

DT501/1 History of Music: Classical/Romantic

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Lecture 13: Schubert and Early
Romanticism

Romanticism

- Origins
 - a product of the widespread disillusionment and cultural pessimism after the French Revolution.
 - a reaction against the increasing industrialisation and rationalisation of everyday life.
- Characteristics
 - ‘inwardness’: prioritises subjectivity and emotional expression over reason, objectivity and order.
 - suspicion of the enlightenment claim that ‘truth’ lies in reason. ‘Truth’ becomes subjective, to be found within oneself.
 - fascination with the ‘irrational’; myth, dreams, the supernatural, an idealised past.
- Implications for art
 - emergence of the modern conception of the artist as a messenger of ‘higher’ aesthetic values rather than simply entertainment.
 - artworks valued as objects of contemplation in and of themselves without recourse to social function: church, aristocracy, etc.



Caspar David Friedrich: *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818)



Josef Danhauser: *Liszt and the Piano* (1840)

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)



- Born in Vienna, the son of a schoolmaster.
- Studies piano, singing, violin and organ and takes composition lessons from Salieri.
- Leaves school at 16 to undertake teacher training and returns to teach at his father's school.
- Encouraged to give up teaching for full-time composition in 1816.
- Influenced by Beethoven but also by Rossini who 'conquered' Vienna in Autumn 1817.
- Compositional maturity after 1819.

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)



- From 1816 reputation spreads in Vienna.
- Establishes himself as a 'freelance' composer from publications and small commissions.
- 1823 — contracts syphilis from an encounter with a prostitute.
- Only dedicated concert to his works takes place in a small concert room owned by the Society of Friends of Music.
- 1827 — serves as one of the torchbearers at Beethoven's funeral
- 1828 — dies at the age of thirty one.

Schubert's Style

- Melody — Schubert favours long lyrical melodies rather than the short motivic ideas often associated with Beethoven. Rather than an all-pervasive process of development, the main thematic areas are given over to the full presentation of memorable themes.
- Harmony — instead of key relationships based on the circle of fifths facilitated through the use of the dominant, Schubert explores cycles of thirds which give his music an expansive, spacious quality. Also important are his alternations of the major/minor modes and more unusual modulations of a semitone.
- Form — while Schubert still makes use of the classical forms inherited from his predecessors, these are expanded by his harmonic innovations. Especially notable is his employment of a three-key exposition in sonata form movements.



Moritz von Schwind: *A Schubertiade*

Prescribed Listening

Franz Schubert:

Piano Sonata No. 21 in B-flat Major, D.960 (first movement)

Symphony No 8 in B minor, 'Unfinished', (first movement)

Prescribed Reading

Relevant sections on Schubert in Chapters 25 and 26 of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*

Taruskin, Richard: *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 79—118.

For other aspect of his music and legacy see:

Gibbs, Christopher H: *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).