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NATIONALISM AND ROMANCE

1820–1910

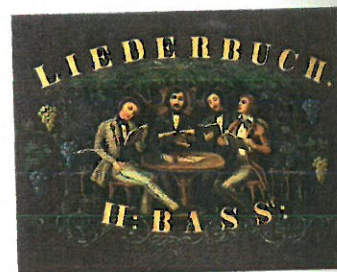
The French Revolution put individual rights at the forefront of society, which exalted the cult of the Romantic artist. A musical era of extremes, the 19th century found composers creating psychologically charged symphonies and writing concerti that featured an unprecedented virtuosity. The epic music-dramas of Wagner, Verdi, and Strauss made this a golden age of opera.

Age of Song

During the Romantic era, song provided an ideal vehicle for expressing profound emotions. Composers set the words of carefully selected poetry to music with increasingly dramatic intensity, and the piano was used to partner the voice, reflecting and enhancing the singer.



Postcard advertising a song theme. Very much the pop music of its day, the imagery from songs found its way on to everyday objects, such as postcards. This one depicts "Death and the Maiden", the title of a Schubert song written in 1817.



Home entertainment. Music publishers capitalized on the growing interest in home music-making. As this title page from a 19th-century Lieder suggests, songs were published for families and friends to perform together.

summarize the mood. He wrote the song cycle *Dichterliebe* (Poet's Love) in 1840, based on a set of 16 poems by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). The cycle, which he completed in an astonishing nine days, starts off with the elation of a new-found love but then descends into the failure of the relationship and rejection. His setting of Heine's words is heart-breaking and very real, while the piano part is intensely expressive.

Folk songs and lullabies

Johannes Brahms (see pp.172-73) was a great friend of Clara and Robert Schumann and is regarded as the natural successor to Schubert and Schumann. He wrote more than 260 songs altogether. Though he set texts by Heine and Goethe to music, his preferred medium was the folk song. One of Brahms's most famous songs "Wiegenlied" (Lullaby or Cradle Song), written in 1868, has the simple charm of a folk song and a lilting melody for rocking a baby to sleep. His two sets of *Liebeslieder Waltzes* (1869), a group of 18 graceful waltzes for four voices and four hands at one piano, are a delightful example of drawing-room music.

The texts are translations of folk poetry from Russia, Poland, and Hungary, covering the emotional range from despair to rapture, though the music maintains a folk-like quality throughout.

Brahms did write a few light-hearted songs in his career but most were restrained and serious. As he aged, his songs became slower, with dense piano accompaniments. In 1896,

Eager to overthrow the rules and limitations of the Classical age, the composers and performers of the Romantic era embraced new musical forms. Among these were German songs, known popularly as *Lieder* (pronounced "leader").

Germany was also home to many great poets who were undergoing their own Romantic rebellion, and their works formed the perfect vehicle for the new style of song writing. The poems of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) were set to song by a number of composers.

Emotional demands

Romantic composers rebelled by using new styles of melody, harmony, and rhythm to portray ever more complex

emotions and moods. Alongside simple songs, in which each verse is set to the same tune (like most folk songs or ballads), a new style, the "through-composed" song, emerged. Here, the text was set freely according to the ebb and flow of the poem, rather than being tied to many verses repeating the same melody. Composers also began to link songs together into a song cycle, based on a group of poems that told a longer, more complex story. By using more than one song, this new form offered composers a way to explore more emotions as the story unfolded. Typically, the poetry and the music rose high in the hope of finding perfect happiness, but the story ended tragically.

Franz Schubert (see pp.156-57), perhaps the best known of the German *Lieder* composers, wrote "An die Musik" (To Music). This approachable song is in only two verses. In less than three minutes the song tells how music has comforted, sustained, and inspired Schubert in such a way that the listener instantly understands. Some of Schubert's finest song writing is found in his two song cycles - *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Fair Maid of the Mill), in 1823, and *Winterreise* (Winter Journey) from 1827, both based on poetry by Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827). In all, Schubert wrote more than 600 songs, all demonstrating a deep understanding of human emotion and psychology.

An important song composer who came after Schubert was Robert Schumann (1810-56), an edgy genius

"I am heartily sick of the word 'romanticist'..."

ROBERT SCHUMANN, IN A REVIEW OF STEPHEN HELLER'S OP. 7, 1837

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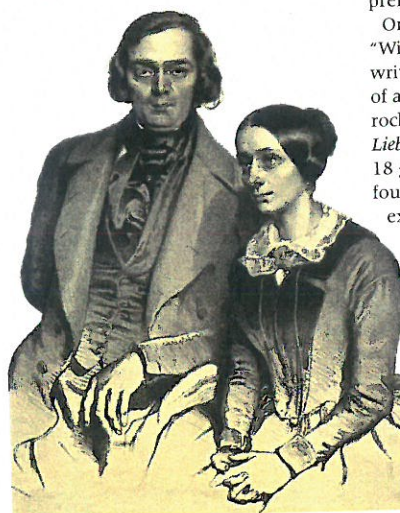
Master song writers

Even though so many new options for writing songs were open to composers at the time, the simplest songs could still make a great impact. In 1817,

Robert and Clara Schumann

In 1840, the year of his long-delayed marriage to pianist and composer Clara Wieck, Robert Schumann composed more than 150 songs - one-third of his total song output.

who suffered lifelong depression. Schumann took the musical possibilities of Romantic song to a new level. In his songs, the piano is no longer a mere accompanist to the voice but a true partner playing an equal role in expressing the meaning of the words through music. Schumann wrote short piano preludes to set the scene for his songs, and postludes at the end to



BEFORE

Between the Middle Ages and the early 19th century, songs gradually became more complex with more sophisticated accompaniment.

SONG THROUGH THE CENTURIES

In the Middle Ages, wandering musicians accompanying themselves on a stringed instrument. During the Renaissance, the lute songs written by John Dowland were highly popular. Around 1600, as opera began to evolve, the singer's melody was no longer made up of simple repeated verses and became more complex.

By the time of Mozart, as the piano usually accompanied the voice, and the music was written out rather than improvised. Songs were mostly written in verses or in three sections, at the end of which the opening musical theme was repeated.

BEETHOVEN'S SONG CYCLE

The first hint of the Romanticism in German song occurred in a composition by Beethoven, in a song cycle entitled *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved). Written in 1816, it consists of six songs linked by piano music, which forms a kind of bridge between the songs. The texts conjure up visions of misty hilltops, soft winds, and wistful longing for reunion with the beloved. The piano accompaniment reflects the words, and the assertive return of the opening theme at the end of the cycle provides a satisfyingly optimistic musical conclusion.



AGE OF SONG

the year before he died, Brahms reflected on mortality in his song cycle *Vier ernste Gesänge* (Four Serious Songs). Written for the bass voice and piano, they are settings to words from the Old Testament and St Paul's 1 Corinthians.

New voice

Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) was born in the Austrian Empire, in what is now Slovenia. He wrote 250 songs, carrying on the Romantic song tradition but using an unusual, almost declamatory style of vocal writing paired with unexpected harmonies. As well as setting poems of Goethe and Eduard Mörike (1804–75), he used Spanish and Italian texts in the song books *Spanisches Liederbuch* (1891) and *Italienisches Liederbuch* (1892–96).

KEY WORKS

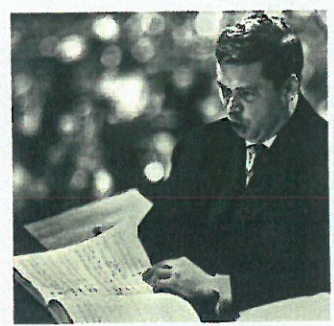
- Franz Schubert** *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Fair Maid of the Mill), D795; "An die Musik" (To Music), D547; *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), D911
- Robert Schumann** *Dichterliebe* (Poet's Love), Op. 48
- Johannes Brahms** "Wiegenlied" (Lullaby), Op 49, No. 4

AFTER

Composers abandoned the piano and voice pairing and began to accompany the voice with the full orchestra.

ORCHESTRA REPLACES THE PIANO
 In 1908, **Gustav Mahler 192–93** wrote a six-movement symphony for voice accompanied by orchestra called *Das Lied von der Erde* (Song of the Earth).

ENDURING POPULARITY
 German *Lieder* are recorded by artists and performed in concert halls before large audiences to this day. German baritone **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau** was one of the great recording artists and interpreters of German *Lieder* of the 20th century.



DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU (1925–2012)

Music practice
 During the Romantic era, the affluent middle classes began to buy pianos and take music lessons. Singing provided both edification for the learner and drawing-room entertainment for family and guests.

COMPOSER Born 1797 Died 1828

Franz Schubert

"I compose like a God.. Thank God I live at last, and it was high time."

SCHUBERT ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS MUSIC TEACHER TO THE ESTERHÁZY FAMILY, 1818

A supreme melodist and highly productive, Schubert composed transcendently optimistic music in stark contrast to his tragically short, often bleak, life. Dead at the age of 31, he never achieved international recognition in his lifetime.

Modest beginnings

Schubert was born in a poor suburb of Vienna, the son of a school assistant. His father taught him to play the piano and violin, and later the viola, and at the age of ten Schubert won a scholarship to Vienna's Imperial College (a religious seminary), where his talent blossomed.

By the age of 15 Schubert had attempted his first opera and completed a series of string quartets.

After leaving the college, Schubert taught in his father's

KEY WORKS

Piano Sonata in G major, D894

Piano Trio No. 1 in B flat, D898

Piano Quintet "Die Forelle" ("Trout"), D667

String Quartet in D minor ("Death and the Maiden"), D810

Symphony No. 9 in C major ("Great"), D944

Song cycle *Winterreise*, D911

Mass in G major, D167

school, and embarked on a period of intense productivity. During the next three years, he wrote five symphonies, four masses, three string quartets, three piano sonatas, six operas, and hundreds of songs. The settings of these songs ranged from simple, folk-like tunes such as the setting for Goethe's *Heidenröslein* (Wild Rose) to extended, lyrically expressive lines in the song cycles, especially *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), inspired by 24 poems of Wilhelm Müller.

Prodigious output

Schubert achieved a remarkable amount in his short lifetime. Although primarily known for his songs, he created masterpieces in every major genre except opera.





Romantic interest
Schubert fell in love with Therese Grob, soprano soloist in his F Minor Mass. His precarious financial situation, however, meant he was considered an unsuitable choice of husband, and he never married.

Commissions and patronage
In 1816, Schubert moved into central Vienna to lodge with his friend Franz von Schober, who was well connected. Life opened up for Schubert, but without the security of a salaried court appointment he was forced to rely on irregular commissions and patronage. Not a great performer, he was unassertive in promoting himself and avoided the limelight as much as possible. His main income came from the publication of songs and piano pieces.

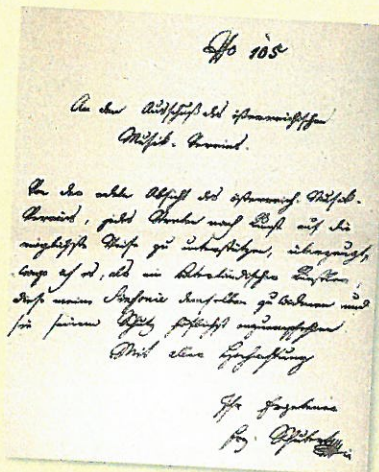
Above all, Schubert was a songsmith, creating the German *Lied* (song), a fusion of words and music that was at the heart of German Romanticism for half a century. Fuelled by his emotional life, and inspired by some of the

greatest poets of the day – Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Johann Mayrhofer, Friedrich Schiller, and others (see pp.158–59) – Schubert wrote more than 600 *Lieder*.

Poor health and financial worries
The success of his musical life was short-lived and not reflected in his personal circumstances. Financial problems mounted and his health began to fail. A rare public concert in 1821 earned useful money for him, but the following year he noticed signs of venereal disease.

New tranquility
Nonetheless, from 1823, Schubert entered a new period of creativity. His piano music – solo sonatas, impromptus, *moments musicaux*, dances, and works for four hands (duets), notably the *Fantasia* in F minor – delights both performer and listener. Schubert made no significant alterations to Classical forms inherited from Joseph Haydn (see pp.128–29), but did introduce a hallmark harmonic device – a temporary shift downwards by a major third while retaining a common note – which created an effect of tranquillity. In all, Schubert produced eight complete symphonies, and several others that are unfinished. The “Great” Symphony No. 9 in C major, completed in 1828, is an extended work, Classical in style but Romantic

in spirit. Its four-movement structure is familiar, but the large scale of the piece was new at the time, as was its harmonic invention. Lyrical melody prevails, but the rhythmic drive of the fast movements is compelling. Of the unfinished symphonies, the best known and most complete is No. 8 in B minor. Its opening movement is turbulent in character,



Letter from Schubert
On completing his Symphony No. 9, the “Great”, Schubert sent the score with this covering letter to the Austrian Musical Union for their consideration.

with passages of lyrical melancholy interrupted by fierce interjections. The second movement, outwardly serene, has hints of agitation. Only a sketch for the third movement exists.

The last flourish
In 1828, the last year of his life, Schubert was fervently energetic. He produced several sacred works and a number of masterpieces, including the song “Der Doppelgänger”, his last three piano sonatas, and the String Quintet in C. Unlike in his early work, a sense of bleak introspection pervades them all. Confined to bed during the last week of his life, Schubert asked for a string quartet to play Beethoven in his room. Already suffering from syphilis, he was diagnosed with typhoid and fell into a coma, dying on 19 November.

Despite his popular songs and enormous output, Schubert was largely uncelebrated during his lifetime. It was left to Schumann, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Brahms, and others to champion his achievements after his death.

Source of inspiration
Schubert and friends perform a charade of Adam and Eve and the Fall at a “Schubertiad” – an evening of fun and intellectual stimulation. This close circle of poets, musicians, and radical thinkers was a support and inspiration for Schubert.

- TIMELINE**
- **1797** Born in Vienna to a school assistant and domestic servant.
 - **1802** Begins to study piano and violin with his father and brothers.
 - **1808** Wins choral scholarship to the Imperial College, a religious seminary in Vienna. Receives instruction from Antonio Salieri.
 - **1812** Composes first string quartets.
 - **1813** Completes Symphony No. 1, D82. Trains as a teacher.
 - **1814** Writes song “Gretchen am Spinnrade”, D118. Also writes Mass in F, D105, to celebrate centenary of Lichtenal parish church, premiered with soprano soloist Therese Grob.
 - **1815** Becomes a schoolmaster. Composes Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3, and the song “Erlkönig”, D328.
 - **1816** Completes Symphony No. 5, D485 and more than 100 songs including “Der Wanderer”, D493.
 - **1817** Composes songs including “Die Forelle” (The Trout) and “Ganymede”. Meets Johann Michael Vogl, renowned baritone at Vienna Court Theatre, an admirer of his songs who does much to spread his name. Writes piano sonatas in A minor, D537, and B major, D575.
 - **1818** Abandons school teaching and becomes music teacher to the Esterházy family. Overture in C “in the Italian style”, his first orchestral work, is performed in Vienna.
 - **1819** Spends summer in Steyr. Commissioned to write “Trout” Quintet, D667.
 - **1820** *The Twin Brothers*, a *singspiel* (short play with songs) is staged. Writes *Lazarus* oratorio.
 - **1822** Writes “Unfinished” Symphony No. 8, D759, and “Wanderer” Fantasy, D760.
 - **1823** Forms an influential circle of friends in Vienna. Musical interludes for Helmina von Chezy’s *Rosamunde* is warmly received. Composes *Die Schöne Mullern*, D795. Admitted to hospital with syphilis.
 - **1825** By now he is known and published in Vienna. Beethoven requests a meeting.
 - **1826** Writes String Quartet No. 15 in G, D887.
 - **1827** Composes the first part of the song cycle *Winterreise*, D911. In March, he is a torch bearer at Beethoven’s funeral in Vienna.
 - **1828** In a year of unprecedented creativity, he completes “Great” C major Symphony No. 9, D944; *Winterreise*, D911; F minor *Fantasia* for piano four hands, D940; and C major String Quintet, D956. After an extended period of ill health, he dies of typhoid at his home in Vienna on 19 November, leaving behind substantial debts.



MEMORIAL IN VIENNA

“Truly in Schubert there dwells a divine spark.”

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, ON HEARING SCHUBERT’S WORKS, FEBRUARY 1827



Literary Links

The composers of the Romantic age used a new and personal voice to express emotion. They were inspired by nature, Classical myths, and medieval legends, as well as works of literature such as Shakespeare's plays and Goethe's and Byron's poems.



Dante's legacy

A fascination with the Middle Ages was a feature of Romanticism. *The Divine Comedy* by the Italian poet Dante (1265–1321), depicted here by Luca Signorelli inspired many Romantic composers, including Liszt.

Byron's narrative poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is the basis for Berlioz's four-movement symphonic work for orchestra, *Harold in Italy*, written in 1834. A dark-toned solo viola – called "a melancholy dreamer" by the composer – represents Harold himself. The composer's own travels through Italy inspired the work's melodies, colours, and textures. Berlioz believed passionately in the power of music to embody precise images, ideas, and intense feelings.

The English essayist Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English*

composers, including Hector Berlioz (see p.188), who wrote *The Damnation of Faust* (1846), a dramatic work for four soloists, seven-part chorus, and a huge orchestra.

Faust was also the inspiration for Franz Liszt (see p.162) in his *Faust Symphony* (1857). Rather than telling the whole complex story, Liszt created in each of the three movements a musical portrait of a central character. The first movement, "Faust", is in sonata form, its strong conclusion thought to represent the composer himself. The second movement portrays the gentle Gretchen, the heroine, while the third, "Mephistopheles", takes themes from the first movement and transforms them into diabolical mutations.

Looking to the past

The Romantic Movement also looked back to the past, especially to Classical civilizations and the medieval period. Berlioz wrote his own libretto based on *The Aeneid* by Roman poet Virgil for his five-act grand opera of 1858, *Les Troyens* (The Trojans). Unlike the

"This marvellous book fascinated me... I read it at meals, at theatre, in the street."

HECTOR BERLIOZ ON READING GOETHE'S "FAUST", 1828

shallow glamour of Parisian grand opera, *Les Troyens* was distinguished by the depth of characterization conjured in the key roles of Aeneas and Dido.

The descriptive power of music

The financial and amorous excesses of English poet Lord Byron (1788–1824) befitted his image as the epitome of the Romantic poet, and his poems influenced many composers. The supernatural aspect of his poem *Manfred*, about a man tortured by guilt, triggered Schumann's *Manfred: Dramatic Poem in Three Parts* (1852) and Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* (1885).

Opium Eater were the inspiration for Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique – Episodes in the Life of an Artist* (1830). Elements of the story are graphically described by the music, such as a waltz in a grand ballroom in the second movement, and mournful shepherd pipes (cor anglais and oboe) calling to one another as though across a valley in the third. In the fourth, even the sound of an execution is captured – the guillotined head falls into the basket to the menacing sound of *pizzicato* (plucking) double bass, followed by tumultuous *tutti* (whole orchestra) cheering from the crowd.

Literature was the inspiration behind some of the greatest music written in the 19th century, from settings of the works by the great Romantic poets such as Goethe and Lord Byron to Verdi's *Rigoletto*, based on Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse*.

Setting stories to song

The most common marriage of literature and music was in song. The German *Lieder* became a major art form in the hands of Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Hugo Wolf (see pp.154–55). They set texts by Germany's great poets, including Goethe, Wilhelm Müller, Heinrich Heine, and Joseph von Eichendorff, using the piano part both to colour individual words or phrases and to depict the mood of the song.

The fascination of Faust

Goethe's greatest work was *Faust*, a two-part drama interpreting the story of the legendary figure who sold his soul to the devil in return for worldly pleasures and supreme knowledge. The Faust legend was taken up eagerly by

BEFORE

Tales from history and Classical myths influenced opera composers of the Baroque period.

LITERATURE AND OPERA

The **Orpheus legend**, in which the musician hero attempts to rescue his beloved Eurydice from the Underworld, inspired works by several composers, beginning with **Claudio Monteverdi's** *L'Orfeo* in 1607 << 80–81. A century later, **Handel** << 110–11 based his opera *Rinaldo* (1711) on "La Gerusalemme Liberata", an epic poem about the First Crusade by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso.

STURM UND DRANG

The German literary movement **Sturm und Drang** (storm and stress) emerged as a force in music from the 1770s << 133. It was most ferociously evident in the terrifying final scene of **Don Giovanni** (1787), written by Mozart << 138–39, in which the wicked Don, engulfed in smoke and fire, is swept to hell.

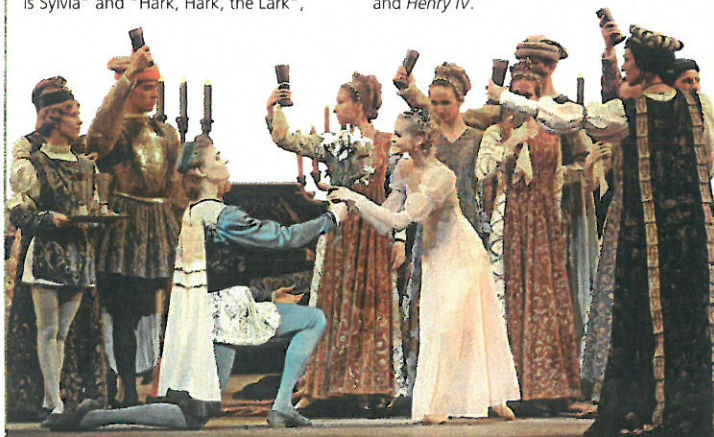
UNDERSTANDING MUSIC

THE LIBRETTIST

Many literary works have formed the basis for operas. The texts are not used intact, but adapted by writers called librettists, not least because words take longer to sing than to speak.

Shakespeare's works have given rise to more than 400 plays and countless instrumental pieces, from Schubert's "Who is Sylvia" and "Hark, Hark, the Lark",

based on two sonnets, to Mendelssohn's and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Verdi and his librettists Arrigo Boito and Francesco Piave created narratives centred on a single character, such as in *Macbeth* (1847) and *Otello* (1887), as well as a new story for *Falstaff* (1893) based on the character in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV*.



Literature continues to inspire popular and classical music today.

POETIC ORIGINS

Stravinsky's opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1927) **212-13** >> has text by French poet and dramatist Jean Cocteau, based on Sophocles' Greek drama. **Britten's** opera *Peter Grimes* (1945) **280** >> was influenced by the work of poet George Crabbe.



BERNSTEIN'S "WEST SIDE STORY"

SHADES OF SHAKESPEARE

Bernstein's musical *West Side Story* (1957) updated *Romeo and Juliet's* Veronese romance by setting it on New York's Upper West Side in the 1950s; **292** >>. Coupled with Bernstein's score, lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim 360** >> perfectly captured the tragic intensity of the original relationship.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47) was sceptical about music's descriptive ability. In a letter to his friend Baroness Pereira in 1831, he criticizes Schubert's "Erlkönig" for imitating "the rustlings of willow trees, the wailing of the child and the galloping of the horse... this kind of thing seems like a joke, like paintings in children's spelling books where the roofs are bright red to make the children realise they are indeed supposed to be roofs."

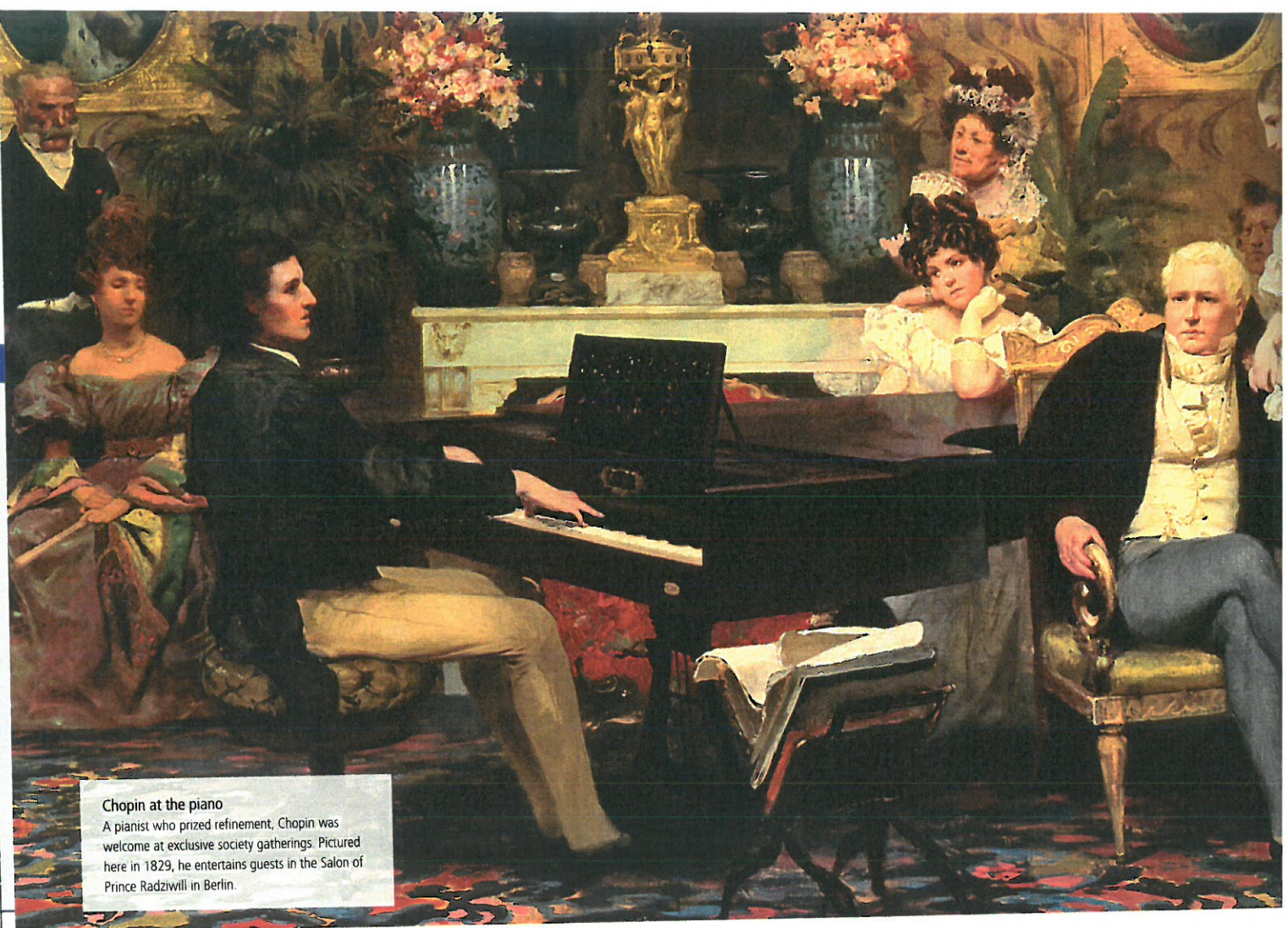
Despite this view, Mendelssohn was commissioned to write a concert overture based on Victor Hugo's tragic drama *Ruy Blas*, and his interpretation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of his best-loved works.

KEY WORKS

Hector Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*, Op. 14; *The damnation of Faust*, Op. 24
Felix Mendelssohn *Ruy Blas* Concert Overture, Op. 95; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* incidental music, Op. 61
Franz Liszt Dante Symphony S109; *Faust* Symphony S108
Tchaikovsky *Romeo and Juliet*
Verdi *Macbeth*; *Otello*; *Falstaff*

Dramatic effects

Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* uses a huge orchestra. This cover of the score was illustrated in suitably dramatic manner by French artist Georges Fraiponi (1873-1912).



Chopin at the piano

A pianist who prized refinement, Chopin was welcome at exclusive society gatherings. Pictured here in 1829, he entertains guests in the Salon of Prince Radziwill in Berlin.

« BEFORE

A yearning for emotional intensity and self-expression began to produce a new intimacy in music.

MUSICAL EXPLORERS

Beethoven had pushed the Classical piano sonata to its limits « 152–53. His constant quest for new heights of **emotional expression and technical challenge** opened the door for further musical exploration after his death. Meanwhile, the Irish composer and pianist **John Field** (1782–1837) wrote natural, unaffected music for piano. His Nocturnes, with their filigree melodies hovering over delicate, left-hand writing, directly influenced Chopin in his own works of the same name.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

Schubert's fascination with poetry led him to discover new ways of using the piano expressively in **song settings** « 154–55. This marked the start of an interest in small, perfectly formed musical entities – the solo.

Expressive Piano

The dawn of Romanticism, coupled with improvements in piano manufacture, offered new opportunities for emotional expression and technical brilliance. The compositions of Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Schumann helped propel the piano into the spotlight.

As Romanticism took hold in Europe, interest in the traditional sonata and its rigid form (see pp.104–05) ebbed away. Instead, smaller pieces became popular, suiting the Romantic urge to distil intense emotion or conjure a mood.

Small is beautiful

The piano repertoire of the period includes a cluster of “miniature” genres. Among them were the waltz,

impromptu, moment musical, prelude, nocturne, bagatelle, berceuse, fantasia, polonaise, barcarolle, mazurka, tarantella, ballade, scherzo, rhapsody, novelette, and song without words. Popular with piano composers seeking new vehicles for their artistic imagination, they were also favourites with listeners. Larger-scale pieces consisting of several shorter, linked items also found favour in this period, often inspired by literature.

“Hats off, gentlemen! A **genius.**”

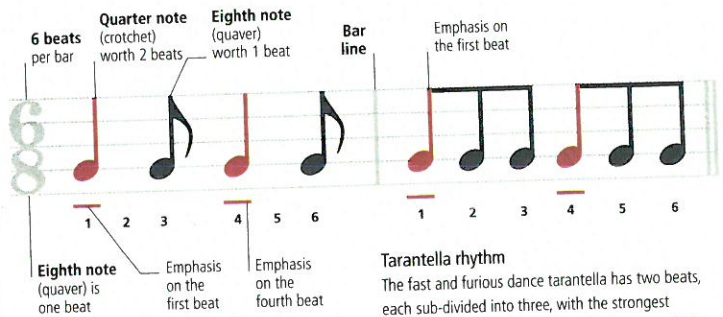
ROBERT SCHUMANN'S REVIEW OF CHOPIN'S VARIATIONS ON “LÀ CI DAREM LA MANO” FROM “DON GIOVANNI” BY MOZART

Fashionable salons

Most piano recitals took place in the private salons of the well-to-do. Musical performances for small groups of guests were a popular form of entertainment, and some composer-performers, including Chopin, four wealthy patrons among the guests at such events.

Waltzes and nocturnes

In many ways, Polish-born Frédéric Chopin (1810–49) – complex, effed abandoned by his lover, and, like German contemporaries Mendelssohn and Schumann, short-lived – epitomizes the modern view of a Romantic-composer-performer. Hi



Tarantella rhythm

The fast and furious dance tarantella has two beats, each sub-divided into three, with the strongest emphasis on the first beat of the bar. Its name derives from the Italian town of Taranto, home to a poisonous spider called the tarantula. It was believed that frenzied dancing of the tarantella could drive out the venom.

KEY WORKS

- Frédéric Chopin** Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21; Waltz in A minor, Op. 34, No. 2
- Felix Mendelssohn** *Songs without Words* in E flat major, Op. 19; *Variations sérieuses*, Op. 4
- Robert Schumann** *Scenes from Childhood*, Op. 15, No. 7, "Traumerei" (Dreaming); Piano Quintet in E flat major, Op. 44

AFTER

Many other composers began to explore the expressive possibilities of smaller forms.

MINIATURE MASTERPIECES

Johannes Brahms's rhapsodies and intermezzi 172–73 echo the new fashion for smaller musical works. Aria arrangements – "songs without words" – were made by **Charles-Valentin Alkan** and **Edvard Grieg 185**, whose respective *Chants* and *Lyric Pieces* reflect the desire for intense and lyrical emotional expression.



THE UPRIGHT PIANO

MUSIC IN THE HOME

The development of the upright piano in the 1780s led to a significant rise in domestic music 170–71. Composers and publishers responded to this by producing a range of teaching and practice materials for the amateur pianist.



The first of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* set in E flat major, from 1829, demonstrates the composer's simple, direct appeal. Perhaps his greatest legacy to pianists, it opens with a broken-chord bass in the left hand, over which an attractive right-hand melody gently unfolds. A contrasting middle section, harmonically more adventurous, is followed by a brief flight of fancy – such as a tiny cadenza – in the right hand, before a final reprise of the opening section.

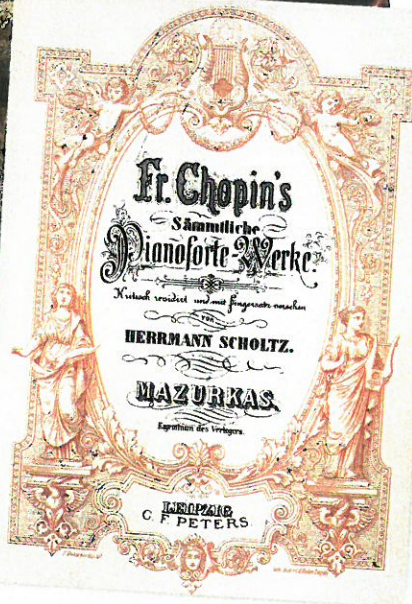
Mendelssohn did not ornament his melodies or use harmonies with the freedom or imagination of Chopin, nor did he exploit fully the potential of the newly improved piano or take technique to new heights, but his piano works delighted audiences with their descriptive charm and harmonic sweetness.

Musical explorer

Robert Schumann (1810–56) composed in all genres, but was at his most inspired when writing for piano and the voice (see p.154). He had a passion for literature, evident in the literary allusions of *Carnaval* and the delicate mood pictures of *Scenes from Childhood* from which the tender "Traumerei" (Dreaming) is the best known. *Papillons* (Butterflies) is a series of pieces depicting a masked ball, a concept inspired by the novel *Flegeljahre* by the German Romantic writer Jean Paul.

Schumann's strength as a piano composer lay less in structure than in mastery of the new possibilities offered by the instrument. He enjoyed exploring musical textures, especially relishing the rich sonorities of the piano's middle register, sometimes neglecting the upper register (which was so brilliantly exploited by Chopin).

Schumann also wrote skilfully for the piano's new sustaining pedal (see pp.142–43), making the piano a well-matched partner for the voice and other instruments that can naturally sustain notes. These qualities work well in Schumann's chamber music with strings, such as the Piano Quintet in E flat major, written in 1842, a year of intense creative energy for the composer.



Frontispiece of Chopin's mazurkas

A traditional Polish dance, the mazurka's triple time is characterized by bouncing rhythms. Mazurkas were hugely popular in 19th-century ballrooms and salons – Chopin wrote more than 50 for the piano.

it returns, reaching a climax of intensity before subsiding into quiet, repeated chords.

Master of harmony

Born into a wealthy and cultivated Jewish family, the composer and pianist **Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)** was less adventurous than Chopin in his use of established musical forms. Preserving the values and forms of the Classical period, he wrote three well-crafted sonatas and various keyboard concertos.

music, most of which was composed for the piano, is characterized by delicacy, deeply felt expressive passion, and lyrical melody. Yet the limpid, spontaneous beauty of his music masks a strong grasp of musical structure that gives all his works, however modest in scale, a satisfying completeness.

Chopin's 17 waltzes cover almost the entire range of his genius. The subdued, haunting simplicity of the A minor Waltz, for example, contrasts with the *Grande Valse Brillante* in E flat major, which conjures images of whirling dancers at a ball.

Inspired by the Irish composer John Field, Chopin wrote 20 nocturnes (compositions evocative of the night). Melancholy in mood, most feature a simple legato (sustained) melody in the right hand, floating above a gentle left-hand accompaniment of simple chords or arpeggios (broken chords). In the Nocturne in E flat major Op. 9, No. 2, the exquisite melody is decorated with ornate trills and elaborate runs each time