

Russian composers were prominent in the Romantic period, with Tchaikovsky leading the way.

Unlike his Russian contemporaries though, Tchaikovsky used Western European forms and harmony; other Russian composers were much more influenced by Russian folk music.

Other notable concert overtures include Felix Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides* (1830) and Johannes Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture* (1880).



Listen to This

1812 Overture (1880) by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

In the last section of the *1812 Overture*, listen for the French national anthem “La Marseillaise” followed by cannon fire. Later, the Russian hymn, “God Preserve Thy People” is played at the same time large bells are rung. The hymn is then combined with the Russian national anthem of that time, “God Save the Tsar.”



What Happened in History at This Time

The *1812 Overture* was written in 1880. The following events in history occurred around the same time:

- 1870—French writer Jules Verne (1828–1905) publishes *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*
- 1876—American writer Mark Twain (1835–1910) publishes *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- 1877—American inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931) develops the phonograph
- 1879—Thomas Edison invents electric light



Art of the Ages

The *1812 Overture* was written in 1880. *The 28th Regiment at Quatre Bras* (1875) by British artist Elizabeth Thompson (1846–1933) was completed at around the same time.



THE 28TH REGIMENT AT QUATRE BRAS (1875) BY ELIZABETH THOMPSON (1846–1933)

Richard Strauss and the Symphonic Poem

The greatest composer of Romantic symphonic poems is German Richard Strauss (1864–1949). Strauss wrote many symphonic poems (though Strauss preferred to call them tone poems), including *Also sprach Zarathustra* [Thus Spoke Zarathustra], which was completed in 1896. The music in this symphonic poem is freely based on the writings of the influential German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.



PHOTOGRAPH OF A YOUNG RICHARD STRAUSS (1886) (PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN)



Listen to This

Also sprach Zarathustra (1896) by Richard Strauss

The famous opening section of *Also sprach Zarathustra* was described by Strauss as a sunrise where man feels the power of God. Strauss composed this piece for an enormous orchestra that featured a pipe organ to



Nationalism was very strong in Russia in the Romantic period. A group of five composers, called *The Five*, made Russian nationalism a musical philosophy. While the music of Tchaikovsky featured Western European forms and harmony, The Five developed a national style of Russian music. This group included Mily Balakirev (1837–1910), Alexander Borodin (1833–1887), César Cui (1835–1918), Modest Mussorgsky, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Balakirev was the mentor of this group of influential amateur composers who taught each other using mutual advice and criticism.



Art of the Ages

The Planets was written in 1918. American artist John Singer Sargent's (1856–1925) *Gassed* (1919) was completed at around the same time.



GASSED (1919) BY JOHN SINGER SARGENT (1856–1925)

Spain

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) captured the spirit of Spanish folk music in his compositions, and he also used Spanish folk tales as the basis for many of his works. His musical style was influenced by the French impressionists, Debussy and Ravel. Manuel de Falla's best-known works are the symphonic poem *Nights in the Garden of Spain* and the ballet *El amor brujo* [*Love, the Sorcerer*], both completed in 1915.



PHOTOGRAPH OF CHARLES IVES (LEFT) AS A STAR PITCHER FOR THE HOPKINS SCHOOL (C. 1894) (PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN)

The United States

The United States was a relatively young country in the Modern period. Even by the beginning of the 20th century, there had not been any significant American-born composers. American composers used the musical resources of their country—such as military music, hymns, and jazz—as well as music of the great European composers for inspiration. These eclectic influences were combined to create strikingly original music.

CHARLES IVES

Charles Ives (1874–1954) is the best-known American composer of the early 20th century. Characteristic of



Charles Ives grew up in Connecticut. He captained the baseball team at Hopkins School in New Haven, CT and later attended Yale University. We know him as a composer, but Ives didn't actually make a living in music. Instead, he was an insurance agent! He even formed his own agency, Ives & Myrick.

the time, Ives experimented freely and often wrote very dissonant music, even quoting pieces by other composers. Ives wrote vocal music, chamber music, symphonies, and works for solo instruments.



Listen to This

Symphony No. 2 (1901) by Charles Ives

Symphony No. 2 is a great example of truly American music. It combines many of the styles that influenced Ives in a well-crafted symphonic structure. In *Symphony No. 2*, there are fiddle tunes, hymns, Civil War tunes, college songs, excerpts from two Brahms symphonies, and more.



What Happened in History at This Time

Ives's *Symphony No. 2* was written in 1901. The following events in history occurred around the same time:

- 1898—The Spanish–American War occurs
- 1899—Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) publishes *The Interpretation of Dreams*
- 1900—Gamma rays are discovered by French chemist and physicist Paul Villard (1860–1934)
- 1903—American inventors the Wright Brothers fly an airplane for the first time