

1810 – 1910 THE ROMANTIC ERA

Beethoven opened the door to the Romantic period by defying conventions of the Classical era and expanding possibilities in his own music. The Romantic composers were more interested in pure expressive content in their works and used larger dynamic ranges and longer melodic lines. As a result, composers' individual voices became more distinct from each other, often strikingly so. Some composers relied on nonmusical subject matter to write **program music** in less rigid forms, like the orchestral **tone poem**. At the same time, **nationalism** became an important factor in composition, as composers began to draw on folk tunes, local **dance forms**, and other musical material native to their homelands. The size and scope of music also expanded: Some composers specialized in very short chamber works, while others wrote lengthy pieces for massive ensembles.

Key Terms

Sonata Form
Dissonance
Chromatism

Program Music
Nationalism
Supernatural
Nationalistic Opera

Tone Poem
Piccolo
Wagner Tuba
Saxophone

Characteristics

Aesthetic: freedom from boundaries, including those that separate the arts: music becomes more programmatic, merging with literature, art, and philosophy; programmatic elements reflect this trend; interest in the subjective, including the emotions and the supernatural, in contrast with the more objective and rational Classic.

Melody

- Long and extended musical phrases
- emotional
- memorable
- leaps are by big intervals.
- **Phrases:**
 - irregular lengths with less symmetry
- **Scale:**
 - on one hand, short, intimate compositions for piano (character piece) or voice and piano (lied, chanson)
 - on the other, expansion of proportions of the symphony, chamber music, concerto, sonata, mass;
 - opera roles demand bigger voices to match more grandiose dramatic concepts

Rhythm

- displaced accents
- shifting and overlapping of duple and triple patterns
- freer meters and tempi
- tempi use expressive terminology

Harmony

- diatonic
- more extensive, with chord extensions and greater dissonance.
- tonal, but with distant chord progressions and modulations
- chromaticism is used extensively
- key areas often change freely within movements
- minor mode predominates

Texture

- homophony predominates
- highlighting the melody
- counterpoint appears at times

Dynamics

- dramatic,
- extremes dynamic ranges

Musical Forms

Were less clearly defined by sections and tonality

- **Symphonic Poem/Tone Poem:** a piece of orchestral music in a single continuous movement in which the content of a poem, a story or novel, a painting, a landscape or another (non-musical) source is illustrated or evoked.
- **Symphonic Suite:** is an ordered set of instrumental or orchestral pieces normally performed in a concert setting.
- **Concert Overture:** a single-movement symphonic piece, which does not belong to an opera or other larger work.
- **Concerto/Solo Concerto:** a musical composition usually composed in three parts or movements, in which one solo instrument (for instance, a piano, violin, cello or flute) is accompanied by an orchestra.
- **Ballet:** a type of performance dance that originated in the Italian Renaissance courts of the 15th century and later developed into a concert dance form in France and Russia.
- **Chamber Music:** a form of classical music that is composed for a small group of instruments.
- **Song Cycles:** a group of songs designed to be performed in a sequence as a single entity.
- **Music Drama:** an opera that avoids discrete numbers such as arias, recitatives, or ensembles, and in which the **music** reflects or embodies the action of the **drama**.
- **Nationalistic Opera:** operatic developments in those countries where nationalism was strong, especially in Russia and Bohemia. These operas were also based on folklore or upon events of national significance with nationally important personages.
- **Oratorio:** work for soloists, chorus and orchestra, based on a sacred story; with no acting costumes or scenery.
- **Mass cycle:** sacred choral, a-cappella composition with specific Ordinary sections of the Catholic service composed as a group, often with the same cantus firmus in the tenor part
- **Lied:** secular polyphonic composition with words in German. (Art Song)
- **Chanson:** any lyric-driven French song, usually polyphonic and secular.
- **Piano Sonata:** a sonata written for a solo piano. Piano sonatas are usually written in three or four movements. The first movement is generally composed in sonata form.

- **Single-Movement:** Character pieces and dances for piano.

Ensembles

In the 1800s, the orchestra reached the size and proportions we know today and even went beyond that size. Some composers, such as Berlioz, really went all-out writing for huge orchestras. Instrument design and construction got better and better, making new instruments such as the piccolo and the tuba available for orchestras. Many composers, including Berlioz, Verdi, Wagner, Mahler, and Richard Strauss, became conductors. Their experiments with orchestration showed the way to the 20th century. Richard Wagner went so far as to have a new instrument, the Wagner Tuba, designed and built to make certain special sounds in his opera orchestra. In one of his symphonies, Richard Strauss and Richard Wagner wrote a part for an alphorn, a wooden folk instrument up to 12 feet long! (The alphorn part is usually played by a tuba.) And Arnold Schoenberg wrote a piece called Gurrelieder for a 150-piece orchestra!

Musical Instruments

Tuba, saxophone, harp, percussion, Wagner tuba and piccolo were added to the orchestra.

Notable Composers

1792 - 1868 Gioacchino Rossini
 1803 – 1869 Hector Berlioz
 1809 - 1847 Felix Mendelsohn Bartholdy
 1810 -1849 Frederic Chopin
 1811 - 1886 Franz Liszt
 1824 – 1896 Anton Bruckner
 1833 - 1897 Johannes Brahms
 1838 - 1875 Georges Bizet
 1839 – 1881 Modest Mussorgsky
 1844 – 1908 Rimsky-Korsakov
 1845 – 1924 Gabriel Fauré
 1857 – 1934 Edward Elgar
 1835 – 1921 Camille Saint-Saëns
 1797 - 1828 Franz Schubert
 1804 - 1849 Johann Baptist Strauss Senior
 1810 - 1856 Robert Schumann
 1813 – 1901 Giuseppe Verdi
 1813 - 1883 Richard Wagner
 1818 - 1893 Charles François Gounod
 1819 - 1880 Jacques Offenbach
 1824 - 1884 Bedřich Friedrich Smetana
 1825 – 1899 Johann Strauss Jr.
 1835 - 1921 Charles Camille Saint-Saëns
 1840 - 1893 Pjotr Iljitsch Tchaikovsky
 1841 - 1904 Antonín Dvořák
 1843 - 1907 Edvard Hagerup Grieg
 1858 - 1924 Giacomo Antonio Puccini
 1860 - 1911 Gustav Mahler
 1864–1949 Richard Strauss
 1865 – 1957 Jean Sibelius
 1873 – 1943 Sergei Rachmaninov