French Opera

Historical Background

- Napoleon
  - Coup 1799
  - Empire until 1814
    - Elba
  - Returned 1815
    - Waterloo
- Louis 18th (r. 1814-24)
  - “Bourbon” Monarchy
- “July” Revolution of 1830
  - Decline of Royal Patronage
  - Louis Véron

Opera Comique

- Semi-Serious
  - Social and Political issues
  - Revolutionary Propaganda
  - Patriotic
- Spoken Dialogue
- Rescue Operas
  - Horror, violence, Natural Catastrophes
- Composers
  - Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842)
  - Etienne-Nicolas Méhul (1763-1817)
- Developed into Lyric Opera
  - Gounod: Faust (1859)
  - Bizet: Carmen (1875)
## Grand Opera

- **Spectacle with Music**
  - Machinery, Ballet, Chorus, Crowd Scenes
  - Public Ceremonies
- **Early composers**
  - Francois Auber, Gioachino Rossini
- **Eugene Scribe**
  - Librettist
- **Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)**
  - Composer of *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*
- **Influenced Massenet, Bellini, Verdi, Wagner, Milhaud, Barber and Corigliano**

## Other Information

### Traits of Grand Opera
- Sung Throughout
- No Pure Recitative
- Arias at the beginning of scenes
- Festive Settings
- Common Folk and Aristocracy Depicted
- Continuity of Plot
- Scenery as Environment
- Controllable Gas Lighting

### Paris became the Opera Capital of Europe
- Four Theatres
  - L’Opera
  - L’Opera-Comique
  - Theatre Italien
  - L’Opera National (1847-70)
    - Theatre-Lyrique