

Romanticism / Beethoven

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Characteristics of Romantic Aesthetics

- Beautiful vs. sublime
- Imitation / representation vs. expression
- Outward vs. Inward
- Cult of genius; having one vs. being one
- Rise of museums, extension into music appreciation: “canon”
- Esp. after French Revolution (1789), rise in cultural capital of bourgeois (rather than aristocracy)

Music as sacred

- Sacralization of concert culture and performance practice
 - “where previously the work served the performer, now the performer and the critic too were to serve the work.” (Taruskin, p. 471)
- Abandonment of improvisation, rise of the conservatory.
- Prestige of composer over performer

Romanticism and Music

- Increase in prestige of the art form itself; what formerly was seen as a disadvantage for music (its inability to represent) is now its greatest distinguishing feature.
- Hoffman, but especially Schopenhauer

Nationalism

- *Geist*
- The triumph of the German identity especially; “unmarked” style.
- Esteban Buch, *Beethoven's 9th: A Political History*
 - 19th century French nationalism
 - “freiheit” schöner?
 - Third Reich
 - Anthem of Rhodesia (until 1970)

Philosophical Climate

- **Kant:** aesthetics has special status as the site of the harmony of “imagination” and “understanding”
- **Hegel:** Art is part of the operation of *geist*, a world-driving force that animates history. Art is “the unfolding of truth.” cf. Keats, 1819, *Ode on A Grecian Urn*
- **Schiller:** art, specifically the fine arts (not just is prerequisite to a theory of morality.
- **Schopenhauer:** Art bypasses cognition (“the Idea”) and expresses something essential in an unmediated way (“things in themselves”). Engagement with “eastern” philosophy, emphasis on the sublime. Hierarchy of artistic forms, with music at the top – but only “absolute music.” (more on this later...)
 - it does not express this or that individual or particular joy, this or that sorrow or pain or horror or exaltation or cheerfulness or peace of mind, but rather joy, sorrow, pain, horror, exaltation, cheerfulness and peace of mind as such in themselves, abstractly... (*World as Will and Representation*, 289)
- **Nietzsche:** *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*. Philosophy itself aestheticized, Wagner lionized (later repudiated). “Philosophy that sings and sizzles.” (Walter Kaufman) Radical subjugation of drama to music.
- **Frankfurt School:** Art is where you can decode/unearth the truth about social problems. (more on this later, esp. in Schoenberg vs. Stravinsky).

ETA Hoffman

- (go to PDF – p. 127, 133)

Schiller AEM, letter 2

I hope that I shall succeed in convincing you that this matter of art is less foreign to the needs than to the tastes of our age; **nay, that, to arrive at a solution even in the political problem, the road of aesthetics must be pursued, because it is through beauty that we arrive at freedom.**

But the voice of our age seems by no means favorable to art, at all events **to that kind of art to which my inquiry is directed.** The course of events has given a direction to the genius of the time that threatens to remove it continually further from the ideal of art. **For art has to leave reality, it has to raise itself bodily above necessity and neediness; for art is the daughter of freedom, and it requires its prescriptions and rules to be furnished by the necessity of spirits and not by that of matter.** But in our day it is necessity, neediness, that prevails, and bends a degraded humanity under its iron yoke. **Utility is the great idol of the time,** to which all powers do homage and all subjects are subservient. In this great balance of utility, the spiritual service of art has no weight, and, deprived of all encouragement, it vanishes from the noisy Vanity Fair of our time. **The very spirit of philosophical inquiry itself robs the imagination of one promise after another, and the frontiers of art are narrowed, in proportion as the limits of science are enlarged.**

Schiller, AEM, letter 22

Exactly because its "aesthetic disposition" does not exclusively shelter any separate function of humanity, it is favourable to all without distinction; nor does it favour any particular functions, precisely because it is the foundation of the possibility of all. All other exercises give to the mind some special aptitude, but for that very reason give it some definite limits; only the aesthetical leads him to the unlimited.

Every other condition, in which we can live, refers us to a previous condition, and requires for its solution a following condition; only the aesthetic is a complete whole in itself, for it unites in itself all conditions of its source and of its duration. Here alone we feel ourselves swept out of time, and our humanity expresses itself with purity and integrity as if it had not yet received any impression or interruption from the operation of external powers.

Schiller's first stanza of *An die Freude*, Beethoven's Addition

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!
Deine Zauber binden wieder
Was die Mode streng geteilt*;
Alle Menschen werden Brüder*
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere
anstimmen,
und freudenvollere.

Joy, beautiful spark of divinity,
Daughter from Elysium,
We enter, drunk with fire,
Heavenly One, thy sanctuary!
Your magic joins again
What custom strictly divided;
All people become brothers,
Where your gentle wing abides.

Oh friends, not these sounds!
Let us instead strike up more
pleasing
and more joyful ones!

Beethoven periods and biographical trivia

- **Virtuoso.** “Classical”
 - Op. 13, “**pathetique**” sonata
 - **Op. 19, piano concerto in Bb**
- **Struggle with deafness.** “heroic” (i.e. post “Heiligenstadt Testament” of 1802)
 - *Eroica*, (Symphony No. 3, Op. 55)
 - 5th Symphony, “Fate”
 - 6th Symphony, “Pastoral” – like *Eroica*, explicit extra-musical reference.
- **Depression.** Late period
 - String quartets (esp. 131 and 132)
 - Taruskin: “His creative activities appeared now to take place in a transcendent space to which only he had access.”

Vocational shifts and aesthetic shifts

- No longer has responsibilities to court or church (or anyone). Can write “for posterity.”
- Imperative to entertain (and to improvise) no longer holds.
- *Missa solemnis* commissioned as a part of elevation of Archduke Rudolph to cardinal, but it's too long to be practically useful in any ceremony.

The two sides of Romanticism, in Beethoven

- Universalism, largeness (Hegel? Kant?): 9th Symphony
- Inwardness, individualism, idiosyncrasy, autonomy : the late quartets. e.g. String Quartet No. 15, Op. 132 in A minor, III

Quartet No. 15, Mov. 3

- “Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart”
 - “Holy thanks giving song of a convalescent, to the diety, in the Lydian mode”
- “Neue Kraft fühlend” (feeling new strength)
- “mit innigster Empfindung” (with deepest feeling? Feeling? Emotion?)
 - Innig – inniger – **innigst**
 - Emp + *finden* = *to find*