

BEFORE

The notion of the musical virtuoso existed as early as the 17th century, but it took on new meaning with Mozart and the advent of opera.

THE DESIRE TO AMAZE

In the 17th century, courts hired the most accomplished musicians, often singers, to impress guests on ceremonial occasions. In 1710, the singer Senesino, a favourite of Handel, was offered £2,000, a staggering sum at the time, to sing in London.

Instrumentalists, too, wanted a share of the limelight. The violinist **Giuseppe Tartini** (1692–1770) was renowned for his exciting performances, not least when playing his famous “Devil’s Trill” violin sonata, featuring a fiendishly difficult trill in the final movement.

TOURS AND PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

In the 18th century, Mozart’s European concert tours with his father and sister while still a child ◀ 138–39 promoted his virtuosity widely. But it was the rise of **public concerts**, and **opera** ◀ 134–35, that ushered in a more tangible virtuosity



TARTINI’S VIOLIN AND CASE

The Virtuosos

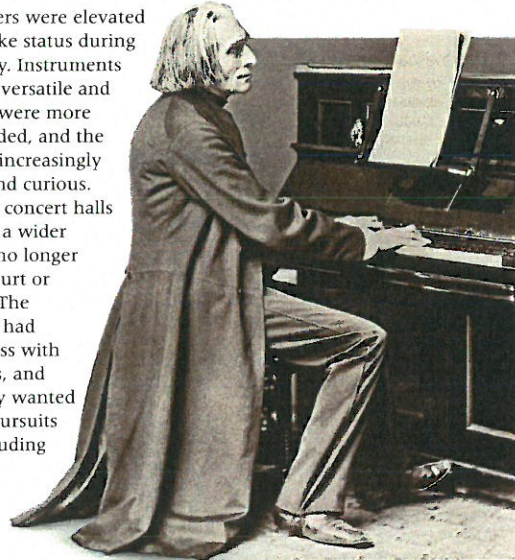
Virtuosity was a natural consequence of the Romantic ideals spreading through Europe in the mid-19th century. With its new emphasis on emotional expression, music began to exist for its own sake, not just to serve a ceremonial purpose, and required brilliant performers to match

Brilliant performers were elevated to almost god-like status during the 19th century. Instruments were becoming more versatile and powerful, composers were more daring and open-minded, and the public was becoming increasingly musically informed and curious.

The opening of new concert halls brought live music to a wider audience, and it was no longer the preserve of the court or wealthy households. The Industrial Revolution had nurtured a middle class with ambitions, aspirations, and money to spend. They wanted to participate in the pursuits of the privileged, including experiencing the arts.

People were also interested in learning how to make music for themselves and so took lessons. With their new understanding, they could admire accomplishment in others. They craved spectacle and wanted to be amazed.

The first two musical superstars of 19th-century Europe were the violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840) and the



pianist Franz Liszt (1811–86). Composers as well as performers, they delighted audiences throughout Europe with their brilliance.

Violinist extraordinaire

Born in modest circumstances in Genoa, Paganini was taught to play the violin by his martinet father, whose methods were rigorous. The young boy was even deprived of food as a punishment for insufficient practice. Niccolò’s prodigious progress took him to Parma to study with the composer and violin virtuoso Alessandro Rolla. On hearing the young Paganini sight-read a manuscript copy of his new violin concerto, Rolla exclaimed: “I can teach you nothing, my boy”.

12 The age at which Paganini made his first public appearance.

In 1810, Paganini embarked on a long concert tour of Italy. His phenomenal technique enabled him to play his own music incomparably well. The well-known *Caprices* for unaccompanied violin feature all Paganini’s trademark devices: very

Showcase for Paganini

Niccolò Paganini’s triumphant debut at La Scala, Milan, in 1813 included his *Le Streghe* (Witches’ Dance), confirming his supreme virtuosity. La Scala remains one of the world’s finest musical venues.

Liszt the showman

Hungarian-born Franz Liszt perfectly captured the Romantic spirit. An astounding pianist and composer he sometimes assumed a monk’s habit while imitating the demon Mephistopheles at the piano.

high notes, multiple stopping (bow more than one string at once), multiple trills, double-stopped octave runs, scordatura (changing the tuning of some strings), “ricochet” (bouncing bowing, left-hand pizzicato (plucking the string), and simultaneous bowing and pizzicato.

Paganini traded upon his demonic appearance to enhance his reputation as a virtuoso. The calculated iciness of his music, which relies on technical bravura for its effect, is worlds apart from the highly charged outpouring of his peers. Although he was a philanderer and gambler (he invested in the Casino Paganini in Paris, which ultimately failed), he amassed a substantial fortune. When he died in 1840, he left 22 immensely valuable stringed instruments to his esteemed makers Stradivari, Amati and Guarneri.

The brilliant pianist

Franz Liszt is regarded as one of the most sensational pianists in history, well as one of music’s most complex figures. Like Mozart, he had an ambitious father who exploited his son’s gift. In 1823, the family moved from Vienna to Paris where Liszt gave 38 recitals in three months, a schedule that was typical for the young Liszt over the next four years.

Though lucrative, the tours organised by his father eventually exhausted Liszt, causing his health to break down. At the age of 15, and following his father’s death, he retreated from the public gaze and started to teach.

Liszt was inspired to return to the platform after hearing Paganini perform in 1831. Astonished by the violinist’s extreme virtuosity and bizarre demeanour, Liszt created his own showman’s persona, delighting audiences by playing from memory a variety of pieces, including his own elaborate arrangements and fantasies. He was the first pianist to lift his instrument on stage and sit sideways to his audience.

The touring resumed and, along with his celebrity performing career, Liszt

“My great rule in art is complete unity in diversity...”

PAGANINI TO HIS BIOGRAPHER JULIUS MAX SCHOTTKY



Following the triumphs of Paganini and Liszt, a wave of new performers attracted the label "virtuoso".

MASTER INSTRUMENTALISTS

The violin was a natural vehicle for musical pyrotechnics, and **Pablo de Sarasate**, **Henryk Wieniawski**, and **Joseph Joachim** were the top violin virtuosos in the late 19th century. They were followed by **Fritz Kreisler** and **Jascha Heifetz** in the 20th century. The brilliance of pianists **Ignaz Moscheles**, **Anton Rubinstein**, and **Vladimir Horowitz** influenced the piano repertoire for the next generation.

VOCAL VIRTUOSOS

Twentieth-century singers such as **Enrico Caruso** continued the concept of the **vocal virtuoso** promoted in the 19th century by Jenny Lind, Adelina Patti, Nellie Melba, and Fyodor Chaliapin. Virtuosity still exists, but has to some extent been eclipsed by media-led celebrity.

composed prolifically. Idiomatic and thrilling piano writing came naturally, whether in original works such as the Sonata in B minor, or in taxing transcriptions and fantasies on popular operatic tunes. Features of these works include rapid octaves, wide spread chords, multiple trills, and ferociously fast passages for both hands – technical aspects that amaze audiences and challenge performers to their limits.

Cult status

Liszt's private life was as colourful as his platform presence. He eloped with a married woman in 1835 and had amorous alliances, but this proved no barrier to him achieving cult status. His fame was celebrated in "Lisztomania", a term coined by the poet Heinrich Heine in 1844 to describe Liszt's impact on the Paris music scene.

Despite this, Liszt provoked criticism throughout his life. Some disliked his exhibitionism, while others found incongruity in his nationalism, Roman Catholicism (he was ordained as an abbot in 1865), and his relationships with women. He eventually became a depressive alcoholic, and died of pneumonia in 1886.

KEY WORKS

Niccolò Paganini Caprices for unaccompanied violin, Op. 1

Franz Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp minor; Piano Sonata in B minor

Pablo Sarasate Zigeunerweisen, Op. 20

Henryk Wieniawski Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op. 16

A master at work

Violinist and composer Niccolò Paganini, whose cadaverous and sinister appearance is captured in this caricature, made virtuosity an acceptable element in music

BEFORE

Near the end of the 18th century, as unrest and revolution swept across Europe, the artistic response started what was called the Romantic era.

A NEW CAST OF CHARACTERS

In the Romantic era, composers looked for fresh material and new ways to express themselves. In opera, characters from antiquity and **Classical mythology** << 20–21 gave way to more contemporary heroic figures, from wronged, innocent peasant girls to supernatural characters.

LONGING FOR LIBERTY AND FREEDOM

The chief precursor of the Romantic movement in opera was **Beethoven** << 144–45, in his three-act opera *Fidelio*. It was premiered in Vienna in 1805. The story and music embody the spirit of longing for liberty and freedom in the face of oppression that was to become a key characteristic of Romantic opera.

Romantic Opera

Certain elements characterize Romantic opera: a fascination with the beauty of nature, the power of evil, and the supernatural; patriotism and the desire for liberty; an admiration for rural simplicity; and the development of the *bel canto* (beautiful) singing style.

The first opera to feature most of these characteristics, and seen as the founding work of this movement, was *Der Freischütz* (*The Freeshooter*), but the opera is also sometimes called *The Magic Marksman* by German composer Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826). His music conjured up the dark German forests, and he used folk tunes and hunting horns to provide colour.

Exotic settings are a constant in Romantic opera. In 1819, Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) wrote *La donna del lago* (*The Lady of the Lake*). The heroine, Elena, makes her first

Inspirational landscape

The Romantic movement sought inspiration in dramatic landscapes and the distant past, qualities encapsulated by Eilean Donan Castle on Loch Duich, one of the most photographed views in Scotland.



appearance while crossing a Scottish loch by boat. The heroine of the 1831 opera *Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini (1801–35) is a druid priestess, in Roman Gaul

while *La sonnambula* (*The Sleepwalker*), written the same year, is set in the Swiss Alps. The action of Bellini's 1835 opera *I Puritani* (*The Puritans*) takes place in the England of the Civil War (1642–51). These settings were considered highly exotic, and had rarely been visited by the composers.

Literary sources reflected the same interest in far-flung places, with the novels and narrative poems of Sir Walter Scott providing rich material. Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) loosely

The 1831 opera *Robert le diable* (*Robert the Devil*) by Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864) features a hero who is drawn towards evil by the mysterious Bertram (his own father) and narrowly avoids eternal damnation.

While there were differences in style and subject matter between Romantic operas in Germany, France, and Italy, some composers crossed national lines. Meyerbeer, a German, had his great successes with operas written to French texts for the Paris Opéra.

“Operas must make people weep, feel horrified, die through singing.”

ITALIAN COMPOSER VINCENZO BELLINI'S EDICT ON OPERA

based his opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* (*Lucy of Lammermoor*) on Scott's historical novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

The German Heinrich Marschner (1795–1861) evoked the supernatural, as Weber had done, in his 1828 opera *Der Vampyr* (*The Vampire*). However, the macabre plot was mocked mercilessly in London, in 1887, by Gilbert and Sullivan in their operetta *Ruddigore* (see p.195).

Meyerbeer's creations were told on a grand scale, played out against sweeping historical canvases. His 1831 opera *Les Huguenots*, for example, culminates in 1572 in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre.

Bellini, Rossini, and Donizetti, followed for the next 50 years by Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901), are the chief representatives of the Italian of Romanticism, while Wagner led the way in Germany.

1831 theatre poster for *La sonnambula*

This poster depicts the soprano Giuditta Pasta as Amina and tenor Gian Battista Rubini, as Elvino, advertising a production of Bellini's opera *La sonnambula* at the Teatro Carcano, in Milan, Italy.

Exquisite singing in extremes Bellini and Donizetti created female characters pushed to extremes caused by their situations. In the title role



Bellini's opera of the same name, Norma kills her own children in revenge for being betrayed by her lover. Lucy, the heroine of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* is driven mad by being forced into marriage.

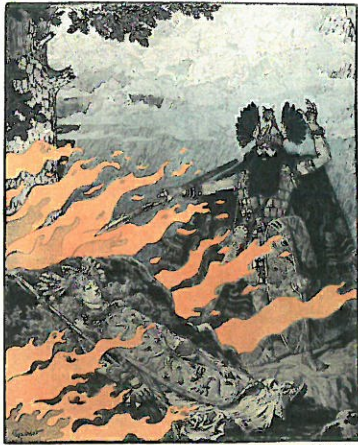
Technically skilled, exquisite singing was required to depict madness and hysteria, along with ever more agile soprano and tenor voices possessing a plangent, consciously beautiful quality designed specifically to play upon the emotions of the listener. The Italian soprano Giuditta Pasta (1797–1865) was the first to sing the title roles in *Norma* and *La sonnambula*, while the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (see pp.168–69) was greatly admired by Queen Victoria and was famous throughout Europe and North America. The French tenor Adolphe Nourrit (1802–39) was the first Robert in *Robert le diable* and Raoul in *Les Huguenots*. Such singers attracted huge followings, and earned considerable amounts of money. Their interpretations were considered definitive, and were inordinately admired, or loathed, by rival fans.

Peak of Romantic opera

Though they never met, Verdi and Wagner (see below) were actively composing at the same time; Wagner wrote his first opera, *Die Feen* (*The Fairies*), in 1833, and Verdi wrote his first opera, *Oberto*, in 1839.

Wagner brought German Romantic opera to its ultimate form in the same way Verdi had for Italian Romantic opera. Wagner, one of the towering figures of the 19th century, wrote

LA VALKYRIE



POÈME ET MUSIQUE DE RICHARD WAGNER

PARIS. P. SCHOTT & CO. 70, Rue de Valenciennes. S. MOYER.

voluptuous yet mystical Romantic operas. His only significant works are those for the theatre, and few could imitate his genius for creating colours in his powerful orchestrations.

For Wagner, the music served the drama, and he wrote all of the librettos of his operas (though not the stories), himself. Staying in the Romantic mainstream, his 1843 opera *Der fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*) is based on the legend of a man doomed to sail the world until he finds a woman who will give up everything to love him. His three-act opera *Lohengrin* (1850) retells a medieval legend of the son of Parsifal

Wagner's Valkyrie

In this 1893 colour lithograph, Eugene Grasset (1841–1917) depicts the final act of Wagner's *Die Walküre* (*The Valkyrie*). Brünnhilde, a warrior maiden, is put into an enchanted sleep by her father, the god Wotan. She will be awoken by the kiss of Siegfried in the next opera of Wagner's epic *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring Cycle*) – a series of four monumental operas retelling Norse legends.

(who also inspired an eponymous opera), and is considered the last important German Romantic opera.

Lohengrin points the way to developments in Wagner's next period. His orchestration, for example, is more dense and sombre than his previous operas, with less noticeable divisions between separate musical numbers. This foreshadows his compositional system of writing continuous music, also called endless melody. In the vocal line, the music is written in free-flowing melody, rather than staying with the formula of balanced,

symmetrical phrases that were heard in the Classical era (see pp.118–19).

To hold this free-flowing music and drama together, Wagner used the *leitmotif* (a short, concentrated musical theme) to act as a kind of musical label for an idea, a person, place, or thing in the drama. The *leitmotif* is played at the first appearance or mention of an object, place, or person, and whenever it reappears, is mentioned, or has an influence on the drama, even when it may be unseen.

Wagner also developed the theory of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which translates loosely as “universal artwork”. In his theory, opera is a meaningful work of drama, and the text, stage-setting, acting, and music must all work together closely as a single all-encompassing unit to serve the central dramatic purpose of the opera.

Verdi wrote 26 operas and never abandoned the past or tried out radical new theories. His aim was to refine Italian Romantic opera to perfection. An aspect of the Romantic ideal most associated with Verdi is his sense of patriotism. Many of his early operas contain choruses that some interpret as being barely disguised appeals to Italians to resist foreign domination. However, he firmly believed every nation should foster its own native music, and keep to its independent style. He deplored any foreign influence being exerted on young Italian composers. This meant that while composers in Germany

KEY WORKS

Carl Maria von Weber *Der Freischütz*
Vincenzo Bellini *La sonnambula*; *Norma*
Gaetano Donizetti *Lucia di Lammermoor*
Richard Wagner *Der fliegende Holländer*
Giuseppe Verdi *Falstaff*
Donizetti *Luci*

romanticized the natural world and built their operas around mythology and legends, Verdi was resolutely unsentimental about it. Nature was there to make use of, not adore. Verdi's interest was in humanity. He saw opera's ultimate role as portraying the human drama, telling the story using a simple, direct solo line, rather than using the lush orchestral and choral indulgences of French grand opera. Except for that of *Falstaff* (1893), most of his opera plots are serious, and many take their inspiration from works by Romantic authors.

AFTER

Wagner continued to fascinate composers in the late 19th century, who struggled to not imitate him.

GERMAN FAIRY-TALE OPERA

In late 19th-century Germany, there was a revival in the *Märchenoper* (fairy-tale opera), as seen in the 1893 opera *Hänsel und Gretel* (*Hansel and Gretel*) by Engelbert Humperdinck (1854–1921). He used Wagnerian orchestration and *leitmotifs* blended with folk-like music.

POST-ROMANTIC GERMAN OPERA

Richard Strauss 22–23 » embraced Wagner's theories while pushing the boundaries of **chromatic harmony** even further. Wagner's styles of continuous music and the systematic use of the *leitmotif* can be heard in Strauss's operas.

TELEVISED SATELLITE CONCERTS

Plácido Domingo, José Carreras, and the late Luciano Pavarotti gained huge commercial success singing a Romantic opera repertoire in popular concerts in the 1990s and 2000s.



THE THREE TENORS

COMPOSER (1813–83)

WILHELM RICHARD WAGNER



Born into a theatrical family in Leipzig, Wagner began composing while working part-time as chorusmaster in Würzburg, and published his first operas at his own expense. It was not until 1864, when King Ludwig II of Bavaria recognized Wagner's unique artistic vision and settled his debts, that the composer knew financial stability – he had previously relocated on several occasions to avoid his creditors.

After a difficult marriage to the actress Wilhelmine Planer, he married Cosima Liszt (daughter of Franz Liszt) in 1870. With Cosima, he founded the Bayreuth Festival, which continues to perform his operas on a yearly basis.

BEFORE

Female musical talent had very few opportunities for expression before the 19th century.

EARLY PIONEERS

German abbess **Hildegard of Bingen** (1098-1179) wrote hymns and liturgical sequences in **plainchant** << 30-31. The cult of the **operatic diva** had its roots in the Italian Renaissance << 66.



SALON PERFORMERS

In the 18th century, women began performing in private salons. **Marianne von Martines** (1744-1812), born in Vienna, studied singing, piano, and composition with **Nicola Porpora** and **Joseph Haydn** << 128-29.

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Women Composers and Performers

Until the 20th century, women in the music world were mostly known for supporting the musical endeavours of others, as wife, teacher, hostess, or diarist. However, during the Romantic era, a handful of celebrated female composers and performers emerged.

Suppressed by social convention and burdened with domestic responsibility, women rarely became serious musicians. The emerging middle classes prized musical education, but this was limited to the performance of songs or piano pieces for entertainment.

For women with musical ambition, the obstacles to success were immense. Employment, even for male musicians, was hard to find. Court positions

dwindled in number in the 19th century, and the Church offered no opportunities for female musicians. Marriage was regarded as a full-time occupation and, for the unmarried, a life spent in the public eye was considered improper.

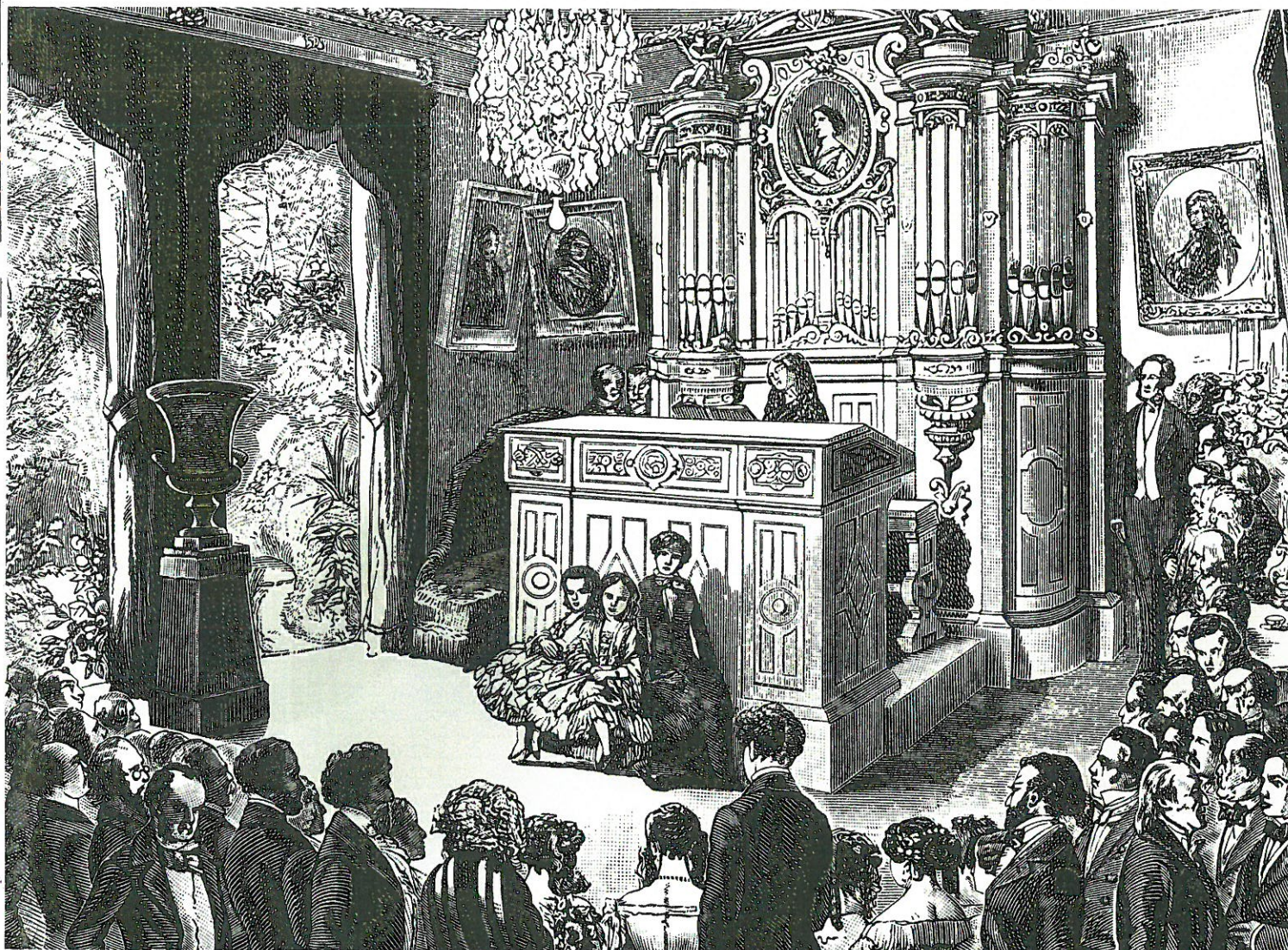
Female vocalists

The women who did succeed musically tended to be all-rounders – pianists, singers, and composers. The popularity

of salon society in the 19th century offered more opportunities for them. In Paris, mezzo-soprano **Pauline Viardot** (1821-1910) became a society figure on her marriage to writer **Louis Viardot**. Their home

Salon soirée

Pauline Viardot's soirées, one of which is depicted in this woodcut, were famous. Attending one of her salons in 1843, the Russian writer **Turgenev** fell in with Pauline, and went on to join her household.



AFTER



Celebrated pianist
Clara Wieck began her performing career at the age of 11 and continued to give concerts throughout her marriage to Robert Schumann, often premiering his compositions.

experienced by women musicians. Both were talented pianists and received similar training, but their father was keen

to suppress his daughter's ambition. In a letter to Fanny in 1820, he said, "Perhaps music will be Felix's profession, whereas for you it will always remain just an ornament; it can and never should become the foundation of your existence".

Fanny rarely performed in public, apart from in a few family salon concerts in Berlin, but she wrote more than 500 works, including around 120 pieces for piano, chamber music, *Lieder* (songs), and oratorios. Her family initially prevented her from publishing her works, so six of her songs were first published under her brother's name. Many of her compositions remained in manuscript.

attracted artists, musicians, and writers. Viardot made her operatic debut as Desdemona in Verdi's opera *Otello* in London (1839), triumphed in Rossini's *Barber of Seville* in Russia (1843), and premiered the role of Fidès in Meyerbeer's opera *Le prophète* (1849). Also a composer, she wrote operas and songs to texts by Russian writer Ivan Turgenev and made vocal transcriptions of Chopin's mazurkas.

"As far as art is concerned, you are man enough."

VIOLINIST JOSEPH JOACHIM TO CLARA SCHUMANN, 1870

Soprano Jenny Lind (1820–87), known as the Swedish Nightingale (see p.167) hit the headlines in 1838 with her performance in the opera *Der Freischütz* by German composer Carl Maria von Weber. She enjoyed commercial success, and in 1850 the American showman Phineas Taylor Barnum invited her to tour the USA, where she gave 93 concerts.

Sibling talents

A comparison of brother and sister Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–47) illustrates the limitations

KEY WORKS

- Louise Farrenc** Symphony in C minor, Op. 32; Nonet in E flat, Op. 38
- Fanny Mendelssohn** Piano Trio, Op. 11
- Clara Schumann** Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 7
- Ethel Smyth** *The Wreckers*
- Amy Beach** Piano Concerto, Op. 45; Symphony in E minor, "Gaelic"

When a small number finally reached print, *Die neue Zeitschrift*, a music magazine co-founded by Robert Schumann, expressed surprise that they were by a woman. Fanny Mendelssohn's piano pieces, particularly the Piano Sonatas and shorter flamboyant showpieces, are occasionally heard in recitals today.

Celebrated musician

Clara Wieck (1819–96), the wife of Robert Schumann, was one of the few female instrumentalists widely celebrated in her own time.

Travel journal

In 1839, Fanny Mendelssohn embarked on a concert tour of Italy. She copied pieces of music into her travel journal, and her husband, the artist Wilhelm Hansen, illustrated them and added the title vignette at the top.

She was an enormously talented pianist, and by the age of 20 she held a Viennese court appointment as Royal and Imperial Chamber Music Virtuoso. Following her husband's death in 1856, Clara was short of money and embarked on concert tours, visiting Russia and England more than 16 times. Praised for her technical mastery and respect for a composer's intentions, she was also noted for choosing a progressive repertoire.

She championed the works of her late husband, and also of Chopin and her great friend Brahms. Despite

claiming that composition was not important to her in 1839, Clara wrote original works for piano, including a concerto, songs, and a piano trio. Their poetic imagination, lyrical melody, harmonic structure, and coherent musical ideas still appeal to modern audiences.

Scholar-composer

One of the first women to achieve prominence as a scholar-composer was Louise Farrenc (1804–75). She studied at the Paris Conservatoire and was later appointed professor of piano there, aged 38. A century before interest in early music began in earnest, Farrenc firmly established her scholarly credentials by publishing the 24-volume *Trésor des Pianistes*, an annotated collection of keyboard music of the three preceding centuries.

Her marriage to the music publisher Aristide Farrenc made her reputation

Several successful female composers emerged in Europe and the USA in the first half of the 20th century.

SUCCESS STORIES

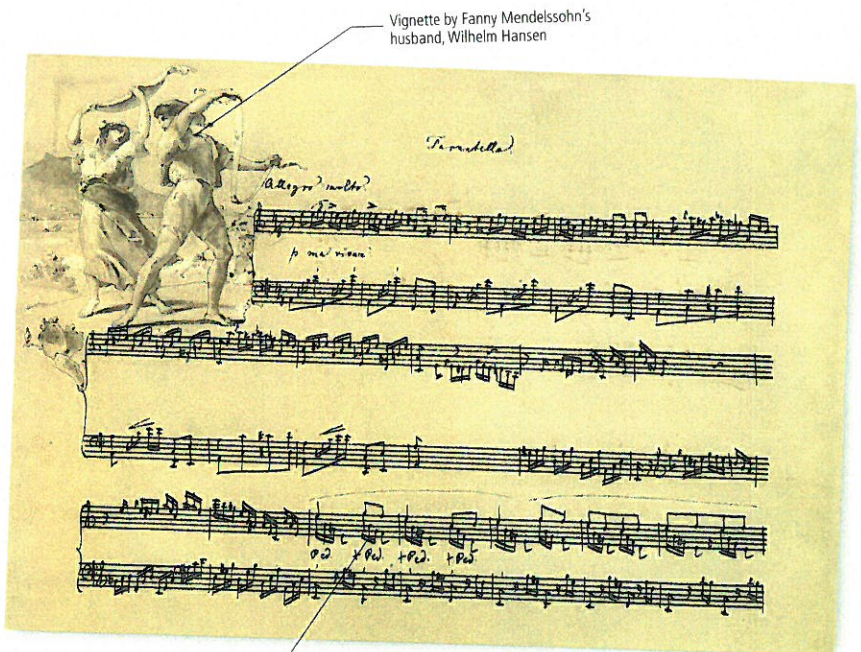
In Britain, **Dame Ethel Smyth** (1858–1944) premiered her opera *The Wreckers* in 1906. In France, **Lili Boulanger** (1893–1918) and her sister **Nadia Boulanger** (1887–1979) were influential composers as well as teachers to Philip Glass, Virgil Thomson, and Astor Piazzolla.

In the US, notable composers included **Amy Beach** (1867–1944), who produced large-scale art music, and modernist **Ruth Crawford Seeger** (1901–53).



NADIA BOULANGER

as a composer, as it ensured publication of her compositions. Her work includes piano pieces and large-scale works that were admired by Hector Berlioz for their sparkling orchestration.



Vignette by Fanny Mendelssohn's husband, Wilhelm Hansen

Performance directions

Music in the Home

During the 19th century, a rapidly growing middle class had the money, education, and leisure to perform and appreciate music. It became indispensable in the domestic sphere both as a principal form of entertainment and for social advancement.

Technological and industrial advances in the 19th century made instruments cheaper and more compact. This created a demand for music for solo instruments and ensembles that could be performed at home, and it led to an explosion in chamber music works, transcriptions for different instruments, and solo pieces.

Invitation to a dance
"The Sparkling Polka" by Thomas Baker was published by Horace Waters in New York City in 1850. As well as playing and singing, people also danced at home.

Urbanization and huge changes in working patterns and social mobility during the Industrial Revolution led to a reaction against industrialization and a rise in Romanticism. The Romantic composers championed the natural world, idealized the life of the common man, and emphasized emotions, greatly broadening the appeal of "serious" music, hitherto formal in construction and tone.

More leisure time

At the same time, the rise of a large and wealthy middle class in Europe and the United States saw improved levels of education and increased leisure time. As education led to a greater appreciation of, and interest in, music, musical accomplishment became prized as a way of furthering social aspirations. It was also a source of entertainment during long evenings in the parlour or drawing room.

Methods of mass production enabled a vast proliferation of sheet music,



which fed this new hunger for music in the home. This greatly expanded market coincided with the end of the traditional model of aristocratic patronage supporting composers and music-making (see pp.84-85). Lacking the opportunities at princely courts that their 18th-century predecessors had relied on, musicians turned instead to performing solo in public recitals or private parties, further fuelling the creation of music for chamber performance.

Solo instruments

Proficiency in a musical instrument was an important feature of a well-rounded education, particularly for girls. The range of instruments that were played at home was extensive, and included the harp, violin, cello, harmonium, woodwind, and, in the United States, the concertina and banjo. But none was as important or popular as the pianoforte, ideal for solo performance and accompanying other instruments, singers, and dancing.

As cheaper and more compact pianos were developed, suitable even for small rooms, every respectable home had one, and the piano remained a

Family favourite

A concertina was a popular home instrument, invented in England and Germany in the 1830s and 1840s. It belongs to the accordion family, but its buttons are pressed individually, rather than as chords.

KEY WORKS

- Henry Bishop "Home Sweet Home"
- Franz Schubert *Winterreise* (*Winter Journey*)
- Frédéric Chopin *Nocturnes*
- Franz Liszt Piano transcription of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*
- Sir Arthur Sullivan "The Lost Chord"
- Johannes Brahms *Three Violin Sonatas*
- Max Bruch *Eight Pieces* for clarinet, viola and piano, Op. 83

major component of domestic life until well into the 20th century. The proliferation of works for solo piano saw a surge of challenging pieces, with new names coined to describe them: sonatas were joined by nocturnes, polonaises, mazurkas, impromptus, and études. Schubert (see pp.156-57) Chopin (see pp.160-61), and Liszt (see pp.162-63) were pre-eminent among the composers writing for solo piano. At the same time, duets and pieces for four hands became hugely popular.

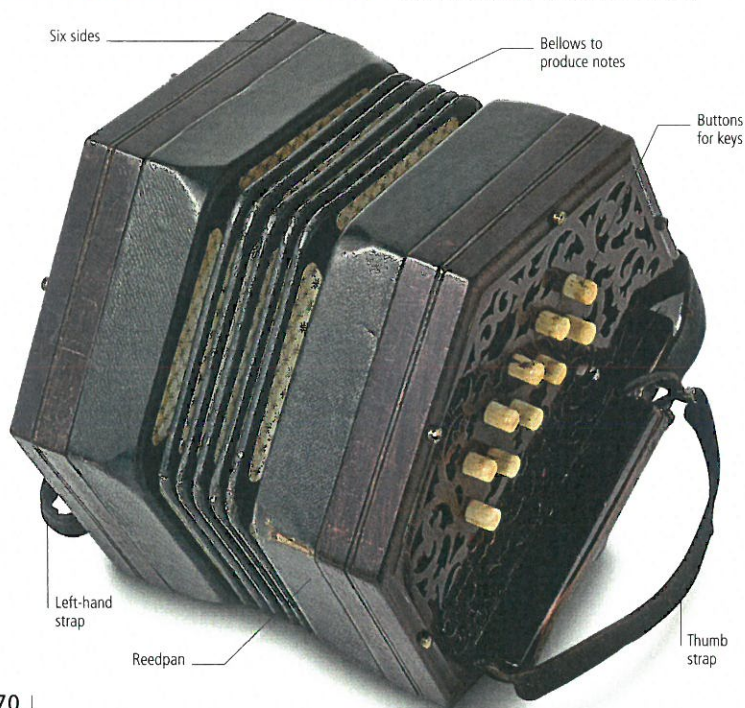
With the piano as the principal tool of music-making, transcriptions became the main means of spreading serious music, from arias to oratorio: Liszt raised the art to new levels of sophistication with transcriptions of symphonies by Beethoven and Berlioz.

BEFORE

Until the emergence of a substantial middle class, the difference between the domestic music-making of the wealthy and the poor remained fixed.

MELODIES AND BALLADS

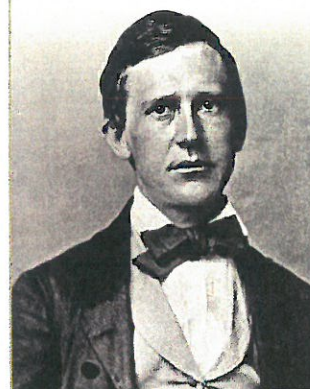
The **harpichord**, **lute**, or even a small private **orchestra** provided music for the wealthy, the **fiddle**, the human voice, and perhaps a caged bird was for almost everyone else. Composers wrote for the Church, the court, and the stage. Music sung or played in the home would typically have been **folk melodies** handed down the generations, or popular **ballads** that were known as "**broad-sides**", which proliferated between the 16th and 18th centuries.

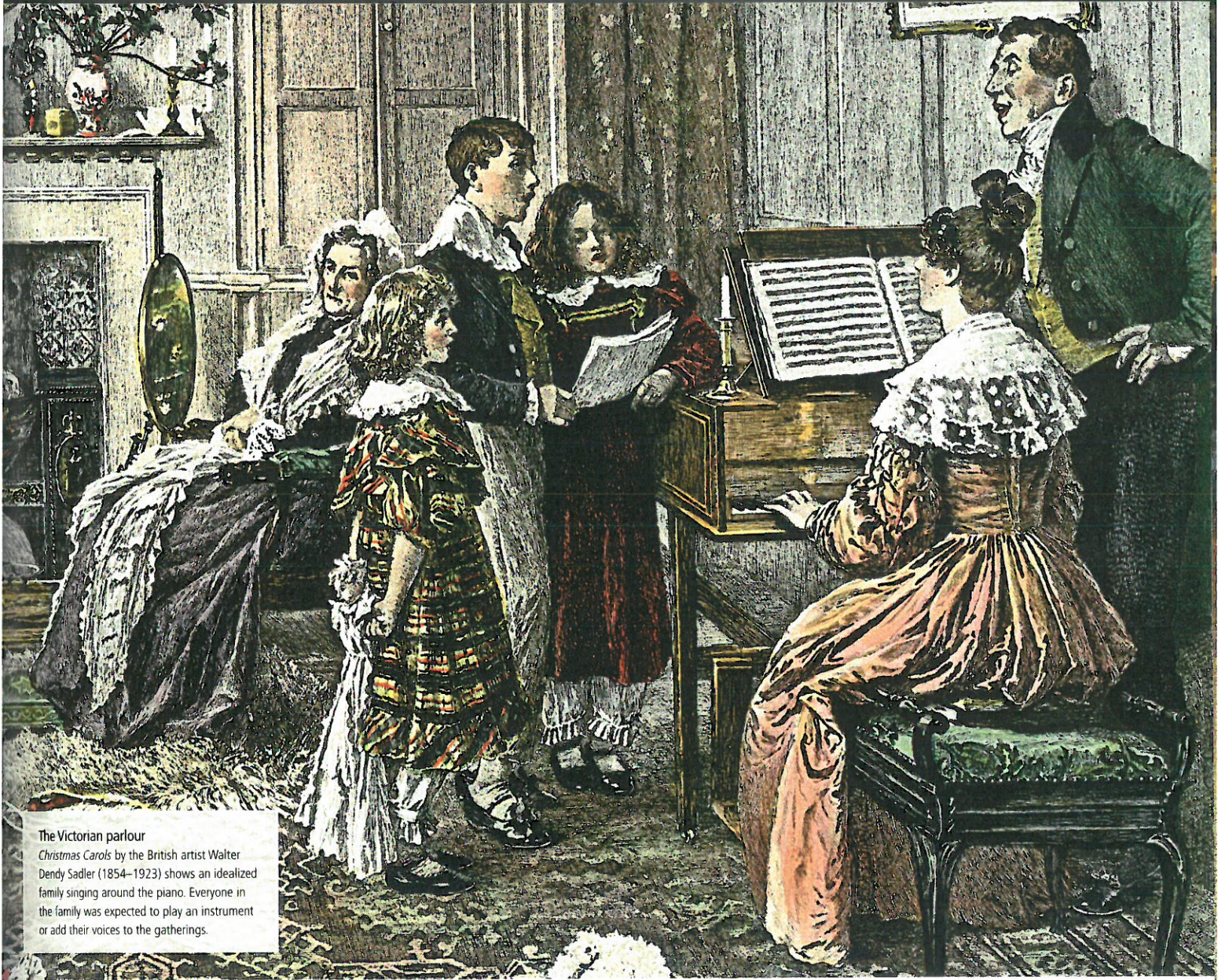


SONGWRITER (1826-64)

STEPHEN FOSTER

Known as "the father of American music", Stephen Foster was America's first fully professional songwriter. His parlour songs included "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair" and "Beautiful Dreamer", while his "minstrel" songs included "The Old Folks at Home", "Camptown Races", and "Oh! Susanna". Foster's new approach to music-making looked to the home and the amateur performer for success.





The Victorian parlour

Christmas Carols by the British artist Walter Dendy Sadler (1854–1923) shows an idealized family singing around the piano. Everyone in the family was expected to play an instrument or add their voices to the gatherings.

and highly original variations on operatic scores that popularized the original works. Since small ensembles could be formed in large families or with friends, or engaged to perform at soirées, chamber music was in demand.

The piano was joined by other instruments to form duets or trios. These – with or without piano – were

“Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

GERMAN POET AND AUTHOR BERTHOLD AUERBACH (1812–82)

easily managed in the parlour; larger ensembles formed the focus of more formal gatherings.

The new passion for chamber music created an insatiable demand for quartets, and most composers catered to this huge market, even those not

usually identified with instrumental music, such as Italian opera composer Gaetano Donizetti (see p.166).

The versatile voice

The Romantic era was a golden age of song, from popular ballads, hymns, and folk songs to sophisticated song cycles and operatic arias. Singing

was popular, and “parlour songs”, often sentimental and requiring little vocal skill, were published in their thousands. Settings of poems, songs commemorating major events, and the latest hits of music-hall and vaudeville stars were also much in demand.

AFTER

Home-made music was gradually replaced by devices that, with the turn of a handle or the flick of a switch, brought music into the home.

CYLINDER TO DISC

The rise of Thomas Edison’s **phonograph** (1877) started to bring outside music into the home. The oldest surviving music recordings are of Handel’s choral music, made in 1888 at the Crystal Palace in London. The **gramophone**, with discs recorded on one side, replaced wax cylinders from around



EARLY PHONOGRAPH

the start of the 20th century. For many homes, the sound of an orchestra, or of leading singers, could be heard for the very first time.

From the 1920s, **radio 260–61** replaced music-making as the main form of home entertainment. At the same time, people increasingly found entertainment outside the home, such as at the cinema.

PORTABLE INSTRUMENTS

The **piano** remained a symbol of respectability and accomplishment in the home, but space and expense made portable instruments such as the **guitar** popular.