

# Music 320 - Nineteenth Century

## Opera to 1850

### France:

Background: Through the 18th Century France had two opera traditions:

- Serious opera or *tragédie lyrique*: style inherited from Lully, Rameau, Gluck
- *Opéra comique*
- The French Revolution (1789-1799):
  - Opera used for propaganda purposes
  - Rescue opera evolved from *opéra comique*: theme was to "free yourself;" resonates with Revolution
  - Paris had two main theaters: *Paris Opéra* and *Opéra Comique*: these were the actual
  - Only *Paris Opéra* had permission to produce through-composed theater
- Post Revolution:
  - In Early 19th Century French were still in Revolutionary mode; opera could serve to bring about political unity
  - many composers came to Paris from Italy and Germany, shared regional styles, evolving more international style

In the first half of the 19th century there were two main kinds of opera in France:

- Grand opera grew out of serious tradition established by Gluck in mid-18th Century, which in turn followed earlier serious trends (Lully, Rameau). Grand operas were commissioned for the Paris Opera by the *Académie Royale de la Musique* (1828 - 1870); they were serious and had historical subjects; ballet, etc. Grand opera featured lots of vocal display in arias. Da Capo format not favored. Lots of spectacle: processions, battle scenes etc.
  - Some composers: Giacomo Meyerbeer (*L'Africaine*, *Les Huguenots*), Hector Berlioz (*Les Troyens*, *Benvenuto Cellini*)
  - *opéra comique*, not necessarily funny, but different from serious opera, e.g. contains spoken dialogue. At first *opéra comique* was light-hearted, maybe sentimental; later incorporated truly tragic events

Later in 19th Century many genres developed: *opéra bouffé*, operetta, *opéra lyrique*, dramatic ballet