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**David McCleery**

# *Discover*

**MUSIC OF THE ROMANTIC ERA**

Read by **Jeremy Siepmann**



**With more  
than 20 music  
tracks**

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*All music tracks are in bold type.*

1	Chapter 1: The Dawn of the Romantic Era	7:35
2	The Rise of Romanticism	6:56
3	Chapter 2: A Musical Revolution	5:44
4	<b>Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 ‘Eroica’ (Mvt 1: Allegro con brio) (excerpt)</b>	8:11
	Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia; Béla Drahos	Naxos 8.553475
5	200 years after the event, it is difficult to understand...	4:59
6	Chapter 3: A Radical New Musical Language	6:09
7	<b>Berlioz: Symphonie fantastique (Mvt 4: ‘March to the Scaffold’)</b>	4:57
	San Diego Symphony Orchestra; Yoav Talmi	Naxos 8.553597
8	One of Berlioz’s greatest legacies...	8:26
9	<b>Liszt: Piano Concerto No. 1 (Mvt 1: Allegro maestoso – Tempo giusto)</b>	5:19
	Joseph Banowetz, piano; Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Oliver Dohnányi	Naxos 8.550187
10	As Liszt grew older...	6:54
11	<b>Chopin: Polonaise in D minor, Op. 71 No. 1</b>	6:11
	Idil Biret, piano	Naxos 8.554535

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12	Chapter 4: The Classical Romantics	4:17
13	<b>Schubert: Gretchen am Spinnrade</b> Lynda Russell, soprano; Peter Hill, piano	3:19 Naxos 8.553113
14	His late, epic song-cycle <i>Die Winterreise</i> ...	0:30
15	When Schubert left the Stadtkonvikt...	5:05
16	<b>Mendelssohn: The Hebrides</b> Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra; Anthony Bramall	10:57 Naxos 8.554433
17	In 1835 Mendelssohn moved to Leipzig...	8:23
18	<b>Schumann: Piano Quintet in E flat (Mvt 4: Allegro, ma non troppo)</b> Jenő Jandó; Kodály Quartet	7:11 Naxos 8.550406
19	In addition to being a composer...	7:58
20	<b>Brahms: Intermezzo in A, Op. 118 No. 2</b> Idil Biret, piano	5:19 Naxos 8.550354
21	Chapter 5: Opera in the 19th Century	1:09
22	Italian Opera	1:55

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- 23 **Rossini: 'Nacqui all'affanno e al pianto' from La Cenerentola** 7:48  
Ewa Podles; Hungarian State Opera Chorus; Hungarian State Opera Orchestra;  
Pier Giorgio Morandi Naxos 8.554682
- 24 In 1815 Rossini moved to Naples... 3:31
- 25 **Donizetti: 'Spargi d'amaro pianto' from Lucia di Lamermoor** 4:01  
Luba Orgonasova, soprano; Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Will Humburg Naxos 8.550605
- 26 Without any shadow of a doubt... 5:04
- 27 **Verdi: 'È lui... Dio che nell'alma infondere' from Don Carlos** 7:31  
Giacomo Aragall, tenor; Eduard Tumuljan, baritone;  
Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Alexander Rahbari Naxos 8.555797
- 28 In Verdi's last two operas... 1:11
- 29 German Opera 9:18
- 30 **Wagner: Prelude to Tristan and Isolde** 8:49  
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Johannes Wildner Naxos 8.550498
- 31 As Verdi had unpredictably written a comic opera... 2:13
- 32 Chapter 6: The Nationalists 3:03

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|-----------|---|----------------|
| <b>33</b> | <b>Glinka: Kamarinskaya</b>   | 6:18           |
|           | Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Anthony Bramall                                | Naxos 8.550085 |
| <b>34</b> | Glinka was the inspiration for a new generation...                              | 3:20           |
| <b>35</b> | <b>Borodin: Symphony No. 2 (Mvt 1: Allegro)</b>                                 | 6:57           |
|           | Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Stephen Gunzenhauser                           | Naxos 8.550238 |
| <b>36</b> | Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)...  | 6:16           |
| <b>37</b> | <b>Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 ‘Pathétique’<br/>(Mvt 2: Allegro con grazia)</b> | 8:40           |
|           | Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Antoni Wit                            | Naxos 8.550782 |
| <b>38</b> | This was the work that Tchaikovsky loved...                                     | 2:59           |
| <b>39</b> | Bohemia   | 4:43           |
| <b>40</b> | <b>Smetana: ‘Vltava’ from Má vlast</b>  | 13:21          |
|           | Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Antoni Wit                            | Naxos 8.550931 |
| <b>41</b> | When Smetana was appointed music director...                                    | 3:15           |
| <b>42</b> | <b>Dvořák: Slavonic Dance in C, Op. 46 No. 1</b>                                | 3:50           |
|           | Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra; Zdeněk Košler                                    | Naxos 8.550143 |

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43	Dvorak's growing reputation led to an invitation...	3:07
44	Moving West	3:58
45	<b>Fauré: Romance in B flat for violin and piano</b> Dong-Suk Kang, violin; Pascal Devoyon, piano	5:39 Naxos 8.550906
46	From 1896 Fauré was Professor at the Paris Conservatoire...	1:37
47	<b>Grieg: 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' from Peer Gynt</b> BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra; Jerzy Maksymiuk	2:38 Naxos 8.554050
48	Elsewhere in Scandinavia...	1:43
59	Chapter 7: The Epic Austrian Symphonists	9:11
50	<b>Mahler: Symphony No. 1 'Titan'</b> <b>(Mvt 3: Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen)</b> Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Michael Halász	10:06 Naxos 8.550522
51	In addition to composing...	3:33
52	Chapter 8: The End of Romanticism	6:17
53	Equally Romantic was the Italian composer, Giacomo Puccini...	5:28

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<b>54</b>	<b>Rachmaninov: Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3 No. 2</b>	4:43
	Idil Biret, piano	Naxos 8.550348
<b>55</b>	In any overview of 19th-century music...	1:58
<b>56</b>	<b>Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations (Var. 9: Nimrod)</b>	3:36
	Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; George Hurst	Naxos 8.553564
<b>57</b>	The wistful melody and predominance of the strings...	1:31
<b>58</b>	Into a New Age...	2:48

**Total time: 5:08:01**

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David McCleery

# Discover

## MUSIC OF THE ROMANTIC ERA

If the Romantics were larger than life it was no coincidence. They affected to be giants even when they were not. Tackling epic subjects at sometimes inordinate length, and using forces that would later make Hollywood look stingy, they were often obsessed with heroism and were prone to regard themselves as heroes (Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* – 'A Hero's Life' – is unabashedly autobiographical). In the Romantic era, however, as in any other, authentic giants were rare. But they changed the world. They also, of course, reflected it.

As the 19th century got underway, the world was changing rapidly, and not only in Europe. The United States was growing fast, the British Empire was expanding eastwards, the Industrial Revolution, born in the England of the 1780s, was transforming society at a rate without

precedent. As men acquired powers hitherto regarded as the province of the Almighty, religion itself began to be called into question. With the Machine Age came increased prosperity, and an increasing population. Parallel to the Industrial Revolution was a new, commercial revolution. Trade between Europe and Africa, Asia and the Americas expanded dramatically. Communications spiralled outwards and upwards, new roads, the growth of railways, the invention of telegraphy, all introduced a new variety into everyday life. In every corner of the world mankind was in the ascendant.

The clear-cut stratifications of 18th-century European society, well-suited to the prevailing logic and principled objectivity of the Enlightenment, with its reverence for design and order, were increasingly supplanted by a new fluidity.

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Social control was passing inexorably from a long-dominant aristocracy to a rapidly increasing and prosperous middle class. And as music had been an adornment of the ruling classes, so it now became cultivated by the rising bourgeoisie as a symbol of genteel prosperity. Decreasingly the emblem of a controlling power, it became a potent source of individual expression. As the 19th century advanced, so the cult of the hero gained ground. The Romantic ego became colossal. As humanity increasingly usurped the prerogatives of God, the concept of the one against the many emboldened the previously oppressed. Subject nations threw off their shackles, or suffered grievously in the attempt, hence the wave of political revolutions that rocked Europe.

If the names of Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Rachmaninov still resonate today it is not merely because they were geniuses but because they dealt with and communicated human truths which are eternal. The Romantics, however, were by no means unique in their preoccupation

with emotion. Music has always been first and foremost a language of emotion. They were unique, however, in making it in many ways the principal cornerstone of their compositions.

Formless music hardly exists. But for many centuries form and emotion were equal partners. Preconceived structures became established vehicles for emotional expression, and many musical devices emerged carrying specific emotional associations. These provided composers with something approaching a standardised emotional vocabulary. Of the standard structures (or rather formal concepts) of Western classical music, none has proved more intrinsically expressive, or more dramatically powerful, than the so-called 'sonata form' that in many ways dominated music from the mid-18th century right into the 20th. This, however, relied heavily on repetition and a certain overall predictability which offended many Romantic sensibilities.

Music in the Classical era (c. 1750–1830) was based on preconceived notions of order, proportion and grace. Beauty and symmetry of form were objects of

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worship in themselves and combined to create a Utopian image, an idealisation of universal experience. In the Romantic Era (c.1830–1914) this was largely replaced by a cult of individual expression, the crystallisation of the experience of the moment, the unfettered confession of powerful emotions and primal urges, the glorification of sensuality, a flirtation with the supernatural, an emphasis on spontaneity and improvisation, and above all, perhaps, the cultivation of extremes – emotional, sensual, spiritual and structural. Where a near-reverence for symmetry had characterised the Classical era, Romanticism delighted in asymmetry. And if there was a rebellion against the tenets of the recent past, there was an almost ritualised nostalgia for the distant past and in many cases an obsession with literature and descriptive imagery.

Form was no longer seen primarily as a receptacle but as a by-product of emotion, to be generated from within. While the great Romantic painters covered their canvases with grandiose landscapes, lavish depictions of atmospheric ruins, historical scenes, portraits of legendary heroes and

so on, the great Romantic composers attempted similar representations in sound – but with a difference. Just as musical figures had once come to symbolise specific emotions, so notes, rhythms, tone colours and melodic fragments now became consciously related to specific ideas, to characters and their development. Music took on an illustrative function to a degree never previously attempted. Instrumental music increasingly took on characteristics of opera, becoming not only dramatic but overtly narrative in character. In its cultivation and transformations of folk music, it became an agent of a nationalism that fired the souls of composers great and small on both sides of the Atlantic. And in the music dramas of Wagner, for which he wrote both words and music, all arts merge into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

A further feature of the Romantic imagination, as noted above, was a taste for extravagance. Grand opera, particularly in Paris, anticipated the Biblical spectaculars of Hollywood, and in the symphonic works of Berlioz, Strauss, Mahler, Bruckner and the pre-

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revolutionary Schoenberg, orchestras, and symphonies, assumed gargantuan proportions. Meanwhile, the 19th-century oratorio tradition in England and Germany resulted in choruses not only of hundreds but of thousands. As David McCleery emphasises, however, the Romantic era was one of extremes, and equal care and passion was lavished on the smaller forms: the piano miniature, the character piece, the accompanied song. With its variety, its rampant individuality, its focus on feeling and drama, and its often notable disdain for tradition, the age is difficult to pigeonhole. What unifies it most, perhaps, is its spirit of boundless adventure.

### **Notes by Jeremy Siepmann**

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**David McCleery** studied music at Manchester University before embarking on a career in arts administration. After various jobs with orchestras, artists' agencies and festivals, he joined Chester Music and Novello music publishers where he developed a keen interest in working with composers, including John Tavener, Richard Rodney Bennett and Thea Musgrave. That interest continues today, although he has moved to the field of media music and works for a management company for film and television composers. When time permits, he undertakes freelance writing projects. For Naxos, he has written *A Portrait of John Tavener*, as well as the Romantic and Twentieth-Century editions of the 'Discover' series.

**Jeremy Siepmann** has contributed articles, reviews and interviews to numerous journals and reference works (including *New Statesman*, *The Musical Times*, *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*), some of them being reprinted in book form (Oxford University Press, Robson Books). His books include three biographies for Naxos Books (Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky), a widely acclaimed biography of Chopin (*The Reluctant Romantic*, Gollancz/Northeastern University Press, 1995) and a biography of Brahms (Everyman/EMI, 1997). His career as a broadcaster began in New York in 1963 with an East Coast radio series on the life and work of Mozart, described by Alistair Cooke as 'the best music program on American radio'. He has devised, written, and presented more than 1,000 programmes, including the international award-winning series *The Elements of Music*. He has written and read the entire 'Life and Works' series For Naxos AudioBooks.

## **Credits**

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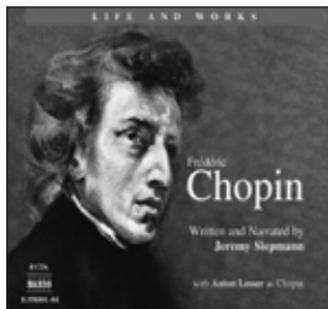
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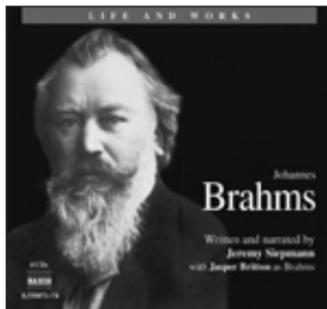
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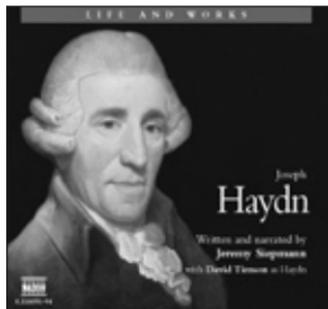
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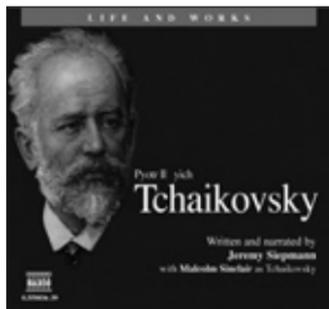
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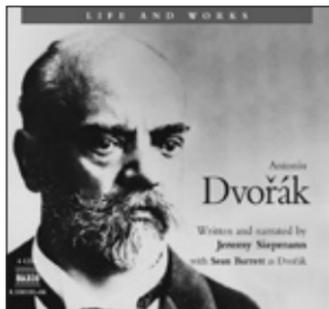
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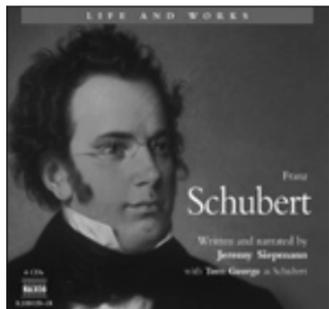
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David McCleery

# Discover

## MUSIC OF THE ROMANTIC ERA

Read by **Jeremy Siepmann**

Amidst a background of wars and revolution, the 19th century produced many of the world's best-loved composers. Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and Tchaikovsky are just some of the many familiar names whose music was shaped by the events of the period: *Discover Music of the Romantic Era* charts the course of music through these turbulent but exhilarating times. This light-hearted but authoritative audiobook tells the fascinating, often scandalous, life-stories of the 19th century's greatest composers.

**Jeremy Siepmann** has contributed articles, reviews and interviews to numerous journals and reference works (including *The Musical Times*, *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*). He has written biographies on Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky for Naxos Books and he has written and read the entire 'Life and Works' series for Naxos AudioBooks.

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