

# HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC I

MUS 3314-1

Dr. Tony Mowrer

## Chapter 17

Solo, Chamber, and Vocal Music in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

p. 592

The supreme Romantic instrument is the **piano**. It is now capable of producing a full, firm tone at any dynamic level and it is responsive to touch, making virtuosity possible. At the beginning of the century, there were two schools of thought followed in compositions for the piano.

1. Hummel (1778-1837)---Hummel emphasized clarity of texture and fluency of technique.
2. Beethoven---Here we find a full tone with a wide dynamic range. There are orchestral effects with dramatic execution and abundant technical power.

Both styles can be seen in Muzio Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum*. This was a collection of 100 **J**udes in strict and free style.

The *Titans of Romantic Piano* were Franz Liszt, Anton Rubenstein, and Hans von Bulow (von Bulow was also known as a conductor who married Liszt's daughter who later married Wagner). These were known for their outstanding technical and interpretive gifts.

The best performers and composers of piano music avoided technical and sentimental displays. Their style and technique were determined by substance. These included:

Schubert  
Schumann  
Mendelssohn  
Brahms  
Clara Schumann

Schubert and Mendelssohn are frequently thought of more for orchestral or vocal works.

Schumann published only for piano prior to 1840. The titles of Schumann's works sometimes suggest an extra-musical meaning. Schumann was **very active** in literary work.

*Fr***J***ic Chopin (1810-1849)*

Chopin wrote almost exclusively for the piano. He was always loyal to Poland and his music reflects the air of Polish music. His works are among the earliest and best examples of Romantic music inspired by national idioms. One characteristic of Chopin's works is the raised 4<sup>th</sup>---Lydian. His works require flawless touch and technique as well as the use of pedals and *tempo rubato*---a pushing or holding back of the right hand while the left keeps a strict tempo. Chopin wrote a set of *Preludes*, a set of 24 short pieces that mirror Bach's Well Tempered Clavier.

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## *Franz Liszt (1811-1886)*

A Hungarian, Liszt studied under Carl Czerny. He began his concert career by the time he was 11. This career lasted until 1848. From 1848-1861, he was the court music director at Weimar (who else served at Weimar?). While there, he conducted performances of important works. From 1861-1870, he resided in Rome.

Liszt was a benevolent person, helping the careers of many young musicians, including Richard Wagner. He was a dazzling performer and was said to have a way with women.

Liszt's music was eclectic and was inspired by national melodies. His music displayed a fiery, dynamic, impulsive temperament. Because he was influenced by the literary works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he composed much program music. His piano style was influenced by Chopin and Paganini (a virtuoso violinist of the time). He pushed the instrument to its extremes. He was active in transcribing orchestral works for the piano.

Liszt's *Piano Concerto in Eb* is an outstanding example of *Thematic Transformation*. Note the changes to the theme on p. 604.

Liszt was one of the first to make use of the *augmented* chords. The augmented chord is recognized by its resolution and by the augmented 6<sup>th</sup> between the bass and an upper pitch.

F# Ab C----Italian

In all these cases, the Ab would likely be in the bass.

F# Ab C Eb----German

D F# Ab C----French

D# F# Ab C----Doubly Augmented (*Swiss*)

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Many others wrote significant piano music. Among them were:

Brahms

Mussorgsky

Charles Franck

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## *Chamber Music*

Chamber music was not embraced by the *arch-romantics* Liszt, Berlioz, or Wagner. Rather, those who were most closely allied with classicism excelled at chamber music. These included:

Schubert  
Brahms  
Mendelssohn  
Schumann

### **Listen Brahms Piano Quintet**

Among the most popular music of the period was the *lied* (*lieder*). The output of the Germans was greater than that of others. Especially noteworthy were Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms. Vocal music attained a new level of importance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The lied had really been around for some time. Beethoven and earlier composers had composed them. They derive from the *ballad*, especially those from England and Scotland. They tended to be narratives.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century lied, however, was longer and required greater variety in thematic treatment and contrast of mood and texture. The piano ceased to be mere accompaniment and rose to the level of partner. Thus, the singer and pianist really performed a duet. The lied became a very important vehicle for the romantic composer. Often, groups of songs were composed together that told a story or created some atmosphere. This is called a *song cycle*.

*Franz Schubert* wrote more than 600 lieder. His songs display a gift for the creation of beautiful melodies. Many are like folksongs while others are full of romantic melancholy or sweetness. Still others are intense and dramatic. Additionally, Schubert displays a feel for harmonic order in his songs. Modulations tend to move from the tonic toward flat keys. Schubert's piano parts are diverse with the piano figures sometimes suggesting something pictorial.

### **Listen Erlk`nig**

Many lieder are strophic with either literal or varied repetition. There is much symbolism in Schubert's works.

*Robert Schumann* was the first successor to Schubert in songs. His music maintained a certain classic serenity and poise. Prior to 1840, Schumann's only published works were for piano. These were rich with beautiful melodies and warm harmonies.

But, in the year 1840, Schumann wrote more than 100 songs. This was the year he and Clara Wieck were married. He first met Clara after 1828 when she was just 9. In 1830

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he moved into the Wieck's house as a student/border. The first kissed on November 25, 1835, when she was 15 ½. They were married in 1840. Clara, by the way, was a good pianist herself.

Schumann was obsessed with expanding the flexibility of his hand so he could become a better pianist. But, he damaged his finger with exercise and another accident that cut him badly, ending his concert career.

Late in his life, Robert went crazy and had to be placed in a *Sanitorium*. Robert and Clara maintained a close relationship with Johannes Brahms. It was assumed that, after Schumann was gone, Brahms would marry Clara. Such was not to be. Brahms held Clara so close that he could not bear to alter their relationship.

Schumann's songs are warm with rich harmonies and beautiful melodies. They are marked by a piano postlude. Schumann's songs do not tend to drive like those of Schubert, but they are **so** beautiful.

## **Listen Dichterliebe**

*Johannes Brahms* was the successor to Schumann as a composer of lieder. Brahms wrote lieder his entire career. In all, he composed 260. These are simple, never distracting from the tune. His songs tend to be strophic and introspective. Essential to Brahms' songs are the melody and the bass, the tonal plan and form. There are few instrumental preludes or postludes. He frequently employs arpeggio figurations in the piano. Many of Brahms' lieder focus on death (*tod*).

## *Choral Music*

When considering the choral music of the romantic period, one must distinguish between times when a chorus is just part of a larger genre, i.e. opera, oratorio, or symphony chorus, or when the choral work is intended to be primary. The best choral composers of this time were those most knowledgeable about the past and resisted change. Two of these were Mendelssohn and Brahms.

Most composers used the chorus simply as a division of the orchestra, supplying a special touch here and there. 19<sup>th</sup> Century choral music tended to fall into one of three categories.

1. Part songs---generally homophonic and sometimes a cappella
2. Liturgical music---choral music intended for use in worship
3. Works for chorus and orchestra

## *Part songs*

Precious little attention is really paid them, but they are important. Choral works falling into this category might be *Zigeunerlieder* or *Liebeslieder Waltzes* by Brahms.

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## *Liturgical Music*

There was some desire to reform music in the Catholic Church. This movement was referred to as the *Cecilian Movement*. There was a revival of *Gregorian Chant* and the a cappella style of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the best examples of this style came from the pen of Schubert in his masses, particularly the Masses in Ab and Eb.

Leaders in other religious groups were Sam Wesley and Mendelssohn. From Russia, the works of Dimitri Bortniansky are notable. Music in the Russian Orthodox Church during this time is particularly beautiful.

Aside from the music to be used regularly, other liturgical music is to be noted. Berlioz' *Te Deum* and *Requiem* excellent examples of choral music of the period. Liszt also wrote a *Requiem*, as did Verdi. These are colossal works, fitting the general approach to music by the composers.

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) was deeply affected by the Cecilian Movement and composed choral music that reflected this.

The Romantic Oratorio was clearly descended from Handel. This can be seen with the way the chorus is used. Most significant composers wrote oratorios. Notable among them are those by Mendelssohn, *Elijah* and *St. Paul*. Berlioz' *L'enfance du Christ* is charming and pictorial rather than churchly.

Brahms' *German Requiem* employed Biblical passages rather than the liturgical texts. There is no *Dies Irae*.

## **Listen Brahms Requiem**