CHAPTER20

CHAPTER 20: THE LATER ROMANTICS

Chapter Outline

Prelude. (CHWM 472–73)

People in the nineteenth century had both a strong belief in progress and a growing interest in music of the past. Scholars unearthed and published music of earlier periods, especially from their own nations and issued editions of complete works of major composers. Performers and audiences had available to them a variety of old and new music, which satisfied the desire to hear new pieces as well as familiar ones. Brahms and Wagner represented two sides of a dispute regarding absolute versus [**program music**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/20/outline.aspx), tradition versus innovation, and Classical versus new genres.

I. Franz Liszt (CHWM 473–78, NAWM 128)

1. Style   
   *Franz Liszt*(1811–1886) was influenced by Hungarian music, by Viennese and Parisian virtuosos, and by [**Chopin**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/20/outline.aspx).

**Biography: Franz Liszt**  
Liszt had an enormous impact on music as a piano virtuoso, composer, conductor, and teacher. He studied piano and composition in Vienna and Paris, taught piano at age sixteen, and pursued a career as a virtuoso until 1848. He devoted the rest of his career to composing, conducting, and teaching. He worked in Weimar and Rome, where he took minor orders in the Catholic Church.

1. Paganini’s influence   
   Liszt was also influenced by violinist *Niccolò Paganini*(1782–1840), who heightened both the technique and the mystique of the virtuoso.
2. Liszt’s [**virtuosity**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/20/outline.aspx)   
   Liszt was a virtuoso, giving solo piano *recitals*(a concept and term he pioneered) and changing the way pianists performed in concert.
3. ***Piano Music***
   1. *Un sospiro*  
      *Un sospiro*shows the high level of technique Liszt applied to the piano.**Music: NAWM 128**
   2. Transcriptions   
      Much of Liszt’s piano music consists of *transcriptions*of vocal and instrumental music.
   3. Hungarian elements   
      Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies* used Hungarian tunes and ornamentation styles.
   4. Sonata in B Minor   
      Liszt’s one-movement Piano Sonata in B Minor uses *thematic transformation*.
   5. Late works   
      Liszt experimented with chromatic harmony, especially in his late works.
4. ***Orchestral Music***
   1. Symphonic poems   
      Liszt composed thirteen *symphonic poems,*programmatic works for orchestra whose content and form were suggested by a person, story, artwork, or something else outside music, identified by their titles and usually by programs.
   2. Thematic transformation   
      Liszt used thematic transformation, a process of transforming a theme or motive into new themes, to provide unity, variety, and narrative-like logic to a composition.
   3. *Faust*Symphony   
      Liszt’s *Faust*Symphony refers to characters and episodes drawn from Goethe’s *Faust.*
   4. Choral music   
      In his choral music, Liszt reinterpreted the past, often deriving melodies from plainchant.
   5. Liszt’s influence   
      Liszt’s symphonic poems, chromatic harmonies, and thematic transformation profoundly influenced other composers.

II. Anton Bruckner (CHWM 478–79)

*Anton Bruckner*(1824–1896) absorbed Wagner’s style and ideas into the traditional symphony and wrote church music that united the technical resources of nineteenth-century music with a reverent approach to sacred texts.

1. ***Symphonies***  
   Bruckner wrote eleven symphonies, none explicitly programmatic.
   1. Influences   
      Bruckner was influenced by Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Wagner, and his own experience as an organist.
2. ***Choral Music***  
   Bruckner’s religious choral music blends modern elements with influences from the Cecilian movement.

III. Johannes Brahms (CHWM 479–84, NAWM 147–48)

*Johannes Brahms*(1833–1897) used virtually all the musical languages of his time and drew heavily on elements from past classics, integrating them into music that appealed to a wide range of listeners.

**Biography: Johannes Brahms**  
Brahms studied piano as a child, developing a love for past composers as well as for Hungarian popular music. He was close to Robert and Clara Schumann, who were instrumental in launching his career. Brahms made his living as a concert pianist, conductor, and composer. He was the leading German composer of his time in every genre except opera and an important influence on twentieth-century music.

1. ***Piano Music***  
   Brahms developed a highly individual style, marked by broken-chord figuration and cross-rhythms.
   1. Short piano works   
      In the 1880s and 1890s, Brahms issued perhaps his greatest contribution to keyboard literature, six collections of intermezzos, rhapsodies, and other short pieces.
2. ***Chamber Music***  
   Brahms wrote a large body of chamber works for a wide range of instrumentations.
   1. Piano Quintet   
      Brahms was influenced by Schubert and Clara Schumann when writing his Piano Quintet.
   2. Developing variation   
      Throughout all of his work, including his Piano Quintet (1864), Brahms used what Arnold Schoenberg called *developing variation,*a technique in which a musical idea is varied to create a string of interrelated but different ideas, producing both unity and variety. **Music: NAWM 148**
3. ***Symphonies***  
   Brahms felt the almost overwhelming influence of Beethoven and composed symphonies with great care and deliberation.
   1. First Symphony   
      Brahms’s First Symphony (1876) fully absorbs Beethoven’s influence but also blends it with other models and new ideas.
   2. Third Symphony   
      Brahms often used wide melodic spans, cross relations, and metric ambiguity, all of which are illustrated in his Third Symphony (1883).
   3. Fourth Symphony   
      The finale of Brahms’s Fourth Symphony (1885) is a chaconne, a set of variations on a basso ostinato that he adapted from a Bach cantata. **Music: NAWM 147**
   4. Choral works   
      All of Brahms’s choral music was composed for amateurs.
   5. A German Requiem   
      *Ein deutsches Requiem*(A German Requiem, 1868) uses Biblical passages rather than the liturgical Requiem text and combines Baroque procedures with rich Romantic harmonies.
   6. Brahms’s place   
      Brahms, often called a conservative, was a model for twentieth-century composers in creating new, individual music that drew deeply on the past.

IV. Piotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky (CHWM 484–87)

1. Looking westward   
   There were two main camps among Russian composers: those who pursued professional training in the Western mode and those who opposed academic study as a threat to their originality.
2. Conservatories   
   *Anton Rubenstein* (1829–1894) founded the St. Petersburg Conservatory with a program of training on the Western model, and his brother *Nikolay Rubenstein*(1835–1881) founded the Moscow Conservatory along similar lines.
3. Ballets   
   *Piotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky*(1840–1893) wrote the most famous and frequently performed ballets in the permanent repertory, including *The Nutcracker*(1892).
4. Operas   
   Tchaikovsky’s two most important operas were *Eugene Onegin*(1879) and *The Queen of Spades*(1890), which he based on works by Russian writer Alexander Pushkin.

**Biography: Piotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky**  
Tchaikovsky studied law in St. Petersburg, then enrolled in the Conservatory. He taught at the Moscow Conservatory and suffered severe bouts ofdepression. His career changed dramatically under the patronage of *Nadezhda von Meck*; he quit teaching, composed full-time, and traveled around the world as a conductor. Tchaikovsky was the leading Russian composer of the nineteenth century and embraced his cultural heritage while reconciling it with Western European styles.

1. Fifth Symphony   
   Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony (1888) is noteworthy for its lyricism, its orchestration, and its drama created by a recurring theme.
2. *Pathétique*Symphony   
   Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony (*Pathétique,*1893) contains novel musical elements, including a waltz in quintuple time and a closing slow movement. The third movement begins with a light character and gradually evolves into a triumphant march. **Music: NAWM 151**

V. Bedrich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák (CHWM 487–90, NAWM 152)

1. Bohemia   
   Like the Russians, Bohemian composers *Bedřich Smetana*(1824–1884) and*Antonín Dvořák*(1841–1904) are better known outside their native land for their instrumental music than for their operas.
2. Smetana   
   Smetana sought to create a national music in his String Quartet No. 1, *From My Life*(1876), and in his cycle of six symphonic poems titled *Má Vlast*(My Country, ca. 1872–79).
3. Dvořák   
   In his symphonies, Dvořák emulated Beethoven and Brahms.
4. Symphonies   
   Dvořák’s best-known symphony is No. 9 in E Minor (*From the New World*, 1893), written during his time in the United States and drawing on the music of Native Americans and African Americans.
5. Operas   
   Dvořák wrote operas in Czech and based on Czech themes.
6. *Slavonic Dances*  
   In his *Slavonic Dances*(1878 and 1886–87), Dvořák used Czech dance rhythms and his own folklike melodies to achieve a national idiom. **Music: NAWM 152**

**Biography: Antonín Dvořák**  
Dvořák was born and trained in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) and became an advocate of nationalism in music, combining Czech elements with the mainstream European musical tradition. He was a professor of composition at the conservatory in Prague but traveled widely and served for three years as director of a musical academy in New York.

Postlude: The Beethoven Legacy (CHWM 491–93)

Beethoven’s music had a profound influence on later composers. Well after his death, Beethoven was associated with the idea of progress and the veneration of novelty. His musical style and personality reflected the nineteenth century’s interest in the individual. Later composers sought to differentiate their music from his, typically by extending some elements of his music while rejecting others. Schubert introduced songlike themes into the symphony. Berlioz found precedents in Beethoven’s symphonies for the program and thematic drama of his *Symphonie fantastique.*Other composers blended the careers of performer and conductor as Beethoven had. Brahms continued the symphony in an individual way, and Richard Wagner saw the choral finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony as pointing to the union of music with words and drama.