



THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

(1820–1880)

Composers

- Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)
- Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)
- Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)
- Cornelius Gurlitt (1820–1901)
- Franz Liszt (1811–1886)
- Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
- Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
- Robert Schumann (1810–1856)
- Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Keyboard Instruments

- Piano
- Organ


Typical Forms

- Character piece
- Etude
- Concerto
- Dance
- Theme & Variations


KEYS TO STYLISTIC MASTERY

Melody


The prominent feature; may be a single note, two notes, or part of a chord.

-  The melody must project over the accompaniment. Bring out the top note of double notes and chords.

Often expressive and emotional.

-  Sing as you play, exaggerating the melodic shaping, and breathing like a singer.


Phrases are typically longer than those from the Classical period and are written in a variety of different lengths.

-  Note the phrase lengths; lift gently at the ends and breathe.




Rhythm

Often more complex patterns than those in Baroque and Classical periods.


-  Write the counting in the music where needed.

Harmony

Thicker harmonies and *sonorities* support the melody to create rich colors.


-  Listen for good balance between the hands especially when the texture is complex.

Harmony can be full of tension, *dissonance*, *chromaticism*, diminished seventh chords and altered chords for heightened expressivity and interesting modulations.


-  Listen for harmonies that create tension and release and shape these interesting and colorful chord progressions; mark key changes in the music.

Tempo

Greater flexibility than those in Baroque and Classical periods; tempo *rubato* (robbed time)—the melody “bends” the tempo over a steady accompaniment.


-  First learn with a steady tempo. Listen for places where slightly “bending” the tempo might be effective.

There can be changes in tempo and meter within a piece.

-  Observe the composer’s tempo and meter changes.

Texture

Varied accompaniments create different textures and moods.

-  Practice the accompaniment alone. Decide how it affects the *character* of the music.

Technique

Free upper arm motion needed to cover the full range of the piano.

- Practice leaps and changes of registers to feel the full range of motion.

LH accompaniment often has a two-voice texture with the lower note emphasized.

- First learn the LH accompaniment using two hands. Slightly bring out the LH bass note. Then practice the LH alone, imitating the balance you achieved with two hands.



Wide varieties of *articulations* are used to express a large range of emotions.

- Pay careful attention to the detailed *articulations*.

More complex voicing in RH due to double notes and inner voices.

- Notice how many voices there are in each hand; bring out melodies in middle and inner voices.

Dynamics

Expanded dynamic range to match the increased capabilities of the piano. The piano is larger and more powerful than it was in the Classical period.

- Pace the long *crescendos* and *diminuendos* so that you gradually get louder or softer.
- Listen to achieve a range from *pp* to *ff*.

Expression

Great intensity of expression represents a wide range of emotions.

- Determine the moods of the piece and write descriptive words in the score. Show these moods in your playing.

Descriptive titles often indicate a story inspired by literature, folklore, the supernatural or a strong sense of *nationalism*.

- Learn about the title of each piece and why it was composed to help you tell the music's story.

Changes in volume and expression can be very abrupt and extreme.

- Pay attention to the specific dynamic and expressive markings.

Pedal

Use of the *dampers pedal* to create colors and blend the melody and harmony.

- When adding pedal, listen for smooth pedal changes immediately after the note where pedal is indicated. This is called *syncopated* or *legato pedal*.

Varied lengths and depths of pedal are often assumed even when not indicated.

- Listen for places where *half pedal* and shorter pedals are needed.

Additional Considerations

Variety of new forms and genres of composition.

- Learn about the type of piece, and discover its *character*. Analyze the form to help you understand and memorize it.

Color and emotional expression are indicated in the score through descriptive terminology such as *con fuoco*, *maestoso*.

- Look up the composer's interpretive words to help bring out the desired *character* and mood changes.