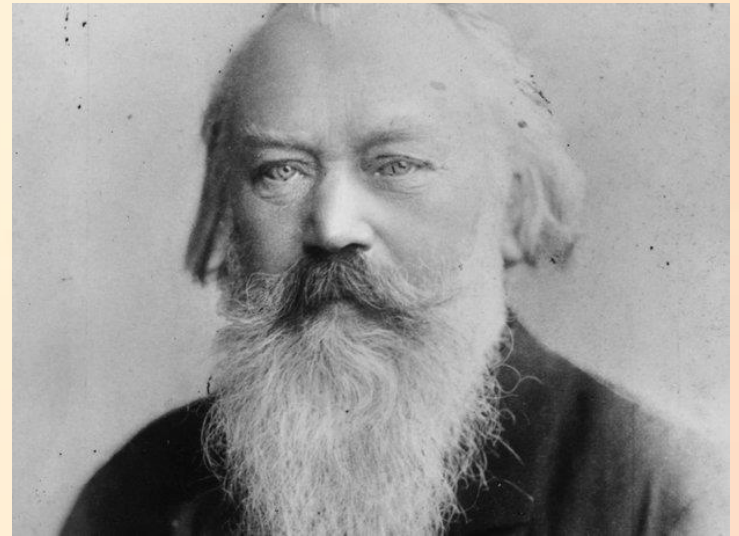
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

- Russian melodist
- His music contains beautiful melodies that stretch and leap wildly
- Style was influenced by folk songs
- Fused national and international element to produce intensely subjective and passionate music



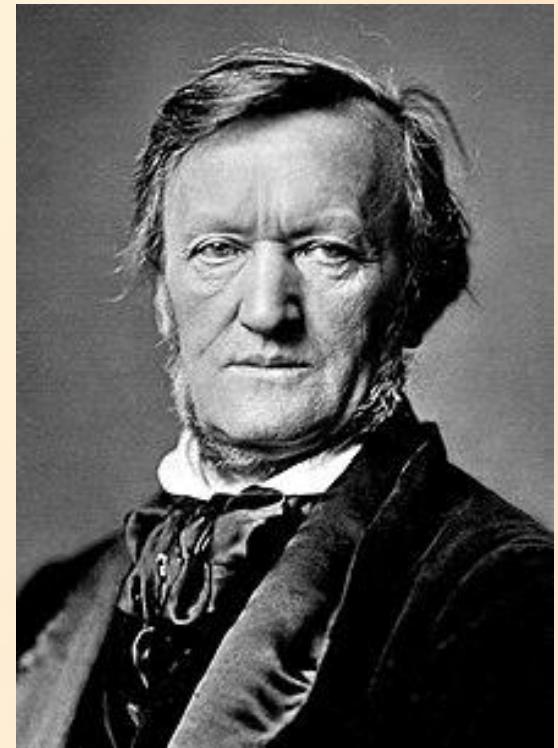
Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

- Used two against three rhythmic patterns
- Lyricism
- Rich, dark tone colors in orchestral works
- Theme and variation form
- Symphony No.3 in F major (1883)



Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883)

- Virtually monopolized the German opera
- Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung): The Ring Cycle
 - Das Rheingold
 - Die Walkure
 - Siegfried
 - Gotterdammerung



Questions

- What is Programme music?
 - *Instrumental music associated with a **story, poem, idea, or scene***
- What is Art song?
 - *Composition for Piano and Vocal*
- Name two composer who represents Nationalism in their works
 - *Smetana & Tchaikovsky*