Romantic Era
1820-1900

Romantic Ideals

Classical vs. Romantic
- Classical
  - Reason
  - Rules/form
  - Monuments of ancient Greeks and Romans
- Romantic
  - Emotionalism
  - Formal rules immaterial to self-expression
  - Liberty of man and wonders of nature

Music and Nationalism
- Definition- pride in national culture
- Movement that musically emphasized indigenous qualities, incorporating folk songs, native scales, dance rhythms, and local instrument sounds
- Music was proudest expression of national spirit (national anthems and marching binds)

Program Music vs. Absolute Music

Program Music
- Instrumental musical, usually for the symphony
- Recreate a story, play, event, nature, or painting
- Evoke particular feelings and associations
  - Lyrical- love
  - Dissonance- conflict
  - Trumpet- arrival of hero

Absolute Music
- Instrumental music free of a text or any pre-existing program
- Opposite of program music
Romantic Style

Melody
- Broad, powerful streams intended to sweep the listener away
- Expressive, lyrical and grandiose climaxes
- Phrases are longer, rhythmically flexible, and irregular in shape

Harmony
- Colorful harmony to create emotional intensity
- Chromatic notes
- Distinct modulations
- Dissonance creates greater anguish and drive to resolution

Tempo
- Rubato - Italian for “robbed”
- A tempo mark indicating the performer may take or steal great liberties
- Exaggerated flow of music
- Gives artistic freedom to performer

Romantic Orchestra

Woodwinds
- New fingering mechanisms made it easier
- Wood flute replaced by silver
- Piccolo, English horn, and contrabassoon frequently included

Brass
- Orchestra includes full brass section
- Horn liked its rich, dark tone (associated with nature and hunt)
- Valves added to horn and trumpet
- Trombones added by Beethoven and became standard
- Tuba invented and replaces ophicliede
- Inventors and composers experienced with new brass instruments

Percussion
- Became a standard feature
- Large variety of new instruments utilized

Conductor
- Required someone to coordinate
- Became important feature of orchestra
Romantic Genres

Program Symphony
- Symphony with 3, 4, or 5 movements
- Movements meant to tell a story
- “Symphonie fantastique” - Berlioz
- “Faust” Symphony - Liszt

Symphonic Poem
- One movement work for orchestra that gives musical expression to emotions and events associated with a story
- Also called Tone Poem
- “Romeo and Juliet” - Tchaikovsky
- “Les Preludes” - Liszt

Overture
- Introductory movement for orchestra that precedes an opera, oratorio, or dance suite
- Became very popular and were soon performed by themselves

Concert Overture
- Independent, one movement work
- Usually program music for concert hall
- Not designed to precede opera
- Little difference between symphonic poem

Incidental Music
- Music inserted between acts during important scenes of a play to add extra dimension to drama
- “Incidental Music to Midsummer Night’s dream” - Mendelssohn

Art Song
- Strong bond between music and poetry
- Composers sought to intensify poetic sentiments
- Music could express ideas that words alone could not
- Composition for solo voice and piano
- Has high artistic aspirations
- Lied - German term for Art Song

Character Piece
- Miniature form usually for piano
- Purpose - to capture the essence of one single mood, sentiment, or emotion
- Variety of titles (bagatelle, humoresque, romance, intermezzo, impromptu)
The Piano - Technological Advancements

- Range extended to 88 keys
- Cast iron frame
  - Allowed greater tension to be placed on the strings
  - Increased the volume of sound
  - Cross-stringing which blended tone
- Two pedals
  - Soft pedal which shifted the keyboard so the hammers would not strike all the strings of a particular pitch and would play softer dynamics
  - Sustaining pedal which allowed some strings to sound while others were being struck
Romantic Composers

Franz Schubert (1797-1827)

- 600 lieder
- Lived a bohemian life
- Also composed symphonies and chamber music
- Most famous for art songs
- Lieder as performed at “Schubertiades”
  - Took place in parlors of friends
  - Schubert accompanied various songs
  - Only Schubert’s music was performed
- Born in Vienna
- Father was a schoolteacher and he was expected to enter teaching
- Obvious musical talent at young age
- Father taught him violin
- Older brother gave him piano lessons
- Also given composition lessons
- He enrolled in a teachers college after his voice changed (1812)
- Excused from the military service because he was too short (less than 5ft)
- Taught in his father’s school for three years
- He earned a small income from the sale of a few songs although it was not enough to live off. He would compose in the morning and then perform for friends in evening.
- “Erlking”
  - Composed at age 17 in one night
  - most famous song
  - text a ballad by Goethe
  - dramatic tale of horror
- “The Trout”
  - Mundane poem by Daniel Schubart about fishing
  - Piano accompaniment like rippling stream
- “Piano Quintet in A major”
  - Called “The trout”
  - Piano, violin, viola, cello, and double bass
  - 5 movements
- Schubert served as a torchbearer for Beethoven’s funeral
- Contracted syphilis in 1822
- Some of his greatest works during his last 6 years of life
Romantic Composers

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

- Known as poet of the piano
- Considered a national hero in Poland
- Made career in Paris
- Born near Warsaw, Poland
- Father-french, mother-polish
- Received an excellent education
- Attended Warsaw conservatory
- Deported to Warsaw in 1830 to go to Vienna and Paris
- Established friendship with Liszt
- Disliked the life of public virtuoso
  - Introverted personality and poor health
  - Played private musical evening in the home of aristocracy
  - Gave lessons for an exorbitant fee that only wealthy could afford
- Compositions
  - Primarily for piano
  - Many compositions were based on folk dances of Poland
  - “Mazurka in Bb major Opus 7 No. 1”
    - Composed in 1832
    - Mazurka was a fast polish dance
    - Harmony used drones to imitate bagpipes
  - “Nocturne in C# minor Opus 27 No. 2”
    - Composed in 1835
    - Nocturne (night piece)
    - Slow and dreamy with chromaticism
- Met George Sand in 1836
  - Actually Baronness Aurore Dudevant
  - George Sand was a pen name
  - Author of many Romantic novels
  - Adopted man’s names, wore men’s clothing
- Chopin made tour of England and Scotland (1848)
  - Financially profitable
  - Physical demands weakened his precarious health
  - Died in 1849 of tuberculosis
  - Buried in Paris cemetery in a safety coffin
  - He was scared of being buried early
Romantic Composers

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Family background and education
  - Born near Grenoble, France
  - Father was a physician who taught Hector to read Virgil's Aeneid in Latin
  - Little early musical training
  - Barely any training in theory and counterpoint
  - Never was a virtuoso on any instrument
  - Age 17 - went to Paris to study medicine
  - Repulsed by a cadaver rooms
  - Found the allure of music irresistible
  - Decided to become a great composer
  - Parents weren’t supportive
  - Cut off living expenses
  - Studied composition at Paris Conservatory
  - Wrote reviews and articles for literary journals
  - Traveled throughout Europe conducting his music

- Compositional Style
  - Called for big orchestras
  - Experiment with new instruments
  - Modified musical forms to suit each compositions
  - Musicians thought his music was bizarre and monstrous
  - One of the greatest orchestrators of all time

- “Symphony Fantastique” - 1830
  - Harriet Smithson was a Shakespearean actress performing in Paris in 1827
  - Berlioz immediately smitten with Smithson
  - Swooned at the sight of her and wrote passionate love letters
  - Smithson refused to meet Berlioz
  - Deeply disappointed, Berlioz eventually turned his attentions elsewhere
  - The intense experience of rejected love provided stimulus for the program
  - Composed between 1827-1830
  - Berlioz wrote the program himself
  - First complete program symphony
  - Revolutionary aspects
    - 5 movements
    - Unifying theme: idee fix (fixed idea)
    - New instruments: ophicleide, English horn, harp, cornet
    - New playing effects: col legno, pedal tones in basses, mutes, & glissando
Romantic Composers

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
- The most classical of the great romantic composers
- Used traditional forms
- Harmony is colorful without being revolutionary
- Orchestration is distinctive
- Influence of romanticism is seen in his use of program music
- Important conductor
  - Established the pattern that an orchestra should perform a repertoire of musical masterpieces from the past as well as new compositions
- Family & Early life
  - Born in Berlin
  - Family was wealthy, father was banker, grandfather was philosopher
  - Educated by private tutors
  - Exhibited extraordinary musical talent
  - Lessons in piano and composition
  - Small orchestra was hired on Sunday to play his compositions
  - Mendelssohn home was a gathering place prominent poets, philosophers, and scientists
- Performance of Bach’s “St. Mathews Passion” 1829
  - First performance in 100 years
  - Returned music of Bach to public attention
- Spent six years traveling across Europe (1829-1835)
- Appointed music director of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig (1835)
  - Conducted the orchestra for 12 years
  - Turned into one of the finest ensembles
- Composed the incidental music for “A midsummer nights dream” in 1843
  - Wedding march
- Died prematurely from a stroke at age 38
Romantic Composers

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

- A tragic genius
- Remarkably creative composer
- Best works are miniature compositions
- Large scale works
- Afflicted with increasing mental illness
- Marriage with Clara one of the great love stories in history of music
- Enrolled in university to study law and hated it
- Determined to become a piano virtuoso
  - Moved to Leipzig
  - Ended up permanently damaging his right hand, ending his dream
  - Met and fell in love with Clara Wieck, his teachers daughter
  - Married her in 1840
- Began to focus his creative energies on compositions and music criticism
- Championed new artists and composers
  - 1853- invited a 20 year old Brahms to live in his home
- Bipolar
  - Symptoms were apparent from his earliest years
  - Mood swings affected creative output
  - Some years would produce incredible number of works
  - Other times, he composed almost nothing
  - Began to hear voices
  - Attempted suicide
  - Committed himself to insane asylum
  - Died in 1856

Romantic Opera

Italian Bel Canto Opera

- Literally means “beautiful singing”
- Emphasizes beautiful vocal melodies
- Exalted leading operatic singers
  - Lyric soprano played heroine
  - Called prima donna or diva
- Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini
- Emphasized compositional style of Verdi and Puccini
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)
• Most popular opera composer throughout Europe
• His operas are still performed more than any
• Was not a child prodigy
• Rejected by Conservatory of Music in Milan
• Returned to city of his youth and became town band director
• “Oberto”- 1839 first opera
• “Nabucco”- 1842
• Became a leader of the movement for Italian independence
  o Many operas on political subjects
  o Elected to countries first parliament in 1861
  o Elected to senate in 1874
• Traveled throughout Europe during early to mid-1850’s
  o “Rigoletto”
  o “La Traviata”
• Returned to Italy in 1857
  o Reduced pace of composition
  o Wealthy and retired
  o Only composed when subject was personally interesting
    o “Aida”
• Two operas based on Shakespearean dramas
  o Othello (1887) and Falstaff (1893)
• Last opera composed when he was 80
• Was respected by national institution at his death
• 300,000 attended the procession of his casket

Opera in Germany
• Italian opera performed in Germany prior to 1820
• Singspiel “singing play”
  o Common with Broadway
  o Topical humor
  o Solo songs
  o Energetic choral numbers
  o Spoken dialogue

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
• Exerted enormous influence on the musical style of the other late 19th cent. Composers
• One of the most determined visionaries in history of music
• Career
  o Moved to Paris (1839) but was not successful
Dresden
- First opera- “Rienzi” was performed there in 1842
- Offered post of opera director for the city
- Fled Dresden in 1848 due to accumulated debt and radical political activities

Switzerland
- Lived in exile
- Worked on many operas
- Composed “Tristan & Isolde”

Musical Style
- Gesamtkunstwerk- total art work
- Realistic drama
- Seamless flow of music between solo singing and declamation
- Tuneful arias removed
- Orchestra part heightened
- Provided musical cues to opera

Leitmotif
- Signature tune
- Motive returns repeatedly throughout opera, facilitating the drama’s progress
- Most often played by orchestra
- Suggests subconscious thought of the character
- “Tristan & Isolde”
  - 1857-1859 composed
  - 1864 premiered
  - Story based on Arthurian Legend
  - Full of leitmotifs
  - Cadences often avoided and delayed
  - Dissonance placed at climax
  - Heightened sense of pain and anguish

King Ludwig II of Bavaria
- Rescued Wagner from financial ruin
- Encouraged him to complete the Ring Cycle
  - Series of 4 lengthy operas
  - Based on Germanic mythology
- Provided the money to build the Bayreuth Festival Theater
  - Built according to Wagner’s specifications
  - Devoted solely to production of Wagner music

Verismo Opera
- Part of late romantic movement
- Social realism
- Depicts the grimy everyday life of industrialized 19th century Europe
Giacomo Puccini (1859-1924)
- Heir to tradition of Verdi
- Generations of Puccini family had been composers and musicians
- Father and grandfather had composed operas
- Earlier ancestors had composed religious music for local cathedral
- Graduated from Milan Conservatory
- “Manon Lescaut”- 1893 first triumph
- Further success followed
- Grew wealthy, famous, and a bit complacent
- Composed less frequently
- “La Beheme”
  - Most famous opera
  - Explores the emotions of love, hope and despair

Romantic Genres

Late Romantic Symphony
- Followed the four movement format of the classical symphony
- Late romantic alterations
  - 3rd movements- light contrasting style
  - Finale took more serious tone
  - Length was increased

Late Romantic Concertos
- Classical 3 movement plan
- Length doubled

Romantic Composers

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
- Family Background
  - Born in Hamburg, Germany
  - Father street musician and beer hall fiddler
  - Formal education didn’t go beyond primary school
  - Provided with best available training in piano and music theory
  - Studied Bach, Haydn, and Beethoven
  - Practiced in showrooms of local piano stores
  - Earned money at night by playing on out-of-tune pianos in “stimulation bars”
- Career
  - First came to public attention in 1853
Schumann took in Brahms
Had relationship with Clara

- Musical style
  - Only composed absolute music
  - Avoided program music
  - Composed traditional genres and forms
  - Melodic style
  - Beautiful melodies

- Works
  - Lots of chamber music
  - Piano works
  - Strings quartets
  - 200 lieder
  - 4 symphonies
    - Terrified about competing with Beethoven
    - Would destroy several works
  - *Violin Concerto in D major* - 1878
    - Composed during work on symphonies
    - Composed for Johann Joachim
  - German Requiem
    - Composed 1868
    - Text not based on Catholic or Lutheran liturgy
    - Text drawn from Bible
    - Contrapuntal style
    - “How lovely is they dwelling place” text from Psalm 84

- Death
  - After death of Wagner, Brahms was considered the greatest German composer
  - He died from liver cancer

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**Romantic Composers**

**Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)**
- Composed in German musical orchestral style
- Excelling in writing music for large orchestras
- Achieved greatest success writing ballets, symphonies, or program music
  - Ballets
    - Nutcracker
    - Swan Lake
    - Sleeping Beauty
  - Program music
    - 1812 overture
- Romeo & Juliet
- Francesca de Rimini
  - Six symphonies
    - 4, 5, & 6 most popular

- Family
  - Family was wealthy
  - Spent his early years living in family estate in Russia
  - Parents wanted him to be lawyer
  - Educated in St. Petersburg

- Career
  - Moved to Moscow
    - Appointed theory professor at Moscow conservatory
  - Madame Nadezhda von Meck
    - Wealthy music loving widow
    - Provided Tchaikovsky with substantial annual income 6000 rubies
    - Never met
  - attained comfortable living position
    - given money by Tsar in 1881
    - able to enjoy freedom for creative energy

- Manic Depressive, neurotic, and hypochondriac
  - Wept at slightest provocation
  - Terrified of electrical storms
  - Irrational fear that his head would fall off while conducting

- Homosexual
  - Not socially accepted
  - Worried he would be discovered
  - Wrote about it in his diary

- Marriage
  - Decided to marry to silence the rumors
  - Hoped it would cure him
  - Married former student who was also mentally unbalanced

- Symphony No. 4
  - Written right after marriage
  - Feature fate theme
  - Form is mixture of Rondo and theme and variations

- Death
  - Cholera?
  - Controversy surrounds his death
  - Many think he poisoned himself with arsenic
Romantic Composers

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)
- Began conducting career in provincial towns
- Returned to Vienna as director of Court Opera in 1897
- Named director of Vienna Philharmonic in 1891
  - Served 10 years
  - Musical tyrant
- Married Alma Schindler in 1901
  - Insisted his wife give up her own musical career
  - Marriage was not tranquil
  - Sigmund Freud counseled him
- Dismissed from his posts in Vienna in 1908 and moved to New York
- Conducted at Metropolitan Opera beginning in 1908
  - Replaced Toscanini
- Only composed symphonies and orchestral songs
  - 9 symphonies
  - Numerous song cycles
- Musical Style
  - Grand scale
  - Massive forces
  - Long pieces
  - Includes elements of folk dances, popular songs, marches, bugle calls, and Gregorian chant