

Romantic Era (1820–1900)

I. Characteristics of Romanticism

A. Shared characteristics of Romanticism across art, literature, music

1. Expression of extreme emotion, new emphasis on subjectivity and individualism
2. Fascination with magic, dreams, fantasy, and mystery
3. Renewed interest in the past (middle ages, chivalry, Shakespeare) and with “exotic” cultures
4. Interest in nature as inspiration for art
5. Concern with unification of the arts

B. Characteristics of Romantic music

1. Continuation and expansion of musical forms from Classical era, with greater range of tone color, dynamics, and use of chromaticism
2. Harmonic vocabulary expands through greater use of chromaticism and juxtaposition of remote key relationships
3. New emphasis on small, personal works, e.g. art songs, short piano works, while at the same time, existing forms (symphonies, sonatas) increase in length
4. Increased emphasis on instrumental virtuosity, made possible by technical improvements in instruments, and fueled by Romantic love of excess

II. Instrumental music: representative trends, composers, and works

A. Improvements in instruments spur new interest in tone color

1. Technical improvements in piano 1820s–1830s increase pitch range and expressive power.
2. Orchestra increases in size and scope
 - a) 80–100 instruments
 - b) New instruments added to orchestra: piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet, contrabassoon, tuba, triangle, cymbals, harp

B. Solo instrumental music

1. Performer-composers write short, highly personal piano works, often loosely grouped by theme, as well as sonatas and other longer works
 - a) Robert Schumann (1797–1828): *Carnaval, Fantasiestücke, Kreisleriana*
 - b) Frederic Chopin (1810–1849): *Preludes, Opus 28; Etudes, Opus 10 and 25; Sonata in B flat Minor, Opus 35*
 - c) Franz Liszt (1811–1886): *Transcendental Études, Hungarian Rhapsodies*
 - d) Clara Wieck Schumann (1819–1896): *Scherzo in D minor*
2. Many solo concertos composed that remain technical and artistic benchmarks for performing artists today
 - a) Johannes Brahms (1833–1897): *Piano Concertos, No. 1 in D minor, No. 2 in B flat major; Violin Concerto in D major*
 - b) Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893): *Violin Concerto in D major, Piano Concertos No. 1 in D minor, No. 2 in B flat major*
 - c) Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847): *Concerto in E minor for Violin and Orchestra, Piano Concerto in G minor*

C. Orchestral and chamber music

1. Symphonies and chamber music composed using formal structures of classical era, but with increased length and harmonic color
 - a) Tchaikovsky: *Symphony No. 6 ("Pathétique")*
 - b) Brahms: *Sextet No 1 in B flat, No. 2 in G, Symphony No. 1 in C*
 - c) Mendelssohn: *Symphony No. 4 in A major ("Italian")*
 - d) Franz Schubert (1797–1828): *String Quartet in D minor ("Death and the Maiden"), String Quintet in C*
2. New interest in descriptive music and program music: use of music to depict nature, characters from literature, stories
 - a) Early Romantic music with descriptive characteristics
 - (1) *Mendelssohn: Hebrides Overture*
 - (2) *Hector Berlioz (1803–1869): Harold in Italy*
 - b) Tone poems, works that depict a series of events
 - (1) *Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881): A Night on Bald Mountain*
 - (2) *Richard Strauss (1864–1949): Don Juan, Don Quixote*
 - (3) *Paul Dukas (1865–1935): The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

3. Composers sometimes unify themes across movements; themes sometimes transformed in later movements to mirror change of mood, plot developments, or characters in literature

a) Schumann: *Symphony No. 4 in D minor*

b) Berlioz: *Fantastic Symphony*

c) Cèsar Franck (1822–1890): *Symphony in D minor*

4. Nationalism: love of country and patriotism expressed through music, often incorporating folk-like melodies and rhythms

a) Bedrich Smetana (1824–1884): *The Moldau*

b) Antonin Dvorák (1841–1904): *Slavonic Dances*

III. Vocal music affords ample opportunities for unification of the arts through poetry, music, and drama

A. Union of poetry and music achieved through art song, (Ger: Lieder), often grouped into song cycles that loosely depict events

1. Schubert: *Die Winterreise* (song cycle), “An Die Musik”
“Gretchen Am Spinnrade,” “Der Erlkönig”

2. Schumann: *Frauenliebe und leben, Dichterliebe*
(song cycles)

3. Hugo Wolf (1860–1903): “Der Gärtner,” “Schwung”

B. Opera flourishes in Romantic era as opportunity to combine emotional expression with virtuosic vocal display

1. Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826): *Der Freischütz*
2. Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868): *Tancredi, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Semiramide, Guillaume Tell*
3. Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1835): *Don Pasquale, Lucia di Lammermoor*
4. Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835): *La Sonnambula, Norma*
5. Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901): *Nabucco, Macbeth, Don Carlos, La Forza del Destino, Rigoletto, La Traviata, Aida, Otello, Falstaff*
6. Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924): *Manon Lescaut, La Bohème, Tosca, Madame Butterfly, Turandot*
7. Richard Wagner (1813–1883): *Fliegende Holländer, Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried, Götterdämmerung, Tristan und Isolde, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Parsifal*
8. Charles Gounod (1818–1893): *Faust*

C. Major sacred choral works composed, but sacred music becomes less prominent than secular concert music and opera

1. Mendelssohn: *Elijah* (oratorio)
2. Brahms: *Ein deutsches Requiem*
3. Liszt: *Christus* (oratorio)
4. Verdi: *Requiem*

IV. Developments in society and related arts

A. Growth of factories and industry promotes rise of middle class, musicians begin to write for middle class audiences and amateurs

B. Musicians no longer depend on patrons, support themselves by performing, conducting, writing music criticism, giving private lessons

C. Subscription concerts begin, many orchestras and opera groups are formed

D. Visual artists depict colorful scenes of emotion and drama, as well as scenes from literature, history, and mythology: Eugène Delacroix, John Constable, J.M.W. Turner, Honoré Daumier, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

E. Poetry, novels, and short stories are written in abundance

1. Novelists: Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Alexandre Dumas, Honore de Balzac, Stephen Crane
2. Poets: Percy Byssche Shelly, John Keats, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Alfred Tennyson
3. Short stories: Edgar Allen Poe, O. Henry