

Chapter 19: “Outsiders” in the Romantic Tradition: Chopin, Gottschalk, and Glinka, 1820–60

- I. Introduction
 - A. Compositions created in opposition to the established German mainstream could seem exotic. These composers were conscious of themselves as outsiders and came to be known in terms of their national identity.
- II. The genius of Chopin
 - A. Recognized for his talent at a young age, Chopin traveled at a young age
 1. His first foreign debut was in Vienna, where he performed a work in homage to Mozart.
 2. Polish patriotism burned brightly despite the country not existing on a map at the time.
 - B. Chopin’s career: from Warsaw to Paris
 1. Chopin’s style became more national as his career became more international. Exoticism presented as nationalism sells.
 2. Chopin’s early success in Vienna gave him hope as he returned to Warsaw. His concertos Op. 11 in E Minor and Op. 21 in F Minor use folk dances in their finales.
 3. He planned to go to London, stopping in Paris on the way, but learned that Warsaw was sacked by Russia. He arrived in Paris in 1831.
 4. Chopin won his fame in prominent European families.
 5. In Paris, Chopin made his public persona through his publications.
 6. A relationship with George Sand (the novelist Aurore Dudevant) allowed him to compose in luxurious seclusion until it ended in 1847. The breakup left him depressed and not interested in work.
 7. He moved to England and again moved in fashionable circles.
 8. He died in Paris of tuberculosis, the most romantic of all diseases. He was a mysterious stranger from Poland who embodied many aspects of Romanticism.
 - C. The pinnacle of salon music
 1. Chopin cultivated a refined manner that allowed him to move among the wealthy.
 2. Improvisation was an important aspect of his performance, and he later tried to write it down.
 3. Since he did not perform in public, he did not need other musicians to play with him. Therefore, most of his music is for piano solo.
 4. Chopin saw himself as a creative artist rather than a virtuoso. To play like Chopin was deemed an aspiration for many pianists.
 5. He was one of the first to use the term “rubato.”
 6. He wrote three sonatas; these were difficult for his contemporaries to understand.
 7. Most of Chopin’s compositions are character pieces: nocturnes, études, ballades, rondos, scherzos, and impromptus. He also has a number of dances.
 8. The wide range of pieces, from large-scale works to miniatures, allows for a full picture of the enigmatic composer.

- D. The Chopinesque miniature
 - 1. Chopin's preludes are expressive performance pieces that demonstrate his penchant for improvisation.
 - 2. Like those of Bach, Chopin composed a prelude in each major and minor key.
- E. Chopin's mazurkas and ballades
 - 1. The Polish dances, mazurkas and polonaises, are the most obvious Polish works by Chopin.
 - 2. As with the preludes, the moods and emotions of these works vary tremendously.
 - 3. The mazurkas date from different periods in his life, and the style differs in each.
 - 4. The polonaises are more heroic, as are the scherzos and ballades (and a few nocturnes).
 - 5. The Ballade in G Minor demonstrates a goal-oriented overall shape through such narrative techniques.
- III. An American virtuoso
 - A. Gottschalk's early career began like Chopin's, but he never achieved the same fame.
 - 1. He was the first American composer to make his mark in European fine-art music.
 - 2. His socially ambitious parents shielded him from popular culture and brought him up in European musical outlets: the salon and opera house.
 - 3. A prodigy, at age fifteen Gottschalk performed Chopin's E-Minor Concerto with the composer in the audience.
 - 4. His most commercially successful music was that based on exotic themes and locales, particularly from the New World.
 - 5. He left the United States in 1865 to avoid false charges of sexual misconduct and spent the last four years of his life in South America.
 - 6. Europeans held Americans in disdain for their commercialism, mechanical technology, and indifference to matters of culture and conduct.
 - 7. America threatened the security of traditional hierarchy. New middle-class American audiences fostered a golden age for the popular consumption of art.
- IV. Russia: the newcomer
 - A. As Peter I ("the Great") Westernized Russia, musical exchanges began between Western Europe and St. Petersburg.
 - 1. Italian opera came to Russia in the mid-eighteenth century.
 - 2. Catherine the Great imported a long line of distinguished composers to Russia.
 - B. National markings and folk tunes
 - 1. After the imported musicians, a second stage of composition in Russia consisted of native-born talent.
 - 2. This coincided with Herder's influential ideas about national character, so Russian music featured "natural artifacts" of peasant culture.

3. Russian folk art was soon exported as well.
4. While this may seem like Russian nationalism, the idea of such nationalism was essentially a response to Russia's Westernization.

C. Mikhail Glinka

1. The first school of significant Russian composers dates to 1836 and the premiere of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*.
2. Glinka was singled out as the beginning of Russian nationalism because he used folk style in a spirit of nationalism, not peasant folksiness.
3. Glinka also mastered advanced international compositional technique—he was more cosmopolitan than his Russian contemporaries.

D. An education in Italy and Germany

1. Although no conservatories existed when Glinka was studying music, he had a well-rounded musical education.
2. Glinka went to Milan and studied with Donizetti and Bellini. Then he studied in Berlin.
3. As such, Glinka's nationalism was dependent on his acquisition of other music, a more cosmopolitan base.
4. Glinka was politically committed to Russia. He worked under the most reactionary monarch in Europe.

E. Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*

1. The subject matter of *A Life for the Tsar* fits perfectly with the aims of Tsar Nikolai I.
2. Chopin's nationalism was felt in his music, but without text.
3. Glinka's Poles express themselves collectively and impersonally—thus without an independent voice.
4. Glinka's score for *A Life for the Tsar* is a significant reason why he is considered the founding father of Russian composers.