

A History of Western Music, 10th Edition, Grout, et al.

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/ [CHAPTER 29. LATE ROMANTICISM IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA](#) / [CH 29 OUTLINE](#)

I. Dichotomies and Disputes

- A. Old versus new
 - 1. Classical repertory
 - a. by 1850, concerts increasingly focused on musical classics
 - b. proportion of older works grew
 - 2. revival of past music
 - a. new field of musicology
 - b. music unearthed, published, studied
 - i. editions of complete works of Bach, Handel, Palestrina, Mozart, Schütz, Lassus
 - ii. editions of early nineteenth-century masters: Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Schubert
 - c. most scholars were German
 - i. special interest German composers
 - ii. revival linked to national pride
 - d. less widely known music of Renaissance and Baroque collected in series
 - 3. increasing supply of older music, paradoxically was new
- B. Brahms versus Wagner
 - 1. preponderance of older music posed problems for living composers
 - a. some created works in Classical tradition (Brahms)
 - b. others saw legacy of Beethoven pointing in different direction (Wagner)
 - c. German-speaking lands, dispute polarized around Brahms and Wagner, dichotomies:
 - i. absolute and program music
 - ii. tradition and innovation
 - iii. classical genres and forms, and new ones
 - 2. mutual respect and influence
 - a. musicians maintained friendly relations on both sides (Hans von Bülow)
 - b. shared common goals, linking themselves to Beethoven
 - i. appealing to audiences familiar with classical masterworks
 - ii. securing place for themselves in permanent repertoire
- C. Nationalism and internationalism
 - 1. repertoire of German-speaking composers performed across Europe, Americas
 - 2. nationalism strong force in instrumental music, song, and choral music
 - a. national flavor, evidence of authenticity, distinctiveness
 - b. ethnicity mattered more than political boundaries
 - c. inspiration drawn from folklore
 - d. composers identified with all-encompassing German tradition
 - 3. nationalism, as part of the international repertoire
- D. Classical versus popular music
 - 1. growing gulf between classical music, popular consumption
 - 2. dichotomy: classical vs. popular, serious vs. light, cultivated vs. vernacular, high vs. low
 - a. composers specialize later in the century
 - 3. popular music intended for entertainment
 - a. audiences converse, clap during music
 - 4. classical music as sacred refuge
 - a. audiences expected to be quiet, reverent
 - b. lights in hall dimmed, focus on performers

II. Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

- A. Leading German composer of his time
 - 1. biography
 - a. born in Hamburg, studied several instruments as a child
 - b. in his teens, played popular music at restaurants, private parties
 - c. 1853, met Robert and Clara Schumann, strongest supporters
 - d. made living concertizing as pianist and conductor, sales of music to publishers
 - e. 1868, settled permanently in Vienna
 - f. active as editor of Baroque, Classic, and Romantic composers
 - g. major works: 4 symphonies, 2 piano concertos, Violin Concerto, 2 overtures, 2 serenades, 3 string quartets, 21 other chamber works, 3 piano sonatas, numerous piano pieces, *A German Requiem*, choral works, vocal ensembles, about 200 Lieder
 - 2. unique personal style
 - a. worked slowly, severely self-critical
 - b. well-versed in music of the past: Beethoven and early Romantics, Renaissance, and Baroque composers
 - c. synthesized elements with current classical and folk idioms
 - i. especially fond of Hungarian Romani (Gypsy) style
 - d. gift for melody, direct expression of emotion
- B. Orchestral works
 - 1. standard established by Beethoven, wrote four symphonies after age of forty
 - a. Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68 (1876)
 - b. Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 (1877)
 - c. Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90 (1883)
 - d. Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98 (1885)
 - 2. Symphony No. 1

- a. took over twenty years to compose
 - b. conventional sequence of movements
 - c. third movement, lyrical intermezzo
 - d. C minor to C major, echoes Beethoven's Symphony No. 5
 - e. overall key scheme, circle of major 3rds (Schubert, Liszt)
 - f. slow introductions, first and fourth movements; recalls Schumann's Symphony No. 4
 - g. main theme of finale, hymnlike melody, parallel to Beethoven's Symphony No. 9
3. Symphony No. 3
- a. opening measures, common traits in Brahms's music
 - i. wide melodic spans
 - ii. cross-relations between major and minor, tonic triad
 - iii. metric ambiguity between triple, duple meter
 - b. conflict between major and minor recurs in finale
 - c. Brahms trademark in finale's second theme: simultaneous triple and duple divisions of the beat
4. Symphony No. 4, finale (NAWM 160), chaconne
- a. form reflects fascination with Baroque music
 - b. variations on bass ostinato and harmonic pattern
 - c. possible models for chaconne and variations
 - i. Bach's cantata *Nach dir, Herr, verlangst mich*, BWV 150
 - ii. Buxtehude's Ciaccona in E Minor
 - iii. finale of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony
 - iv. Bach's Partita for Unaccompanied Violin in D Minor
 - d. rich web of allusion, typical of Brahms
5. concertos
- a. Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor (1861)
 - b. Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77 (1878), ranks with Beethoven's
 - c. Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83 (1881), most symphonic
- C. Chamber music
- 1. works include 3 piano trios, 3 piano quartets
 - 2. string quartets: comparison to Beethoven inescapable
 - 3. Quintet for Piano and Strings in F Minor, Op. 34 (1864; NAWM 161), first movement
 - a. developing variation: continuously building on germinal ideas
 - b. theme, series of variants of its opening measure
 - i. each measure varies previous one
 - ii. new figures derive from earlier ones
 - iii. three ideas have little in common, all derive from same figure
- D. Piano music
- 1. highly individual piano style
 - a. full sonorities
 - b. broken-chord figurations
 - c. frequent doubling of melodic line in octaves, 3rds, 6ths
 - d. multiple chordlike appoggiaturas
 - e. frequent use of cross-rhythms
 - 2. 1852–53, three large sonatas
 - a. tradition of Beethoven
 - b. incorporates chromatic harmony of Chopin and Liszt
 - c. songlike style of Schumann's character pieces
 - 3. in his twenties and thirties, focus on variations
 - a. distinctive character to each variation
 - b. Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel, Op. 24 (1861)
 - c. Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35 (1863), étude-like
 - 4. Waltzes, Op. 39 (1865), Hungarian Dances (1872)
 - a. home or concert performance
 - b. strong popular flavor
 - c. Brahms admired Johann Strauss's waltzes
 - 5. last two decades, six sets of intermezzos, rhapsodies, and other short pieces
 - a. perhaps his finest contribution to keyboard literature
 - b. most in ABA' form, resemble songs without words
 - c. varied textures, surprising harmonies, deft counterpoint
- E. Songs
- 1. Schubert as model for songwriting
 - a. voice primary partner
 - b. piano rich with supporting figuration
 - 2. over 200 Lieder, many strophic or modified strophic form
 - a. some imitate folk song style; *Wiegenlied* (Lullaby, 1868)
 - 3. piano, varied in texture
 - a. figuration changes every two to four measures, recalls Mozart
 - 4. accessible for amateur performers, interesting to connoisseur
- F. Choral works
- 1. all composed for amateur performers
 - a. arranged German folk songs for chorus
 - b. many short, unaccompanied partsongs
 - c. many larger pieces, chorus with orchestra
 - 2. *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem, 1868)
 - a. soprano and baritone soloists, chorus, and orchestra
 - b. performances across Europe, enthusiastic response
 - c. German text, passages from Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament
 - i. universal themes of mortality, loss, comfort, blessing
 - d. music draws on Schütz and Bach: use of counterpoint, expressive text-setting
- G. Brahms's place
- 1. often called a conservative, actually a path breaker
 - 2. introduced new elements into traditional forms
 - 3. developed subtle and complex techniques; enormous importance to later composers
 - 4. never lost sight of average listener or musical amateur

III. The Wagnerians

A. The "New German School"

1. term by Franz Brendel, music critic
 - a. composers leading new developments: Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz
 - b. German in spirit; Beethoven as their model
2. term crystallized polarization
 - a. Liszt, Wagner, and their followers
 - b. advocates of absolute music; Brahms and music critic Eduard Hanslick

B. Franz Liszt

1. 1848, retired from career as touring pianist
 - a. court music director at Weimar, focused on composition
 - b. poetic ideal, logical development of material more important
2. symphonic poems
 - a. 1848 to 1858, twelve symphonic poems
 - b. one-movement programmatic work
 - i. sections of contrasting character, tempo
 - ii. symphonic in sound, weight, developmental procedures
 - iii. "poems": analogy to poetry, especially narrative poems
 - iv. form often has vestiges of traditional patterns
 - c. variety of sources
 - i. *Prometheus* (1850–55), myth and poem by Herder
 - ii. *Mazeppa* (1852–54), poem by Victor Hugo
 - iii. *Orpheus* (1853–54), Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and an Etruscan vase
 - d. two programmatic symphonies
 - i. *Faust Symphony* (1854)
 - ii. *Dante Symphony* (1856)
3. thematic transformation
 - a. thematic material transforms to reflect, portray programmatic subject
 - b. *Les préludes* (The Preludes, 1854), linked to poem by Alphonse-Marie de Lamartine
 - c. music follows same sequence of moods as poem, 3-note motive modified and expanded, different characters
4. choral music: accommodation between past and present
 - a. two oratorios, most important works
 - i. *St. Elisabeth* (1857–62)
 - ii. *Christus* (1866–72)
 - iii. both derive thematic melodies from plainchant
5. Liszt's influence
 - a. symphonic poem taken up by many composers
 - b. chromatic harmonies helped to form Wagner's style after 1854
 - c. even divisions of the octave: impact on Russian and French composers
 - d. thematic transformation parallels
 - i. Berlioz's *idée fixe*
 - ii. Wagner's leitmotives
 - iii. Brahms's developing variation

C. Anton Bruckner (1824–1896)

1. absorbed Wagner's style and ethos into traditional symphony
2. reverent, liturgical approach to sacred texts
 - a. trained in counterpoint, organist of cathedral at Linz, court organist in Vienna
 - b. internationally renowned organ virtuoso
 - c. taught at Vienna Conservatory, lectured at University of Vienna
3. symphonies
 - a. nine numbered symphonies, two unnumbered ones
 - b. frequently revised, most exist in two or three versions
 - c. Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 as model
 - i. procedure, purpose, proportions, religious spirit
 - ii. first movements emerge from inchoate intervals, rhythms
 - iii. chorale-like themes in finale
 - iv. recycled subjects from earlier movements in finale
 - d. influences of Wagner
 - i. large-scale structures
 - ii. great length
 - iii. lush harmonies
 - iv. sequential repetition of entire passages
 - e. orchestration influenced by experience as organist
 - i. massive blocks of sounds suggest organist's improvisation
 - f. Symphony No. 4, first movement
 - i. opens in similar manner to Beethoven's Symphony No. 9
 - ii. sonata form with continuous development of ideas
4. choral music
 - a. modern elements with influences from Cecilian movement
 - i. motets for unaccompanied chorus, Cecilian ideals
 - ii. range of harmonic palette: strictly modal, quickly modulating harmonies
 - b. Mass No. 2 in E Minor (1866)
 - i. neomedieval work for eight-part chorus and fifteen wind instruments
 - c. sacred works function equally as part of liturgy or concert music

D. Hugo Wolf (1860–1903)

1. best known for adapting Wagner's methods to German Lied
2. piano pieces, string quartet, symphonic works, choruses, and an opera
3. Lieder
 - a. 250 Lieder, periods of intense creativity, 1887 to 1897
 - b. incapacitated by mental breakdown
 - c. five principal collections of Lieder; single poet or group
 - i. Eduard Mörike (1889)
 - ii. Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1889)
 - iii. Goethe (1890)

- iv. German translations of Spanish poems (1891)
 - v. Italian poems (1892 and 1896)
 - d. like Wagner, ideal of equality between words and music
 - i. collective artwork, fusion of poetry and music, voice and piano
 - e. *Lebe wohl!*, from Mörike songbook
 - i. arioso vocal style, speechlike rhythm
 - ii. continuity sustained in piano part
 - iii. chromatic voice-leading, appoggiaturas, anticipations, wandering tonality: *Tristan und Isolde* idiom
 - iv. dissonances resolve to other dissonances
 - v. chromatic saturation: twelve chromatic notes appear in first phrase
- E. Richard Strauss (1864–1949)
1. dominant figure in German musical life for most of his career
 - a. celebrated as conductor
 - i. positions in opera houses of Munich, Weimar, Berlin, Vienna
 - ii. conducted most of world's greatest orchestras, numerous tours
 - b. as composer, best remembered for tone poems, operas, Lieder
 2. tone poems
 - a. studied score of *Tristan und Isolde*, style changed profoundly
 - b. modeled after Liszt and Berlioz
 - i. colorful orchestration
 - ii. transformation of themes
 - iii. types of program
 - c. programs based on literature
 - i. *Don Juan* (1888–89), poem by Nikolaus Lenau
 - ii. *Macbeth* (1888, revised 1891), Shakespeare
 - iii. *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1896), prose-poem by Friedrich Nietzsche
 - iv. *Don Quixote* (1897), novel by Miguel Cervantes
 - d. programs on personal experience
 - i. *Symphonia domestica* (1902–3), idealized portrait of domestic life
 - ii. *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life, 1897–98), openly autobiographical
 - e. programs range from representational to philosophical
 3. *Don Juan*
 - a. first complete mature work
 - b. events in Don Juan's career as roving lover pictured
 - c. most of piece evokes general moods rather than specific plot
 4. *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, 1894–95)
 - a. tends toward representational, comic tale of trickster's exploits
 - b. realistic details, marginal notes in printed score
 - c. two themes for Till used and developed as leitmotives
 - d. music understood on its own terms
 - e. Strauss indicates "rondeau form"
 5. *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spoke Zoroaster)
 - a. musical commentary on Nietzsche's prose-poem
 - b. Christian ethic should be replaced by superman above good and evil
 - c. program is philosophical, some moments directly representational
 6. *Don Quixote* (excerpt, NAWM 162)
 - a. adventures of the knight Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza
 - b. variation form fits adventures
 - c. split personalities, double meanings
 - d. chamber-music sound
 - i. conceived in contrapuntal lines
 - ii. themes attach to particular solo instruments
 - e. themes of two main characters transformed
 - i. builds on Liszt's technique of thematic transformation

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[CH 29: NAWM 160 Johannes Brahms: Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98, Fourth movement ▶](#)

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