

# Romanticism

The Self-Conscious 19th Century

# Comparisons

- Baroque: we would probably identify the period easily, but not the composer
- Romantic: we would probably identify the composer first

# The “Conscious” Period

- The only era to name itself
- Artists were aware that they were living in a *new*, and *different* era. A few eras were like this:
  - The Renaissance
  - The 14th century (*Ars Nova*)

# The Concept of the Individual

- Romanticism is individualistic
- Composers sought to develop individual styles
- Cult of the artist as superhero
- Cult of the virtuoso

# Development of the Specialist

- Rossini, Wagner: opera
- Brahms: instrumental music and lieder
- Chopin, Liszt: piano music
- Schumann: piano music and lieder
- Berlioz: orchestral music
- Tchaikovsky: ballet and orchestral music

# Rhythm

- Rubato: the rhythm is handled flexibly in performance
- Practiced in the service of greater expressivity
- Rubato cannot be learned from rules, only by example and only via experimentation

# Rhythm

- Chopin: Nocturne in D-flat Major
  - Leopold Godowsky (1920s)
  - Cuttner Solomon (1940s)
  - Dinu Lipatti (1950s)

# Melody

- Generally longer, more effusive than Classical or Baroque melody
- Pitch ranges tend to be much greater
- Melodies tend to be rhythmically more varied
- The clear-cut phrases of the Classical are often avoided in favor of a more “stream of consciousness” style

# Melody

- In contrast to overall Romantic trends, there were numerous composers who preferred to write much more Classically-structured melodies
- This Brahms waltz is a classic *two-part song form*, as would have been familiar to any Classical or Baroque composer

|: a |: b :|

# Harmony

- Harmony for its own sake was cultivated—a sheer delight in the sensual possibilities of sound
- Alexander Scriabin: *The Poem of Ecstasy*

# Tone Color: The Orchestra

- The orchestra expanded beyond all recognition, into its modern form
  - New instruments
  - Adding instruments previously unused in the orchestra
  - Development of existing instruments
- *Orchestration*, or the art of writing for orchestra, expanded right along with it

# Tone Color: The Orchestra

- Wagner: *Parsifal*, scene change as Montsalvat appears
- Richard Strauss: opening of *Don Juan*
- Antonin Dvorak: finale of Symphony No. 8

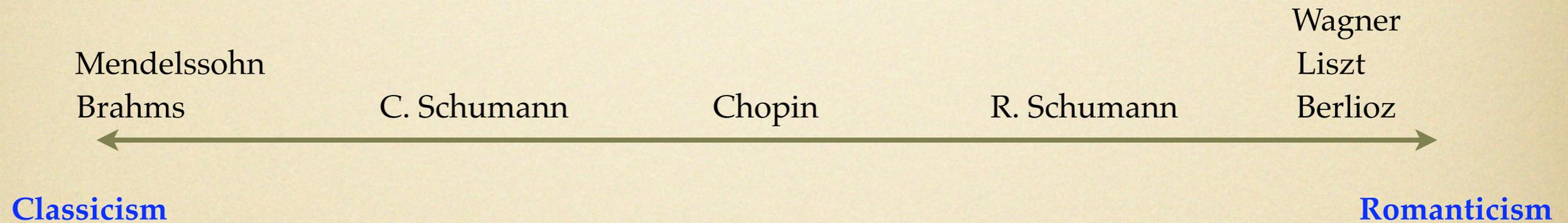
# Program Music

- Nonvocal music written in association with a story, theme, poem, or other literary source
- Sometimes “tells a story”, but other times concerns itself with moods, themes, or ideas brought up in the original literary source

# Program Music

- To 19th century composers and listeners alike, music was always “about” something, even if the composition itself was abstract.

# Classicism and Romanticism



# Form

- Romantic forms tended to be much freer than in the Classic or Baroque
- Form, in general, was less important to Romantic composers
- Often very simple structures (A-B-A) were used as containers; the real “action” in the music was elsewhere

# Miniatures

- The “miniature” is a short piece designed to be performed either in private or a very small room
- Miniatures usually encapsulate a single feeling or emotion in a short period of time
  - “Character piece” for piano
  - The *lied*, or art song

# Grandiosity

- Giganticism in music began early in the century and continued well into the 20th century
- Bigger, longer, ever more epic compositions
- Began with Beethoven (3rd and 9th symphonies)

# Grandiosity

- Some examples:
  - Berlioz: *Romeo and Juliet* Symphony (90 minutes)
  - Wagner: *The Ring of the Nibelungen* (opera cycle, 20+ hours)
  - Mahler: Symphony No. 8 (*Symphony of a Thousand*)