Music History Lecture Notes
Romantic & Nationalism
1810 AD - 1900

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The Romantic Period

• Begins in 1810 (although elements occurred before)
• Emphasis on personal feelings
• Interest in the natural and supernatural worlds
• Art movement parallels a “realignment” of power in Europe
The Romantic era

• Like “classical,” Romantic is an imprecise label; it helps to define a period
• From “romance” a tale or poem about heroes or events written in a language descended from Latin (Roman)
• Qualities: fantastic, idealistic, marvelous
• Maintains much of the musical vocabulary and conventions of the classical era
Romantic Art

• Characterized by a spirit of longing or yearning for an impossible fulfillment

• Famous Painters
  – Goya
  – Blake
  – Delacroix
Goya: Executions of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of May
Blake: God as an Architect, Christ in the Sepulcher
Blake: Nebuchadnezzar
Delacroix: Liberty Leading the People
Romantic Philosophies

• Schopenhauer
  – The world is driven by desire, the result of which is suffering

• Nietzsche
  – “God is dead”
Music as a romantic art

- The world of ordered sound and rhythm does not need to mirror the concrete world.
- Music can evoke impressions, thoughts, feelings.
- Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer called music “the incarnation of the innermost reality”.
Additions to Romanticism

• 1. Love of remote time and place
  – interest in religion, antiquity and travel

• 2. Contrast
  – Large vs. Small

• 3. Yearning for the unattainable
  – Impossible loves
Program Music

- Purely instrumental music became much more commonplace.
- It is able to express an idea without words.
- Many instrumental pieces however took a literary orientation, associating a piece of music with a poetic, descriptive or narrative subject.
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

• Father was a school master (principal)
• Schubert’s musical training was not systematic, but he grew up surrounded by it
• Following his father’s wishes, taught school for 3 years (1814-1817)
• He renounced teaching to devote himself entirely to writing music
• Died at age 31
Schubert’s Lifestyle

• A bohemian existence
  – Near poverty - living on what he could
  – Meager music sales

• Lived with and befriended Romantic poets

• Defined the German Lieder
Schubert’s Style

• A romantic classicist
  – interested in sound for sounds sake, feelings, romantic color
  – follows classical rules, a simple traditional style
• Introspective, finesse, solitary
• Concentrates on melody and ignores motives and development
Lied

- Opera was for large arenas
- Solo songs (lied) entertained for small gatherings
- First collection in 1736
  - The Singing Muse on the River
- Began a long tradition of great songs
Schubert’s Work

• Massive output
  – 9 symphonies
    • Unfinished (#7) is called the first truly Romantic symphony
  – 22 piano sonatas
  – short piano pieces
  – 35 chamber works
  – 200+ choral works
    • 6 masses
    • 7 opera
  – 600+ lieder

• In 1815 alone he wrote 144 songs
Schubert’s Gift

- Beautiful melodies
- Simple, folksong quality in art music

Schubert’s Poets

- 59 from Goethe
- Two cycles on poems by Wilhelm Muller
Felix Mendelssohn 1809-1847

• A virtuoso pianist
• Father converted from Judaism to Lutheran
• Born into a wealthy family
• Quality education
• Child Prodigy - poet, writer, painter
• Loved to travel
  – Favorite of Queen Victoria of England
Felix Mendelssohn

- Most important symphonies preserve the impressions of sounds and landscapes from his international travels
  - No. 3 - Scottish
  - No. 4 - Italian
- Use of folk idioms illustrates the romantic nostalgia for far off places and an interest in native music
Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel
Felix’s Sister
Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel
1805-1847

• A child prodigy

• Shared the same music education as her brother, but not the family support
  – Music will perhaps become his profession, while for *you* it can and must be only an ornament' - Her Dad

• Published some works under her brother’s name
  – F. Mendelssohn

• Married a painter who supported her composition

• Wrote 466 pieces
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Leader of the Romantic’s more radical wing
- Both and author and composer
- Treatise on orchestration
Berlioz

• Father wanted him to be a doctor
• So original he doesn’t fit in
• Had trouble getting works performed
• Supported self as a music critic for a popular magazine
  – Made a lot of enemies
• Librarian for the Paris Conservatory
Berlioz at Prix de Rome

• Competition at Paris Conservatory
• Given a cantata text
• Berlioz did not play piano
• His compositions were truly symphonic and could not be replicated on piano
• Hence, Berlioz was unable to win this coveted award
Symphony Fantastique or Episode in the Life of an Artist

- An incredibly original work, bending the symphony to serve narrative and autobiographical ends
- “Idee fixe” - musical theme that recurs - associated with a character
- Founder of the modern orchestra
  - Use of new instruments: English horn, harp
  - Expanded use of timpani
Berlioz’s Requiem Op. 5

- First performed in 1837
- Biggest setting ever
- 150 member orchestra
  - 4 brass choirs (dies irae)
  - 4 tam-tams
  - 10 cymbals
  - 16 timpani (dies irae)
  - 400-600 vocalists
- Te deum added (for Napoleon III coronation) in 1855
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

- Symphonies express a profoundly religious spirit by their prevailing seriousness
- The great conservative of the romantic era
- A master of chamber music
Brahms' Music

- 4 symphonies
- 2 piano concertos
- 1 violin concertos
- Many overtures
- Variations on a theme by Haydn
- Wrote 260 songs
  - most famous Wiegenlied (Lullaby)
  - Used Schubert as his model
- Chamber music
- Ein Deutches Requiem
Brahms’ Ein deutsches Requiem

- A German Requiem
  1868
- Not a liturgical requiem
- Texts from the old testament
- In German
  - First significant setting of a Requiem not in Latin
Piotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

- Started out as a lawyer before undertaking musical training
- Graduate of St. Petersburg conservatory and taught harmony at the Moscow conservatory
- Last great Russian composer open to the West
- Commits suicide (??)
Tchaikovsky

- Ballets
  - Swan Lake
  - Sleeping Beauty
  - Nutcracker
- 6 symphonies
- 1812 Overture
WHAT'S THIS MUSIC?

IT'S "THE 1812 OVERTURE."

I KINDA LIKE IT. INTERESTING PERCUSSION SECTION.

THOSE ARE CANNONS.

AND THEY PERFORM THIS IN CROWDED CONCERT HALLS?? GEE, I THOUGHT CLASSICAL MUSIC WAS BORING!
Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

- Austrian but moves to Vienna
- Unsuccessful attempts at opera
- Successful career writing symphonies and orchestral lieder
- LARGE music
Mahler
the conductor

• Conducted at numerous opera houses
  – 1909 moves to US to conduct NY Philharmonic
• dies in US in 1911
Mahler’s Symphonies

- Require an enormous group of performers
  - 1st known as Titan
  - 8th - Known as the symphony of 1000
Mahler’s 8.5

- After symphony 8, he composed “Das Lied von der Erde”
- Afraid to write symphony #9
- Too many composers die after composing 9 symphonies
- Ninth symphony is last
  - Polyphonic and entirely instrumental
Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

- Most famous German composer during early 1900
- Father was a musician, mother a brewer
  - Father would not allow him to listen to Wagner until age 18
  - Follower of Brahms
- Continued the Romantic genre of symphonic poems
Strauss’ Symphonic Poems

• Best known for his symphonic poems (mostly before 1900) and his operas (mostly after)
• Also wrote 150 lieder, but most are now forgotten
• 2 types of poems
  – Philosophical
  – Descriptive
• 1888 Don Juan
• 1889 Death & Transfiguration
• 1895 - Till Eulenspielgel
  – folk poetry
Strauss’ Symphonic Poems

• 1896 Also sprach Zarathustra
  – Musical commentary on the essay by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche
  – Concept of the Ubermensch (superman) were agitating all over Europe
  – Strauss avoided direct correlation to the original poem, using only the prologue in his program and chapter titles in his score

• 1897 - Don Quixote

• 1898 Ein Heldenleben
  – A Hero’s Life
Dr. Keays on Strauss

• “Strauss could have set the phonebook to music.”
The Romantic Piano

- Quite different from the piano of Mozart’s day
- Enlarged to 7 octaves
- Strengthened by metal plates and braces
- Improved hammer mechanisms
- Full tone at any dynamic
- Very responsive
- The ultimate Romantic instrument
Playing Piano

• 2 schools of piano playing
  – (Mozart’s students) Emphasis on clarity of texture and fluency of technique
  – (Beethoven’s) Emphasis on fullness of tone, dynamics, orchestral effects and dramatic execution
The Problem with Piano Music

• Romantic ears demanded a songful melody with long lyrical lines
• Accompaniments must be active and interesting like those of lieder
• A player only has 10 fingers
• Technique is greatly expanded
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

- After studying law, devoted himself to piano performance
- A fan of Bach, much of his music uses fugal textures
- Develops the form of the etude
- An injury to his right hand cut short his career
  - He had built a machine to stretch his hand so he could play bigger chords
  - Some scholars believe it was also syphilis
Schumann’s Love & Death

• 1840 married his beloved Clara Wieck
  – That year he wrote over 100 lieder including his famous “Dichterliebe”

• Died insane from syphilis
Dichterliebe

• **Im Wunderschönen Monat Mai**
  – In the lovely month of May, when all the buds were bursting, then within in my heart love broke forth.

In the lovely month of May, when all the birds were singing, then I confessed to her my longing and desire.
Dichterliebe

• Die Rose, Die Lilie, Die Taube, Die Sonne
  – The rose, the lily, the dove, the sun-
    I once loved them all with ecstatic love.
    I love them no more, I love only
    the little one, the dainty one, the pure one, the One.
    She alone, the well-spring of all love,
    is rose and lily and dove and sun.
Dichterliebe

• Ich will meine Seele tauchen
  – I will dip my soul into the chalice of the lily; the lily shall breath a song about my beloved.

The song shall quiver and palpitate like the kiss of her mouth that once again she gave me in a wonderfully sweet moment!
Clara Wieck Schumann (1819-1896)

- Her own career as a pianist and composer
  - Trained by her father
    - Father also taught Robert
  - Recognized as a child prodigy
  - First appearance in Leipzig at age 9
The Schumanns

- Married against father’s wishes
- Had 8 children
- A friend of Brahms
- First woman to make a successful career of performing and composing
- May have helped Robert finish his later works
Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

- Piano virtuoso as a child
- Warsaw ➔ Vienna ➔ Munich ➔ Paris
- Lived in Paris after 1831
- Retained many local Polish idioms
  - First nationalist of 19th century
- Lived in self-imposed exile
Small Piano Pieces

- Polonaise (Polish dance)
- Nocturne
- Ballades
- Studies
- Mazurka (Polish)
- Scherzo
- Prelude
- Rondo
- Variations
- Waltzes
  - derived from minuet
- Sonata etudes
Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

• Born in Hungary to an official under Prince Nicholas Esterhazy
• Trained as a piano virtuoso and made a career of playing and conducting until 1848
Franz Liszt

- Pushed the technique of the piano to its furthest limits in both his playing and compositions
  - Had huge hands
- Greatest international piano virtuoso and composer
- Several well publicized affairs with affluent women added a glamour to his fame
Liszt’s Careers

- First of the great super-star pianists
- Midlife begins to conduct Weimar Opera
- Later joins a minor religious order in Rome (a monk)
• Composed in an eclectic style - a result of his past
  – Hungarian born
  – Viennese trained
  – A French literary romantic

• Many arrangements - transferring orchestral idioms to the piano

• 1870 gets involved with Wagner
  – Becomes very avant garde
Romantic Opera

- Contrast
  - small songs vs. big choruses
- Modern use of orchestra
- Beginning of nationalism
- Specialist composers
- Use of contemporary librettos
19th Century French Opera

• Paris became the capitol of opera
  – French Revolution
  – Napoleonic Empire
  – Success of Gluck

• Following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo (1815), the Bourbon monarchy was restored

• Exiles returned and musical life was reawakened

• New opera house built in 1821
Grand Opera (1830-1850)

- Royal patronage declining
- Primarily for the middle upper class
- Opera needed to appeal to the masses
  - relatively uncultured audiences who went to opera for excitement and entertainment
  - As much spectacle as music
  - Librettos written to exploit ballet, crowd scenes, machinery, dances, etc.
Grand Opera

• 5 acts
• All sung plus ballets
  – alternates solos and duets
• Large productions
  – Emphasis on spectacle
  – Scenic effects
• Full orchestra
• International Stories
Opera Comique

• Foibles of common man
  – Emphasis on people / characters
• Lighter and less grandiose
• Spoken dialogue
• Founded by Jacques Offenbach
  – Influences Gilbert & Sullivan -> Broadway
Comique Conventions

• Mad scene
  – soprano goes insane
  – outlandish coloratura

• Romantic subject matter
Lyric Opera

• Between light opera comique and grand opera
• Dramatic or fantastic subject with great melodies
• Concerned with relationships
  – Love stories
• Mostly sung
Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875) an example of Lyric Opera

- By Georges Bizet (1838-1875)
- A landmark in the history of French opera
  - Rejected a sentimental or mythological plot
    - anti-romantic movement toward realism
  - Exemplifies exoticism (Spanish)
  - Extraordinary rhythmic and melodic vitality
Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

- Principal composer of Italian opera
- Brings opera buffa into the 19th century
- A gift for melody and flair for stage effect
- Between the ages of 18 and 30 he produced
  - 32 operas
  - 2 oratorios
  - 12 cantatas
  - 2 symphonies
  - Some instrumental works
    - Example: William Tell Overture
- His serious opera failed in Venice in 1823
Rossini

- Moved to London
- Master piece: *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816)
  - Same cast as Mozart’s *Figaro*
  - Voices come first
  - 1st part of story and exaggerated comedy in the Mozartian tradition
- Retires in 1829
- Becomes a fat cook living happily in Paris until his death in 1868
- For the last 40 years of his life wrote only sacred music, songs and piano albums
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

• Practically only composer of Italian music for 50 years after Rossini
• The greatest Italian composer of the 19th Century
• Perhaps the greatest Italian composer of all times
• 26 operas (1839-1893)
• Worked to refine Italian opera to a point of perfection
Verdi the Opera Composer

• 1st opera by candlelight, last opera with electricity
  Audience should be uplifted by opera
• Loathed opera for entertainment’s sake
• Operas to be simple and natural
• Italians should stick to opera above all else
• Refined style
  – fewer arias, fewer recitatives
• Treated opera as a human drama
• Would write a fugue every morning to “warm-up”
Verdi’s Best Known Operas

- Rigoletto 1851
  - La Dona Mobile
- Il Trovatori 1853
  - Anvil Chorus
- La Traviata 1853
- Aida 1871
- Falstaff 1893
  - 1 of only 2 comedies
Verdi and Nationalism

- Nationalism is the only Romantic issue that really affected Verdi
- Believed wholeheartedly that each nation should cultivate native music
- Deplored the influence of foreign music, especially German
- During years of Risorgimento (national rebirth) Verdi’s names became a Patriotic symbol and rallying cry “Viva Verdi”
  - Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re d’Italia
  - Long live Victor Emanuel, king of Italy
Verdi’s Requiem

- One of a few pieces not intended for the stage
- In memory of Manzoni - a famous Italian novelist
- An immense and deeply moving work
- Thoroughly Catholic in spirit
German Opera in the 19th C

- Singspiel (comic)
- Translated opera seria
- Serious German opera composers
  - No models
  - No good librettos
Leitmotif

- a musical theme or motive associated with a particular person, thing, emotion or idea in the drama
- a sort of musical label
- allows an object or thought to be referenced, even if it is not present on stage
- the leitmotif sounds, usually in the orchestra, at first appearance or mention of the subject
- it is then repeated at subsequent appearances or citations
Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

- One of the crucial and controversial figures in the history of music
- Brought German Romantic opera to consummation
- Created the genre of the music drama
- His harmonic idiom hastened the dissolution of tonality
- Music serves the end of dramatic expression
- Wagner was a published writer and criticized music, art, literature, drama, politics and moral issues
- Created a sort of endless melody, a continuity of line unbroken by traditional stops and starts of the Classic musical syntax
Wagner

• Father is uncertain
  – Geyer, an actor, was a “good friend” of mother
• Wrote all his own librettos
• Goal: elevate German opera to the artistic status equal to the best symphonic music
• Theater for ennoblement, not entertainment
Early Works to 1848

- 1841 Flying Dutchman (P 1843)
  - 1st psychological drama
  - myth
  - Written as one long act

- 1845 Tannhäuser

- 1848 Lohengrin (P 1850)
  - Both medieval legends
  - Psychological dramas
  - Beginning of “dialogue opera” - further from arias
  - Expands leitmotif
  - Associates tonality with situations and characters
Wagner 1848-1859

- Participates in a political revolution in Saxony (flyers, smuggling, etc.)
- Political unrest in Germany persuaded Wagner to emigrate to Switzerland
- Lived in exile for 14 years
- Studies Norse mythology
- Formulated theories on opera
  - 1849 - Art & Revolution
  - 1851 - Opera & Drama
  - 1851 - the Artwork of the Future
- Opera vs. Music Dramas
Gesamtkunstwerk

- literally “total or joint artwork”
- absolute oneness of drama and music
- organically connected expressions of a single dramatic idea
- Poetry, scene design, staging, action and music
- Orchestra conveys the inner action: emotion, thought
- Singers convey the outer action
- Vocal lines are a part of the musical texture on accompanied arias
Writing the Ring

• Wrote poetic cycle of 4 dramas collectively called “Der ring des Nibelungen”
  – Siegfried’s Tod (prose sketch)
  – Jungesiegfried
  – Die Walkure (the Valkyrie)
  – Das Rheingold (the Rhinegold)

• Composed
  – 1. 1845 - Das Rheingold
  – 2. 1856 - Die Walkure (the Valkyrie)
  – 3. 1857 - Siegfried (no Junge)
    • Acts 1 & 2 - act II written in 1866
  – 4. 1874 Gotterdammerung (Twilight of the gods)
    • Formerly Siegfried’s Tod
The Ring Cycle

• First complete performance in 1876 in a theater built in Bayreuth according to Wagner’s specifications
  – Largest building in world at time

• First performed in a Bavarian theater
  – Commissioned by King Ludwig II of Bavaria
  – King further pays off all Wagner’s debts

• Woven out of stories from Norse legends

• The “Ring” refers to a ring that a gnome fashioned out of gold he stole from the Rhine
Wagner’s Influence

• Three concepts most affected later composers
  – Gesamtkunstwerk
    • One person in charge
    • Symphony equal to singers
    • Cumulative music drama
  – Leitmotif
  – Endless melody

• Wagner has few equals in use of orchestral color

• Sheer overwhelming power to suggest or arouse an all embracing state of ecstasy, both sensual and mystical, the goal of the entire Romantic movement
Nationalism

• Prevalent in non-mainstream countries
  – Spain & Austria
• Emphasis on literary and linguistic traditions
• Interest in folklore
• Patriotism
• Craving for independence and identity
• Pride in language and literature formed part of the national consciousness that led to German and Italian unification
• Search for an independent, native voice was keenest in England, France, the US, Russia and Eastern Europe
Bohemia (Czech)

- Historically under thumb of Austria
- Flourished when oppression was removed
- Composers
  - Smetana
  - Dvorak
Anton Dvorak (1841-1904)

- 9 symphonies
  - #7 in D minor is considered best
  - #9 from the New World is most familiar
  - written during his first trip to the US (to start a conservatory in NY)
    - summers in Spillville, Iowa - founded by Bohemian farmers
  - uses Native American themes and slave spirituals
- Concertos
- Absolute music
• Until 1800s secular music in Russia was largely imported
• First recognized native Russian composer Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)
• Tchaikovsky, though Russian, was German trained and uninterested in the nationalist movement
• Later in the century 5 composers took the lead known as “moguchaya kuchka” or “The Mighty Handful”
The Mighty Handful

- Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)
  - Chemist by profession, was intrigued by Mendelssohn, but was also a nationalist
- Mily Balakirev (1837-1910)
  - The most professional
- Cesar Cui (1835-1918)
- Modest Musorgsky (1839-1881)
  - The greatest
- Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)
Mussorgsky

- Earned a living as a clerk in the civil service
- Alcoholic
- Trained by Balakirev
- Principal works
  - A symphonic Fantasy - Night on Bald Mountain (1867)
  - Piano piece - Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)
Rimsky-Korsakov

- Most western of the 5
- Links the Mighty 5 with the later generation of Russian composers
- Experimented with whole tone and octatonic scales, parallel chord progressions
  Abandoned a career in the Navy to teach composition at St. Petersburg Conservatory
- Leading Pupils
  - Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)
  - Igor Stravinsky
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

• Not a nationalist, left Russia in 1917
• Cultivated a late Romantic, passionate, melodious idiom

• Notable compositions
  – 2-3 piano concertos
  – Second symphony (1906-1907)
  – Symphonic poem Isle of the Dead
  – Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini (1934)
– Edvard Hagerup Grieg (1843-1907)
  • imposed national characteristics on an orthodox style taught at Leipzig Conservatory
England

- Nationalism came late to England
- Edward Elgar (1857-1934) first English composer in over 200 years to have international recognition
  - Although his music is not based on English folk music, it follows the patterns of the English language
  - Most famous symphony: Enigma Variations (1899)
  - Pomp and Circumstance
Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

- Influenced by both English traditions and Hindu mysticism
- Best known work: The Planets (1916)
France

• National Society for French Music was founded in 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian War
• Intended to provide for performances of French composers
• Sought to revive music of old French masters like Rameau and Gluck
• Schola Cantorum founded in Paris in 1894 introduced historical studies of music
• 3 main traditions of music in France 1871-1914
  – Cosmopolitan, French tradition, Later tradition
Impressionism

- Word first appeared to a school of French painting (1880-1900)
  - Revolt against photography
- Claude Monet (1840-1926)
Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte
Impressionistic Music

- Does not seek to express emotions
- Relies on allusion and understatement
- Evokes a mood sentiment or atmosphere
- Use of enigmatic titles
- Use of musical references
  - natural sounds
  - dance rhythms
  - characteristic bits of melody
Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

- One of the greatest influences on 20th century music
- First to write Impressionistic movement
- Some impressionistic ingredients appear in Nuages (Clouds)
  - Middle section is based on Javanese Gamelan music (1887 Paris Exposition)
- returns to a more classical style later in life
Debussy’s Music

- 1892-1894 “Prelude to the Afternoon of a Fawn”
- 1893-1899 Three Nocturnes
- La mer (the ocean)
  - 3 tone poems
- Clair De Lune
- Opera: Pelleas et Melisande
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

- Adopted some impressionist techniques
  - accused of plagiarizing Debussy
- Attracted more to clean melodic contours, distinct rhythms, firm form, functional harmony
- A brilliant colorist - he orchestrated several of his piano pieces
- Musical Best-Seller - Bolero (1928)
  - Certain Spanish elements
Paul Dukas (1865-1935)

- Sorcerer’s Apprentice (1897)
- Serious attempt to combine Wagnerian symphonic drama and Debussian styles
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