

The background features a large, faint, stylized musical staff with several notes and a wavy line, creating a musical theme for the title.

Keeping Romantic Music Alive

*A program of music and accompanying notes to introduce
anyone, regardless of musical background,
to the Romantic Era in western music.*

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Introduction to the project:

Music is an important part in our lives, whether we play an instrument or simply listen to the radio on the way to work. For some, music is nothing more than background sound on TV or in movies, while others have hundreds of songs saved on their computer, and others still have a deep passion for music which leads them to playing in an orchestra or band, or to attending live concerts whenever possible. Wherever you fall, music probably plays some part in your life, no matter how small.

Music history is a fascinating subject, because we can trace the development of music over time, from the Middle ages and Gregorian chants to modern rock music. In studying music history, changes in musical style are only part of the mix. Changes in technology must also be considered as they led the way to new instruments and new ways of transmitting music (radio, TV, etc). Changes in popular taste are also worth examining because music requires listeners, and composers adapt to what people want to hear. The public not only influenced the type of music composed and performed at any time in history, but had control over what music would be forgotten and what would live on though time.

After providing an overview of music history, this project focuses on music from the Romantic Era (about 1840-1900). Everyone is familiar with some Romantic music, whether they are aware of it or not. Some works appear in popular culture, either in commercials, on TV shows or in films, while others are ballets performed annually worldwide. The well known “here comes the bride” processional and the classic wedding recessional are both by Romantic composers. By presenting an overview of music history and a program of Romantic masterpieces, the project will hopefully acquaint

anyone, regardless of musical experience with the music and composers they hear anyway.

The program of music is included on CD with program note style commentary including information about the composer, facts and anecdotes about the work, and how it has survived over time. In order for any music to flourish, there must be an audience who continues to listen and appreciate what they hear. My project is a combination of listening and reading to create an appreciation for Romanticism, thereby keeping Romantic music alive for years to come.

A very brief look at music history*:

When looking at music history, it can be difficult to divide the styles and composers into periods. There are generally accepted periods, and rough estimates of dates, but it is important to keep in mind that the eras blend together. There are stylistic characters unique to each period in musical history, but the lines are fuzzy, and composers more often than not, influenced their followers. Many composers straddle two periods and have stylistic traits from both in their works.

The first period in musical history was the Middle Ages, about 400-1450, and some of the most famous composers of this time include Hildegard of Bingen, Guillaume Machaut, and Guillaume Du Fay, though they are not well known today. Four smaller, overlapping periods, the Early Christian Period, the Gregorian Chant period, the Romanesque period, and finally the Gothic period, made up the Middle Ages as a whole, though each had unique styles and developments important to history. The Early

* This summary of music history was taken from *The Enjoyment of Music* by Joseph Machlis and Kristine Forney. This is a text used in introductory music courses, and should be consulted for a more detailed history of music. See bibliography for full reference information.

Christian period and the Gregorian chant period are closely related in style, and featured mostly sacred, *a cappella* (unaccompanied voice) music. Churches and monasteries were the primary supporters of composers and musicians, resulting in the composition of mostly music for church services. Next was the period dominated by Gregorian chants, which make use of several voices singing one melodic line. Entering the Romanesque period, secular music began to arise in courts around Europe and polyphony, one of the most important developments in music, occurred.ⁱ

Until about 850BC, western music had featured monophony, a single-line melody, but with the Romanesque period, polyphony began to appear in music. Polyphony is when there is more than one line at a time, allowing for melody, counter-melody and harmony. With so many lines at one time strict meter and written notation, rather than improvisation and oral tradition became necessary. Polyphony continued to develop through the Gothic period as some instrumental music with accompaniment arose.

During the Renaissance (about 1450-1600) new instruments were developed, and polyphony became even more prominent. Along with composition of music, developing and constructing instruments, as well as printing and publishing music were also developing as music-related forms of income.ⁱⁱ Renaissance music had a fuller sound than music of the Middle Ages, and secular dance music flourished though sacred music was still commissioned and composed. Well known Renaissance composers include Josquin des Prez, Giovanni de Palestrina and Claudio Monteverdi.

The Baroque period followed the Renaissance and lasted from 1600 to about 1750. This period in music saw some drastic changes due to politics and the rise of a

stronger middle class culture, with music being composed not only in public places, but also at home and at universities. As musical instruments continued to develop players became more technically advanced, and composers could incorporate more technical playing into their pieces. Secular music such as solo song with instrumental accompaniment and also solo instrument with orchestra accompaniment joined the genres, but the newest genre was opera.ⁱⁱⁱ The combination of voice, acting, music, poetry, and costumes all in one performance was unheard of until the baroque era. Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, and Georg Frideric Handel all made use of the wide array of Baroque genres, and remain today some of the most popular composers of western music.

The next period of music history is the well-known Classical period (1750-1825) that produced Joseph Haydn, and the ever-popular Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Much of Ludwig van Beethoven's music also falls into the Classical era. Order and objectivity were main themes of Classicism in music, and the works tended to have a memorable, singable melody that followed a regular meter. Secular music in the Classical period centered around the court with a developed patronage system. Composers also made great use of folk elements in their music, especially as the opera genre continued to expand.^{iv}

1820 to 1900 featured the Romantic era in music. Romanticism in the arts grew out of the upheavals after the French Revolution, and in music the changes in every level of society could be seen. Quality of musical instruments increased greatly, and new instruments were introduced into orchestras during the Romantic era. Musical educational opportunities were also rapidly increasing, allowing orchestras to have more

talented players than ever before. Romantic music was moved the public concert halls, for all to hear, not just the members of the court as in the Classical era. The beautiful melodies, and expressive harmonies appealed to wide audiences, as composers shared their passions and feelings with their audiences through music. Many composers from the Romantic era are still popular today, including Hector Berlioz, Richard Wagner, Felix Mendelssohn, Georges Bizet, and Piotr Tchaikovsky, to name only a handful.^v

After Romanticism, there are several periods that make up 20th Century music. Post-Romanticism in Germany and Austria and Impressionism in France followed Romanticism immediately. The Romantic style carried over into these movements, but composers were looking for something different. Some turned back to the past to a pre-Romantic style, while others simply turned against Romanticism and the intense harmonies. Impressionist composers such as Claude Debussy used more chromatic melodies (meaning every note in the scale without any jumps), and floating, free rhythms.^{vi} Early 20th Century music favored simplicity and abstraction, in direct contrast to the complexity of Romanticism in the 19th Century. Composers such as Charles Ives, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, and John Philip Sousa chose more complex rhythms and did not focus on developing melodies and harmonies. Jazz and ragtime, are genres on their own, but also influenced many composers in the 20th century. Modern music began in about 1940, in which we find jazz, musical theater, music for films, rock, pop, punk, etc being performed worldwide. At this point in time music is very free, and composers can look back to the past or create a style for the future.

Why Romantic Music?

With all of these amazing periods in music history, why would someone focus on Romanticism only? Besides the fact that there are more Romantic composers still popular today than from any period, the Romantic era is when music really began to change as it “became a stimulant and demanded more of the listener.”^{vii} The many changes in society at the time are all reflected in Romantic music because the composers were able to express their every emotion in music. There was an instability after the French and Russian revolutions and the music expressed the uncertainties about the nature of the “truly just society” that were being felt by many people in Europe at the time.^{viii} The passion and emotion of the melodies and harmonies is not something that should be overlooked or forgotten. Romantic music had a tendency to “feel rather than think,” and that is what makes it so wonderful.^{ix} The audience can easily connect with the music, and can share in the emotions of the composer.

Unlike many of their predecessors of the Classical Era, Romantic composers were not as tied to following rules of form, melody or harmony. “Breaking through boundaries was now an honorable goal” and Romantics rose to the occasion.^x The Romantic composers took a new meaning to the relationship between sounds as they redefined form, melody and harmony in their music.

Ludwig van Beethoven was the real forefather of the Romantic era, as he continuously forged ahead in his compositions, and for this reason the program begins with his revolutionary Ninth Symphony. The program then moves on to Brahms, also from Germany before Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky from Russia, and finally Berlioz from France. The program introduces several genres including program music, symphonic suites, overtures, and symphonies from the Romantic era. Although opera

was also very popular, it is a thesis of its own, and is too broad to be addressed in an introduction to Romantic music.

The Program:

Symphony Number 9 in D Minor, op. 125, *Choral*.....Ludwig van Beethoven

- I. *Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso*
- II. *Molto vivace. Presto. Molto vivace*
- III. *Adagio molto e cantabile. Andante moderato*
- IV. *Presto. Allegro assai. Alla marcia. Andante mesto. Adagio ma non troppo, ma divoto. Allegro energico. Allegro ma non tanto. Prestissimo*

Symphony Number 3 in F Major, op. 90.....Johannes Brahms

- I. *Allegro con brio*
- II. *Andante*
- III. *Poco Allegretto*
- IV. *Allegro, un poco sostenuto*

Scheherazade, op. 35.....Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

- I. *Largo e maestoso* “The Sea and Sinbad’s Ship”
- II. *Lento* “The Story of the Kalendar Prince”
- III. *Andantino quasi allegretto* “The Young Prince and the Young Princess”
- IV. *Allegro molto* “Festival in Bhagdad; The Ship Goes to Pieces Against the Rock Surmounted by the Bronze Warrior”

Romeo and Juliet, Fantasy Overture in B Minor.....Piotr Ilich Tchaikovsky

Symphonie Fantastique, op. 14a.....Hector Berlioz

- I. *Reveries, Passions*
- II. *A Ball*
- III. *Scene in the Country*
- IV. *March to the Scaffold*
- V. *Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath*

Beethoven, Symphony No. 9

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany, and started his career in music very early, as an organist in the court chapel. He traveled to Vienna when he was only 17 and made such an impression that Mozart was noted to have said, “Keep an eye on him-he will make a noise in the world some day.”^{xi} Mozart could not have been more correct. Though much of Beethoven’s music falls into the Classical style, his later compositions are very revolutionary, and therefore Romantic in style, making Beethoven the “real precursor of the Romantic era in music.”^{xii} As such, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is the best place to start an introduction to Romantic music. The symphony, especially the last movement, is well known, yet the story behind it is often lost, and this story makes the symphony even more impressive than it already is.

Beethoven knew as early as 1792 that he wanted to set Friedrich Schiller’s poem, *An die Freude*, or “Ode to Joy” to music.^{xiii} For Beethoven, the poem about the unity of all mankind was “a principle of order in a chaotic universe.”^{xiv} He started jotting down themes and melodies randomly, but did not begin working on a full symphony until 1822, at which point he was completely deaf. He finished the symphony in 1824, and rehearsals began immediately. Due to his deafness, he could not conduct, but that did not stop him from attending every rehearsal and observing them closely. The singers and musicians were constantly asking him to make the music easier, but to no avail.^{xv} The score was left as he had written it for the premier performance on May 7, 1824.

The first movement of the symphony begins quietly, with the second violins on one note. The first violins introduce the theme, several notes at a time. All of a sudden the theme is restated by the full orchestra, loudly and clearly. Beethoven varies the

theme, but then restates it often as if he wanted to make sure the audience would not forget. These sudden loud restatements of the theme make the movement seem catastrophic and tense at points, with calmness and resolution in between. The movement ends with a strong restatement of the opening theme, then two ascending scales that “linger in the memory, yet to be resolved,” before moving on to the second movement.^{xvi}

The second movement of this symphony is one part of why it is revolutionary for when it was composed. Typically, Classical symphonies (including most of Beethoven’s earlier symphonies) feature a slow, beautiful, lyrical movement as the second and a dance movement as the third. Beethoven has switched them in his Ninth symphony and placed the scherzo dance movement as the second. This movement is fast and presents several layered themes. The first is introduced by the strings with woodwind punctuation, before the woodwinds take the theme over and add a slight variation, without really changing the rhythm. The use of tympani in this movement is also worth noting, because the tympani here are more than just percussion in the background. The tympani have several “solo” measures that interrupt the wind or string statements. The trio section of this movement is fast and light, presenting a new theme in a new time signature before returning to the introductory theme. In most Classical symphonies, the trio is presented once, in the middle of the movement. Beethoven, however, returns to the trio, as if the movement was going to continue through another cycle, but he then throws the audience off with an abrupt, loud, and punctuated ending. The ending here is a nice contrast to the quiet and lyrical opening of the third movement.

Finally, in the third movement, Beethoven presents the slow, beautiful melodies that he writes so well. This movement alternates between two main melodies that make for nice contrast to the dark first movement and the playful second. The main themes are in two different time signatures and pass between the woodwinds and strings, with a brassy fanfare near the end. The movement ends quietly, but with mystery in the air.

The opening of the fourth movement answers this mystery with a fast and furious opening before the cellos continue with a measured recitative. Then there is a play between the cellos and the rest of the orchestra as Beethoven interrupts their recitative with small recaps of the first three movements. After the audience has been reminded of what they have already heard, the “Joy” theme is introduced. It is simple, yet so eloquent and beautiful. Beethoven allows the woodwinds the honor of a brief introduction before the cellos and basses take the theme in full. The violas join the cellos and basses first, then the violins, and then finally the brass and winds enter for a glorious statement of the “Joy” theme. Beethoven then returns to the furious fanfare opening statement, and all of a sudden a voice starts singing!

This moment begins the choral, as the soloist sings the recitative written by Beethoven, “Oh friends, not these tones! Let us raise our voices in more pleasing and more joyful sounds!”^{xvii} By introducing a full chorus, Beethoven single-handedly changed the symphony for the future. Here, “a human voice breaks into a musical form that had hitherto been purely instrumental.”^{xviii}

After the soloist introduces the chorus into the symphony, the Joy theme is used to present Schiller’s immortal words. The theme varies, and both solo singers and full chorus are used to great effect. There is nothing so magnificent as a full chorus singing

about all men becoming brothers with full orchestra accompaniment. The next section features the Turkish March, and a fugal passage, followed by another variation on the “Joy” theme. However, Beethoven is not done yet, because he then layers the “Joy” theme and the fugue themes to make one of the most incredible passages in the whole symphony. The combination of the “Joy” and fugue themes leads into the scherzo ending, and “as the text sings of joy one final time, the music begins to sound like an opera finale. And so it ends... In a thoroughly operatic, extroverted, joyful song of praise.”^{xix}

The premier of the symphony in 1824 was a success. One account of the concert tells of one of the most famous images of Beethoven, “on 7 May when he stood totally deaf and absorbed in the score. Karoline Unger (a soloist) took his arm and turned him around to face the audience that was applauding him.”^{xx} The popularity of this masterful symphony did not end that day. Beethoven’s Ninth has been used throughout history for various political purposes. Germans in 1824 felt the symphony was patriotic and finally allowed them to move beyond the era of Napoleonic wars.^{xxi} Later the symphony would be used by Hitler to celebrate his birthdays, while at the same time it was played in concentration camps by his opposition. Beethoven’s Ninth was also used in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall. There were actually many performances of Beethoven that year, but the most prominent were on December 23 and 25 when the Ninth was performed. These performances featured musicians from both “Germanies” as well as the Allied powers, and were broadcast world wide, as all men were, for a time, united as brothers.^{xxii}

<p><i>Baritone Recitative (added by Beethoven):</i> O Freunde, nicht diese Töne! Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere!</p>	<p>Oh friends, not these tones! Let us raise our voices in more pleasing and more joyful sounds!</p>
<p><i>Ode to Joy by Friderich Schiller</i> Freude, schöner Götterfunken, Tochter aus Elysium, Wir betreten feuer-trunken, Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!</p> <p>Deine Zauber binden wieder, Was die Mode streng geteilt; Alle Menschen werden Brüder, Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.</p> <p>Wem der große Wurf gelungen, Eines Freundes Freund zu sein, Wer ein holdes Weib errungen, Mische seinen Jubel ein!</p> <p>Ja, wer auch nur eine Seele Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund! Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!</p> <p>Freude trinken alle Wesen An den Brüsten der Natur; Alle Guten, alle Bösen Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.</p> <p>Küsse gab sie uns und Reben, Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod; Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben, Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.</p> <p>Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen Durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan, Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn, Freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.</p> <p>Freude, schöner Götterfunken, Tochter aus Elysium, Wir betreten feuer-trunken, Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!</p> <p>Deine Zauber binden wieder, Was die Mode streng geteilt; Alle Menschen werden Brüder, Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.</p> <p>Seid umschlungen, Millionen! Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt! Brüder! über'm Sternenzelt Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.</p> <p>Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen? Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt? Such ihn über'm Sternenzelt! Über Sternen muß er wohnen.</p>	<p>Joy, fair spark of the gods, Daughter of Elysium, Drunk with fiery rapture, Goddess, We approach thy shrine!</p> <p>Thy magic reunites those Whom stern custom has parted; All men will become brothers Under thy gentle wing.</p> <p>May he who has had the fortune To gain a true friend And he who has won a noble wife Join in our jubilation!</p> <p>Yes, even if he calls but one soul His own in all the world. But he who has failed in this Must steal away alone and in tears.</p> <p>All the world's creatures Draw joy from nature's breast; Both the good and the evil Follow her rose-strewn path.</p> <p>She gave us kisses and wine And a friend loyal unto death; She gave lust for life to the lowliest, And the Cherub stands before God</p> <p>Joyously, as his suns speed Through Heaven's glorious order, Hasten, Brothers, on your way, Exulting as a knight in victory.</p> <p>Joy, fair spark of the gods, Daughter of Elysium, Drunk with fiery rapture, Goddess, We approach thy shrine!</p> <p>Thy magic reunites those Whom stern custom has parted; All men will become brothers Under thy gentle wing.</p> <p>Be embraced, Millions! Take this kiss for all the world! Brothers, surely a loving Father Dwells above the canopy of stars.</p> <p>Do you sink before him, Millions? World, do you sense your Creator? Seek him then beyond the stars! He must dwell beyond the stars</p>

Brahms, Symphony No. 3

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1833, a mere six years after Beethoven's death, yet Brahms and his contemporaries felt the shadow of Beethoven looming. Brahms' father was a musician, and young Johannes studied music for nearly his entire life and could be found as early as ten performing on the piano in dance halls to help increase the family income.^{xxiii} Some of Brahms' first compositions impressed the violinist Joseph Joachim, who sought out the young composer and introduced him to Franz Liszt and Robert Schumann. The introduction to Robert Schumann would later play an important part in the development of Brahms as a composer.

Joachim arranged in 1853 for Brahms to study with Schumann, and the young composer was not only in awe of Robert Schumann but also of his wife Clara. Clara

ⁱ Machlis and Forney, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 72-94

ⁱⁱ Ibid, 108.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, 137

^{iv} Ibid, 193-199

^v Ibid, 254-354.

^{vi} Ibid, 356.

^{vii} Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era*, 41.

^{viii} Whittall, *Romantic Music: A Concise History*, 14.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Schmidt-Jones, Catherine

^{xi} Machlis and Forney, 219.

^{xii} Einstein, 81.

^{xiii} Levy, *Beethoven, The Ninth Symphony*, 18.

^{xiv} Solomon, "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending," 297.

^{xv} Kramer, *Listen to the Music*, 102.

^{xvi} Kramer, 103.

^{xvii} "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony,"

http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/beethoven_sym9.html

^{xviii} Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History*, 1.

^{xix} Kramer, 105

^{xx} Buch, 98

^{xxi} Buch, 95.

^{xxii} Buch 260.

^{xxiii} Machlis and Forney, 305.

Schumann was an accomplished pianist and composer herself, and would have major impact on Brahms's life and compositions. Brahms benefited greatly from his friendship with the Schumanns, as they helped the self-conscious composer boost his confidence and see his great potential.

Unfortunately, Brahms fell deeply in love with Clara Schumann in the process, and felt guilty for the rest of his life as a result of his feelings. He was so in awe of Robert Schumann, that he could not forgive himself for loving his idol's wife. He helped Clara through the tragedy of her husband's mental illness and death, but for the years following, Brahms was constantly faced with a decision: love or freedom. He chose freedom, and formed a life-long friendship with Clara instead of a romantic relationship. Brahms sent sketches of works to Clara and often sought her approval before he continued with composition.

Robert Schumann, before meeting Brahms, had compared the young composer to Beethoven and made the bold statement that Brahms "could, should, and probably would pick up where Beethoven had left off."^{xxiv} This comparison is one that would linger over Brahms' head and greatly affect his ability to compose a symphony. Brahms felt so overshadowed by Beethoven that when pressed on the issue of symphony composition, he would exclaim, "you have no idea how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like him behind us!"^{xxv}

Brahms not only worried about composing a symphony that would live up to the musical standards Beethoven had set, but he was also concerned about his compositions having the same kind of impact on society. Beethoven composed symphonies "that

^{xxiv} Kramer, 154.

^{xxv} Machlis and Forney, 308.

communicated effectively to a broader public” whereas this sort of social function had previously been fulfilled by masses or oratorios.^{xxvi} In addition to these concerns, Brahms wanted his symphonies to have the correct balance of Classicism and Romanticism, another influence of Beethoven. Although Brahms was passionately romantic, he had a very classically oriented intellect and recognized that the underlying fallacy in Romanticism: “an overabundance of feeling can become undisciplined.”^{xxvii}

In an effort to put off composing a symphony, Brahms worked on other projects, including the *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* and the *Ein deutsches Requiem* (German Requiem). Both of these works were incredibly successful, and the latter even succeeded in having the societal impact Brahms had desired. Following these successes, Brahms was out of excuses for not working on a symphony and in 1876, he finally finished his first symphony. The first symphony was an immediate success, is often referred to as “the Tenth,” (Beethoven had composed nine symphonies) which is both complementary and burdensome for Brahms. This allusion to Beethoven meant Brahms had absolutely succeeded in finding his Classical-Romantic balance and impacting society in the same way Beethoven had. However, the bar was set, and the expectation of Brahms’ symphonies to come was high. Brahms lived up to this expectation and in less than ten years, he completed his four symphonies.

Brahms’ Third Symphony is the most concise, the hardest to perform, and best exemplifies his genius ability to balance between Romantic tone and Classical form.^{xxviii} Once Brahms started composing symphonies, he was able to complete them quickly. He began the third in 1882 and finished in 1883. The premier was on December 2, 1883, and

^{xxvi} Frisch, *Brahms: the Four Symphonies*, 35.

^{xxvii} Kramer, 161.

^{xxviii} Wilson, *Notes on Brahms*, 79.

after the premiere, there was competition among conductors for the honor of conducting the second performance. Brahms chose Joseph Joachim, his old friend, and “the symphony was hailed at each new performance, and it made Brahms’ name as a symphonist resound as never before.”^{xxix}

The symphony begins with a dramatic, three-note opening sequence, and the rest of the movement is “both assertive and sidestepping.”^{xxx} Brahms presents a beautiful theme played gracefully by the clarinet, and playfully passes the theme around the winds and violins before he darkens the mood. After some brooding in the darker mood, he restates the opening and returns to the clarinet again for the same graceful melody. The first movement is filled with a sense of wonderment, and a gentle ending leading into the slow second movement. The second movement begins with a hymn-like choral in the winds with echoes from the strings.^{xxxi} The second movement proceeds at times with “slightly uneasy momentum” as it alternates between graceful melodies and tense harmonies.^{xxxii}

The third movement is a bit of a surprise, because Brahms has replaced the usual scherzo with a melancholy waltz whose opening theme “is heard throughout the impassioned orchestral ‘song without words.’”^{xxxiii} In this movement, Brahms presents one of his most beautiful melodies, and when this “cherished melody comes back in the French horn and then in the oboe, the heart hums with a nearly unbearable bittersweetness.”^{xxxiv} This movement is inevitably passionate and romantic in sound, no matter how much Brahms tried to remove himself from the Romantic mindset.

^{xxix} Kramer, 162.

^{xxx} Wilson, 81.

^{xxxi} Derrickson, “Johns Hopkins Symphony Orchestra Program notes.”

^{xxxii} Wilson, 81.

The finale of this symphony begins softly, but the ferociousness arises out of the grumble. Brahms in a “typical symphonic finale form presents several themes quickly and then switches back and forth among them.”^{xxxv} These sudden changes in theme are like changes in mood, and Brahms settles in the end calmly, as he repeats, almost note for note, the introductory three-note motive (F, A-Flat, F) from the first movement. It is said that this motive stands for his life motto: “Frei aber froh,” meaning “free but happy.”^{xxxvi} Thus Brahms has ended his symphony the way it began: free, but happy.

Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade*

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was born in Tikhvin in 1844 to a musical family. His mother played the flute and his father could play melodies he had heard in Mozart by ear. Nikolai began taking piano lessons at age six, and continued studying music throughout his life.^{xxxvii} The Rimsky-Korsakovs, however, were also a Naval family, and Nikolai was

^{xxxiii} Machlis and Forney, 308.

^{xxxiv} Derrickson.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

^{xxxvi} Machlis and Forney, 308.

no exception. Though he enjoyed sailing and mathematics, he found he did not have the stomach for a life of Naval service, and so he ended his career early and began to pursue music in earnest.

Rimsky-Korsakov was approached by Mily Balakirev when he was only seventeen, and was still serving in the Navy. Balakirev saw some of Rimsky-Korsakov's sketches, deemed the young man a genius, and started him on composing a symphony. Rimsky-Korsakov ended up being part of the "Mighty Five," a group of Russian nationalist composers who turned inward to the national core of Russia in their compositions, though each in his own manner.^{xxxviii} He ended up turning away from the group, though his sound was "as Russian as any...yet suave with a lilt and brilliance reassuring to Western ears."^{xxxix} *Scheherazade* premiered in 1888, and is one of Rimsky-Korsakov's most famous works, appearing fairly often on current orchestra repertoires.

Scheherazade is Russian in its sound and feeling, though it is based on Arabic tales. Rimsky-Korsakov said the piece "was not meant to be an exact depiction of Scheherazade's stories, and titles of the movements are meant to 'direct but slightly the hearer's fancy.'"^{xl} He had composed a symphonic suite in four movements, but Rimsky-Korsakov was adamant that there was not story, and no themes for characters save for one. The only melody he meant to have meaning was the violin solo melody that represents the heroine, none other than the tale-spinning Scheherazade.^{xli} This melody appears in all four movements, and the entire suite ends with the solo violin.

^{xxxvii} Briggs, *The Collector's Tchaikovsky and the Five*, 219.

^{xxxviii} Mordden, *A Guide to Orchestral Music*, 280.

^{xxxix} Ibid.

^{xl} Heninger, Program notes: *Scheherazade*

^{xli} Mordden, 280.

The story of Scheherazade is a tale of a Sultan who married every day and killed his new wife every night after his first wife betrayed him. Scheherazade married the Sultan in an attempt to save women from this destiny and she stayed alive by telling the Sultan tales every night, but leaving the ending for the next evening. She would finish the previous night's story and then begin a new story in the same fashion. After 1,001 nights the Sultan removed the death sentence he had placed on Scheherazade. Rimsky-Korsakov took some of these tales as the titles of the movements for the *Scheherazade* symphonic suite.

The first movement's opening is dark and intense at first, but then the mood is lightened with the entrance of the solo violin. The solo violin is Scheherazade telling her story, and as the violin fades, the story takes over with a beautiful theme. The subtitle of this movement is "The Sea and Sinbad's Ship" and bearing this in mind, it is easy to hear the ebb and flow of the sea in the theme, and to feel the tensions and dangers of sailing. The solo violin enters in the middle and then the story continues.

The second movement is ushered in by the story-telling violin. "The Kalendar Prince" features a light, playful, "oriental" theme passed from solo bassoon to solo oboe and then to full sections of the orchestra.^{xlii} As the instrumentation of the melody changes, so does the mood. The light theme becomes more intense and stressed, but the playfulness is recovered for a moment before the low stings and brass enter with a harsh, angry theme. The end of the movement regains some of the lightness, and the melody from the first movement is also brought back before the movement ends.

"The Young Prince and the Young Princess" is slow and beautiful in the opening, seeming to represent a love story between a prince and princess. The passionate love

^{xlii} Ibid, 281.

story is interrupted by a restatement of the theme from the second movement, but the love themes return, and at long last the solo violin. The violin “weaves in and out and the movement ends with a series of rapid, quiet figures that seem to dance into the distance.”^{xliii}

The fourth movement opens with the solo violin, and after the story is introduced, the festival music begins. The dance music becomes more and more vigorous and wild as the movement progresses until the melody changes back into that of the first movement, but with “an unmistakable air of disaster.”^{xliv} And so the suite ends with one final statement from the violin Scheherazade, ending her story. As much as Rimsky-Korsakov insisted that there was no story, in the end, it seems as if this decision is up to the audience. The solo violin representing the story teller, Scheherazade, seemed to always appear at the right moments to remind listeners that the piece was, indeed, telling a story. Why have a story teller if there is no story to be told?

Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy-Overture

^{xliii} Herninger.

^{xliv} Briggs, 280.

Piotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky was born in 1840 in Votinsk, Russia. Tchaikovsky also showed a deep passion for music when he was young, and he had a talent to match his passion. His parents had expected him to follow a career in government, and though his father did not really understand his son's decision to pursue music, he did not resent the choice. From an early age Tchaikovsky was sensitive and often moody and irritable, and these traits would continue for the rest of his life.^{xlvi} As he began composing, his character including the moodiness, neurotic elements, and eventual homosexuality were "inseparable from his development as a composer."^{xlvi} With such a personality, Tchaikovsky embodied the "pessimism that engulfed the late Romantic movement."

Although Tchaikovsky was homosexual, this was something that lingered over his head and took him nearly his entire life to fully acknowledge. As a result, he often suffered from waves of depression because of guilt over his homosexuality.^{xlvi} He attempted to stabilize his life by getting married, but was forced to flee from his marriage after his sympathy for his wife turned to revulsion.^{xlvi} This was a turning point in Tchaikovsky's career because as he recovered from his marriage and near-breakdown, he received a check from Nadezhda von Meck who had a passion for his music. Her only stipulation as his patron was that they never meet, and with this agreement, she "launched him on the most productive period of his career."^{xlvi}

Tchaikovsky was the first Russian composer whose music appealed to Western tastes, though he considered himself to be "Russian through and through" and was recognized as a nationalist composer in the eyes of his countrymen.¹ Regardless, he was

^{xlvi} Abraham, *The Music of Tchaikovsky*, 9.

^{xlvi} Ibid.

^{xlvi} Machlis and Forney, 350.

^{xlvi} Ibid.

^{xlvi} Ibid.

invited in 1891 to the United States for the opening of Carnegie Hall in New York. As much as Tchaikovsky claimed to be Russian, he was also greatly influenced by German symphony, Italian opera, and French ballet. However, he was able to combine these influences with his Russian folk heritage, and this mixture, sprinkled with his character, resulted in some of the most well known Russian compositions still performed today.^{li}

The idea for *Romeo and Juliet* actually came from Mily Balakirev, the leader of the Mighty Five, the group of Russian nationalists that also included Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, and Borodin. Balakirev wrote to Tchaikovsky in 1869 suggesting the topic, and he was even so bold as to suggest instrumentation and music he wanted for the opening. Tchaikovsky was young and unsure of himself, so rather than being frustrated by the interference, he was appreciative of the interest and set to work on the project, sending the completed composition to Balakirev for suggestions.^{lii}

The Shakespearean story that provided the basis for the overture could not have been more appropriate for that time in Tchaikovsky's life. He himself was caught in a hopeless love, not unlike that of the young Romeo and Juliet. Before he acknowledged his homosexuality, he found himself enthralled by a singer named Désirée Artôt, and began seeing her often, even going so far as to talk about marriage. Luckily the marriage never happened, because when he did get married several years later to Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova, the ending was not happy. Tchaikovsky had loved Artôt and grieved for his lost love by pouring "his unhappiness and love-longings into the *Romeo* overture."^{liii}

^l Ibid, 351.

^{li} Ibid.

^{lii} Kramer, 768.

^{liii} Ibid, 769.

Romeo and Juliet is not necessarily a program piece, but it has certain themes to represent several of the main characters or ideas from Shakespeare. The ultimate idea in the piece, of course, is the intense passion felt by the young lovers, a doomed love that resulted in both their deaths. The beginning of the overture is slow and church-like to represent the Friar Laurence. His theme is interrupted after several minutes by the feuding Capulet and Montague families, represented by rising scales and harsh rhythms. Finally Tchaikovsky introduces his beautiful love theme, representing the ill-fated Romeo and Juliet love affair. However, Tchaikovsky keeps the audience in suspense almost until the end before he allows the audience to hear “one of his most inspired romantic melodies” in its full, passionate glory.^{liv}

The piece develops after the slow introduction between the Friar Laurence theme, the battling families and small hints at the love theme. With such a doomed love, it could not just be brought out. It is intermingled with the tensions of the families, and the understanding of Friar Laurence. Finally, minutes from the end of the piece, Tchaikovsky gives his melody the treatment it deserves. This moment is incredible, featuring “full strings accompanied by other instruments” and has tremendous impact because of its placement in the peace and its extraordinary passion and beauty.^{lv} Romeo and Juliet express their love to one another before they both die in the somber, yet Romantic, ending.

^{liv} Ibid, 770.

^{lv} Ibid.

Berlioz, *Symphonie Fantastique*

Hector Berlioz was born in 1803 in a village near Grenoble, France to an upper-middle class family. His father was a physician, and young Hector was expected to follow in the same path and was sent to Paris at age 18 for medical school. However, Paris had more to offer than classes, and Berlioz was more enthralled by the conservatory and the opera than he ever was by his classes. After a year, he made the life-altering decision to give up medicine for music, and at that point, his disappointed family cut him off. In order to support himself, Berlioz began giving music lessons and singing in a theater chorus.

While studying and working in Paris, Berlioz was introduced to Shakespeare's plays by a visiting English troupe.^{lvi} Many of Berlioz's works were inspired by the Shakespeare plays he saw, but more importantly, he fell in love with one of the actresses from the troupe, Harriet Smithson. His almost unhealthy obsession with Ms. Smithson eventually led him to the composition of *Symphonie fantastique*, in which Smithson plays a key role. In his most famous symphony, Berlioz makes use of an *idée fixe* (fixed idea), one of its most innovative features, which symbolizes his beloved and "becomes a musical thread unifying the five diverse movements, thought is appearances are varied in harmony, rhythm, dynamics and instrumental color."^{lvii}

^{lvi} Ibid, 287.

^{lvii} Ibid, 288.

The *Symphonie fantastique* premiered on December 5, 1830, only three years after the death of Beethoven.^{lviii} What really intrigued listeners that day, beyond the unusual orchestral effects, was the fact that Berlioz himself had written, printed and distributed an extremely detailed program to the audience at the premier. The fact that “as symphony could be so unreservedly autobiographical and self-confessional... was fresh to music at the that time.”^{lix} Some of Berlioz’s program on his own symphony, also called ‘Episode in the life of an Artist’ is included here. The degree of detail and the composer’s insistence on its importance for the listener was unprecedented, and therefore the piece should always be accompanied by some excerpt of Berlioz’s writing:

Reveries, Passions... A young musician..sees for the first time a woman who embodies all the charms of the ideal being he has imagined in his dreams and he falls desperately in love with her. Through an odd whim, whenever the beloved image appears before the mind’s eye of the artist, it is linked with a musical thought whose character, passionate but at the same time noble and shy, he finds similar to the one he attributes to his beloved.

The passage from this state of melancholic reverie, interrupted by a few fits of groundless joy, to one of frenzied passion, with its movements of fury, of jealousy, its return to tenderness, its tears, its religious consolations—this is the subject of the first movement.

A Ball. The artist finds himself in the most varied situations—in the midst of the tumult of a party, in a peaceful contemplation of the beauties of nature. But everywhere—in town, in the country—the beloved image appears before him and disturbs his peace of mind.

Scene in the Country. Finding himself one evening in the country, he hears in the distance two shepherds piping a *ranz des vache* ** in dialogue. This pastoral duet, the scenery, the quiet rustling of the trees gently brushed by the wind, the hopes he has recently found some reason to entertain—all concur in affording his heart an unaccustomed calm... He reflects upon his isolation; he hopes that his loneliness will soon be over. But what if she were deceiving him! This mingling of hope and fear, these ideas of happiness disturbed by black presentiments, form the subject of the adagio. At the end one of the shepherds again takes up the *ranz des vaches*; the other no longer replies. Distant sounds of thunder—lonliness—silence.

** A simple melody usually played on the horn by Alpine herdsman as they drive their cattle to or from the pasture.

^{lviii} Kramer, 127.

^{lix} Langford, 53.

Dream of a Witches' Sabbath. He sees himself at the Sabbath, in the midst of a frightful troop of ghosts, sorcerers, monsters of every kind, who have come together for his funeral. Strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter, distant cries which other cries seem to answer. The beloved melody appears again but it has lost its character of nobility and shyness; it is no more than a dance tune, mean, trivial, and grotesque... Funeral knell, burlesque parody of the *Dies irae* (hymn sung in the funeral rites of the Catholic Church), Sabbath round-dance. The Sabbath round and the *Dies irae* combined.^{lx}

Even more original than the *idée fixe* or the composer's notes on his piece was the orchestration Berlioz used in his symphony. "The use of four bassoons, four types of clarinets, large bells, and cornets as well as trumpets lends this score a unique sound," and this sort of orchestration in most of his works led to Berlioz being referred to as the creator of the modern orchestra.^{lxi} The *Symphonie fantastique* is completely unique in its reason for composition, its sound, its form, and its program. Berlioz was a very innovative writer for orchestra, drawing on his personal experiences or Romantic literary works, and all his innovations are evident in his most well known symphony that still appears often on modern orchestra repertoire.^{lxii}

^{lx} Kramer, 130-131.

^{lxi} Kramer, 132.

^{lxii} Machlis and Forney, 286

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to provide a basic overview of Romantic era music for anyone, regardless of musical background. The program provided works from some of the most famous Romantic composers, beginning with Beethoven who is considered the forefather of the Romantic Movement. After Beethoven is Brahms who had a Romantic sound that followed a classical form, making him the Classical Romantic in the first half of the nineteenth century. Rimsky-Korsakov was a part of the Nationalist movement in Russia, and Tchaikovsky represented the pessimism that surrounded much of the late Romantic Movement. Last is Berlioz who was a true innovator in his time, so much so that most of his music was not understood until years after his death.

In all of these composers, the changes between the Classical era and Romantic era are evident. Romantic composers began composing music for their own purposes, not for a patron of the court. Berlioz went so far as to include notes on his own piece, notes that were clearly based off his own personal experience, while much of Tchaikovsky's music was composed to help him conquer his inner demons of guilt. Performances of these masterpieces were not only for members of the court, but were open to the public.

The small biographies of the composers in the program notes help to put the composition in perspective, and can also increase appreciation for the work. Knowing Beethoven was completely deaf when he composed the Ninth Symphony makes the masterpiece all the more impressive. At the same time, knowing Tchaikovsky often suffered from waves of depression explains the passion, yet sadness that appears in many of his works. The program notes also walk through the piece. These notes are not supposed to map every note in a work, but to provide a general idea of what is happening, and what the audience should listen for.

As Arnold Whittall said, “There is a rich variety of masterpieces to serve the purpose, and to confirm that, whatever it is that makes Romantic music Romantic, the Romantic era was a time with a greatness all its own.”^{lxiii} Hopefully anyone who has taken the time to listen to all five pieces and read the notes now understands, at least a little, the greatness Whittall mentioned.

^{lxiii} Whittall, 15.

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Suggestions for further learning

If this project has peaked your interest in Romantic music, there are many other works I could suggest not only by the five composers in this project, but by hundreds of other Romantic composers. I started by listing additional pieces by the composers covered in this project, and then I listed some others to provide an introduction to

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Levy, David Benjamin. *Beethoven, The Ninth Symphony*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1995.

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Romantic opera, and other Romantic pieces that are simply wonderful to listen to. All of the works mentioned below should be easy to find on iTunes or any university music library.

Beethoven

*Symphonies 1-8

*Für Elise

Longyear, Roy M. "Beethoven and Romantic Irony." *The Musical Quarterly*. Vol. 56. No. 4, Special Issue Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Beethoven. (October, 1970), pp. 647-664.

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Solomon, Maynard. "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 2. (Winter, 1991), pp. 289-305.

Whittall, Arnold. *Romantic Music: A Concise History from Schubert to Sibelius*. London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1987.

*Moonlight Sonata
*Violin Concerto in D

Brahms

*Symphonies 1,2,4
**Ein deutsches Requiem*
*Variations on a Theme by Haydn

Rimsky-Korsakov

*Procession of the Nobles

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Orchestra. Sony CD 92480, 2004.

Temirkanov, Yuri, dir. *Scheherazade*. New York Philharmonic. RCA, AINS
B000003F95, 1993.

Von Karajan, Herbert, dir. Symphony No. 3, by Johannes Brahms. Berliner
Philharmoniker. AINS B00008CLNQ

- *Capriccio Espagnole
- *Russian Easter Festival Overture
- *Flight of the Bumblebee

Tchaikovsky

- **Nutcracker, Swan Lake, and Sleeping Beauty* ballets
- *Symphonies 4-6
- *Capriccio Italien
- *Violin Concerto in D

Berlioz

- **Les Troyens* (opera)
- *Damnation of Faust
- *Beatrice and Benedict

Modest Mussorgsky

- *Night on Bald Mountain (heard in Disney's Fantasia)
- *Pictures at an Exhibition

Felix Barthodly Mendelssohn

- **Hebrides* Overture
- *Violin Concerto in E-Minor
- **A Midsummer Night's Dream* (includes the famous wedding recessional)
- *Symphony No 2 *Lobgesang* (hymn of praise)
- *Symphonies 3,4

Richard Wagner (the quintessential Romantic Opera composer)

- *Thy Flying Dutchman
- *Lohengrin (includes the famous wedding march)
- *Tristan and Isolde (especially the overture)
- *The Ring of the Nibelung (cycle of four operas)

Giuseppe Verdi

- *La Traviata
 - *La forza del destino
-

Giacomo Puccini

*La Boheme (Musetta's Waltz referenced in the Broadway show/Hollywood musical RENT is from this opera)

*Madame Butterfly

This list could continue for pages, but these composers and the few works I included are well known and very Romantic in style, making them perfect to continue learning about Romantic Music.

Notes