

# *Romantic Music*

Discovering the Romantic Period through Chopin and Schumann

## **Teacher Resource Kit**



Cross-curricular Lessons and Activities

Grades 2—5

**Boston Philharmonic**

**“Crescendo!” Outreach Program**

[www.bostonphil.org](http://www.bostonphil.org)

Dear Educator,

**T**he Boston Philharmonic believes that classical music can be enjoyed at any age, and it is never too early to begin learning. We are committed to providing opportunities and tools for our community, helping to create a personal connection to classical music. As part of our vision to make music accessible to everyone, we have developed guides and activities that will engage children and provide resources for teachers at a time when many public school districts are forced to cut music programs from the curriculum. Elementary school teachers can click on our study guides for activities to incorporate into their classrooms, or parents can explore the music together with their children. We hope you will enjoy learning more!

Sincerely,

The BPO “Crescendo!” Team

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# *What is Romantic Music?*



The term “**Romantic**” comes from the word “romance.” A romance is an emotional attachment, which can often involve feelings of love between two people. During the 1800s in Europe, an artistic style based on these kinds of intense feelings became popular.



In art and especially music, people were seeking to express themselves as truthfully as possible. A painter would paint a scene from his favorite meadow and hope that by looking at the painting, you could feel the same peace and beauty that the painter felt about that particular place.

Composers started to write music that touched the audience’s emotions, trying to communicate feelings of joy, sadness, defeat, celebration, heartbreak, wonder, and many more.





The scene above is missing a lot of information.

Who is on the ship?

Where are the sails?

What's the weather like?

What could be under the water?

Where is the ship heading?

Add details to the scene, and try to answer the question: What is about to happen here?

Like a Romantic composer, you should try to express a specific emotion. Is this a happy scene, or frightening?

A story of success or failure? Use your imagination to complete the scene, so that it shows what you feel.

# Composer Biography

Fun Fact: Although Chopin did not spend much time in Poland, he loved his native country. Chopin carried around a vase filled with soil from Poland wherever he traveled, and when he died the soil was scattered over his grave in Paris.



**Frédéric Chopin** (1810—1849) was a composer from Poland during the Romantic period. Like many of the great composers, Chopin showed a talent for music at an early age. He learned how to play the **piano** at age six, the next year he published his first piece of music, and by the time he was eight Chopin had performed in his first public concert.

Chopin spent most of his life living in Paris, where he achieved great success as a composer. Chopin did not give many public concerts as an adult, because he preferred to perform for smaller gatherings hosted by friends, which were known as **salons**. Chopin's music was still valued by the public, and it is widely performed all over the world.

# Composer Biography



Fun Fact: Schumann was born in the same year as Chopin. The two pieces of music featured in this study guide were written within ten years of each other.

**Robert Schumann** (1810—1856) was a composer from Germany during the Romantic period. Schumann was born in the same year as Chopin, and he spoke highly of Chopin's work when both men became famous composers. Schumann wanted to study the piano, but a hand injury that he suffered at age 22 left him unable to play the piano at a high level.

Instead, Schumann turned his attention to composing music and writing scholarly articles. Schumann's wife Clara, who was an excellent pianist, was often a **muse** for her husband, which is a word meaning a great source of inspiration for his work. Clara also performed Robert's music at concerts in Germany and Russia.

# *The Salon*



In this 1887 painting by Henryk Siemiradzki, Chopin is shown playing the piano at a salon in Berlin, Germany. Chopin preferred to perform for small groups like this one, instead of in large concert halls.

A salon is a type of gathering that was popular during the Romantic period. The host, often a wealthy artist, intellectual, or political leader, invited several friends to get together and have interesting discussions. More than just a party, the salon was a time to discuss serious topics such as art, philosophy, and other complicated ideas without the pressure of being in a classroom.

Everyone had a good time socializing and listening to music, but there was also the expectation that one could become more educated and sophisticated by having deep conversations in a relaxed setting.

**If you were hosting a salon for your friends, what would it be like? What kind of music would you play? What would you talk about?**

## Chopin's "Raindrop" *Prelude No. 15*

A **prelude** is a short piece of music, often performed as the introduction to a larger **composition**. However, especially during the Romantic period, composers wrote preludes that were meant to stand on their own. Chopin published a set of 24 preludes in 1839, and the longest one, *No. 15*, is commonly referred to as the "Raindrop" Prelude. Although Chopin did not give it this title, many people feel like they are hearing raindrops when they listen to the piece. See if the repeated notes remind you of the steady fall of raindrops, or of something else.



In fact, the female artist George Sand wrote that Chopin composed *Prelude No. 15* during a rainstorm while they were vacationing on an island off the coast of Spain. But Chopin denied that he was imitating the sound of raindrops falling on their house. A true Romantic composer, Chopin said that the music came from within himself, from the sounds of nature that already filled his mind at all times.

## Schumann's "The Happy Farmer"

Schumann's family greatly influenced his work. His wife Clara was a talented piano player, and she performed many of his compositions. Schumann's three daughters, whose names were Marie, Elise, and Julie, were also a source of inspiration. In 1848, Schumann wrote a collection of piano music called *Album für die Jugend* (*Album for the Young*), which he dedicated to his daughters. The collection is made up of 42 pieces for solo piano, the first 18 of which are intended for children to be able to play.



A coffee farmer works in Brazil.

"The Happy Farmer," the tenth piece in Schumann's *Album für die Jugend*, suggests a specific image to the listener. The happiness of the farmer mentioned in the title is expressed through the melody of the piece, which is meant to sound upbeat and remind the listener of a happy farmer returning from work. A piece of music like this is called a **character piece**, because it is about a particular character. Only about a minute long, "The Happy Farmer" lasts just long enough to put the image of the farmer in your head, leaving you to fill in the other details.

# Romantic Music Vocabulary

Artists during the Romantic Period were always searching for just the right words to express themselves. See if you can find all of the words from the list below, which were all featured in **bold** in this study guide. Some of them are backwards!

E Q L M S S G L B V P N R X M  
Y C H N A Q Y M Y Z I O M D D  
A O E L P B P X O H A I Q A R  
Y D O I H S E H K W N T O B Y  
L N U R P F K X W C O I O V G  
V Q X J U R B V I K T S I D J  
P R E L U D E T F X M O H T R  
H C T D P U N T R D M P P I P  
G Y H N N A H U C G M M B V L  
L A S O M U Q T S A H O U K O  
P Q N O P S L N S D R C V O K  
N G R X T I N D U V E A W A F  
H D N S W J N K B L B U H K Y  
D K Q J Q W M F J W X W P C W  
F I R T R B J D C I I E S U M

Romantic

Character piece

Salon

Muse

Prelude

Piano

Composition

Chopin

# How does it work?

## The science behind the piano



Although they are hidden from view, metal wires give the piano its sound. Stretched out next to each other under the lid of the piano, each of the wires is a different length and thickness, and plays a different note when it vibrates at its distinct speed. When the different wires vibrate, they create sound waves that are different according to how fast the wire is vibrating. The sound waves travel to our ears, and we hear the piano being played.

In order to play the piano, the musician presses different keys on the keyboard. The keys are laid out in a long row, and each key goes with one wire under the lid of the piano. Pressing the key causes a small hammer to strike the wire that it goes with, and the sound is made.

There are also three pedals that the person playing the piano can press with his or her feet, to allow notes to be held longer and to change how loud or soft the notes sound. The pedals were greatly improved during the Romantic Period. There are 88 keys on a piano, and with the different pedal combinations, there are countless ways to make sounds on the piano.



**Think about the two pieces by Chopin and Schumann discussed earlier in this study guide. Both pieces are played by just one musician on the piano, yet they sound quite different. What do you hear that is different about the playing? Do you notice anything about how the piano sounds that makes each of the pieces so unique?**

# Rubber Band Instruments



Here's an activity that shows the relationship between sound and vibration. All you need is a few rubber bands and an empty metal coffee can. You can also try using an empty tissue box.

To make your instrument, stretch the rubber bands around the coffee can or tissue box, across the opening. See if you can fit five or six rubber bands, leaving enough space between them so that each one can be plucked individually.

The rubber bands are acting like the strings of a cello or the wires of a piano. When you pluck the rubber band, it vibrates and creates a sound. The sound waves bounce around inside the open space of the can or box, and then travel to your ears. Both the length and the thickness of the rubber band determine what the sound will be like.



**What do you notice about the different sounds that the rubber bands make? Experiment by using thin and thick rubber bands to make different sounds. What happens when you pull the rubber band tighter and then pluck it?**

## MA Learning Standards (Grades 2—5) Covered in this Study Guide:

### **ELA/Literacy, Speaking and Listening Standards**

2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

### **Foreign Languages Cultures Strand**

4.4 Identify distinctive cultural products from the target culture such as toys, clothes, foods, currencies, games, traditional crafts, and musical instruments

### **Science and Technology/Engineering**

#### **(Physical Sciences, Chemistry and Physics, Forms of Energy)**

4. Identify the basic forms of energy (light, sound, heat, electrical, and magnetic). Recognize that energy is the ability to cause motion or create change.

4.11 Recognize that sound is produced by vibrating objects and requires a medium through which to travel. Relate the rate of vibration to the pitch of the sound.

### **Technology/Engineering**

#### 1. Materials and Tools

*Central Concept:* Appropriate materials, tools, and machines extend our ability to solve problems and invent.

1.1 Identify materials used to accomplish a design task based on a specific property, e.g., strength, hardness, and flexibility.

### **Arts**

#### **Critical Response**

5.1 Perceive, describe, and respond to basic elements of music, including beat, tempo, rhythm, meter, pitch, melody, texture, dynamics, harmony, and form

5.2 Listen to and describe aural examples of music of various styles, genres, cultural and historical periods, identifying expressive qualities, instrumentation, and cultural and or/geographic context

5.3 Use appropriate terminology in describing music, musical notation, music instruments and voices, and music performances

5.4 Identify the sounds of a variety of instruments, including many orchestra and band instruments, and instruments from various cultures, as well as children's voices and male and female adult voices

5.6 Describe and demonstrate audience skills of listening attentively and responding appropriately in classroom, rehearsal, and performance settings

#### **Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression**

3.2 Create 2D and 3D expressive artwork that explores abstraction

3.3 Create 2D and 3D artwork from memory or imagination to tell a story or embody an idea or fantasy

### **Purposes and Meanings in the Arts**

6.1 When viewing or listening to examples of visual arts, architecture, music, dance, storytelling, and theatre, ask and answer questions such as, “*What is the artist trying to say?*” “*Who made this, and why?*” “*How does this work make me feel?*”

6.2 Investigate uses and meanings of examples of the arts in children’s daily lives, homes, and communities

### **Roles of Artists in Communities**

7.1 Investigate how artists create their work; read about, view films about, or interview artists such as choreographers, dancers, composers, singers, instrumentalists, actors, storytellers, playwrights, illustrators, painters, sculptors, craftspeople, or architects

### **Inventions, Technologies, and the Arts**

9.1 When using art materials or handling and viewing artifacts or musical instruments, ask and answer questions such as

- “What is this made of?”
- “How does this instrument produce sound?”
- “Would I design this differently?”
- “Who first thought of making something like this?”

### **Interdisciplinary Connections**

10.1 Integrate knowledge of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts and apply the arts to learning other disciplines



### **Suggested CDs:**

*Preludes*, performed by Ivo Pogorelich (1990)

*Album für die Jugend Op 68.*, performed by Rico Gulda (2001)

### **Image Credits**

Rain on grass2.jpg

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/Rain\\_on\\_grass2.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/Rain_on_grass2.jpg)

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Rubber bands - Colors - Studio photo 2011.jpg

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