



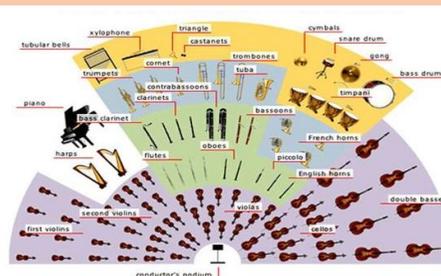
The Romantic Period (1820-1900)

The word **ROMANTICISM** was first used to describe the stirrings of new ideas in painting and literature towards the end of the 18th century. This word was later taken up by musicians to describe changes in musical style which took place soon after the turn of the century. Classical composers aimed to strike a balance in their music between expressiveness and formal structure. Romantic composers shifted this balance. They looked for a greater freedom of form and design in their music and a **MORE POWERFUL AND INTENSE EXPRESSION OF EMOTION**, often revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings, even sufferings. Many Romantic composers read widely and took a keen interest in art. Often, the inspiration behind a composition by a Romantic composer was sparked off by a painting, a book, a poem or a play. **IMAGINATION, FANTASY** and a **QUEST FOR ADVENTURE** are important ingredients in Romantic style. Among the many ideas which hold a strong fascination for Romantic composers are: **FAR-OFF LANDS AND THE DISTANT PAST, DREAMS, NIGHT AND MOONLIGHT, RIVERS, LAKES AND FORESTS, NATURE AND THE SEASONS, THE JOY AND PAIN OF LOVE, LEGENDS, FAIRY-TALES, MYSTERY, MAGIC** and **THE SUPERNATURAL**. The Romantic period gave rise to the **VIRTUOSO** – a musician of extraordinary technical skill – including the virtuoso violinist Paganini and the composer/pianist Liszt.

Instruments, Timbres and Sonorities

During the Romantic period, there was an **ENORMOUS INCREASE** in both the **SIZE** and **RANGE** of the orchestra. The **BRASS SECTION**, now with the addition of a **TUBA**, took on far greater importance and its range and flexibility were increased by the invention of the **VALVE SYSTEM**. The **WOODWIND SECTION** now contained a **PICCOLO, BASS CLARINET, COR ANGLAIS** and **DOUBLE BASSOON**. A huge and varied range of **TUNED AND UNTUNED PERCUSSION** was added to the **PERCUSSION SECTION** giving Romantic composers considerably more variety in **TIMBRE** and **SONORITY** to explore. As the other sections increased in size, it became necessary to increase the number of strings players in order to maintain a balance of sound between the sections, which now also contained **HARPS**. Romantic composers revelled in exploring this wider range of **PITCH AND DYNAMICS, RICHER HARMONIES** and the new possibilities of combining and contrasting **INSTRUMENTAL TIMBRES AND SONORITIES**.

The Romantic Orchestra



The Piano in the Romantic Period

During the 19th century, several improvements were made to the **PIANO** including increasing the number of notes giving it a **ROUNDER, RICHER SONORITY** and a **WIDER RANGE IN PITCH, VOLUME** and **TIMBRE**. Romantic composers explored the full range of the keyboard, building up rich and varied textures with a greater use of the **SUSTAINING PEDAL**. Almost all Romantic composers wrote music for piano including Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms. Sonatas were still written, but more popular were **FAIRLY SHORT, INDIVIDUAL PIECES** including dances such as the **WALTZ, MAZURKA** and **POLONAISE** and **MOOD OR CHARACTER PIECES** such as the **IMPROMPTU, ROMANCE, SONG WITHOUT WORDS, PRELUDE, NOCTURNE, BALLADE, INTERMEZZO, ÉTUDE** ('study') and **RHAPSODY**. Many solo piano pieces presented two contrasting moods and were often in **TERNARY FORM (ABA)**.

Melody and Texture and Harmony and Tonality

Melodies in the Romantic period, whether tender and passionate, become more **LYRICAL** and **SONG-LIKE**. Romantic composers explored **SWIFTER** and **MORE FREQUENT MODULATIONS**. Harmonies became **RICHER** and **INTENSELY EMOTIONAL** with a powerful use of **DISCORDS**, bringing in **CHROMATIC NOTES** from outside the key and frequent use of **DISSONANCE** – **DISCORDS** often merge into further **DISCORDS** instead of resolving onto expected **CONCORDS**. **DENSER, WEIGHTIER TEXTURES** with **BOLD DRAMATIC CONTRASTS** exploring pitch ranges.

The Romantic Concerto

The **SOLOIST** now entered immediately in a **SINGLE EXPOSITION**. **CADENZAS** written out by the composers. Normally still in **THREE MOVEMENTS**. **LARGE ORCHESTRAS**. Brilliant technical ability of **VIRTUOSO PERFORMERS** with increasingly more difficult solo parts. **PIANO** popular as a solo instrument. **DRAMATIC AND EXCITING CONFLICT** between soloist and orchestra.

Romantic Vocal Music

The German **LIED** – solo voice and piano in equal partnership – Schubert wrote many. **OPERA** – Wagner called them **MUSIC-DRAMAS** and employed huge orchestras using **LEITMOTIFS** ('leading-motives') – themes representing a character, emotion, place or object which are changed and transformed according to the situation or time. Verdi and Puccini also wrote many operas during the Romantic period. The **ORATORIO** and **REQUIEM** also continued to be popular vocal forms.

Romantic Programme Music – music which 'tells a story' or 'paints a picture' or is in some way descriptive in the mind of the listener.

The Programme Symphony

Some Romantic composers e.g. Brahms continued to write symphonies that were **ABSOLUTE MUSIC** (music which is not descriptive and intended to be enjoyed purely for its own sake) but composers such as **BERLIOZ** added detailed notes – 'programme' in his *Symphonie Fantastique* which is an example of a **PROGRAMME SYMPHONY** in 5 movements linked by an **IDÉE FIXE** – a recurring theme to give unity between movements.

The Concert Overture

A **ONE-MOVEMENT PROGRAMME PIECE FOR ORCHESTRA** (usually in Sonata Form) simply intended for performance at a concert and with no relation to opera or oratorio overtures. Famous Concert Overtures include Mendelssohn's *Fingal's Cave/The Hebrides* and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

The Symphonic/Tone Poem

Invented by Liszt and a **ONE-MOVEMENT PROGRAMME PIECE FOR ORCHESTRA** (more lengthy and freer than the Concert Overture). The music should take its shape from the pattern of ideas or events in the programme itself. **THEMATIC TRANSFORMATION** is often used – a basic theme recurring and continually changed or transformed in mood and character to match each situation. Famous Symphonic poems include Smetana's *Vltava* and Richard Strauss's *Don Juan*.

Incidental Music

MUSIC SPECIALLY COMPOSED TO BE HEARD AT CERTAIN POINTS DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF A PLAY. Often setting the mood at the start of an act or scene or entertaining the audience during scene changes. Collections of Incidental Music were published as **SUITES** and performed in concerts out of their original context. Famous Suites of Incidental Music include Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suites*.

Romantic Composers



Beethoven (Germany) (1770-1827)



Schubert (Austria) (1797-1828)



Berlioz (France) (1803-1869)



Mendelssohn (Germany) (1809-1847)



Chopin (Poland) (1810-1849)



Schumann (Germany) (1810-1856)



Liszt (Hungary) (1811-1886)



Wagner (Germany) (1813-1883)



Verdi (Italy) (1813-1901)



Smetana (Bohemia) (1824-1884)



Brahms (Germany) (1833-1897)



Tchaikovsky (Russia) (1840-1893)



Dvořák (Bohemia) (1841-1904)



Grieg (Norway) (1843-1907)



Elgar (England) (1857-1934)



Richard Strauss (Germany) (1864-1949)

Romantic Nationalism

One key feature of the Romantic Period is **NATIONALISM** – reaction against German influences by composers of other countries, especially Russia, Bohemia and Norway. Nationalist composers deliberately aim to express strong feelings for their own country in their music often using **FOLKTUNES** or **FOLKDANCE RHYTHMS** of their country or taking scenes from their country's life, history or legends as a basis for works such as operas or symphonic poems.