

# HUMA 1102: Enjoyment of Classical Music

Lecture 16: Revolutions and Music

# Revolutions that shaped the Western world

- **German Peasants' War** or the **Great Peasants' Revolt** of 1524–1525, in part an outgrowth of the religious revolution of the **Protestant Reformation**, and linked with the decline of feudalism
- **Age of Revolutions**: mid-18th century to mid-19th century, linked to the **Age of Enlightenment** whose roots were in the **Scientific Revolution**:
  - **American Revolution**, 1765–1783
  - **French Revolution**, 1789–1799, and subsequent revolutions in 1830 and 1848
  - **Revolutions of 1848** or the **Springtime of Peoples**
- **Russian Revolution**, 1917–1923

# Peasants' Revolt and the Reformation

- Culmination of more than a century of localized uprisings against **oppressive feudal rule**, excessive extraction of labor and taxes, arbitrary justice, and restrictions on hunting, fishing, and other use of lands reserved for the nobility.
- In part religiously inspired, incorporating aspects of the emerging **Protestant Reformation** and the rhetoric of **Martin Luther**.
- Luther, however, believed that **a farmer's main purpose in life is to work the earth and the feudal lords' duty is to keep the peace**. He sided with the rulers and their allies in the Roman Catholic church: peasants "must be sliced, choked, stabbed, secretly and publicly, by those who can, like one must kill a rabid dog."
- Democratically run, poorly funded and untrained peasant army was no match to the established armies of the European aristocracy.
- 100,000 out of 300,000 participants in the revolt were killed, the leaders captured and many of them tortured before being executed. Conditions after the failed revolution ended up being more repressive than before.
- **Religious wars** continued to ravage Europe for the following two centuries.

# Luther's hymns

- In addition to being a theologian, Luther was a trained musician, often described as a composer, who wrote and adapted dozens of melodies to be sung as **hymns**.
- Luther wrote his first known hymn, “Ein neues Lied wir heben an”, after two of his followers were burned on the stake in Brussels. He soon recognized the power of music as a tool of propagating a revolutionary message.
- Making the religious service and sacred texts understandable and relevant to the congregation was a key aspect of the Reformation. The function of hymns was to get the congregation to participate in the service. Luther's hymns are sung to this day.
- Hymns have also been used as *musical raw material, a source of inspiration, and for religious references* by composers to this day. The most famous examples are Bach's chorale harmonizations, and his use of chorale melodies as **cantus firmi**.

# “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”

- “A Mighty Fortress is our God”, sometimes called “the battle hymn of the Reformation”, based on Psalm 46.
  - One of Bach’s (1685–1750) harmonizations, in which the melody is clear and easy to follow in the soprano line.
- Use of the same melody by early Baroque composer Heinrich Schütz, in the Reformation Mass of 1617.
- A more complex usage of the melody as a cantus firmus in Bach’s church cantata by the same name, 1723.
- Felix Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 5, “Reformation”, 1830. IV Andante con moto – Allegro vivace – Allegro maestoso
- Igor Stravinsky: “Grand Chorale” from *The Soldier’s Tale* (1918)



# The French Revolution

- 1789–1799: The overthrow of the absolute monarchy and end of the feudal, estate-based social order, institution of broader suffrage, Catholic Church reigned in under state control, establishment of the French First Republic.
- Revolutionary France was at war with other European monarchies who, after the execution for King Louis XVI, were terrified the revolution could not be contained.
- Revolutionary fervor, paranoia about the presence of domestic counter-revolutionary royalists, and antipathy towards the clergy lead the to the Reign of Terror, a series of public executions and massacres in 1792–1794.
- In 1799, revolutionary general Napoleon Bonaparte takes power in a coup. In 1804, he crowns himself Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, becoming a dictator.
- Napoleon finally loses his hold on power in 1814, after a disastrous attempt to invade Russia, giving way to the period of Restoration.
- The subsequent revolutions of 1830 (“July Revolution”), 1848 (across Europe), and finally the fall of Napoleon III in 1870, leads to the establishment of the French Third Republic.

# Beethoven: Symphony No. 3, “Eroica”

- Among Beethoven’s most noted works, setting the stage for his musically revolutionary middle period.
- Begins to set the Romantic and modern standard for the genre of symphony.
- “Sinfonia eroica” means “heroic symphony”; it was originally dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte who Beethoven saw as a revolutionary hero of the democratic and anti-royalist ideals of the Enlightenment.
- Musical patrons were mainly members of the nobility which made a statement such as this awkward and potentially inflammatory; Beethoven went back and forth with the dedication and the title (at one point calling the work “Bonaparte”).
- When Beethoven heard news that Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, Beethoven went into a rage, tore the title page in half and threw it on the floor.

# Beethoven: Symphony No. 3, “Eroica”

- A symphony in four movements, in the “heroic” key of Eb major. First movement in sonata form. It opens with loud, repeated chords; the climax of the exposition is an interruption of the musical flow with the aggressive repetition of an accented, dissonant chord six times. Tension, aggressive and repetitive sforzandos, and drama characterize the movement.



- The second slow movement is a “funeral march for a hero”.





# November Uprising in Poland

- Also known as the **Polish Russian War of 1830–1831**, or the **Cadet Revolution**, the **November Uprising** happened as result of Poland's partitioning out of existence between Russia and two other European powers, starting in the late 18th century.
- Russian-controlled Poland had a high degree of autonomy: an elected parliament, courts, and its own constitution, one of the most progressive in Europe.
- Gradually, Poland's rights were rolled back and the constitution ignored by Russia. Press censorship was imposed, followed by the introduction of secret police.
- Russia's attempt to use the Polish military to crush the **Second French Revolution** was the final igniting incident. Following a revolt by cadet officers, armed citizens eventually captured the Warsaw arsenal and forced Russian troops out of the city.
- All-out war with Russia was joined by some neighboring populations, declared with a demand for a “king [who will] respect the sworn guarantees of civic freedom”.
- Money was raised for the Polish cause in France and United States, but governments remained cautious and neutral.

# Chopin's "Revolutionary Etude"

- **Frédéric Chopin** (1810–1849) was a famous pianist and composer at the age of 20 when, weeks before the insurrection, he left Poland to tour Europe. Part of the extensive “brain-drain” that resulted from the Great Emigration, Chopin never returned to Warsaw.
- Crushing of the Polish uprising was a formative moment in Chopin's personal and artistic life. Though he assumed a French version of his name in his adopted hometown of Paris, eventually receiving French citizenship, he was a fervent Polish nationalist to the end.
- Etude Op. 10, No. 12 in C minor, “Revolutionary Etude” or “Etude on the Bombardment of Warsaw”, was written in 1831. The set is dedicated “to my friend, Franz Liszt”.
- Chopin was an early musical celebrity. With his volatile and public love life, his connection to a revolutionary movement, and his early death (at 39) make him a quintessential character of the Romantic period.

# Chopin's “Revolutionary Etude”



# Next week:

- Tuesday: Quiz on instruments. Review the following:
- PowerPoint and reading/listening from Lecture 11
- This includes from Chapter 2 – “Pitch, Dynamic, and Tone Color”, pp. 15–24, *Instruments*
- You can also prepare with the interactive website *The Orchestra: A User's Manual*  
<http://andrewhugill.com/OrchestraManual/>

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# LISTEN

SEVENTH  
EDITION



Joseph Kerman • Gary Tomlinson