Key Characteristics

- A thick texture
- Wide range and contrast in dynamics and pitch
- Long expressive melodies
- Rich harmonies
- A large orchestra – a variety of Percussion is now common
- Use of recurring themes – Leitmotiv
- Nationalism

Romantic Orchestra

- Orchestra size became the size it is today.
- **Strings** – many more players (plus the Harp)
- **Brass** – introduction of trombone and tuba
- **Woodwind** – more in number (piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet and contrabassoon)
- **Percussion** – 3 or more timpani, plus lots of other percussion instruments

Symphony

- A work for full orchestra
- The Classical Symphony usually followed the pattern of 4 movements.
- However, in the Romantic era some composers extended this to include 5 movements,
- Some experimented with the addition of voices.
- In both of the above examples the use of expression through dynamics, modulation and size of orchestra was significant.

Concerto

- A work for soloist and orchestra
- In the Romantic era the Orchestra took a more prominent role in the Solo Concerto.
- In Classical music it had played the accompanying part – in Romantic times it became equal with the soloist.
- Romantic Orchestra became equal with the soloist

Programme Music

- Music which tells a story or describes a scene.
- This was music composed for the purpose of telling a story or describing a mood or scene from a picture or piece of poetry.
- Instruments and harmonies were assigned to certain emotions or characters within the story/picture.
- Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony
- Composed in 1808
- Beethoven said that the symphony was “more the expression of feeling than painting”
- Berlioz composed his Symphonie Fantastique where one melody is used to symbolise a person throughout each movement.

Leitmotiv

- A recurring theme throughout a work which describes a character or idea (also called idee fixe)
- Berlioz used the idea of a recurring theme in ‘Symphonie Fantastique’
- Wagner took it further.

Tone Poem

- Also known as Symphonic poem
- One movement piece for orchestra based on a story or experience
- The Sorcerer's Apprentice
- Based on a poem by the Romantic poet Goethe

Nationalism
• Until the mid 1800’s much music had been dominated by German influences. However, during the Romantic period composers from other European countries, such as Russia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Norway and Finland became evident.

Many of these composers carried strong influences from the folk music of their own country in their compositions. Often the melodies of folk songs would be used as a basis for their compositions.

**Opera**

• At this point in time there were two main styles of opera, Italian and German.
• Italian opera was very much a vehicle of good melodies and exciting tunes with less emphasis on drama
• German operas was more concerned with drama and perhaps less so with memorable tunes.

**German Opera**

• In the 1820s Weber produced three operas
• He was innovative;
  – Use of folk tunes
  – Use of themes to denote particular characters.
  – Influenced Wagner

**Italian Opera**

• Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini.
• All three composers were renowned for compositions in the ‘Bel Canto’ (beautiful singing) style of long and smooth melodies.
• These melodic lines were often very difficult to sing.

**Wagner and Verdi**

**Leid or Leider**

• Solo voice and piano
• Both parts are equally important
• Text is in German
• Structure can be Strophic or Through-Composed

**Song Cycle**

• A group of songs linked by a common theme or text
• Usually accompanied by piano
• Can be accompanied by small ensemble or orchestra

**Choral Music**

• Oratorio and Mass were still popular

**Late Romanticism**

• Late 19th and early 20th Century.
• Use of lots of chromaticism and vast orchestral forces.
• Large scale compositions.
• Composers include Wagner, Mahler and Strauss.