Chapter 14

The Age of the Tone Poet
Chapter Overview

- Age of the Tone Poet
- In the 18th century, instrumental music begins to increase in importance, still viewed as incapable of conveying concepts or reason.
- 19th century, instrumental music best able to convey ideas and emotions
- Beethoven dubs himself a “tone poet”
- Public begins to see the composer as a High Priest (able to see into a more spiritual world, divinely inspired)
- Later in the 19th century, opera retakes the higher position as it is a synthesis of all the arts
Romanticism and the New Prestige of Instrumental Music

• term romantic derives from name of literary genre, the romance, that emerged in the medieval era

• a romance tells a long story in verse or prose

• romance is largely free of structural or narrative convention

• because of association with freer narrative expression, the genre (romance) gave its name to the artistic movement (romanticism)
The Romance

- The term “romantic” is used to describe a revival of interest in literary works with medieval settings, written in the romance languages.
  (Source: Adams, Exploring the Humanities, p. 500)

- Anonymous 13th century story of Jaufré Rudel:
  
  - Jaufré Rudel ... the prince of Blaye ... fell in love with the countess of Tripoli, without ever having seen her, out of the good he heard of her. ... Out of his desire to see her, he became a crusader and set off by sea, and on the boat was taken ill, and was taken to Tripoli. ... Word of this was sent to the countess and she came to his bedside and took him in her arms. ... [He praised] God for having allowed him to live long enough to see her; and so he died in her arms.
  (Source: Eco, History of Beauty, p. 167)
Jaufré Rudel legend in the Romantic Period

Heinrich Heine
from *Romancero-Last Poems* (1851)
(in Eco, *History of Beauty*, p. 169)

The walls of castle Blaye
are hung with tapestries
woven by the expert hand
of her who was countess of Tripoli.
...
The countess bends over him
Embracing him with love
And kisses the bloodless mouth
That had praised her gloriously.

But oh! that kiss is transformed
into a kiss of farewell.
...
In castle Blaye, at night
The figures on the tapestries
Tremble, rustle, whisper
As suddenly they return to life.

The Lady and the Troubadour
Their spectral limbs arouse
And come down from the walls
To stroll through the halls.

Giosuè Carducci
from “Jaufré Rudel” (1888)
(in Eco, *History of Beauty*, p. 170)

... as out of Cyprus sails
The crusader ship.
Gasping with fever in the stern
Lies the prince of Blaye, Rudel
Seeking to glimpse
The castle high in Tripoli.

With the Asian shore in sight
The song rings out
“Love from a distant land
For you my heart aches.”

... the ship
Moors in the peaceful harbor ...
Bertrand ... hastens to the castle to seek
Melisenda
The countess of Tripoli.
...
Romanticism and the New Prestige of Instrumental Music

• romanticism closely associate with philosophical outlook known as Idealism

• Idealism allows for a realm that lies beyond reason and words and, thus, grants more room to spiritual and even mystical

• instrumental music - because it is intrinsically abstract - is an art form that most approximates disembodied realm of ideas
Composer as High Priest

- social status of composers rose
- composers dealt with most abstract of all arts
- listening public sought insight into their working methods
- composers biographies appeared
- composers wrote about themselves and their art
Composer as High Priest

- Composers did not always “speak” in comprehensible manner - hence need to explanatory texts
- Composers incorporated autobiographical elements into music
- More weight on accuracy and authority of published scores
- Composers became cultural heroes
Originality and Historical Self-Consciousness

- belief every work of art must be new and different
- composers sought own distinctive voice
- composers compared to their contemporaries and masters of earlier generations
- composers embrace forms and styles of earlier generations while presenting them in original ways
The virtuoso as idol

Throughout the 19th century, the great musical virtuosos and composers were perceived as endowed with diving, superhuman powers. This is a satirical drawing of the great Polish composer and pianist Ignace Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) from ca. 1895.
The New Dichotomy between Absolute and Program Music

• composers and critics maintained music could achieve its highest potential only through a synthesis with other arts including the arts of the word

• view of 18th-century critics toward instrumental music: has ability to move passions but too abstract to carry true meaning

• the term *absolute* was embraced as a label for purely instrumental music
Nationalism in Music

- the meaning of music can sometimes be political
- Eastern European composers often had nationalistic meanings in their music
  - Chopin (from Russian controlled Poland) wrote mazurkas and polonaises (traditional Polish dance forms) while in Paris
  - Schumann noticed their political dimension saying that if the Czar recognized the threat he’d forbid their performance (Bonds p. 381).
Nationalism in Music

- Russia sought to become a major European power and one off shoot was to create a distinctive Russian music.

- Russian composers used folk melodies and harmonic progressions to create a Russian flavor

- Glinka *A Life for the Tsar* (1836)

- Borodin *In the Steppes of Central Asia*

- Mussorgsky *Boris Godunov* (1869-72)
Nationalism in Music

- Many composers show Nationalistic tendencies
- Verdi in Italy
- Wagner in Germany
- Dvořák in Bohemia (now Czech Republic)
- Gottschalk in the U.S.
Nationalism in Music

- Norway ruled by Denmark since 14th century
- unified with Sweden in 1814
- during the 19th century Norway saw many nationalistic artistic trends
- Henrik Ibsen and Edvard Grieg collaborated on the verse drama Peer Gynt (1867)
- Two Peer Gynt Suites are the best know music from the verse drama
- “Halling” from Peer Gynt also made into an solo piano piece. It shows the incorporation of folk elements.
Nationalism in Music

• Other uses of folk elements

• Verdi (Italian) use “Egyptian” elements in *Aida*
  - written for the commemoration of the Suez Canal

• Brahms (German) wrote *Hungarian Dances*

• Dvořák used “Native American” elements in *Symphony No. 9 “From the New World”*
The Growing Division between Art and Popular Music

- during the 19th century, musicians and public began drawing a distinction between art music and popular music
- economic factors reinforced this division
- programs became homogeneous and appealed to an increasingly narrower audience
Music in the 19th Century: A Stylistic Overview

• growing drive toward originality opened a variety of options in texture, melody, harmony, rhythm and form

• texture and melodic structures range from simple to complex
  - look at the use of periodic phrase structure in Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (see p. 386)

• harmonies became chromatic

• rhythm became complex
Music in the 19th Century: A Stylistic Overview

- cyclical coherence became important for multi-movement instrumental works
- orchestral writing required a conductor
- orchestral rehearsals became the rule