

ROMANTIC PIANO

Romantic: Virtuoso, Emotional, Nationalism, Non-musical influences (i.e. the nocturne, the Ballade), New piano technology

The music: Cross-rhythms (3v2), tonal ambiguity, dissonance (diminished / half diminished chords), use of pedal notes, dramatic contrast, full range of piano's potential (pitch & dynamics)

Nocturne (Chopin): Structure A, B, A, B. Sections unified by arpeggio patterns.

Section A: E minor. Four bar phrases – ultimately not balanced [8+13]; Cross rhythms [Duplet vs Triplet]; each phrase end in open cadences; Chromatic harmony (use of Augmented 6th, Diminished 7th); section concludes with tierce de Picardie. Use of the minor 6th interval (both within the melodic line as well as the rolling arpeggio accompaniment); appoggiaturas (in both accompaniment and melodic line – creates dissonance and resolution).

Section B: B major; Based on a B pedal; regular 8 bar phrases

Melodic development: Decoration; mordents; trills; acciaccaturas; extreme range (B6).

Norwegian March (Grieg): C major. Four Part Texture [melody, pedal note, inner parts provide march rhythm] = Dance versus March (6/8 sounds 2/4)

Structure: A B A B (Monothematic)

Melody: syncopated (dance like); Grieg motif; decorated (mordents); melodic sequence

Harmony: Cycle of 5ths used (D,G,C,F,B,E,A,D,G), use of Drone, tonic – dominant relationship. A^{flat} harmony used for colour in section B

Folk references: drone/pedal, dance like melody, tonic – dominant, simple structure/monothematic.

Notturmo (Grieg): Post Wagnerian/ Folk influenced

Structure: A, codetta, B (faster) A, codetta

Section A: C major. Chromatic harmony that moves ultimately to the dominant
Descending chromatic bass line that moves to the dominant
Melody based on a perfect fourth of the 'Grieg motif' [minor 2nd-major 3^d or major 2nd-minor 3rd]
Cycle of 5ths using half diminished chords [based on F[#], B, E, A, D, A^{flat}, E, A, D, G]

Link/Codetta: Slow harmonic rhythm [stillness], unresolved dissonance [B^ø – G⁹, D^ø - B^{flat9}]
Melodic = Oscillating perfect fourth/trill - Sounds like bird song

Section B: Chromatic harmony used for colour [E⁹, E¹¹, A^{flat}, D⁹, G¹¹]
Bass Line descends chromatically due to inversion of A^{flat} (reference to opening bass line?)

Grieg: 1843-1907. Post Wagnerian. Nationalist. Use of a Grieg motif. Use of drones and pedal notes, Strong tonic/dominant relationships. Wrote a piano concerto which opens with the Grieg motif (A, G[#], E). Also wrote the incidental music Peer Gynt Suite.

Ballade (Chopin): A B A B A;

Section A: F Major; 6/8 time signature; Andantino; pedal note of opening & Dotted rhythm of melody = folk/dance; homophonic.

Section B: A minor (later D minor). Cross rhythms (3vs2). Dissonant diminished chords (underpinned by pedal note). Presto con Fuoco (Fast with Fire). Wide range of pitch. Last B extended to include agitato section – inclusion of waltz like rhythms (rather than cross rhythms)

Transitions: 1. Use of pivot note (mediant becomes tonic); 2. Chromatic descent from E^{flat} to C (Dominant); 3. Gradual bridging using increases in dynamic, range and tempo and dissonance (an ascending chromatic scale with dim chords)

Chopin: 1810-1849. Mainly piano music (folk/dance forms e.g. Mazurkas, Polonaises, Waltzes) – though not always intended to be danced due to tempi (e.g. very fast waltzes and use of rubato)

Brahms: 1833-1897. A full range of works for a range of instrument combinations (Concertos, Symphonies, Lieder, and many works for Piano solo)

The Romantic Piano:

Development of better strings materials and the Iron Frame piano resulted in better tone and dynamic range.

Improved sustain pedal

Introduction of the double escapement mechanism allowed fast repetition of a note.

A variety of piano makes and types resulted in different composition approaches (e.g. Liszt, Brahms, Chopin, Beethoven)

Form:

The Ballade: Can convey a narrative/story.

Romantic composers used the form to allow freedom (freedom of structure, freedom of interpretation) and drama. Other forms that allowed freedom of structure include the Intermezzo, the Prelude and the Impromptu. More formal structures were less used – e.g. Mozart wrote 19 piano sonatas and Beethoven 32 – Chopin wrote only 3 and Brahms 4.

Ballade (Brahms): A B A, [A is A B A itself]

Section A: G minor. Descending melodic G minor scale outlined by melody. The opening melody demonstrates rhythmic diminution (3:1 ratio employed throughout the Ballade). Allegro Energico: Fast with Energy. Asymmetric harmonic rhythm of opening (3:1). Cycle of 5ths employed. Concludes with tierce de Picardie – pivot note (B) links to section B (Augmented 6th)

Phrases: Section A = 5 bar phrases opening – 6 bar phrases; Section B = regular 4 bar phrases

Section B: melody employs 3:1 dotted rhythm; Brief move to D[#] minor (reference to section A); contrast through key, dynamics, accompanying pattern; phrase lengths

Intermezzo (Brahms): A B C B A (A is ABCAB).

Section A: A major. Inversions in the harmony to create smoothness; **Cross** rhythms; Chromatic scale outlined by melody. Use of hemiola (division of six quavers).
Melody: melodic augmentation (minor 3rd becomes minor 7th); Use of melodic inversion (3rd rising = falling, 7th rising = falling).

Section B: F[#] minor; phrase lengths reduce 4 – 3 – 2.5 – 2.5; Asymmetric harmonic rhythm (5 – 3 – 2 – 1 – 1); Tenor melody provides imitation.

Section C: F # major; texture contrast (chordal); melody taken form section B

Wagner: Tristan Und Isolde. The Tristan Chord – Half diminished = tonal ambiguity. He wrote the Ring Cycle (a series of operas based on German Mythology). Use of the Leitmotiv (musical material used to represent characters/objects/situation within a story).

The Nocturne (night music):

Field (piano)
Chopin (piano)
Grieg (piano)
Skryabin (piano)
Debussy (orchestral)
Mahler (Nachtmusik –
Symphony No.7)

