

## The Barber of Seville, Overture

This was composed in 1816 for a comedic opera, the Barber of Seville. It is one of the most recognizable pieces of music ever. The opera is about a young woman whose guardian is an old, fat man who wants to marry her for her dowry as soon as she comes of age. But she and a young count fall in love. The young count gains entry to the house by pretending to be a drunken soldier of Napoleon who has been billeted on the house. As the young lovers try to conceal their plans hilarity ensues.

Other famous pieces by the composer include the *William Tell Overture*.



## Symphonie Fantastique, March to the Scaffold

This was composed in 1830 as a program symphony. It is completely instrumental, but notes in the programs handed to the audience would have included a story line. The story of this music is that an artist falls in love with a woman, but the love is not returned. In despair he overdoses on opium and in hallucinations sees his own execution and funeral.

The composer was very influential in the early Romantic movement. He was also famous as a conductor, taking over that job from hirelings as he became frustrated with their lack of understanding of his pieces.

Other famous works by this composer include *Requiem* and *Romeo et Juliet*.



## Rigoletto

This is an opera that tells the story of a wicked duke and his hunchback court jester, Rigoletto, who have been cursed by an evil spell. The curse comes true when Rigoletto's beautiful daughter, Gilda, falls in love with the wicked duke and sacrifices her life to save his worthless one.

The music, composed in 1851, was considered revolutionary when it was written because the composer included almost no arias, a way for singers to display their vocal talent and to infuse emotion into the opera, but not to move the story line forward, and no grand finale for each part. It's closer to the way a play is presented.

Other famous pieces by this composer include *Aida*, *Il Travatore*, and *La Traviata*.



## Ride of the Valkyries

This was composed in 1870 as part of an opera about the Valkyries, mythological Norse warrior women who decided who should live and who should die on the battlefield.

The composer's style was extremely influential and led the way toward 20th century classical composition. In particular Wagner ended the tradition of Western tonal music with the famous "Tristan chord", from the Opera *Tristan and Isolde*. The opening chord is full of tension, but the listener is not given resolution until the very end of the opera. Earlier composers never would have done that to their audiences.

Other famous pieces by this composer include the "Bridal Chorus" from *Lohengrin*, often played as the bridal march at weddings.





## Années de pèlerinage (Years of Pilgrimage)

This was composed between 1835 and 1838 for piano. This piece is a symphonic poem, a musical form invented by the composer. It takes a painting or poem and creates its themes and meaning in music. This one is based on Goethe's novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*.

Like others in the Romantic movement this composer was moved by nature and attempted to express his feelings through his music.

The composer was best known for his virtuoso piano performances and his compositions were written to show off his talent and so are very difficult.

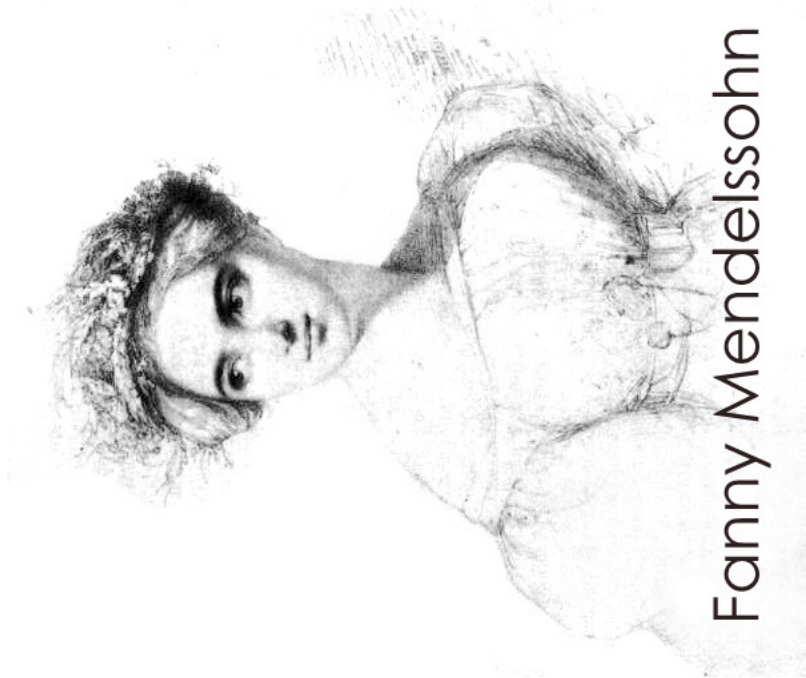


## Album für die Jugend (Album for the Young)

This was written for the composer's children in 1848 and is a simple melody that many beginning piano students learn. The whole album consists of 43 short songs. Beginning at number 19 the pieces are marked for adults and become more difficult.

The composer is one of the most famous of the Romantic era and was besides an influential music critic. Many other musician's careers hinged on whether or not they were recognized by this composer. This composer also suffered from mental illness and died very young.

Other famous pieces include *Kinderszenen* and *Blumenstück*.

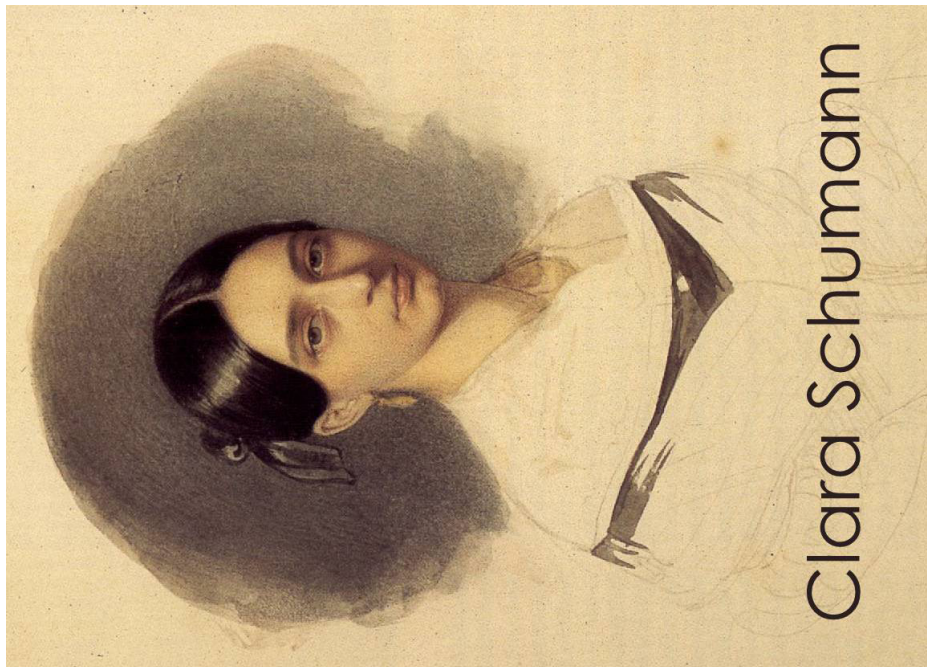


## Das Jahr (The Year)

This collection of twelve songs take the listener through the seasons of the year in natural settings. This was composed in 1841. Like most Romantics the composer was enamored with nature and most compositions are based on natural themes.

Not supported by family, this composer and pianist performed in public only once and most compositions weren't published until later in life, in defiance of the family, or after death.

Other famous pieces by this composer include *Italien*.



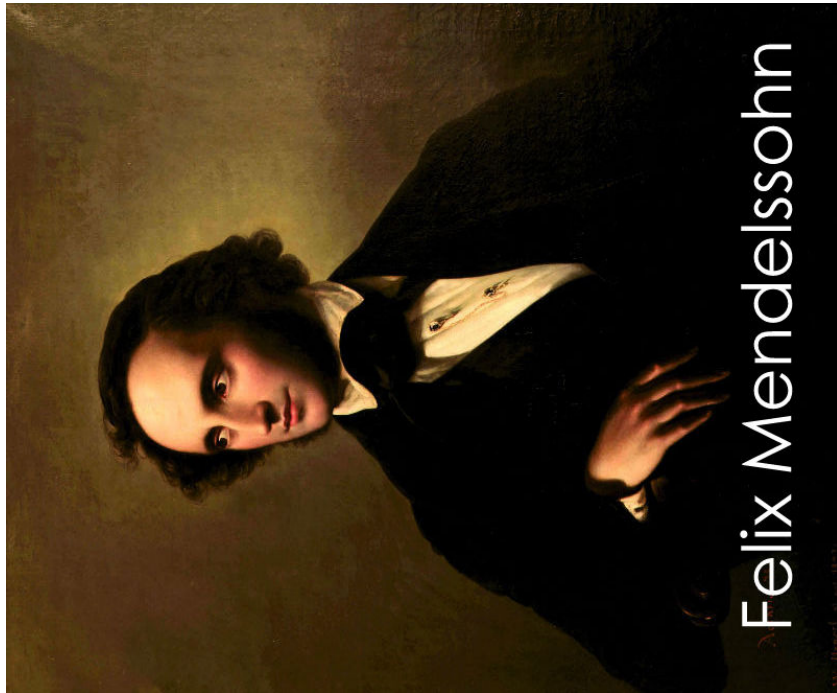
## Nocturne in F major Op.6 No.2 from 'Soirées Musicales'

A nocturne is a musical piece that is evocative of the night. Nocturne's were developed during the Romantic period. This one plays gently, almost like a lullaby, but it is very complex and difficult to play. It was composed in about 1825 when the composer was just sixteen, by then already a famous concert pianist.

This composer is best known for virtuoso piano performances, having little time for composing after marrying and starting a family.

Other famous pieces by this composer include *4 Polonaises for Piano* (composed at age 10) and *Piano Trio in G Minor*.





## Wedding March

Composed in 1842, this was inspired by Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is one of the most recognizable pieces of music in the world.

A child prodigy this composer was already performing around Europe by the teens. Though most of this composer's music was based on or written for literary works they were never meant to accompany a play or opera but were instead meant to stand alone as a concert, a common practice during the Romantic era.

Other famous pieces by this composer include *The Hebrides*, *Songs Without Words*, and *Italian Symphony*.



## Waltz in D Flat Major "Minute Waltz"

This was composed in 1847. The popular nickname refers to the fact that it is a very short piece. It takes longer than one minute to play. But it is supposed to be played in a very lively and fast manner.

This composer, who was also a pianist, wrote for the piano, every piece including a piano part. Suffering from ill health throughout life, this composer died young.

Other famous compositions include *Sonata in B Minor*, the *Opus 55 Nocturnes* and the *Opus 56 Mazurkas*.

# Romantic Music Cards, Part 1

The Romantic period in music is part of the overall Romantic movement that also included art and literature. It was a reaction to the order and precision of previous music and was characterized by emotionality. Many Romantic composers were fascinated with the wonders and power of nature and their pieces were composed to depict natural settings and seasons. Further this was the time of the industrial revolution and the rise of the middle class. Music was no longer composed to please the aristocracy, on whose patronage artists had depended. Now the people buying the sheet music and tickets to concerts were middle class tradesmen, bankers, and shop keepers. And so the music is written to appeal to them.

Another component of the Romantic period in music includes forays into politics with composers, like artists, supporting popular revolutions and the overthrow of the old political status quo. They often composed nationalistic music meant to appeal to the common man's pride in his country.

Beethoven was a transitional musician who first laid the foundations for high emotion in music. Others followed on in his tradition, expanding and experimenting with music. This set of cards includes the most famous of the first generation of Romantic composers.

Print these music cards and famous pieces by the composers onto white card stock. Cut the cards out on the solid lines.

Help your kids become familiar with these pieces and composers by playing matching games, sorting the cards, and quizzing over them.

1. Lay the cards face up in front of the students. Play one of the famous compositions for the students to listen to. The music can easily be found online and on Layers of Learning. Have the students match the composer and the composer's famous piece to the music that is playing.
2. After the student can identify the composer and piece, play another famous piece by the composer, listed at the bottom of the card, and see if the student can recognize the style of that composer and identify whose music is being played.