

Romantic Period 1825 – 1900

Cultural background

- fascinated by unknown
- rely on emotion rather than intellect, feelings replaced reason
- intrigued by long ago and far away
- reveled in the struggle against unknown forces
- rural orientation, love of nature
- revolutionary spirit
- art for art's sake, composed for posterity, art is window to world around us
- nationalism
- dramatic growth of music making in the home
- music publishing houses

Musical characteristics

- cyclical treatment of themes
- theme transformation
- music for virtuoso instrumentalist
- largely homophonic
- rubato
- sudden and dramatic changes of mood and dynamic level
- rich harmony with many chromatic alterations
- motives
- large orchestra
- long compositions
- new timbres, luscious quality of sound, new instruments: bass clarinet, English horn, bass trombone, harp in orchestra
- Golden Age of the Piano
- climaxes of feeling and volume
- program music: (the story was the means of organization)
 - concert overture
 - incidental music
 - symphonic poem
 - nationalistic works
- bel canto singing
- verismo style in opera

New Large Forms

- art song
- symphonic poem
- grand opera
- music drama

New Small forms

- short, lyric instrumental pieces

Representative works:

Symphonie fantastique, Berlioz

- 5 movements
- cyclical – idée fixe
- based on B's feelings of unrequited love for Harriet Smithson
- Reveries, Passions(tenderness)
- A Ball – beloved appears before him in several situations
- Scene in the Country – reflecting on his isolation and loneliness
- March to the Scaffold – in opium haze, imagines his own death
- Dream of a Witches' Sabbath – includes parody of Dies Irae, combined with sabbath round dance

Les Préludes, Liszt

- consists of a number of sections distinguished by differences in mood, instrumentation, thematic material, rhythm
- three themes derived from recitative-like motive
- form based directly on four sections of Lamartine's ode: love, destiny, war, countryside
- **thematic transformation**

Art Song

- German lied
- Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Mahler
- setting of a poem to music
- music and text of equal importance
- singers must express differing emotions, characters within song
- significant piano accompaniment which may also be character or object besides setting mood and providing harmonic support
- song cycles: all text by same poet
- Examples: Gretchen am Spinnrade, Erlkönig, Auf dem Strom

Grand opera

- emphasized grandeur and spectacle based
- usually based upon a dramatic historical event
- virtuosic singing
- example: Aida, Verdi

Opera comique

- competed with grand opera for popularity
- used spoken dialogue in some scenes
- example: Carmen, Bizet (even though it has a tragic ending)

Music drama

- music theater in which words and music were of equal importance
- leitmotif: expresses more than spoken language; refers to a particular person, event, idea, doesn't have to be sung
- thematic transformation
- endless melody
- continuous music
- avoided cadences
- highly chromatic, started blurring the tonal center
- Wagner, Ring Cycle, Tristan and Isolde
- huge orchestra, new instruments

Piano – Golden Age of Piano

- many new short, lyric pieces
- character pieces: nocturnes, impromptus, ballades, preludes, etudes, dance pieces like mazurkas, polonaises, waltzes
- extensive use of rubato (Chopin)
- used the entire keyboard (Liszt)