

MUSICAL NATIONALISM IN THE ROMANTIC ERA

Composers emphasized on self-expression. It was their goal to be unique and for the music to reflect their personalities. With this individualism, a very important movement took place called **Nationalism**. In Nationalism, composers use individualism to deliberately created music with their specific national identity. They used folk songs, dances, legends, and history of their homeland within their music. This contrasts with the universal character of classical music. This fascination with national identity also led composers to draw on colorful materials from foreign lands. This became known as **Exoticism**.

Russian Five: Cesar Cui (1835 – 1918)
Alexander Borodin (1833 – 1887)
Mily Balakirev (1837 – 1910)
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844 – 1908)
Modest Mussorgsky (1839 – 1881)

These five men met together in St. Petersburg with the aim of creating a truly Russian music. They criticized each other's works and asserted the necessity of breaking from some of the traditional techniques of German, Italian, and French composers. All had nonmusical jobs and could compose only in their spare time.

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893) is probably the most famous of all Russian composers. So rapid was his progress in music that after graduating he became professor of harmony at the new Moscow Conservatory. At age thirty, he composed his first great orchestral work, *Romeo and Juliet*. This sparked interest from the public in Tchaikovsky's music. In 1877, he acquired a benefactress who supplied all of his money so that he could quit his conservatory position and devote himself strictly to composition. Tchaikovsky was a prolific composer of both instrumental and vocal works. His most popular compositions are the Forth, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies, *Romeo and Juliet*, the ballet scores to *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*, and the *1812 Overture*.

Bedrich Smetana (1824 – 1884) was the founder of Czech national music. His works are full of folksongs, dances, and legends of his native Bohemia (which became part of Czechoslovakia). Though he was recognized as a pianist, those opposed to nationalism scorned his compositions. In 1865, he moved to Sweden, where he taught, conducted, and composed symphonic poems in the style of Franz Liszt. In 1862, he returned to Prague as an active composer, pianist, teacher, conductor, and tireless propagandist for Czech musical nationalism. At age fifty, Smetana suffered the same fate as Beethoven – he became completely deaf. Yet some of his finest works followed, including his famous symphonic poem *My Country*, which includes *The Moldau*, describing the river that runs through Czechoslovakia. He passed his last ten years in acute physical and mental torment caused by syphilis. He died in an insane asylum at age sixty.

Antonin Dvorak (1841 – 1904) followed Smetana as the leading composer of Czech national music. He left home at the age of sixteen to study music in Prague. For years he earned a meager living by playing in an opera orchestra under Smetana's direction. He was little known as a composer until his works came to the attention of the German master Brahms, who recommended Dvorak to his publisher. From this time on, his fame spread rapidly. In 1892, Dvorak went to New York, where he spent almost three years as director of the National Conservatory of Music. While here in America, he encouraged American composers to write nationalistic music. He also wrote his most famous work Symphony No. 9 (From the New World) during his first year in America. In 1895, Dvorak returned to his homeland and lived there the rest of his life.