

Contents

	<i>page</i>
Track List	4
<i>Music of the Romantic Era</i> , by David McCleery	9
I. The Dawn of the Romantic Era	10
II. A Musical Revolution	17
III. A Radical New Musical Language	23
IV. The Classical Romantics	36
V. Opera in the Nineteenth Century	53
VI. The Nationalists	70
VII. The Epic Austrian Symphonists	93
VIII. The End of Romanticism	100
A Timeline of the Romantic Era (music, history, art, literature)	114
Further Listening	134
Front Cover: Featured Music (Wagner's 'Tristan' Chord)	140
Composers of the Romantic Era	142
Map	146
Glossary	147
Credits	160

Track List

CD 1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 3 in E flat 'Eroica'

- 1 Movement 1: Allegro con brio 16:58
Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia / Béla Drahos 8.553475

Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

Symphonie fantastique

- 2 Movement 4: Marche au supplice (March to the Scaffold) 4:41
San Diego Symphony Orchestra / Yoav Talmi 8.553597

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Piano Concerto No. 1

- 3 Movement 1: Allegro maestoso – Tempo giusto 5:14
Joseph Banowetz, piano / Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Oliver Dohnányi 8.550187

Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)

- 4 Polonaise in D minor, Op. 71 No. 1 6:06
Idil Biret, piano 8.554535

- Franz Schubert (1797–1828)**
 5 Gretchen am Spinnrade (Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel) 3:14
 Lynda Russell, soprano / Peter Hill, piano 8.553113
- Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)**
 6 The Hebrides 10:53
 Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra / Anthony Bramall 8.554433
- Robert Schumann (1810–1856)**
 Piano Quintet in E flat
 7 Movement 4: Allegro, ma non troppo 7:08
 Jenő Jandó / Kodály Quartet 8.550406
- Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)**
 8 Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 No. 2 5:16
 Idil Biret, piano 8.550354
- Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)**
 9 'Nacqui all'affanno e al pianto' from *La Cenerentola* (Cinderella) 7:43
 Ewa Podles / Hungarian State Opera Chorus / Hungarian State Opera Orchestra
 Pier Giorgio Morandi 8.554682
- Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848)**
 10 'Spargi d'amaro pianto' from *Lucia di Lammermoor* 3:55
 Luba Orgonasova, soprano / Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Will Humburg 8.550605
- Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)**
 11 'È lui... Dio che nell'alma infondere' from *Don Carlo* 7:28
 Giacomo Aragall, tenor / Eduard Tumuljan, baritone
 Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Alexander Rahbari 8.555797

TT 79:24

CD 2

- Richard Wagner (1813–1883)**
- 1 Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan and Isolde* (excerpt) 8:46
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Johannes Wildner 8.550498
- Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804–1857)**
- 2 Kamarinskaya 6:16
Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Anthony Bramall 8.550085
- Alexander Borodin (1833–1887)**
- Symphony No. 2 in B minor
- 3 Movement 1: Allegro 6:54
Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Stephen Gunzenhauser 8.550238
- Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)**
- Symphony No. 6 in B minor 'Pathétique'
- 4 Movement 2: Allegro con grazia 8:38
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Antoni Wit 8.550782
- Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884)**
- 5 Vltava from *Má vlast* 13:12
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Antoni Wit 8.550931
- Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)**
- 6 Slavonic Dance in C major, Op. 46 No. 1 3:46
Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra / Zdeněk Košler 8.550143

- Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)**
 7 Romance in B flat for violin and piano 5:36
 Dong-Suk Kang, violin / Pascal Devoyon, piano 8.550906
- Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)**
 8 In the Hall of the Mountain King from *Peer Gynt* 2:35
 BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Jerzy Maksymiuk 8.554050
- Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)**
 Symphony No. 1 'Titan'
 9 Movement 3: Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen (Solemn and
 measured, without dragging) 10:02
 Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Michael Halász 8.550522
- Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)**
 10 Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3 No. 2 4:42
 Idil Biret, piano 8.550348
- Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)**
 Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma')
 11 Variation 9: Nimrod 3:35
 Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / George Hurst 8.553564
- TT 75:09**

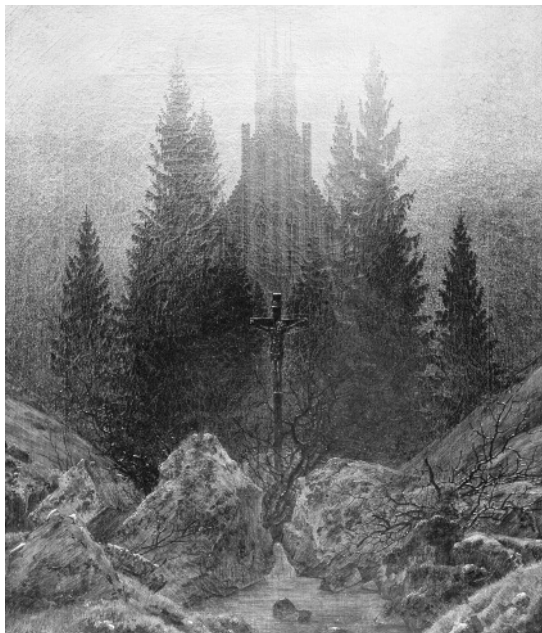
DISCOVER *music of the* ROMANTIC ERA

Music of the **Romantic Era**

by

David McCleery

I. The Dawn of the Romantic Era



Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840): *The Cross in the Mountains*, c. 1812

What was the Romantic Era?

The nineteenth century was a time of great political, cultural and artistic upheaval in the Western world. The dream of an ideal society spread throughout the consciousness of Europe and the New World, and it was a dream that people were determined to turn into a reality. Not only were they inspired by 'liberté, égalité et fraternité' – the motto of post-revolutionary France; they sought to return to a natural state of being, one in which the individual would seek truth in his own heart, and not in the political and religious conventions of the day. But to achieve this perfect world, both politically and personally, things would have to get worse before they got better; and aside from this prevailing spirit of hope and optimism, the era now dubbed the 'Romantic' period was dogged by wars, poverty and disease. None of these would feature in today's interpretation of the word 'romantic', so how did the term come about?

The word itself derives from the Old French word 'romanz' and refers to the many stories of heroism, chivalry and passion – the romances – of medieval times. These were written in such languages as French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese – languages which grew out of Latin and therefore came to be termed the 'romance' languages. It is the extremes of emotion contained in these stories that led to our modern definition of the word 'romantic', and that are key qualities of Romantic music.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people lived in deference to either the Church or the State, and major advances in the fields of physics, astronomy, biology and medicine resulted in a belief that the world could be fully explained by science and reason. Society had a highly regulated and ordered quality, against which people eventually started to rebel. Artists began to look beyond the well-established strict rules of form in order to express themselves. In the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, painters, writers and musicians began to find inspiration in the art of medieval times, responding to the heightened emotion contained in the romances, and the tragic songs of 'courtly love' performed by the troubadours in medieval France. The German Romantic writer Goethe wrote books in a medieval, Gothic vein, and they proved hugely influential over the next

hundred years. *Faust*, perhaps the most famous of all his works, tells the story of a man so hopelessly in love with a woman that he sells his soul to the Devil to have his love reciprocated, if only for a short time. This story was the subject of several operas and oratorios by Romantic composers, such as Gounod, Liszt and Berlioz. There was also a renewed surge of interest in the plays of Shakespeare, whose plots involving love, nature and magic appealed very much to the Romantic spirit.

Composers in particular, searching for ways to express this heightened emotion, delved deep into their inner selves and made musical discoveries which they experienced in almost religious terms. Beethoven believed that music was 'a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy' and Rossini claimed that music was 'a sublime art which moves the earthly passions with celestial harmony'. In exploring their own emotions, composers were developing a sense that they were a channel through which something divine was flowing. This belief in the importance of the individual was typical of society's fast-changing viewpoint. The common man had for too long toiled away for the glory of the State: it was now time to glorify his own rights and traditions. Thus there was a renewed interest in traditional peasant folk culture, which led to a strengthening of national identity throughout Europe.

A deep love of nature became very fashionable. Many young men who went on the Grand Tour (the eighteenth-century equivalent of a gap year) found they were less interested by the measured and calculated splendour of the classical Italian cities they visited, than by the mysterious, wild and unknowable beauty of the Alps which they traversed en route. As we shall see in later chapters, nature featured strongly as a source of inspiration in nineteenth-century music.

Aside from the elements mentioned above, Romantic composers, breaking away from the formal strictures of the preceding 'Classical' period, sought to develop the existing genres and invent new ones. Symphonies, concertos and operas grew in size and stature, as did the orchestras (and singers) that performed them. Yet the Romantic era was not just about everything becoming bigger. It was an age of extremes, and a tiny chamber work of quiet, aching intensity is just as characteristic of the period as an epic symphonic work. 'Programme

music' (music that tells a story or paints a picture) was an important new genre and led to the development of the symphonic poem, which will be explored later. Often inspired by a composer's love of nature or of another person, programme music was the perfect vehicle for Romantic expression. Moreover, Romantic composers often sought to unify their works in a variety of different ways, sometimes by having the same theme or melody throughout the different movements of a symphony, or at other times by linking movements together so that a whole work is played without a break.

It is not possible to give a comprehensive and exhaustive list of qualities contained in music of the Romantic period: each composer's personal journey led to many contradictory trends and to many clashes of artistic opinion. Perhaps the defining quality is a break from the formal conventions of the eighteenth century. But when we come to explore the music, we can be sure to find passion and intense emotion, as well as an obsession with nature, folk traditions, nationalist fervour and many manifestations of the individual's self-expression.

The Rise of Romanticism

Artists have been regarded with suspicion throughout history. Back in the fourth century B.C., Plato claimed that 'art is subversive to the State'. Even today, a similar attitude prevails: many people would regard the winning artworks of the UK's annual Turner Prize (named after one of the greatest Romantic painters) as unrepresentative of the high moral fibre of good and decent society. However, as the Romantic era dawned, and the individual became increasingly empowered, artists were at least able to do something about their social position. They had traditionally been thought of as merely craftsmen or artisans whose job it was to create art or music for the benefit of the Church or the State. By the end of the eighteenth century, they were beginning to see themselves as geniuses with a rare talent. When Haydn entered the service of Prince Esterházy as a court composer in the 1760s, his fame was primarily due to his association with the Prince: by the time of his death in 1809, the Esterházy court was famous due to its connection with Haydn.

Haydn, however, was a Classical composer: the Romantic era of music began two or three

decades later than that of literature and philosophy. A German writer called F.M. Klinger published a play in 1777 called *Sturm und Drang* ('Storm and Stress') after which an early Romantic artistic movement was named. This movement encompassed subjectivity, enthusiasm for nature, rebellion against accepted standards and a full rein to emotional expression. 'Sturm und Drang' was more influential on the literary than the musical scene. Haydn did write a series of symphonies which later became known as the 'Sturm und Drang' symphonies but, despite the use of minor keys and the odd dramatic effect, these works really remain firmly within the eighteenth-century Classical tradition.

The writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was one of the first key figures in Romantic thought. He opposed the rule of reason, believing in an order based not on intellect but on the truth of nature. Over the course of several decades the seat of European philosophical thought shifted from France to Germany, where many increasingly impenetrable books and treatises on philosophy were written that built on Rousseau's theories. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was one such writer. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* he argued that, contrary to the views of Sir Isaac Newton in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, scientific exploration only served to reveal how mysterious and unfathomable the world actually is. His core message, put extremely simply, was that you should act as you would like others to act. Such views shook the hierarchical establishment of eighteenth-century society, which, combined with a growing unease amongst the lower and middle classes, led eventually to civil unrest.

The American Revolution, which culminated in the Declaration of Independence from British Rule in 1783, proved that rebellion against the establishment could be successful. [See *Panel 1.*] And nowhere did this message strike a stronger chord than in France, where the aristocratic classes were ruling the country like feudal lords, levying crippling taxes on an increasingly disenchanted and deprived peasant class. Emboldened by contemporary thought, which was embodied in the works of writers such as Rousseau, the middle classes revolted, and on 14 July 1789 the storming of the Bastille heralded the start of the French Revolution. However, change was not as everyone had expected. The King and Queen were deposed and eventually executed, and there followed the years of terror, during which large numbers met

Panel 1

From The Declaration of Independence

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. —That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. —Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain [George III] is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

their destiny at the hands, or rather the blade, of Madame Guillotine. New hope came with the appointment of a more moderate regime, and the young general Napoleon Bonaparte rose through the ranks of the army, determined to realise his Romantic ideals of uniting France and establishing both social and legal equality throughout the country. However, as his power increased so did his political ambition – and his ego. He invaded country after country, placing his friends and family in positions of political power, only to be stopped – first in Moscow in 1812 (a Russian victory commemorated seventy years later by Tchaikovsky in his '1812' Overture), then at Leipzig by the Russians, Austrians and Prussians, and later at Waterloo by the British. He lived his last years in exile on the island of St Helena and died in 1821, leaving France with a legacy of further volatile decades. Napoleon demonstrated how the rise of the individual – the Romantic ideal – could become misdirected and destructive. He was motivated by a worthy dream, and in many ways he did achieve much that was beneficial to the citizens of France; but his ruthless political ambition and ultimate failure left the French unsure about the benefits of pursuing the revolutionary values he stood for. This may go some way to explaining why French music, with a few notable exceptions, was rather conservative for much of the nineteenth century and did not make a vast mark on musical history. In spite of this, it is difficult to overstate the wide-ranging influence Napoleon had on the course of history: his example provided inspiration to revolutionaries all over the world, such as the great liberator Simón Bolívar (who freed much of South America from Spanish colonial rule) and arguably the greatest-ever musical revolutionary: Ludwig van Beethoven.

II. A Musical Revolution



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

*“Keep your eyes on him; some day he will give
the world something to talk about”*

W.A. Mozart, speaking of Beethoven in 1787

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Beethoven was born in Bonn in 1770. His father was a second-rate court musician, and a temperamental alcoholic who was bitterly disappointed by the fact that his musical career would never rise above the level of mediocrity. He obsessively laid all his lost hopes of musical greatness onto Ludwig, forcing him to practise the piano at all hours of the day and night. This did not make growing up in the Beethoven household easy; but, as they say, every cloud has a silver lining, and possibly this harsh and sometimes frightening upbringing was responsible to some extent for the development of Beethoven's extraordinary drive, determination and perfectionism.

At the age of twenty-two Beethoven moved to Vienna, where he established himself as a pianist and composer. He took composition lessons from Haydn (from whom he later claimed to have learned nothing) and frequently entered the virtuoso piano competitions which were very popular at the time. He almost always won these, and the established Viennese virtuosos were astounded by the talents of this young unknown musician from a provincial backwater.

One of the most remarkable facts about Beethoven is his deafness. The devastating effect it had on him is made clear in a letter, written to his brothers in 1802 and now referred to as the Heiligenstadt Testament (named after the spa town where he was staying when he wrote it), which hints that it had led him to contemplate suicide. [See *Panel 2*.] He first became aware of degenerative hearing problems in the late 1790s, and by 1816 he was profoundly deaf. How could a composer produce such ground-breaking music without the one sense that was most important to him? It could be that his enforced detachment from the world of sound encouraged his musical imagination to run wild, leading him to revolutionise the artform.

From the very start of his career, Beethoven had deliberately set out to expand the boundaries of the hitherto unchallenged musical conventions of the eighteenth century. His Piano Sonata, Op. 26 (1800–1) opens with an *Andante* theme and variations (instead of the standard brisk and energetic *Allegro*), normally reserved for second movements. This may not seem outrageous today, but to contemporary audiences it would have seemed like the

Panel 2

Beethoven's 'Heiligenstadt' Testament

Oh ye men, who consider me to be hostile, obstinate or misanthropic, how unjust you are to me, for you do not know the secret cause of that which makes me seem so to you. My heart and my soul, since my childhood, have ever been filled with tender feelings of good will: I was even ready to perform great deeds. But consider that for six years now I have been afflicted with an incurable condition, made worse by incompetent physicians, deceived for year after year by the hope of an improvement and now obliged to face the prospect of a permanent disability, the healing of which may take years or may even prove to be quite impossible. Born with an ardent, lively temperament, and also inclined to the distractions of society, I was, at an early age, obliged to seclude myself and to live my life in solitude. If, once in a while, I attempted to ignore all this, oh how harshly would I be driven back by the doubly sad experience of my bad hearing; yet it was not possible for me to say: speak louder, shout, for I am deaf. Alas, how would it be possible for me to admit to a weakness of the one sense that should be perfect to a higher degree in me than in others, the one sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, a perfection that few others of my profession have ever possessed. No, I cannot do it. So forgive me if you see me draw back from your company which I would so gladly share. My misfortune is doubly hard to bear, inasmuch as I will be misunderstood. For me there can be no recreation in the society of others, no intelligent conversation, no mutual exchange of ideas; only as much as is required by the most pressing needs can I venture into society. I am obliged to live like an outcast. If I venture into the company of men, I am overcome by a burning terror, inasmuch as I fear to find myself in the danger of allowing my condition to be noticed. What humiliation when someone standing next to me could hear from a distance the sound of a flute whereas I heard nothing. Or, someone could hear the shepherd singing, and that also I did not hear. Such experience brought me near to despair. It would have needed little for me to put an end to my life. It was art only that held me back. Ah, it seemed to me to be impossible to leave the world before I had brought forth all that I felt destined to bring forth. Almighty God, Thou lookest down into my innermost being; Thou knowest that the love of mankind and the desire to do good dwell therein. Oh men, when you once shall read this, reflect then that you have wronged me. You, my brothers, as soon as I am dead, if Professor Schmidt be still alive, request him in my name to describe my malady, and let him attach this written document to the report of my ailment, so that, as far as possible, the world may be reconciled with me after my death.

musical equivalent of serving the main course before the starter. In other early piano sonatas, he wrote four movements instead of the usual three, which resembled the structure of a symphony, not a sonata. His first two symphonies (written in 1800 and 1802 respectively) sound conventional today, but when they were first performed critics attacked the heaviness of the orchestration, where increased importance was given to the wind instruments.

But those who had been surprised by the sound of the first two symphonies must have been open-mouthed as they listened to the Third. Beethoven originally dedicated his Third Symphony (written in 1804) to Napoleon, who until then had been fighting tirelessly for the rights of the common man. However, when Napoleon declared himself Emperor, Beethoven was so infuriated that he ripped out the title page containing the dedication and renamed the symphony 'Eroica' ('Heroic'), by which name it is known today. At over forty-five minutes, the 'Eroica' added almost a third onto the duration of any previous symphony. The drive, energy and dramatic climaxes heard in the first movement (**CD 1, track 1**) were unprecedented in symphonic writing. In the middle of this movement there is a section of forty-five seconds (beginning 7'58") in which the rhythm is thrown into such confusion that the listener loses all sense of where the beat lies. At 10'58" Beethoven plays a musical joke, giving the horn a false entry, as if the player has lost his way and come in too early. None of the techniques used in this symphony are absolutely new, but never before had they been used on such a scale. Other elements in the work, such as the emotional intensity of the second movement, broke the boundaries of symphonic writing, and as such the 'Eroica' Symphony heralded the start of Romanticism in music. Two hundred years after the event, it is difficult to understand how challenging this work was to a contemporary audience; but despite the fact that its premiere left even his most loyal supporters wondering if he had not gone one step too far, Beethoven never had any problems finding artistic patrons to fund his endeavours. Throughout his life, he regularly received generous amounts of money from such illustrious supporters as the Princes Lichnowsky, Kinsky and Lobkowitz, Archduke Rudolf and Count Andreas Razumovsky (to whom Beethoven dedicated three of his best-loved string quartets).

Beethoven continued to develop and innovate the symphony throughout his career. The

famous opening motive of the Fifth, representing 'fate knocking', appears throughout the symphony providing thematic unity between the movements. This was a new idea, and one which was to assume great importance over the course of the nineteenth century. The Sixth Symphony (the 'Pastoral') was the first important example of programme music – music inspired by a non-musical idea. Each movement was given a programmatic title (e.g. 'the awakening of happy feelings upon arriving in the country'), mostly deriving from a typically Romantic appreciation of nature, and Beethoven's evocative score developed the symphony in yet another new direction. In 1824 Beethoven wrote his final, Ninth symphony, which lasts over an hour and contains a triumphant choral setting of Schiller's *Ode to Joy* in the last movement. By this time he had established such a monumental prototype for the Romantic symphonic cycle that many composers spent years of their careers feeling too intimidated to even try to build upon it.

Beethoven's music was not merely about expansive scale and the grand gesture. Although he loved to demonstrate his breathtaking pianistic skills, he tended not to write ostentatious solo parts in his own concertos. Though often technically demanding for the soloist, Beethoven's concertos for piano (forming the bulk of his concerto output) are more like symphonic dialogues between soloist and orchestra, rather than the showy virtuoso solo pieces with orchestral accompaniment that typified the contemporary trend for concerto writing. Like the majority of his music, Beethoven's concertos concentrated more on an internalised rather than a more frivolous externalised mode of expression.

By 1816, as well as being profoundly deaf, Beethoven was suffering from chronic abdominal complaints. His behaviour became erratic, leading some to believe he had gone mad. His brother Caspar Carl had recently died, leaving a wife and son. For five years, Beethoven tried, ultimately unsuccessfully, to gain legal custody of his nephew Karl, as he felt (unfairly it would seem) that his sister-in-law was unfit to be a mother. This bitter and obsessive struggle was damaging to both uncle and nephew, and led to Karl making an unsuccessful suicide attempt. From this point Beethoven's health deteriorated steadily until he died in 1827, aged fifty-seven.

Beethoven was by all accounts a temperamental and difficult man; but those who knew

him well also described his generous, kind and exuberant nature, which can be heard in so much of his music. He never married, tending to fall regularly for unavailable women, often members of the aristocracy. His deafness, abdominal complaints and turbulent relationship with his nephew and sister-in-law made his latter years deeply troubled. Yet the music of this period does not seem to betray any of these difficulties, being imbued instead with a heightened sense of spiritual awareness which is often difficult to fathom, especially in the case of his late string quartets. Beethoven undoubtedly was the composer who bridged the Classical and Romantic periods. The question of whether he should be thought of as a Romantic or primarily a transitional composer is a controversial one. However, considering the visionary and radical musical advances that he made, along with the great emotional power and depths of his music, there is a very strong argument to suggest that he was indeed a true Romantic.

This is the introductory chapter of Discover Music of the Romantic Era.
The full booklet, illustrated with photographs and accompanied by two CDs,
is available to buy from www.naxos.com.