

THE CONCERTO THROUGH TIME

KEY IDEAS & CONCEPTS

- 1. Solo and orchestra** A concerto involves a solo instrument (**solo concerto**) OR a group of solo instruments (**concerto grosso**) with an **orchestral accompaniment**.
- 2. Three movements** Most concertos are in three **movements**: 1. fast 2. slow 3. fast
- 3. Virtuosity** One of the main ideas of a concerto is to show off the capabilities of the solo instrument and/or the solo performer.
- 4. Interplay between solo and orchestra** How the solo instrument(s) interact with the orchestra is very important. The orchestra may play the main melody or have an accompanying role.

BAROQUE

[1600...ish - 1750...ish]

- 1. Small orchestra**, consisting of strings and **continuo**.
- 2. Concerto grosso** very popular.
- 3. Ritornello form** often used for first movement. Second movement often very short, sometimes **improvised**.
- 4. Diatonic harmony**, mostly based on chords I, IV and V, and **cycles of 5ths**.
- Use of **ornaments (trills, grace notes)** – mostly left to performer to decide.
- Often uses **contrapuntal textures, terraced dynamics** and **melodic sequences**.
- Music feels **continuous**, each movement has a set tempo/mood that does not change.
- Composers usually **employed** by nobility or the church: had to write pieces their employers approved of.
- JS Bach, Vivaldi, Corelli**.

CLASSICAL

[1750 - 1800...ish]

- 10. Medium-sized orchestra**. Now has separate **woodwind section** including **clarinets**. **No continuo**. May have **horns** and **timpani**.
- Nearly all concertos **solo**. **Piano** and **clarinet** concertos popular as new instruments.
- Slightly longer concertos. **Sonata form** often used for first movement. Written-out second movements. **Rondo form** often used in third movement.
- Diatonic** harmony.
- Ornaments (trills, grace notes)** used but often indicated by composer.
- Melody-dominated homophony. Periodic phrasing (equal phrases)**. More **subtle changes of dynamics** shown in score.
- Composers **employed** but beginning to put on own concerts in new **concert halls**.
- Use of **cadenzas**.
- Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven**.

ROMANTIC

[1800...ish - 1900...ish]

- 19. Large orchestra**. May include large brass and percussion section, and even **harp**. Brass instruments now have **valves**.
- Solo concertos**, often much **longer** and more **virtuosic**. **Cadenzas** very important. Piano, violin and cello popular. Celebrity performers. Large concert halls.
- Chromatic harmony**.
- Dramatic, emotional** music, often with big contrasts of mood, dynamics and tempo.
- Most composers **freelance** and rely on **commissions**.
- Mendelssohn, Chopin, Brahms, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky**

KEY TERMS:

- 1. Acciaccatura:** (Pronounced: a-chak-a-toora). An ornament: a very quick, 'crushed' grace note.
- 2. Appoggiatura:** (Pronounced a-poj-a-toora). A slightly longer grace note.
- 3. Binary form:** in two sections: A B.
- 4. Cadenza:** The orchestra stops and the soloist has a virtuosic solo section that sounds improvised.
- 5. Chromatic harmony:** Harmony that uses more complex chords, with notes from outside of the major/minor scale.
- 6. Cycle of 5ths:** A chord progression where the root notes are a 5th apart, e.g. E-A-D-G-C.
- 7. Commission:** When someone pays a composer to write a specific piece.
- 8. Concertino:** The group of soloists in a concerto grosso.
- 9. Concerto grosso:** A concerto with a group of soloists (not just one soloist).
- 10. Continuo:** Continuous bassline/accompaniment, played by a bass instrument (often cello) and a chord instrument (often the harpsichord)
- 11. Contrapuntal / Polyphonic:** Independent melodic lines sounding together.
- 12. Diatonic harmony:** In a major or minor key. Based on chords I, IV and V (these chords are known as the primary triads)
- 13. Freelance:** Self-employed.
- 14. Homophonic texture:** A texture where there is a melody and an accompaniment.
- 15. Ornament:** Decorative notes, e.g. acciaccaturas, appoggiaturas, trills.
- 16. Periodic phrasing:** Pairs of phrases organised in a question-answer format. Balanced phrase lengths.
- 17. Ripieno:** The orchestral backing in a concerto grosso.
- 18. Ritornello:** A recurring section.
- 19. Rondo:** A structure with a recurring section eg A B A C A D A.
- 20. Sequence:** Where a motif is repeated higher or lower each time.
- 21. Solo concerto:** A concerto with only one soloist.
- 22. Sonata form:** A structure with three sections: exposition, development and recapitulation.
- 23. Terraced dynamics:** Either loud or soft. No gradual changes (crescendos or diminuendos).
- 24. Ternary form:** In three sections: A B A.
- 25. Trill:** Alternating quickly between two adjacent notes.
- 26. Tutti:** A section in which everybody plays.
- 27. Valves:** On brass instruments, they allow playing of every chromatic note.
- 28. Virtuoso:** Difficult to play.