



The Romantic Generation (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures)

By Charles Rosen

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What Charles Rosen's celebrated book *The Classical Style* did for music of the Classical period, this new, much-awaited volume brilliantly does for the Romantic era. An exhilarating exploration of the musical language, forms, and styles of the Romantic period, it captures the spirit that enlivened a generation of composers and musicians, and in doing so it conveys the very sense of Romantic music. In readings uniquely informed by his performing experience, Rosen offers consistently acute and thoroughly engaging analyses of works by Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Bellini, Liszt, and Berlioz, and he presents a new view of Chopin as a master of polyphony and large-scale form. He adeptly integrates his observations on the music with reflections on the art, literature, drama, and philosophy of the time, and thus shows us the major figures of Romantic music within their intellectual and cultural context.

Rosen covers a remarkably broad range of music history and considers the importance to nineteenth-century music of other cultural developments: the art of landscape, a changed approach to the sacred, the literary fragment as a Romantic art form. He sheds new light on the musical sensibilities of each composer, studies the important genres from nocturnes and songs to symphonies and operas, explains musical principles such as the relation between a musical idea and its realization in sound and the interplay between music and text, and traces the origins of musical ideas prevalent in the Romantic period. Rich with striking descriptions and telling analogies, Rosen's overview of Romantic music is an accomplishment without parallel in the literature, a consummate performance by a master pianist and music historian.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

This is not a book for musical wimps. It is thick, densely written and profusely illustrated with musical examples of the things Rosen, a well-known concert pianist as well as author and lecturer, writes about: the music of the Romantic period, particularly as exemplified by Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Bellini, and Schubert, in the light of their times. It is also highly rewarding if you can make it all the way through. Because it can be difficult to write adequately about music, it is especially felicitous that Rosen has chosen to append a 74-minute CD that demonstrates some of his points. This is a companion volume to his 1970 work, *The Classical Style*.

From Library Journal

This logical and long-awaited sequel to Rosen's award-winning *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (LJ 5/15/71) once again demonstrates the author's extraordinary insights. Rosen explains and describes the first half of the 19th century in conjunction with literature, art, and social changes; for example, he compares the content and format of early 19th-century poetry with the smaller contemporary musical forms. Rosen also examines the lives of the composers and pursues some detailed analysis of numerous compositions to make his points. The result is a fresh, challenging, and stimulating view of the society in which Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, and Schumann flourished. Highly recommended.

Timothy J. McGee, Univ. of Toronto

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From [Booklist](#)

Pianist and professor Rosen helps us understand the harmonic and rhythmic variety and the virtuosity required of performers that make romantic music appeal to so many. The music of the classical period--of Haydn, Beethoven, and early Schubert--markedly adhered to formal structures of rhythm, pitch, and organization. Composers of romantic music relaxed that conformity and added tone color. Romantic music was composed of fragments, of the smallest phrases that could stand complete and isolated, but it also attempted to create a coherent world not dependent on reality. Rosen covers the development of romantic music, beginning with Schubert's invention of the song cycle, continuing with the piano music of Chopin and Liszt, looking at the religious "kitsch" of Mendelssohn, proceeding to the instrumental and choral works of Berlioz and the operas of Meyerbeer and Bellini, and ending with the piano and chamber music of Schumann. Long on analysis of significant musical examples (728 accompany the text) and short on summary comments on the nature of romantic music, this is a worthy fellow to Rosen's prizewinning *Classical Style* (1980). *Alan Hirsch*

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