

A Young Scholar's Guide to
Composers



A full year's curriculum in 32 weekly lessons

Melissa E. Craig and Maggie S. Hogan

Get Started

Bach
Beethoven
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Gershwin
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Haydn
Ives
Joplin
Liszt
Mendelssohn
Mozart
Schubert
Schumann
Strauss
Tchaikovsky
Verdi
Vivaldi
Williams

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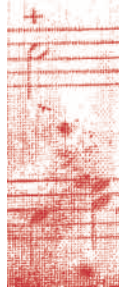
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SAMPLE PAGES

Introduction

Why Teach the Classical Composers?

There are a number of good reasons for exposing children to classical music and the rich heritage of classical composers. First, music is from the Lord. He created it, and He created us with the ability both to make music and to appreciate music.

Second, although there are many different types of music in other cultures, what is called “classical” music is uniquely part of the heritage of our Western civilization. Becoming familiar with it opens a door into ideas and expressions that are inaccessible to those who have not been introduced to the musical classics. This familiarity allows one to participate in conversations and musical experiences that would otherwise remain a mystery.

Third, research suggests that both listening to and playing classical music is of great value to the development of the brain even in many other aspects of learning, including math, memory, and literacy itself.

Finally, there is the rich satisfaction that comes with the knowledge of having been exposed to great minds and talents and having brought away from it a deeper understanding of music, of self, and of life. It is not always easy to “crack” the code of classical music, but even rudimentary exposure, over time, will increase one’s level of enjoyment and understanding.

Although this is just a one-year course, we are not suggesting that teaching classical composers should be a one-time activity. Ideally, you will continue to incorporate classical music into your curriculum, perhaps following the format we have developed or perhaps using other resources.

How to Use This Book

Any music appreciation course taught primarily through a book is lacking one important ingredient: actual music! This is where you play an integral role. It is imperative to play the music of the composers as you study them in order to truly gain any understanding of the classical composers and their music. Fortunately, it is easy to find recordings of music from every composer we will be covering by looking online, at your library, or in catalogs.

Music and the Brain

Although there had been much hype about the now mostly discredited “Mozart Effect,” it does not change the fact that there is a growing body of research that points to a strong link between music and positive brain development. From www.sciencedaily.com, accessed May 16, 2008, we read this headline and the beginning of an article about music and brain development:

“First Evidence That Musical Training Affects Brain Development in Young Children”

Science Daily—*“Researchers have found the first evidence that young children who take music lessons show different brain development and improved memory over the course of a year compared to children who do not receive musical training.*

“The findings, published 20 September 2006 in the online edition of the journal Brain [Oxford University Press], show that not only do the brains of musically trained children respond to music in a different way to those of the untrained children, but also that the training improves their memory as well. After one year the musically trained children performed better in a memory test that is correlated with general intelligence skills such as literacy, verbal memory, visiospatial processing, mathematics and IQ.”¹

A Word About Music Lessons . . .

Does this mean that your child is being sadly neglected if you don’t provide music lessons? Does this mean that his or her brain will shrivel up and become the size of a lima bean without the experience of piano practice? Of course not! This is just a further bit of motivation to encourage you, in whatever way works best, to provide basic lessons for a year or two. The piano is the typical instrument of choice, although some people prefer the violin, and others find that a recorder is all they can handle space-wise and money-wise.

If your child is provided with a caring and competent teacher, an instrument to use, as well as scheduled and monitored practice time, the lessons are sure to be a success. Despite your best intentions, though, not all children will appreciate music lessons. Encourage your child to try it for one school year. If after that time they are still disinterested, at least you know you have given them the great advantage of exposure to the world of playing music. Many, many adults say how much they now appreciate the gift of music lessons in their childhood, even if at the time they vigorously opposed them. We can’t think of anyone who has told us the opposite!

A Kind and Simple Approach to This Curriculum

This course is intended to be as stress-free as possible. The plan is to listen to the recommended music a minimum of three times per week. The read-aloud lesson and the note-taking pages or student review questions should be done on Day One. The hands-on work of timeline, map, and Composer Info-Card can be done on Day Two. In the interest of time, it is certainly feasible to do all the academic work on one day instead of two, but the music listening itself should be spread throughout the week.

Your Schedule

Day One

- Listen to the recommended selections.
- Read the lesson.
- Fill in the note-taking pages or answer the Student Review Questions

Day Two

- Listen to the recommended selections again.
- Fill in the Composer Info-Card.
- Color in the timeline. (See Timeline Directions.)
- Match the composer to his place of birth. (See Map Directions.)

Day Three

- Listen to the recommended selections again.

Listening Directions

- Say the name of the composer.
- Say the name of the selection.
- Play the piece.

We concur with the opinion expressed by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer in *The Well-Trained Mind*. They write:

“The first time the child listens to the piece, have her listen to it two or three times in a row. Then make sure she plays it again at the beginning of her next listening period. [Day Two] Familiarity breeds enjoyment. She can do handwork such as Play-Doh™ or coloring books about the composer . . . but nothing that involves words; her attention should be focused on what she hears, not on what she sees.”

We would add that some children need to move to the music, some like to draw, and others do best just sitting and staring out the window!

Lessons

Each lesson runs about 1,200 words. Each will take approximately fifteen minutes to read aloud. There will often be unfamiliar vocabulary words within the lessons. These usually are defined for you within the lesson, allowing you to quickly explain them to the student before moving on. (There is also a handy glossary in the Appendix.) A composer who especially captures a child’s interest would be worth further research. Fortunately, there are many biographies of composers available now, and there is a plethora of online information available as well. (Please see the caution regarding research below.)

The Classical Period

circa 1750 to 1820

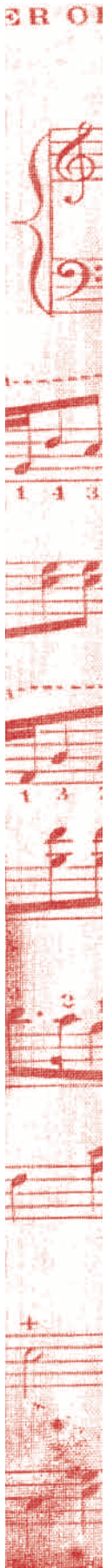
The **Classical period** emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century. Can you think of two major political events that were happening between 1750 and 1800? The American Revolution and the French Revolution! This was a time when people were daring to think differently and were wanting things to change. People were also challenging the established religions and the **monarchies**—monarchs, or kings—that ruled the country. People desired rights that included “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The Classical period is usually defined as being between 1750 and 1820.

Music reflected these changes as well, and the common people, not just the nobility, began attending public concerts. Because the audiences were different, composers began writing specifically for the enjoyment of the public—the common people instead of the nobility. This new era, therefore, called for less ornamentation. One way this was shown in music is that composers didn’t write in counterpoint anymore. (Remember counterpoint? This music features two or more melodies working together at the same time within a piece.)

Instead, composers began writing in **homophony**, in which a work contains one melody. This melody was supported by harmony accompanying the melody in chords. A more straightforward era called for more straightforward music—and this was considered a clearer way of presenting a melody. As a result, music from the Classical era was easier to listen to—less taxing on the brain—than the Baroque music from the past.

New forms arose in this new era. Composers began to compose in the sonata form, minuet form, rondo, and theme and variations form. Music listeners of the time appreciated these forms—they were familiar with the structure. Within a few minutes of listening to a new piece, they would recognize the form and have an idea of what to expect. (This means they would then know when to expect to hear the theme again. They would also know how long the piece might last.)

The **sonata** form, a new favorite among composers, contains three sections: the exposition, the development, and the recapitulation. In the first section, called the exposition, a composer introduces listeners to a main theme. Later, he introduces a different, contrasting theme. In the second section, called the development, he develops the themes, playing with them and making them sound different. In the third section, called the recapitulation, the composer brings listeners back to the themes, making them sound very similar to the first time they



were heard. This is called ABA' format (said “A-B-A prime”), where A is the first section, B is quite different, and A' shows a return to the first, familiar sound—the ' is said “prime,” and it means that although we can expect the theme to come back to the original A, it will be a little different from the first time we heard it.

The **minuet** is the one dance form that was carried from the Baroque period to the Classical era. One reason is that the dance itself continued to be popular in social circles. It also reminded people of the aristocratic courts in which orchestras first appeared. And it gave the newly established symphonic forms a nice contrast because of the way it used time and rhythm.

The **rondo** form takes a tune and repeats it—a lot, with some extra stuffing in between its appearances so that the listener doesn't get bored. It is light and especially easy to listen to. A rondo could be structured like this: ABACA or ABACABA (notice that A keeps recurring).

The **theme and variations** introduces a main theme. The theme is the melody. In this form, the melody is then repeated with several variations. (This isn't the only form that has a theme; most works have themes, or a main melody. But this is the only form that is structured with one theme and several different variations.)

During this period, the symphony also arose as a new form. A **symphony** is a longer piece of music that is made up of several **movements**, or parts. Each of these parts is usually written in one of the forms we just discussed. In a typical symphony (and remember that not all symphonies are typical), there are four movements. The first movement is a fast or moderate movement written in sonata form. The second movement is slow, and there is no standard form for it—sometimes it's written in sonata form, sometimes in rondo form, and sometimes in a variation form. The third movement is usually a minuet—the tempo is moderate and written in minuet form. The final, or closing, movement is fast and is written in either sonata or rondo form.

Although each movement in a symphony has its own themes and its own forms, they're written to go together. You cannot simply replace the second movement of one symphony with the second movement of a different symphony. Think of it like decorating a house. Usually, the rooms work together—the colors flow from one room to the next. They may not be the same, but there are elements that carry from one area to another. That is the way a symphony works.

Though the Classical period lasted only 70 years, it served a pivotal role in the development of “classical” music. The development of musical instruments, the growth of the orchestra, and the growing popularity of the newer **pianoforte** (which we now know as a piano) set the stage for the Romantic period that was to come.

The Classical Period *Note-taking Pages*

The Classical period took place between the years _____ and _____.

Name two major political events that were happening in the world during this time:

1. _____

2. _____

What was different about concerts during this period? _____.

What was different about the audiences attending these concerts? _____

Composers began writing in _____, instead of counterpoint.

Homophony occurs in a work that contains _____ melody.

This melody is supported by harmony, which accompanies the melody in _____.

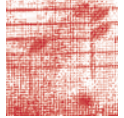
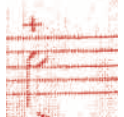
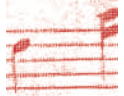
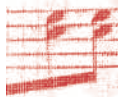
New forms:

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____ and _____

Sonata form contains _____ sections.

Section #	Name	Music Contains	Format
1		theme	
2	development		B
3		theme is similar	



The _____ is the one _____ form that carried over from the Baroque period.

The _____ takes a tune and _____ it.

Some possible structures for a rondo:

_____ OR _____

The _____ and _____ form introduces a _____ and repeats it with different _____.

A _____ is made up of _____ movements.

These movements are actually other _____.

Movement	Tempo (fast or slow)	Form
	fast or moderate	
second		any—sonata or rondo or variation
		sonata or rondo

Frédéric (Fryderyk) *Chopin*

b. 1810 d. 1849

Frédéric Chopin was born near Warsaw, Poland, in 1810 to a French father and a Polish mother of poor but noble birth. Young Frycek (his nickname) had small, delicate hands and fingers that would later astonish all of Europe with their amazing dexterity. Frédéric's father was a well-educated, multilingual man who left France for Poland at age 16, never to return. (Later, Frédéric would leave his beloved Poland for France, never to return.)

Frédéric and his three sisters grew up in a loving home, in a city that was sophisticated and appreciated music. Their father was a tutor for aristocratic families and later a professor at a prestigious school. He brought up his children to behave with the refined manners his students possessed.



Music was an important part of the Chopin household. His father played the violin and flute, and his mother played the piano. She began teaching young Frédéric the piano, but he quickly surpassed her teaching skills. Before the age of 6, he could play every melody he had ever heard and had even begun to improvise!

Wanting to provide him with further training, his parents hired an older man by the name of Wojciech Żywny of Bohemia to tutor him. Some say that the wisest thing this teacher did was to recognize Chopin's natural genius and rather than attempt to improve it, he guided it instead. He didn't correct Frédéric's unusual and intricate piano fingering. Żywny introduced him to the music of **Bach**, which Chopin loved his entire life.

The slender, fun-loving boy made his public debut in Warsaw a week before his eighth birthday. He was hailed as their "Polish Prodigy." This earned him invitations into high society, where his charming manners and amazing talent made him a popular guest. In 1826, at age 16, Frédéric was enrolled in the Warsaw Conservatory, where he worked hard on his composing. The next year, his sister Emilice died of tuberculosis, the dreaded condition that Frédéric himself was to fight his entire life. (Remember **Beethoven**? He died the same year as well.)

Frédéric graduated from the conservatory after three years and then spent two weeks in Vienna, hoping to be noticed. The well-known composer and music critic **Robert Schumann**

reviewed the unknown Chopin's set of Piano Variations, op. 2, and then wrote, "Off with your hats, gentlemen—a genius!"

Chopin returned to Warsaw and worked on two concertos that were strongly influenced by the rhythms of Polish folk music and dances, especially the mazurka. In 1830, he left Warsaw for the last time, taking with him a small urn of Polish soil. He landed in Paris, just a few weeks after his beloved Warsaw fell to Russia.¹ From then on, the 21-year-old made Paris his home.

He quickly became a popular piano teacher among the wealthy and powerful. Late at night, he was often found playing the piano at their glittering "salons." (Everyone who was anyone in the arts, letters, and sciences made their way to these fancy Parisian soirees.) A fastidious dresser who enjoyed a lifestyle he couldn't actually afford, Chopin always struggled with finances. His piano students provided some income, as did the sales of his sheet music and an occasional concert. During his lean times, rich friends and patrons helped to support him, especially later when his health declined and he could no longer teach or perform as he once did.

Paris in the early 1830s was a city teeming with people, ideas, business opportunities, and the arts. Its grandeur, virtues, vices, and vitality attracted many well-known figures. Chopin numbered among his friends and acquaintances the authors Victor Hugo and George Sand; the painter Eugene Delacroix; the composers **Rossini**, **Berlioz**, **Liszt**, and **Bellini**; as well as the famous banking family the Rothschilds.

Chopin preferred playing in small, intimate salons rather than in the large concert halls. This was probably because he was a bit of a snob and because his style of playing—refined and delicate—was much more suited to smaller gatherings.

In Paris, Chopin's health grew worse. Always susceptible to coughs and colds, he found it harder and harder to bounce back after each bout. In the meantime, he continued to work feverishly on his compositions, almost obsessively writing and rewriting each line and each page of music. Although he produced a relatively modest number of compositions in his lifetime, each one was chiseled and polished over hours, days, and months until it shone like a gem.

It has been said that while on his journey to Paris, Chopin heard that Warsaw had fallen. In his fury and despair, he composed a piece now known as *The Revolutionary Étude*. Because of his constant reworking of pieces, and because he rarely dated his manuscripts, it is impossible to determine just when and where this piece was written. Although this story is not likely to be true, Chopin was not known to have discouraged its telling!

Chopin is famous for his **études** (French for "studies"), which are instrumental pieces

designed to improve a player's technique. Most études are dull as dirt, despite their teaching value. But Chopin's études are exciting masterpieces in their own right, and for pianists around the world, they are the standard for technical excellence.

Do you remember we mentioned that when Chopin was a little boy his teacher didn't change his unusual fingering? This extraordinary ability enabled him to become especially proficient at playing a flexible tempo known as **tempo rubato** (literally, "stolen time"). This is a musical term for slightly speeding up or slowing down the tempo of a piece at the discretion of the soloist or the conductor, and it is especially common in piano music.

Chopin is also known for his **nocturnes**. (*Nocturne* is a poetic word for "music of the night.") These rather quiet, subtle, dreamlike pieces include melodies so incredible that some consider them the most beautiful in all of music.

The composer and pianist Franz Liszt introduced Chopin to a famous writer and feminist, a woman who went by the name George Sand. A year or so later, they became inseparable. She was older and supported him emotionally and financially and nursed him during his many bouts of illnesses. Nine years later she ended their relationship and left Chopin a broken man. He lived another two and a half years but composed no more.

In 1848, he played his last concert in Paris, just one week before the revolution² would depose King Louis-Philippe. Chopin left for the British Isles at the urging of an admirer, Jane Stirling. She paid for his quarters and arranged for him to play and tour the land. It is remarkable that he could manage to travel and play at all, as he was now in the final stages of tuberculosis.

During his time in England, he played for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and met Charles Dickens. He had this to say of England: "Their orchestra resembles their roast beef and their turtle soup; it's strong, it's famous . . . but that is all."

He returned to Paris in late 1848, weighing barely 90 pounds! His beloved sister Louise came from Poland to be with him, as well as his old friend the Abbé Jelowicki. Although there are differing accounts of his last days, it is generally agreed that at the very end Chopin made a confession of faith with his dear friend the abbé present.

The abbé later wrote: "Day and night he held my hand, and would not let me leave him. . . . Soon he called upon Jesus and Mary, with a fervor that reached to heaven. He made the most touching utterances. 'I love God and man,' he said. 'I am happy so to die; do not weep, my sister. My friends, do not weep. I am happy. Farewell, pray for me!' . . . Exhausted by deathly convulsions he said to his physicians, 'Let me die. Do not keep me longer in this world of exile. Why prolong my life when I have renounced all things and God has enlightened my soul? God calls me; why do you keep me back? . . . Thus died Chopin, and in truth, his death was the most beautiful concerto of all his life.'"

Chopin requested that **Mozart's** Requiem be played at his funeral. He died in October 1849. Thousands attended his funeral, and he was buried with his treasured urn of Polish soil. Although his body remained in Paris, his heart was sent to Poland. One writer said, "Paris never got the Polish out of the pianist."

Although Chopin lived during the time of the Romantic period, the influence of the Classical composers he so admired caused him to be, in some ways, like a few of the other composers we have studied, a bridge between the two styles.

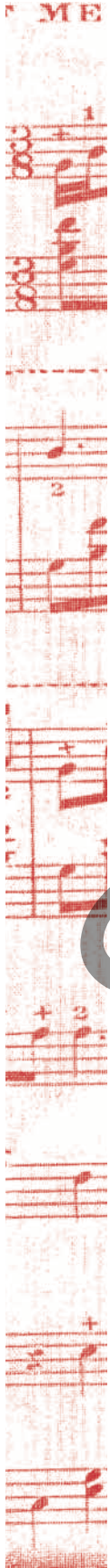
Teacher Notes

¹This was during the rebellion against the rule of the Russian Empire in Poland, called the "November Uprising" or the "Cadet Revolution."

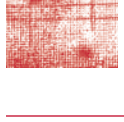
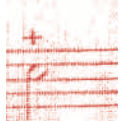
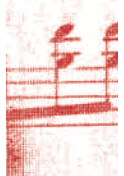
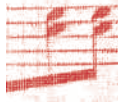
²The February 1848 revolution in France ended the "July Monarchy" (a period of monarchy rule from 1830–1848).

SAMPLE
PAGES

Frédéric (Fryderyk) Chopin *Student Review*



1. Chopin was born in _____ but lived his entire adult life in _____.
2. True or False: Before age 6, Chopin could play on the piano every melody he had ever heard and had even begun to improvise.
3. Which of the characteristics below describe Chopin? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. “Polish Prodigy” fun loving
 - b. shy sloppy
 - c. mannerly silly
 - d. unintelligent snobbish
4. From what disease did both Chopin and his beloved sister die?
 - a. muscular dystrophy
 - b. AIDS
 - c. tuberculosis
 - d. hepatitis B
5. True or False: Chopin preferred playing in large concert halls as opposed to small, intimate salons.
6. Match the following musical terms with their description:
 - a. étude = “music of the night”
 - b. tempo rubato = French for “studies”
 - c. nocturnes = “stolen time”



7. Chopin knew many writers, artists, musicians, and other famous people. Which of the following had he met? Circle all that apply.

Charles Dickens

Michelangelo

Victor Hugo

Mark Twain

Jane Austen

Georgia O’Keeffe

Queen Elizabeth

Franz Liszt

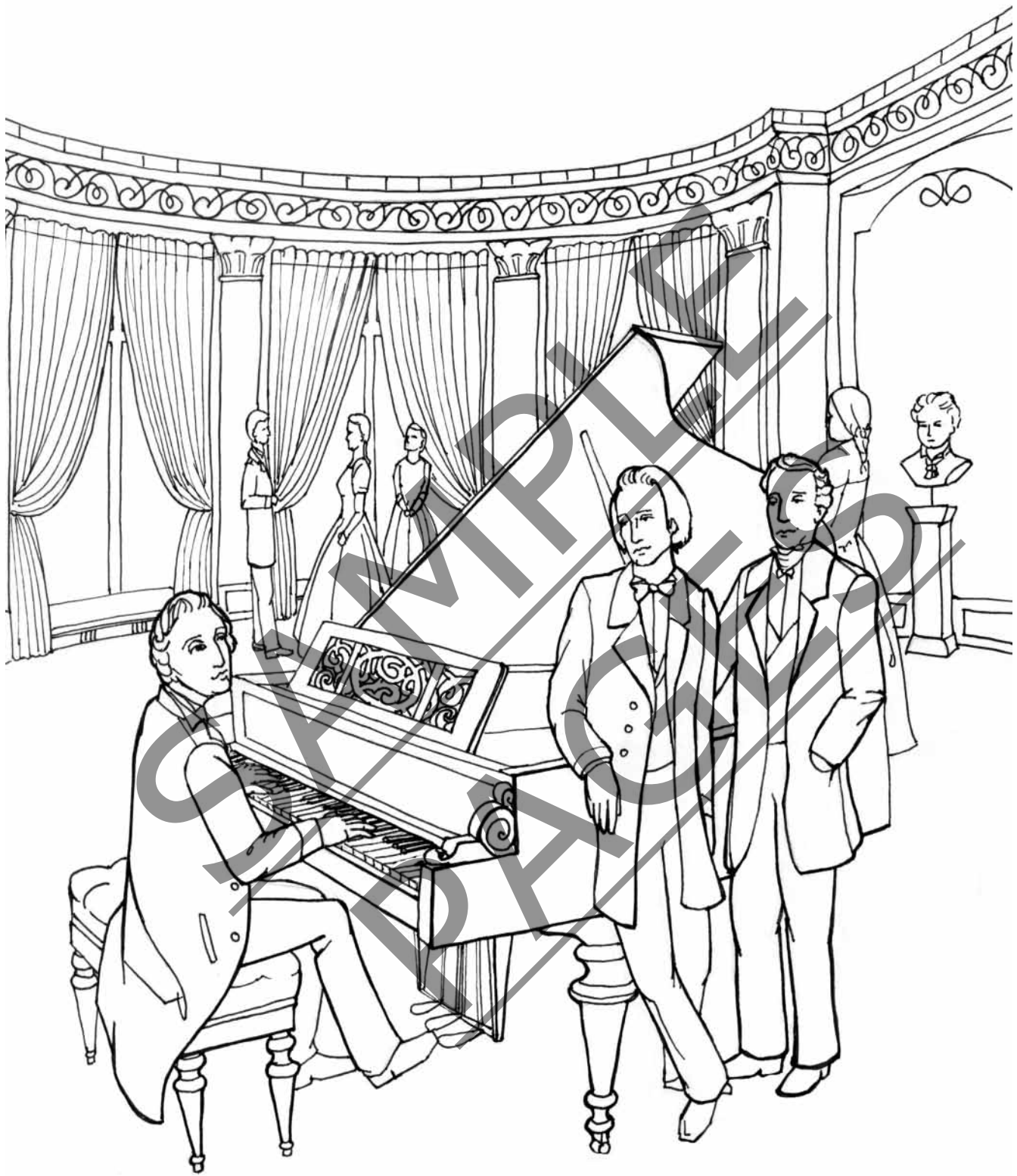
Eugene Delacroix

George Sand

8. What country was Chopin referring to when he said, “Their orchestra resembles their roast beef and their turtle soup; it’s strong, it’s famous . . . but that is all”?

9. Chopin, along with some other composers, is considered a “bridge” between the _____ period and the _____ period.

10. Chopin requested that Mozart’s _____ be played at his funeral, which was attended by thousands.



Chopin plays beautiful music for friends Liszt and Mendelssohn.

Certificate of Completion

awarded to

for completion of
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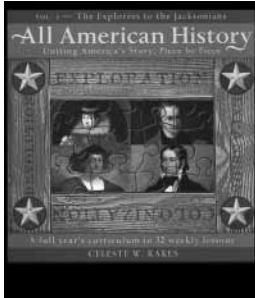
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Date

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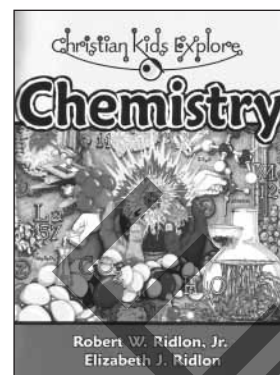
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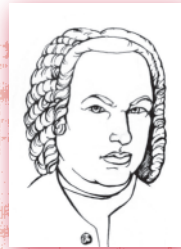
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Melissa is a lifelong musician and lover of music. She graduated from Grove City College with a B.A. in Communications. She and

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