

Name of the era:

Romanticism

Approximate timeframe of the era or style:

1830 - 1920

Historical background:

- Spirit of change, revolutions in France (1798–1799) and America (1776)
- Demise of the German Confederation
- Klemens Wenzel Lothar von Metternich tries to fight the resistance with censorship and the use of spies (much like the East German *Stasi*)
- the bourgeoisie gains power
- Enlightenment
- Industrial Revolution leads to urbanization and rural exodus
- Flourishing of natural sciences

How historical events influenced the characteristics of the music:

- Romanticists search for comfort in nature > their songs praise the beauty of their home countries
- Composers seek subjective freedom and disregard or stretch musical conventions (harmonic expansion)
- **Hausmusik** ("house concert") is very common (this way "prohibited content" can be performed in a safe environment)
- Content that would otherwise have fallen victim to censorship is expressed through music (concealed)
- Compositions are increasingly based on programmatic backgrounds and have a story (titles vs. generic names)
- New instruments are invented (the saxophone in 1840, or the tuba in the early 1800s) and existing instruments optimized
- The interest in instrumental color causes the gradual enlargement of the orchestra
- Women are establishing themselves more and more as composers (Clara Schumann, Fanny Hensel)
- Composers no longer strictly adhere to the musical theory of form (sudden changes of key and freer cadences at the end of compositions are now possible)

The most popular genres of the era:

- The **Lied** or **Kunstlied** ("Art Song"): song, accompanied by piano (particularly composed by Schubert)
- **Program Music**: instrumental works (without singers or lyrics) that express a narrative, which itself might be offered to the audience in the form of program notes, inviting imaginative correlations with the music; single movement orchestral pieces of program music are often called **Symphonic Poems** (longer instrumental works that expresses extra-musical content through musical means - for example Smetana's "The Moldau," or Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition")
- **Music Drama**: poetry and music are composed as inseparable unity; an opera in which the musical and dramatic elements are of equal importance and strongly interfused – coined by Richard Wagner

The sound of the era:

- **Very little regularity**: less "regulated" - uneven phrases, harmonic freedom - different keys, more dissonance, unexpected endings
- **The bigger, the better**: the romantic orchestra used more (new) instruments (contrabassoon, bass clarinet, piccolo, xylophones, drums, celestes, harps, bells and triangles)

Famous composers/performers/bands of this era + composition examples:



Franz Schubert (1797–1828) - German

"Forellenquintett" (1819)

- ["Forellenquintett" on Spotify](#)

- [“Forellenquintett” on YouTube](#)

Lieder Cycle “Die Winterreise” (1827)

- [“Gute Nacht” from “Die Winterreise” on Spotify](#)
- [“Gute Nacht” from “Die Winterreise” on YouTube](#)



Pjotr Iljitsch Tschaikowski (1840–1893) - Russian

“Swan Lake” (1877)

- ["Swan Lake" on Spotify](#)
- ["Swan Lake" on YouTube](#)

“The Nutcracker” (1892)

- ["The Nutcracker" on Spotify](#)
- ["The Nutcracker" on YouTube](#)



Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) - Polish

“Piano Concerto No. 2. II Larghetto” (1830)

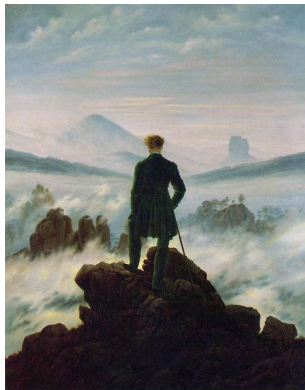
- ["Piano Concerto No. 2. II Larghetto" on Spotify](#)

- ["Piano Concerto No. 2. Il Larghetto" on YouTube](#)

"Polonaise in A-flat major, Op.53" (1842)

- ["Polonaise in A-flat major, Op. 53 \('Heroic Polonaise'\)" on Spotify](#)
- ["Polonaise in A-flat major, Op. 53 \('Heroic Polonaise'\)" on YouTube](#)

Romantic Paintings:



["Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer" \("Wanderer above the Sea of Fog"\) \(1818\) - Caspar David Friedrich \(1774–1840\) – German](#)



["Fishermen at Sea" \(1796\) – J.M.W. Turner \(1775–1851\) – English](#)