21M011 (spring, 2006)
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Lecture X

Romantic Orchestral Music

Throughout the 19th century, composers continued to write orchestral music in two
different tracks. In the first, the music evolved exclusively out of its own musical
components following the example of most symphonies by Haydn, Mozart and
Beethoven. Schubert, Schumann and Brahms are major composers in this form, referred
to as "absolute" music. This was opposed to the second track of program music, or music
composed to depict some extra-musical storyline, as exemplified by Berlioz's *Fantastic
Symphony*. Of course, this is not to say that program music lacked internal musical
organization, but rather that it was harnessed to an extra-musical topic. There is, needless
to say, some blurring of these categories.

Brahms, *Violin Concerto*, third movement K 5:5-10
A good example of absolute music. This last movement follows a traditional, if
somewhat modified, rondo form: A B A′ C B A″ . Further, the A theme is in written out
rounded binary form: aa | ba′ . Each return of A then presents a section of the theme
(similar to the way Bach fragments the returns of his ritornellos); the use of variation in
the returns is similar to Haydn's process.: A′ = aa″ and A″ = ba‴ . The lack of a return
after C is the only oddity.

Mahler, *Symphony No. 1*, third movement K 5:11-18
This movement, the third of five in the symphony, falls somewhere between absolute and
program music. Kerman/Tomlinson refers to its form as a type of minuet/trio (with two
trios). In this interpretation the funeral march = the minuet (here a march instead), and
the trios are Kerman/Tomlinson's Section 2 (dance-band) and Section 3 (song). Indeed,
Section 2 falls into a repeated binary form (written out): ab ab′ . However, this analysis
seems to overlook the return of the march at 4:12; at least, this return is not identified
with a "section" number. I think, rather, that this movement can be considered a rondo
form: A B A′ C A″ . We will come back to this movement later.

Chaikovsky, *Overture-Fantasy,* Romeo and Juliet K 4:24-25
This self-contained piece in one movement is an excellent example of program music; it
is based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. However, unlike many programmatic
pieces that fall into free forms dependent on the story line, Chaikovsky manages to tell
the story within the confines of sonata form.

Pyotr Ilyich Chaikovsky (1840-1893), like Wagner, was strongly influenced by Mozart's
Don Giovanni, Italian opera, Berlioz (orchestration and narrative form), Chopin (freedom
of form), and Liszt (power of the large-scale, less specific narration)

Chaikovsky met Berlioz in 1867.

Chaikovsky wrote symphonies and many operas; he is particularly famous for his ballets (*The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*) that tell stories in free, narrative form.

Chaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*
1869: first version
1870 (2nd version)
1880 (3rd version)

basic story line:

Romeo (Montague)
Juliet (Capulet)
secret wedding
Mercutio killed by Tybalt (Romeo tries to prevent)
Romeo kills Tybalt
Romeo exiled
wedding night
Juliet told to marry Paris
Friar provides a sleeping potion to Juliet that mimics death
in the tombs, Romeo kills Paris, takes poison
Juliet, waking to find Romeo dead, kills herself with his knife

Kerman/Tomlinson states that "Chaikovsky followed the outlines of the original play only in a very general way," but I would suggest that the connection is stronger than that.

The overture-fantasy, in sonata form, opens with a slow introduction based on a modal hymn theme representing Friar Lawrence and giving the whole story a more magical, mystical cast (much like *Tristan und Isolde*).

The exposition opens with the "vendetta theme" depicting the fighting between the young Montagues and Capulets by the use of contrapuntal (fugal) techniques (compare Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique* last movement). The "sighing" theme (at 7:16) with its alternating notes comprising a dissonant and unresolved interval represents Juliet, and depicts her tremulous excitement at this point in the balcony scene ("Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?"). The love theme represents Romeo (compare with the *idée fixe* theme of Berlioz in its yearning intervals and use of sequence).

The development plays the fighting theme against the hymn of the introduction—the hymn here representing the wedding of Romeo and Juliet by Friar Lawrence in the face of the opposition of their families.

The recapitulation explodes with the fighting theme, representing the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, with the immediately following "sighing theme" (12:24) indicating Juliet's reaction to the Duke's decision to exile Romeo as she anticipates his arrival, signaled by the return of the love theme. The combination of these themes represents their wedding night together, with the love theme fragmenting at Romeo's departure (14:04). The

reintroduction of the "vendetta" theme and of conflict portrays her family's insistence that Juliet marry Paris; the return of the hymn theme depicts Juliet's plea for help from Friar Lawrence, who gives her the sleeping potion.

In the coda, Romeo arrives in Juliet's tomb (love theme with muffled funeral drums); he drinks poison (the theme fragments further); Juliet awakens (transformation of the sighing theme [16:40]). In most nineteenth-century productions of the play, Juliet awakens just before Romeo dies so that they have a moment together: this may be represented by the "transcendent" version of the love theme (17:46).

The drum roll and final cadences may depict Juliet's desperate suicide following Romeo's death, the final scene of death illustrating the ghastly result of the feud between the families. It is striking that Chaikovsky chooses to end the movement not with the love theme dying away, but with this sense of violence and loss, which is more Shakespearean than Romantic.

Nationalism

Western music from its origins had a shifting geographical center. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the dominant group of composers were Franco-Flemish (Perotin, Ventadorn, Machaut, Dufay, Josquin). Toward the end of the 16th century, the center shifted to Italian cities and courts (Palestrina, Gabrieli, Monteverdi, Frescobaldi, Vivaldi). Over the course of the eighteenth century, the center (with the exception of opera) shifted to German-speaking lands (Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Wagner, Brahms). Increasingly, however, with the rise of nation states (Italian risorgimento; see Verdi), the overthrow of absolute monarchy through revolution (France, Russia) and the rise of constitutional monarchy in England following the American Revolution, the arts began to take on specifically national characteristics, using folk music (song and dance) as a basic for composition. In countries that lost independence, such as Poland, nationalism took on perhaps even more importance than in countries that gained it. In part, of course, this musical trend was political, and political messages have always been important in music. For example, Mozart in his operas depicted the strength and morality of the lower classes against the weakness and immorality of the upper classes and Beethoven originally intended his 3rd Symphony to honor Napoleon. Later, Verdi's operas became important political vehicles. In part, however, the trend by the end of the 19th century was as much (or more) toward the portrayal a distinctive national sound through the incorporation of "characteristic" folk idioms than the depiction of political or revolutionary subject matter. In a way, nationalism in music blends early 19th-century politicism with the development of "character" pieces, the "character" in this case being a national identity. Both kinds of nationalism continued well into the 20th century. When composers adopt a national idiom other than their own, the term "exoticism" is used (Verdi's imitation of Egyptian music for the hymn of the priests; another example not in your text is Ravel's "Boléro").

Some examples (underlined composers in your text):

Poland: <u>Chopin</u> (Polonaises, Mazurkas), Paderewski, Penderecki, Lutoslawski
Czech: Smetana, Dvorák, Janaçek
Hungary: Liszt, <u>Bartók</u>, Kodály, <u>Ligeti</u>
Germany: Johann Strauss (family: waltzes, Ländler), <u>Mahler</u>
Scandanavia: Grieg, Sibelius, Nielson, <u>Saariaho</u>
England: Sullivan, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Britten
France: Saint-Saëns, Fauré, <u>Debussy</u>, <u>Ravel</u>, Satie, Poulenc
Spain: Granados, de Falla
U.S: Gottschalk, John Philip Sousa, Joplin, <u>Ives</u>, <u>Copland</u>, <u>Ellington</u>, <u>Gershwin</u>, <u>Bernstein</u>

Perhaps the greatest national school was the Russian: Rimsky-Korsakov, <u>Musorgsky</u>, Borodin, <u>Chaikovsky</u>, <u>Stravinsky</u>, Prokofiev, Shostakovich

Musorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition* K 5:1-4

Modest Musorgsky (1839-1881) was not a trained musician. Because of his social class (he came from a wealthy land-owning family of north central Russia), he was trained as an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard (the Tsar's bodyguards), but after revolutionary changes in Russia that "caused the liquidation of his family estate," he made his living in a clerical job. His continuing interest in composition admitted him to a loose-knit group (*Kucha*) of nationalist Russian composers organized by Balakirev that included Glinka, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and, briefly, Chaikovsky, among others.

As a child, his mother taught him piano. While in the guards he sought composition lessons in musical form from Balakirev based on a study of Beethoven symphonies. In 1858, he resigned from the guards to pursue music as a gentleman. However, the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 forced him to take civil service jobs to keep body and soul together. He shared a room with the composer Rimsky-Korsakov.

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874) is based on paintings by the architect Victor Hartmann. Musorgsky had met Hartmann in 1870, and they had become close friends. When Hartmann died suddenly in 1873, Musorgsky grieved deeply, and an exhibition of Hartmann's "characteristic" paintings in 1874 prompted this musical cycle. Influenced by the work of Schumann (compare *Carnaval*) and Liszt, *Pictures* is a cycle of piano miniatures tied together by the "Promenade" from room to room of the museum.

Hartmann believed that Russian architecture should draw its inspiration from folk designs; Musorgsky's *Pictures* follows this nationalistic goal.

Rimsky-Korsakov edited the score for publication. Maurice Ravel orchestrated it in 1922. In the list of contents below, the paintings are indicated by italic. The original piano version follows from the tradition of Schumann's *Carnaval* in its serial depictions creating a set of miniature character pieces. (Notes based in part on Jon W. Finson, *Nineteenth-Century Music: The Western Classical Tradition* [Prentice-Hall, 2002], pp. 231-241).

Kerman/Tomlinson includes four movements in Ravel's orchestration:

1. Promenade (groupings of five and six with a pentatonic melody, based on Russian pentasyllabic verse and folk melody)
2. *Gnomus* (nutcracker: lurching rhythms, dissonant harmony)
3. Promenade
16. *The Great Gate of Kiev* (chorale-like setting, including Promenade theme and Russian folk song)

Listening to the original piano version is highly recommended: Musorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Anatol Ugorski, piano (Deutsche Grammophon, 1992).

[In a recent semester the piano version was played in class by Joey Zhou '07 (EECS).]

Mahler, *Symphony No. 1*, third movement—again K 5:11-18
It is now possible to reconsider Mahler's movement in light of nationalism. The movement, like Musorgsky's *Pictures* is based on a "well-known nursery picture of the time" (Kerman/Tomlinson, p. 303); see p. 304 for the picture. Mahler bases his march on a parody of a familiar nursery tune, "Frère Jacques," putting it in minor at a slow tempo. Kerman/Tomlinson writes that Mahler's distorted marches can be traced to his recollections of parade music at the military barracks near the home where he grew up. The first episode, or dance band music, is based on the sound (or perhaps a specific example) of Jewish klezmer music heard in Bohemia, a tribute, perhaps, to Mahler's own Jewish heritage. The second episode is based on a song about lost love. The use of pre-existent folk-like material to conjure up the sounds of his German environment gives this movement a significant nationalistic content. (Brahms's use of gypsy music in his Violin Concerto is a form of exoticism, see Kerman/Tomlinson, p. 300.)

Debussy, *Nocturne* No. 1, "Clouds" K 5:19-24

1. the term "nocturne" evokes a night-time scene
2. model = Chopin's *Nocturnes* for piano (piano miniature)
3. Debussy's *Nocturnes*, and "Clouds" in particular, influenced by the impressionist painting of James McNeill Whistler—the third example in your syllabus of a musical composition influenced by visual art (compare Mahler, Musorgsky).

Kerman/Tomlinson describe this piece in ternary form. In doing so, the English horn motive is given no identity, although it is this theme that returns the most often and ends the piece.   I think it is difficult to hear this work in simple ternary form. Like clouds themselves, it is more amorphous, moving in and out of familiar material and fragmenting at the end. I have compared the two analyses below.

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Kerman:     A(a          b              a)      B       A′
Harris:     a      b      c      b      a       d       b      a      d      b
                                                         ─────────────────►
                                                                    fragmenting
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Themes a-d (Harris analysis) have distinctive characteristics: a (cloud theme; chromatic); b (English horn; octatonic); c (rising section); d (flute; pentatonic). The use of non-tonal scales and amorphous form give this piece its "impressionistic" quality.

Summary of Romantic era: Schubert to Debussy

Chronology

Schubert, *Erlkönig* (1815)
Schubert, *Moments Musical* (1827?)
Berlioz, *Fantastic Symphony* (1830)
Chopin, *Nocturne* (1831)
Robert Schumann, *Carnaval* (1833-35)
Robert Schumann, *Dichterliebe* (1840)
Clara Schumann, *Der Mond kommt still gegangen* (1843)
Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (1859)
Chaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy* (1869; revised 1880)
Verdi, *Aida* (1871)
Musorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition* [for piano] (1874)
        --orchestrated by Ravel (1922)
Brahms, *Violin Concerto* (1878)
Mahler, *Symphony No. 1* (1888)
Debussy, *Nocturne* (1899)

Miniatures/Character pieces
Schubert
Schumann(s)
Chopin

Orchestral movements
Berlioz (symphony)
Chaikovsky (symphonic poem)
(Mussorgsky)
Brahms (concerto)
Mahler (symphony)
Debussy (symphonic poem)

"Absolute" music
(Chopin Ballade)
Brahms

Nationalistic
Mahler
(Schubert)
Mussorgsky

Program music based on narrative stories
Berlioz
Chaikovsky

Program music based on paintings
Mussorgsky
Mahler
Debussy

Self-depiction
Berlioz
Robert Schumann
(Wagner)

Opera
Wagner
Verdi

Exotic
Verdi
Brahms