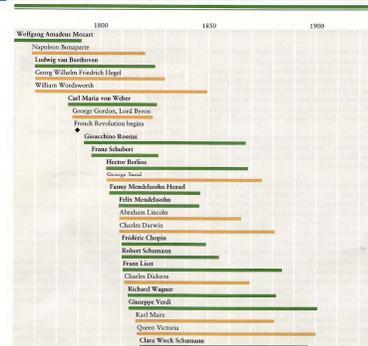## Chapter 16

Prelude:

*Music after Beethoven:
Romanticism*

Early Romantic Timeline

Key Terms

- Romanticism
- Rubato
- Chromaticism
- Romantic orchestra
- Program music

- Miniatures
- Grandiose compositions
- Thematic unity
- Thematic transformation

Music after Beethoven

- Music taken seriously as a major art
- Newly respected in cultivated circles
- Developments in literature linked with developments in music

Romantic Literature

- Flourished 1800–1820
- Sought to transcend everyday existence
- Aspired to an ideal state of being
- Rebelled against established order

Romantic Themes

- Glorification of individual feeling
- Revolt
- The supernatural
- The macabre
- Freedom from artistic barriers
- Blending art forms
- The boundless quality of music

The Cult of Individual Feeling

- Harks back to Rousseau
- Everyday life seen as dull and meaningless
- Free exercise of individual will and passion seen as highest good

Romanticism and Revolt

- An age of political revolutions
  - Late 1700s: America, France
  - 1848: France, Germany, Austria, Italy
  - Many musicians took up political causes
- Also social revolutions
  - Fewer barriers between classes
  - Greater social mobility

Artistic Barriers

- Traditional forms and genres now seen as constraints
- "Rules" not to be trusted
- Artistic expression and inspiration not to be hemmed in
- Shakespeare inspired many composers
  - Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, Verdi

Breaking Down Musical Barriers

- Intense experimentation with "forbidden" chords
- Imaginative new harmonies
- Forms treated freely
- New genres emphasizing freedom
  - Fantasy, symphonic poem, character piece, etc.

Music and the Supernatural

- Many supernatural or macabre subjects
  - Dreams, nightmares, demons
  - A demon who claims a child's life
  - *Frankenstein, The Vampire, The Magic Bullet*
- Composers created spooky music—new, strange harmonies and sounds

Blending the Arts

- Poetry became more "musical"
- Paintings and musical works given "poetic" titles
- Wagner's "total artwork" concept
- Blurred effects cultivated
  - Half-obscure verbal meanings
  - Ambiguous shapes and color blends
  - Imprecise yet rich and evocative sounds

The Boundlessness of Music

- More "abstract" than other arts
- Not restricted by the literal or physical
- Could express inner experience more deeply
- "All art aspires to the condition of music" (Walter Pater)

Concert Life in the 19th Century

- Public concert grew in importance
- Even small cities had symphony societies
- Intimate genres increasingly performed on concert stage
- Touring artists became more prevalent

The Artist and the Public

- Composers interested in innovation
- Audiences grew more conservative
  - Less sophisticated knowledge of arts
  - Wanted "value" for their money
  - Preferred established masterpieces, virtuoso performers

Style Features of Romantic Music

- Hard to define Romantic style
- Music had to mirror inner feeling
- Artists expected to have individual style
- Constant striving for higher experience
- Innovation essential

Rhythm: Rubato

- Italian *tempo rubato* = Robbed time
  - Tempo speeds up, slows down
  - Melody can move in and out of phase with beat
  - Seldom notated
- A sign of individual expressivity
- Reflected Romantic "blurring" tendency

Romantic Melody

- The most recognizable Romantic feature
- Wider range
- Dramatic buildups to sustained climaxes
- More irregular in rhythm and phrasing
- Overall, more spontaneous
- Many individual emotional shadings

Romantic Melody Example

Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet* love theme

Romantic Harmony

- Supports emotional quality of melody
- Also savored for its own sake
- New chords and chord progressions
- Chromaticism used to expand expressivity

The Expansion of Tone Color

- Tone color finally as important as melody, rhythm, or form
- Major advances in instrument design
- Orchestra grew to modern size and makeup
- Composers mixed colors with great freedom
- Conductors needed to control and balance sounds

The Romantic Orchestra

A TYPICAL ROMANTIC ORCHESTRA

STRINGS	WOODWINDS	BRASS	PERCUSSION
First violins (12–16 players)	2 Flutes	4 French horns	3 Timpani
Second violins (12–16)	1 Piccolo	2 Trumpets	Bass drum
Violas (8–12)	2 Oboes	3 Trombones	Snare drum
Cellos (8–12)	1 English horn	1 Bass tuba	Cymbals
Bass viols (6–10)	2 Clarinets		Triangle
	1 High E♭ clarinet		Tubular bells
Note: Each string section is sometimes divided into two or more subsections, to obtain richer effects.	1 Bass clarinet		
	2 Bassoons		
	1 Contrabassoon		
2 Harps			Piano

Program Music

- Nonvocal music written in association with a literary source
  - A blending of music and literature
  - Berlioz, *Fantastic* Symphony concert program
- Can tell a story
- Or can paint a mood, personality, or concept

19th-Century Debate

- Can music *really* tell a story? or illustrate a program?
- Does the program help the listener make sense of the music?
- Or does it get in the way of the listener's imagination?

Form in Romantic Music

- Individual spontaneity was central
  - Music a bubbling, churning emotion
- How do you make "spontaneous" music coherent?
  - Many standard forms used, but loosely

Miniature Compositions

- Pieces that last only a few minutes
  - Mostly songs and short piano pieces
- Convey a particular, momentary emotion
- A variety of titles
  - General: Impromptu or Capriccio
  - Dance: Mazurka or Polonaise
  - Programmatic: *To a Wild Rose, Spring Song*

Grandiose Compositions

- Diametrically opposed to miniatures
- More movements, more instruments, longer time spans, etc.
  - Berlioz's 90-minute *Romeo and Juliet* Symphony
  - Wagner's 19-hour, 4-opera *Ring* cycle
- Often blended poetry, philosophical or religious ideas, and drama

Miniature vs. Grandiose

- Miniatures bypass spontaneity vs. form problem
  - Work ends before listener wonders where it's going
- Grandiose works draw on extramusical factors for coherence
  - Text or program provides story or ideas
  - Music adds emotional conviction

Thematic Unity

- Increasing tendency to use themes throughout entire works
  - Literal, obvious return or looser relationships possible
  - New versions of a theme: thematic transformation
- Vague similarities most typical
  - Vagueness preferred over clarity, suggestion over statement, feeling over form