

What to expect in your listening exam

Everyone listens to music. We all have songs and pieces of music that we like, and we all have those that we dislike. We discuss music with those around us, forming and changing our opinions all the time.

What makes a GCSE Music student different? Studying music teaches you to listen to music carefully, and also to comment on specific musical details you hear. Not only will you be able to describe certain features of the music, but you will also be able to explain why music sounds the way it does. These skills are not limited to the music studied on the course, but can be applied to any music you hear, in any context. Musicians' listening skills are their superpower!

A listening exam that lasts up to **1h 30m** is **40%** of your qualification. You will hear extracts from various pieces of music, and be asked to write short or long responses to what you hear. In addition, the knowledge you gain from studying the Areas of Study will help you deliver sensitive performances and more musical compositions.

The following pages will teach you about the types of music you will hear in the exam, and how to listen carefully to what you hear. The exam preparation section (see page 165) will go into more detail about how to approach the kind of questions you will find in the exam.

Areas of Study: What you need to know

There are four Areas of Study that will come up in the listening exam:

- **AoS2: The Concerto Through Time**
- **AoS3: Rhythms of the World**
- **AoS4: Film Music**
- **AoS5: Conventions of Pop.**

For each of these areas you will need to know and understand:

- The musical characteristics of the various styles and genres in each Area of Study.
- The background and historical development of each Area of Study.
- The cultures and audiences surrounding each Area of Study.
- Some details about important musicians and composers in each Area of Study.

Listening to music properly

Although you'll need to know specific information about each of the Areas of Study, it's really important that you learn to analyse any piece of music that you hear.

Start by thinking about the elements of music. How are these elements used in the pieces or songs that you like listening to?

The following table explains the kind of thing that each element of music includes:

Melody and harmony	<p>This refers to how composers use melody (tunes) and harmony (chords). It can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Melodic devices (e.g. sequence) ■ Chord progressions ■ Cadences.
Tonality	<p>Tonality refers to music that is based around a key and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Major ■ Minor ■ Modulation (changes of key).
Structure	<p>How composers organise music using simple structures, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Verse and chorus ■ Call and response ■ Binary or ternary form ■ Theme and variations.
Instruments (and timbre)	<p>Which instruments are used. Pay attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Whether the instruments belong to a specific ensemble (e.g. rock band, orchestra) ■ 'Timbre' refers to the specific sound quality of an instrument.
Articulation	<p>Specific directions for how the music is performed. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legato ■ Staccato ■ Specific instrumental techniques, such as pizzicato on string instruments.
Texture	<p>How musical lines or parts fit together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unison ■ Melody and accompaniment ■ Homophonic ■ Polyphonic ■ Monophonic.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

Tempo, metre and rhythm includes:

- Pulse
- Simple time
- Compound time
- Basic rhythmic devices (e.g. dotted rhythms or triplets).

Dynamics

Basic dynamic devices, such as:

- Loud and soft
- Crescendo
- Diminuendo
- Effects such as terraced dynamics.

Use of technology

How modern technology has been used to create or change the piece. Techniques and devices such as:

- Remixing, looping, overdubbing, multi-tracking, sampling
- Effects (reverb, echo, EQ)
- Synthesiser, drum machine, sequencer, decks.

These terms, and many more, are explained in much more detail in the glossary (page 188), but it is a good idea to think in terms of these elements when listening to music.

Like your performing skills, your listening skills get better with practice. Try to get into the habit of listening carefully to every piece of music you hear. When you can, read through the following 'listening grid' while listening to a piece of music and write some notes based on the suggested questions. It is a good idea to listen to pieces related to the Areas of Study, but you can do this exercise with any piece of music.

Practice listening grid**Melody**

- Does the melody use stepwise movement, and/or move by leaps?
- Does the melody have a small or a large range?
- Can you hear any devices, such as a improvisation, imitation, dialogue or sequence?

Harmony

- Are the chords played as block chords, broken chords or arpeggios?
- Are you able to hear any major or minor chords?
- Are you able to hear diatonic, or chromatic harmony?
- Does the piece use a set chord progression, or does it change?
- Does the accompaniment use a repeated riff/ostinato?

Tonality

- Does the piece modulate (change key) at any point?
- Is the piece in a major or minor key?

- Structure**
- Does the piece have repeated sections? If so, can you name a typical structure?
 - Does it have a verse/chorus structure, or use an introduction or instrumental break?
- Instruments (and timbre)**
- Can you name the instruments used and their families? Is it a typical ensemble such as an orchestra or jazz group?
 - Does the piece use technology to change the sound of the instruments?
 - Can you pick out any techniques the instruments use, such as pizzicato, staccato, bends or tremolo?
 - If you can hear voices, are they singing syllabic or melismatic phrases?
- Articulation**
- How is the music performed? Is the melody performed legato or staccato, for example?
 - Are there any particular instrumental techniques used, such as glissando or staccato?
- Texture**
- Can you hear one solo line, or a melody and accompaniment?
 - Can you describe how the accompaniment is playing?
 - Is the texture thick or thin? Does it change during the extract?
 - Do the parts move together (homophonic) or are there interweaving lines (polyphonic)?
 - Can you hear additional parts such as a countermelody or **descant**?
- Tempo, metre and rhythm**
- Is the piece fast or slow? Can you use a specific term such as andante or presto to describe this?
 - Does the piece change tempo, or pause at any point?
 - Can you hear a steady beat? Can you identify the time signature?
 - Does the piece use syncopation, swung rhythms, dotted rhythms or polyrhythms?
- Dynamics**
- What are the dynamics and do they change throughout the extract?
 - Do the dynamics change gradually or suddenly?
 - Can you use technical terms or musical vocabulary to describe this?
- Use of technology**
- Has technology been used to change the sound of this piece?
 - Can you name any devices that may have been used, such as a drum machine or synthesiser?
 - Can you hear any effects, such as distortion or reverb?

If you do not understand the terms used in the grid, don't worry. We will encounter them in the following section, and they can also be found in the glossary.

As you improve your listening skills, you will then be able to talk about the style of a piece of music, or the period it comes from. After that, you will be able to identify features that are typical of that style or period.

Ok, let's get started!

A young man with dark hair, wearing a blue suit jacket over a dark shirt, is playing a cello. He is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The background is dark with some bokeh light effects, suggesting a stage or concert hall setting.

Listening And Appraising

CONCERTOS OF THE BAROQUE, CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC ERAS

The concerto as a musical genre has been the height of achievement for classically trained soloists for over 300 years.



A concert orchestra

What is a concerto?

VIRTUOSO

A virtuoso is a performer who has an outstanding technical ability on their instrument. Music that requires a virtuoso to play it can be described as 'virtuosic'.

ORNAMENTATION

'Ornaments' are decorative notes that help to fill out a melody. They often include short, fast notes, and rely to some extent on improvisation. Examples of ornaments are: trills, turns, mordents, acciaccaturas and grace notes.

The concerto is a work for a solo instrument that is accompanied by an orchestra. Be aware that in the earliest concertos (from the Baroque period) there were often two or more soloists.

The concerto usually has three movements (fast-slow-fast).

A concerto's movements feature the following:

- **Tutti** sections, where the full orchestra plays.
- **Solo** sections, where the spotlight is on the solo instrument. It may be lightly accompanied by sections of the orchestra or the soloist might play alone.
- **Cadenza**, from the Classical period onwards. This is an unaccompanied passage for the soloist, who will often play **virtuosically** (quick scales/arpeggios at extreme registers, large leaps, **ornamentation**). The cadenza usually comes towards the end of the first movement. Cadenzas were initially improvised but by the Romantic period they were composed in advance by the composer or the performer.
- **Themes** (musical phrases and ideas) are passed between the soloist and orchestra.

The musical examples used in this section will illustrate how the concerto evolved from the Baroque period through to the Romantic period. These examples will only be extracts (or a brief overview) of movements from the concertos. You should listen to the rest of the movement and the rest of the concerto so that you understand the music in the context of the rest of the work.

What to look out for in this section:

- The role of the soloist and how it changes over time.
- How the soloist's music becomes more virtuosic, especially into the Romantic period.
- The changing relationship between the soloist and orchestra.
- How the orchestra grows from the Baroque period through to the Romantic period.

KEY FEATURES OF THE BAROQUE PERIOD (C. 1600–1750)

- The use of a **continuo section** (cello, lute and either harpsichord or organ). The cello would play the bass line while the chordal instrument would play chords to fill in the texture.
- Decorative melodies, often using ornamentation.
- **Terraced dynamics** - the whole ensemble will change volume suddenly. There are rarely any crescendos or diminuendos. Every part of the ensemble is the same dynamic at any one time.
- Balanced phrases (phrase lengths of an even number).
- A variety of textures were used in the Baroque period. These include: **polyphonic/contrapuntal** (independent melodies); **homophonic** (all parts move together in harmony); and **melody and accompaniment** (melody over an accompaniment).
- **Modulations** were made to related keys (e.g. **dominant** or **relative minor**). In the concerto, the tutti section would often return with the same thematic material but in different keys.
- Baroque musicians were usually court musicians, employed by churches or the aristocracy. They wrote for the performers available to them, so the instrumentation of some works (e.g. J. S. Bach's Brandenburg concertos) is often different from the norm.

The orchestra in the Baroque period

The orchestra was relatively small in the Baroque era, and at first, depended on the performers at the disposal of the composer:

- Strings - two or three players per section.
- Woodwind - recorders or wooden flutes, oboes, bassoon.
- Brass - sometimes trumpets and horns (none with valves).
- Timpani - two drums, tuned to the tonic and the dominant of the relevant key.

The instruments most likely to have been soloists in concertos were violin, cello, harpsichord, and recorder. The oboe and flute were also used in several of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg concertos.

The Baroque solo concerto and concerto grosso

J. S. Bach, Handel, Vivaldi and Corelli – these were some of the most important composers of concertos in the Baroque era. The concerto grosso was eventually replaced by the solo concerto.

The solo concerto

An example of a Baroque solo concerto is Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor.

For a live performance of this piece, search on YouTube for the 'Voices Of Music' recording. Listen to (and watch) the first movement.

Notice how small the orchestra is, and how the majority of the musicians are standing. This was typical of a Baroque performance, as was the absence of a conductor. You will see that the soloist leads very clearly from her instrument.

Analysis: Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons'

There are many studio recordings of this piece, but for a live version, search for 'Janine Jansen Vivaldi The Four Seasons Amsterdam Sinfonietta' on YouTube. The score is available commercially and can be downloaded from the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP).

Composed in 1723, Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons' comprises four separate violin concertos, named after the four seasons. The concertos were presented with poems about each season, whose lines were clearly written in the score to make no doubt about the work's programmatic nature. This was quite unusual for music at this time.

Baroque features of Vivaldi's 'Spring'

Listen and watch the first movement of Janine Jansen's performance of 'Spring' (0:00–3:20).

'Spring' contains many features of Baroque music; you'll find a list of some of these characteristics on the next page.

TASK

There are many features of Baroque music in Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor. For example, the texture is often contrapuntal, with independent melodies in the accompanying parts. Look at the blue 'Key Features' box on the previous page. How many other features of Baroque music can you see and hear in this piece?

Musical elements and devices	Features of Baroque music found in Vivaldi's 'Spring' concerto (1st movement)
Instruments and timbre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Violin solo accompanied by a string orchestra, and continuo section. ■ In the first solo section (bars 13-27), there are Violin 1 and Violin 2 soloists as well as the main solo violin. This is very similar to a concerto grosso (see the next page) in its instrumentation.
Pitch and melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The opening of this concerto and many of the solo passages are quite high in the violin's register. This contributes to the virtuosic nature of the solo line, e.g. bars 47-55. ■ In bar 59, Vivaldi uses a long sustained pedal note below the solo instruments for seven bars, which gives a feeling of anticipation for the returning tutti (full orchestra) section.
Dynamics, expression and articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The opening phrase being repeated at a <i>p</i> dynamic is a perfect example of terraced dynamics. ■ Staccato notes contribute to the crisp feeling of spring.
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Much of this movement is homophonic - the parts move together in largely the same rhythm and in harmony (see bars 1-13). ■ The first solo passage is polyphonic: the three violins have independent melodies which weave in and out of each other (bars 14-27). ■ The movement alternates tutti (full orchestra) sections and solo sections.
Structure, phrasing and cadences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the tutti sections, the same passage of music (first heard at 0:19) keeps recurring, a bit like a chorus in a song. This is known as a ritornello section. ■ Most phrases use an even number of bars (balanced phrases), although the opening tutti section uses three-bar phrases.
Harmony and tonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The tonality is E major (a nice bright key for springtime!) and the chords are mainly major or minor. The music has modulated to C# minor (the relative minor of E) in bar 59.
Repetition, sequence and imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Phrases are often repeated with a different dynamic (e.g. bars 7-13). ■ The use of sequences can be found in bars 47-50, where the phrase rises each time it is played. ■ In the first solo passage, imitation between the three solo violins is a feature of this section (bars 14-27)
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bars 14-27 include many 'birdlike' ornaments such as mordents (bar 13-14, violin solo) and trills (bar 14, Violin 2). These are clearly used to illustrate a line from the original poem ('the birds welcome spring in joyful song').

Other things to consider:

- The soloist will usually play along in the tutti sections (this changes in the Classical period).
- Although this is essentially a solo violin concerto, 'The Four Seasons' also shows the influence of the *concerto grosso* (see below).
- Giving a title to the work was fashionable at the time, but Vivaldi is unique in the way he has composed specific music for specific lines of text.
- Notice the string **tremolo** in bars 47–55, where the strings furiously play repeated notes as quickly as possible to represent the storm.

BAROQUE SOLO CONCERTO EXAMPLES

For further examples of the Baroque solo concerto, listen to:

- The 2nd movement from Albinoni's Concerto Op. 9 No. 2 for oboe.
- The 3rd movement from J. S. Bach's Concerto in A minor for violin.

In each of these, you can hear how the movements differ in character: the 2nd movement is slow, giving the soloist an opportunity to play in a smooth *cantabile* (songlike) style, whereas the 3rd movement is fast (like the 1st movement).

The Baroque concerto grosso

The concerto grosso was a popular form in the Baroque period, but did not survive beyond it. Instead of one solo instrument, a concerto grosso has a small group of soloists – usually two to three instruments.

They form the *concertino* section, which plays together and in contrast to the *ripieno* section (the rest of the orchestra – usually strings only).

The two contrasting groups of instruments in the concerto grosso are:

- The **concertino** section. This would normally comprise two violins and a cello (though J. S. Bach's Brandenburg concertos used a variety of instruments, including violin, trumpet, recorder and oboe). These are the **soloists**.
- The **ripieno**. This is usually the string section, alongside the **continuo** section.

Corelli's Concerto Grosso in F major

Listen to Corelli: Op. 6 No. 2 in F major, by Musica Amphion (search on YouTube, or find it in the iTunes store). This is a concerto grosso for two violins, cello, strings and a continuo section in four movements:

- Vivace-Allegro-Adagio-Allegro-Largo andante (0:00-4:20)
- Allegro-Adagio (4:22-6:09)
- Grave-Andante Largo (6:10-8:11)
- Allegro (8:12-end).



Arcangelo Corelli was known for his concerti grossi.

Start by listening to the 1st movement. The introduction to the piece starts with a question and answer section between the **concertino** section and the **ripieno**.

The ripieno continues to provide short interludes between the concertino phrases. You'll hear the following extract at 0:29 on the recording (bars 6-10 of the Allegro).

MOVEMENTS

The different movements in a concerto are named after their **tempo markings**. Whatever the composer's nationality, these will almost always be Italian words, such as 'Allegro' or 'Adagio'.

ITALIAN ENDINGS

In this section there are lots of Italian descriptions. Don't be phased by the word 'concerti' - it's just the plural form of 'concerto'.

Extract from 1st movement

NOTE: The concertino section has been marked in RED and the ripieno in PURPLE.

Allegro

Solo Vln. I

Solo Vln. II

Solo Cello

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Continuo

(continued...)

SI. Vln. I

SI. Vln. II

SI. Cello

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Cont.

Listen out for the interaction between the concertino and the ripieno, creating a **dialogue** between the two parts.

4th movement - opening bars

NOTE: The concertino section has been marked in RED and the ripieno in PURPLE.

Allegro

Solo Vln. I

Solo Vln. II

Solo Cello

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Continuo

Sl. Vln. I

Sl. Vln. II

Sl. Cello

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Cont.

Notice how the ripieno punctuates the texture by joining in with the concertino at the ends of phrases.

FURTHER LISTENING

- **Concerto Grosso**
Op. 6 No. 8 'Christmas Concerto' (Corelli)
- **Concerto Grosso**
Op. 3 No. 1 (Handel)
- **Brandenburg**
Concerto No. 2 in F (J. S. Bach).

Sometimes the concertino and ripieno all play the same thing. Listen to the 3rd movement, Grave-Andante Largo for an example of this.

The harpsichord often fills in the texture, especially in the slow movements, e.g. in the final three bars of the Andante Largo (7:50–8:10 on YouTube). You can hear the harpsichord playing scales and decorations to fill in the rests. You can also hear a **lute** playing. The lute was a common addition to the continuo section.

There are a variety of textures used throughout the piece. You can see homophonic writing in our second extract (on page 62). **Imitative** entries are a feature of the fast movements, but the texture rarely lasts more than four bars before the music returns to a more homophonic texture. Listen to the first Allegro (0:22–0:25) to hear an example of this.

LISTENING TASK

J. S. Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G major, 1st movement

Search for: 'Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G major, BWV 1049 (Freiburger Barockorchester)' on YouTube.

Listen to 0:12–1:30.

1. Can you hear which are the instruments of the concertino section (the soloists) before they appear on the screen? (2)
2. Name the chordal instrument you can hear, which is at the heart of the continuo section. (1)
3. Can you describe the opening melodic idea played by one of the recorders (this is also repeated a number of times in this opening section)? (2)

Listen to the first solo passage from 1:30–2:13.

4. What melodic device can you hear being used frequently in the violin melody? (1)
5. Which term best describes the majority of the violin writing? (1)
 - i. **Scalic** ii. **Octave leaps** iii. **Arpeggios**

Listen to 2:23–2:30.

6. How does the tonality of this section compare to the tonality of the opening? (1)

Listen to 2:43–3:10.

7. Identify the melodic device which is used when the two recorders play. (1)

Listen to 3:11–3:33.

8. The violin part is very technically demanding. What musical term describes this type of playing? (1)

See answers on page 172.

The concerto of the Classical era

Mozart and Beethoven were two of the great masters of the Classical period of musical history. Here we explore the development of the concerto through their legacy.

The development of the Classical concerto

The key features of the Classical period (1750–c. 1810):

- Melody and accompaniment was the predominant texture.
- Homophonic textures.
- Balanced phrasing, usually in four or eight bars with question and answer phrases.
- Melody is usually in the 1st Violins (in orchestral or chamber music).
- Harmony and tonality were **diatonic**, with modulations going to closely related keys (e.g. dominant, relative minor).
- The use of **Alberti bass** (in piano music and orchestra accompaniment).
- Dynamic ranges increased. Crescendos and diminuendos appeared, as well as more extreme and moderate dynamics, e.g. *pp*, *ff*, *mp*, *mf*.
- The role of the woodwind and brass would be to colour and punctuate the texture.
- Brass was often used in loud passages, accompanied by timpani.
- The continuo section was no longer required in the Classical period, as textures became fuller and harmonies clearer.
- Some orchestras still performed without a conductor (especially in a concerto).

The orchestra in the Classical period

The orchestra became a little larger:

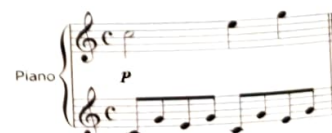
- Strings – a few more players (up to six) per section.
- Woodwind – there would usually be two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, and towards the end of the period, two clarinets.
- Brass – two french horns and two trumpets were also often used.
- Percussion – if trumpets were in the orchestra, they would usually be accompanied by two timpani.

DIATONIC

If a piece is diatonic, it uses (almost) exclusively notes that fit within the key of the piece. A piece in C major would use just the white notes of the piano, with few or no accidentals.

ALBERTI BASS

This a simple style of accompaniment named after Domenico Alberti, who used it frequently. It is a broken chord accompaniment figure, usually in quavers, giving the piece more movement.





New instruments

The piano was developed in the Classical period and became a popular instrument, as a solo instrument in the concerto, and as a solo and chamber music instrument.

The clarinet was also developed and became part of the late Classical orchestra. Mozart wrote a clarinet quintet and clarinet concerto in the final years of his life.

Changes in the structure

- There were usually three movements in the Classical concerto, which were all longer than movements from the Baroque period.
- The cadenza became a part of the concerto, usually towards the end of the first movement.
- Unlike the Baroque period, the soloist would not play in the tutti sections.

Listening tasks

Mozart: Flute Concerto

Listen to the 2nd movement of Mozart's Concerto for Flute in D major K. 314.

A score can be downloaded from the IMSLP website, and is commercially available. The timings on the next page refer to the recording of the piece by the Swedish Chamber Orchestra (Naxos Records, available to stream and download).

Originally composed in 1777 as an oboe concerto in C, Mozart reworked this concerto into his Flute Concerto in D in 1778. It was commissioned by the Dutch flautist Ferdinand de Jean. De Jean refused to pay Mozart for this concerto, because it was based on his oboe concerto!

Movements:

- Allegro aperto
- Andante ma non troppo
- Allegro

Musical elements and devices	Features of Classical music found in the 2nd movement of Mozart's Flute Concerto
Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Solo flute. ■ String section. ■ Two French horns in G. ■ Two oboes. ■ The small wind section allows the solo flute to be heard more clearly above the orchestra.
Pitch and melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The melody is generally quite simple. As this is the 2nd movement, the focus is not on virtuosity but making a lyrical and beautiful sound. ■ The melody is often on top of the texture. ■ There is often dialogue between the flute and the 1st Violins (bars 27-30), at 1:41 on the recording. ■ The pause at bar 86 gives an opportunity for the flute to improvise a short cadenza (listen from 5:22).
Dynamics, expression and articulation	<p>The dynamics are often the same (mainly <i>p</i> or <i>f</i>), but crescendos are present, as is the occasional <i>fp</i> (sudden change from loud to soft).</p>
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ While the texture is generally melody and accompaniment, Mozart varies this throughout the movement: ■ In the orchestral introduction (bars 1-10) the violins play the melody in 3rds. The oboes and horns provide a more sustained accompaniment. ■ When the flute enters, it plays the melody while the violins play repeated quavers. ■ Notice in bar 26 how the 2nd Violins play an Alberti bass figure in semiquavers. ■ In general, the horns and oboes play sustained notes with occasional movement at cadences.
Structure, phrasing and cadences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The movement is in ternary form (ABA). ■ Phrases lengths are usually four bars with clear cadences.
Harmony and tonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The movement is in G major, using mainly primary chords, with the occasional chromatic chord (e.g. diminished chord, bar 22, at 1:22 on the recording). ■ Section A is in G major (tonic). ■ Section B is in D major (dominant). ■ Section A is then repeated.
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mozart uses the trills in both the flute and orchestral parts to decorate the melody. This usually occurs at cadences (e.g. bars 39-40, at 2:26 on the recording) but also within phrases (bar 28 of the flute solo, at 1:45 on the recording). ■ Acciaccaturas are also used in the flute melody (e.g. bar 29, at 1:48 on the recording).

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 3

Listen to Piano Concerto No. 3 (3rd movement) by Beethoven. There are many recordings available, including an excellent live performance on YouTube by the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

This concerto was written during 1796 and 1797 and was dedicated to Beethoven's pupil, the Countess of Bratislava. Despite being the first of Beethoven's piano concertos to be published, he had been writing music for many years previously.

- This movement is in **Rondo** form (a form where Section **A** returns throughout the movement, sometimes in different keys: **ABACADA**, etc.).
- This movement is **ABACABA** with the two **B** sections in G and C major respectively, and the **C** section in A minor.
- The movement begins with the solo piano instead of an orchestral introduction – this often happened in the final movement. The orchestra then comes in with the idea presented by the piano.
- The piano writing is virtuosic – fast passages of semiquavers, often at extreme registers of the piano.
- The piano textures are varied: dense chords, octave movement, single-line melody and single-line accompaniment, melody accompanied by chords.
- As with the other concertos, notice how the orchestral accompaniment becomes thinner in texture (fewer instruments) so that the solo piano is heard clearly in the texture.
- Dynamics become even more extreme, with **pp** and **ff** appearing throughout the movement. The use of off-beat **sf** accents was a signature of Beethoven's style and can be heard particularly in the orchestra tutti sections.
- The harmonic language has become slightly more ambitious, with more chromatic moments in both the melody and the chords.

FURTHER LISTENING

- Cello Concerto No. 9 (Boccherini)
- Clarinet Concerto (Mozart)
- Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor (Mozart)
(the final movement is in theme and variations form)
- Trumpet Concerto in E flat (Haydn).

The Romantic concerto

We are not talking about 'romantic' with a small r, but Romantic with a capital R - the cultural period of history in which the concerto was further developed by composers such as Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov.

Features of the Romantic period

The Romantic period spanned c. 1810–1900. Important developments and features of this period included:

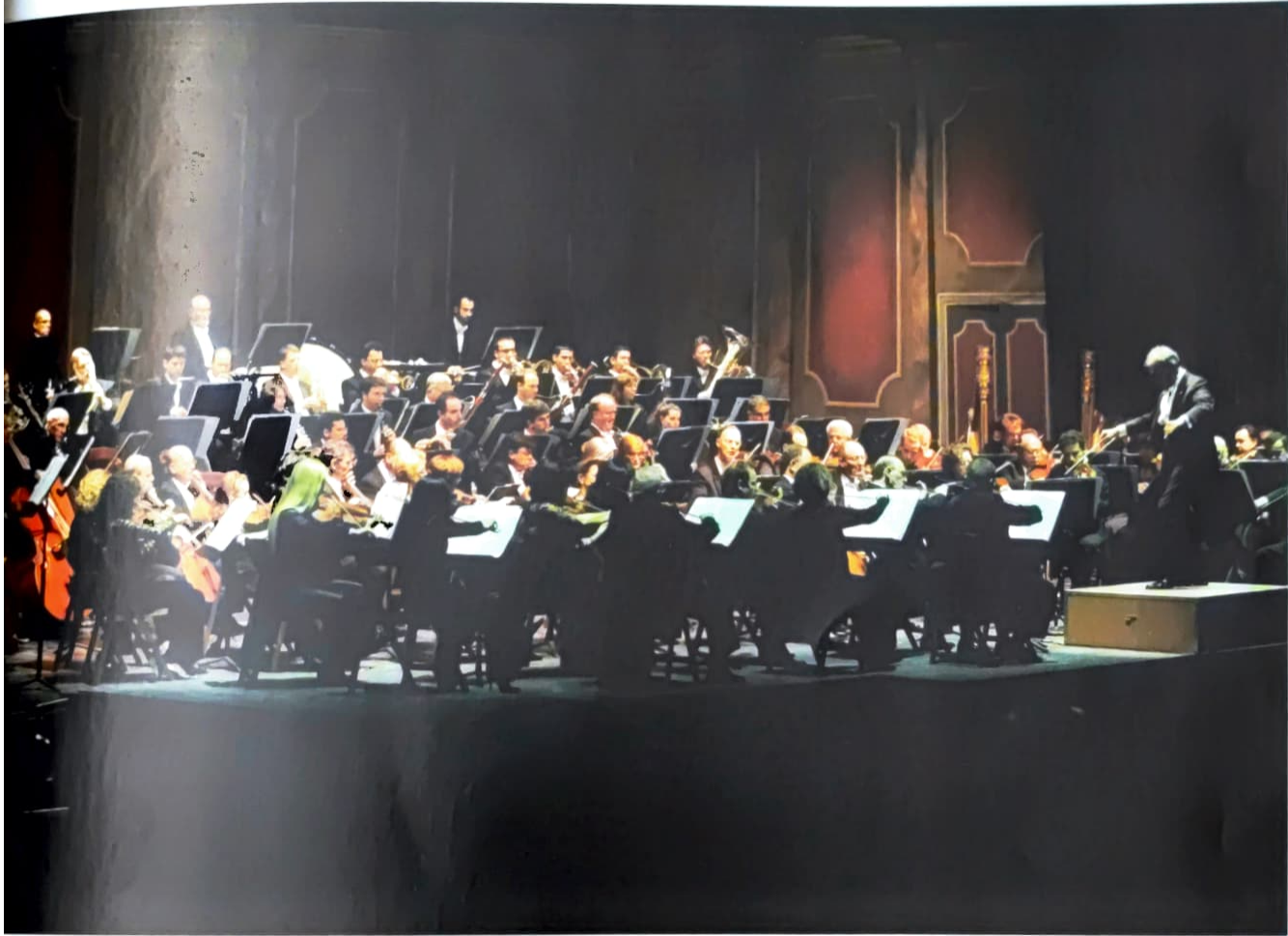
- The music was much more dramatic than the Classical period. Composers would often try to portray emotions or themes such as nature.
- Nationalist styles also emerged.
- Movements and works became even longer.
- While the harmony was still diatonic, chromatic chords and melodies were used much more frequently, as well as creating more **dissonance**. This made the music more expressive.
- Melodies became longer – the clear cadences of the Classical and Baroque periods are often blurred by the use of distantly related chords.
- Modulations were often made to distantly related keys.
- Textures were much denser/thicker – melodies would be **doubled** and there were newer instruments (see the next page).
- The woodwind and brass became much more prominent, often with lyrical solo lines.
- Dramatic contrasts in textures, exploring a wider range of pitches, dynamics, and timbre.
- Most orchestral performances required a conductor as the rhythms and textures had become much more complex.
- **Rubato** would often be used by the conductor and soloist. The strict tempo would be relaxed briefly (either by speeding up or slowing down), and this contributed to the expressive nature of the music.

DISSONANCE

If two or more notes 'clash' or create musical tension, we often describe this as dissonance. This often happens when composers use **chromatic** notes (notes from outside the key) in a chord.

DOUBLING

A melody is 'doubled' if it is performed by two or more different instruments at the same time. The different instruments either play in unison, or in octaves. This has the effect of making the melody 'stand out' much more.



The orchestra in the Romantic period

Once again, the orchestra became even bigger:

- Strings – there were larger string sections (many more desks per section), and the double bass section would have its own line of music (unlike in the Baroque and Classical periods where it would double the cellos).
- Woodwind – the clarinet had become an established member of this section and two of each instrument would be a standard instrumentation.
- Brass – trumpets, french horns, trombones and tuba would often be found. The number in each section would vary depending on the composition.
- Percussion – other instruments joined the timpani: bass drum, side drum, cymbals and more.

New instruments

The woodwind section would occasionally include its extended instruments: piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet and contrabassoon, extending the range and texture available to composers for the orchestra.

Changes in the concerto

- The soloist's writing was much more virtuosic. The music had become exceptionally demanding in comparison with the Classical and Baroque periods.
- The cadenzas were rarely improvised (due to their length and complexity) – they were either written by the composer or the performer, and there are often multiple versions for performers to choose from today.
- The usual orchestral introduction was sometimes abandoned for a dramatic opening from the soloist.
- Tutti melodies were not confined to the 1st Violins – a greater selection of instruments would play melodies.

LISTENING TASK

Brahms

Listen to the 2nd movement of Brahms' Violin Concerto – there are several performances available to view on YouTube. The timings in the following analysis refer to the Julia Fischer live recording, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting (available on YouTube).

The score can be downloaded from IMSLP, and is commercially available.

Brahms wrote this in 1878 and dedicated it to his friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim. The 2nd movement is the perfect combination of expressive and lyrical melodies while still being technically demanding for the violinist.

The 1st and 3rd movements demand a huge amount from the soloist: double and triple stopping (playing two or three notes simultaneously), as well as rapid scalar and arpeggiated passages to and from the highest parts of the violin.

Musical elements and devices

Instruments and timbre

Pitch and melody

Features of Romantic music found in the 2nd movement

Brahms truly exploits his instrumental timbres here:

- The instrumental introduction is written for the woodwind and french horn section (no strings at all!) with a beautiful oboe solo.
- The solo violin plays lyrically, exploring the extreme range of the instrument.
- The opening oboe theme is simple in terms of its shape and rhythm, but the violin decorates this with semiquaver passages throughout the movement. When the opening theme returns at 5:59, the solo violin plays very fast notes in octaves to accompany it.

Dynamics, expression and articulation

- As this is a lyrical slow movement, the predominant dynamic is *p*, but there are many crescendos and diminuendos, with dynamic and articulation markings being much more frequent and instrument-specific than in the Classical concerto.

Texture

- While the overall texture is best described as 'melody and accompaniment', the textures of the accompaniment are varied; sometimes **countermelodies** or imitative ideas emerge, and at other times the accompaniment can be quite simple.

Structure, phrasing and cadences

- Like the Classical concerto, the opening phrase lengths are even (usually four bars). However, after the violin enters, phrase lengths become unclear, mainly due to the extensive semiquaver passages and the absence of clear cadences (e.g. perfect, imperfect cadences).
- This movement is in **ternary** form (**ABA**). The **B** section begins at bar 52 (3:56), and the **A** section returns at bar 78 (5:59).

Tonality

- The movement opens in F major but the music modulates to unrelated keys (e.g. G \flat major at 3:30 and F \sharp minor at 4:15).
- Sometimes the tonality is unclear due to the chromaticism in the melody and harmony (e.g. 3:56–4:14).

Harmony

- Within these keys, chords venture far outside primary chords, with many chromatic chords and dissonances which contribute to the tonal uncertainty.

Repetition, sequence and imitation

- When the violin enters (2:28) the opening falling motif is imitated in the flute, and then the horn.



- This kind of imitation happens frequently throughout the movement with many instruments echoing the solo violin. This happens more often than it did in the Classical period.

Rachmaninov

Listen to Piano Concerto Op. 18 No. 2, 1st movement: **Moderato** (Rachmaninov). Many recordings can be found online (especially on YouTube), including one played by the great Polish-American pianist Arthur Rubinstein, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

The score can be downloaded from the IMSLP, and is commercially available.

GCSE MUSIC STUDY GUIDE

This particular concerto has become extremely popular, and many of its themes have been used in popular songs and films in the 20th century. It has many notable features:

- As well as two of each woodwind instrument, Rachmaninov uses four french horns, two trumpets, three trombones and a tuba. There are three timpani. In the final movement Rachmaninov also uses a bass drum and cymbals.
- The opening of the movement, from 0:00-0:50, begins with the solo piano playing eight very dramatic chords, which begin *pp* and end *ff*. The piano then launches into arpeggios, which span a huge range of the piano. The strings and clarinet enter with an agitated melody in C minor (the key of the concerto) while the piano accompanies.
- In the piano part, listen out for: block chords, arpeggios, melody at the top of the piano texture, and accompaniment by chords or arpeggios.
- Orchestral textures are also varied: the instrumental sections no longer play as a unit; Rachmaninov uses each instrument and exploits its timbre, e.g. the cello melody at Figure 2 (0:50-1:02) and the french horn melody at Figure 13 (7:48-8:05).
- As well as the orchestra accompanying the piano, and vice versa, there are many moments of dialogue between them, e.g. Figure 6 (3:44-4:04).
- The opening section (until 2:03, bar 79) is a good example of how the texture builds up and instruments gradually enter the texture. It is not until the around 2:00 that the whole orchestra plays together.
- You can see from the score that dynamics and articulations are everywhere. The chords start with a sustained marking, which gives way to accents, and crescendos and diminuendos can be found frequently throughout the music. This contributes to the expressive nature of the music.
- Notice how the soloist uses rubato – a good example of this is at around 2:13 where the new theme begins (*a tempo* – nine bars after Figure 4).

FURTHER LISTENING

- Violin Concerto (Tchaikovsky)
- Violin Concerto (Mendelssohn)
- Piano Concerto (Grieg)
- Cello Concerto (Dvořák)
- Horn Concerto (R. Strauss).

TIMINGS

Please note that all of the timings in this section refer to the Rubinstein/Chicago Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Fritz Reiner) recording of this piece.

KNOW YOUR COMPOSERS

You will often be asked to suggest possible composers and the relevant historical period.

LISTENING TASK

Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement

Listen to the 2nd movement of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 by searching for Krystian Zimerman's recording, with Seiji Ozawa conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Play from 0:50-1:43. You will usually hear an extract like this four times - the recording goes beyond the extract.

A single-stave score of the main melody is printed here.

1. Using the given rhythm, fill in the missing notes in bar 5. (7)
2. Describe the piano writing in this extract. (2)
3. Give two ways the composer creates a peaceful feeling to the music. (2)
4. Give two musical features of music from the Romantic period which you can hear in this extract. (2)

See answers on page 172.

The 'long answer'

You may be asked to compare extracts or write in more detail about an extract in prose, in which the quality of your written communication will be marked (spelling, grammar, and punctuation). This question will be marked with a *. Here is an example of a 'comparison question' from this Area of Study:

Listen to:

Extract A: Violin Concerto No. 5 K. 219, III: Rondo, Tempo Di Minuetto (Mozart).

Use the New Philharmonia Orchestra recording with Sir Alexander Gibson conducting (0:00-0:50).

Extract B: Violin Concerto Op. 35, III: Finale, Allegro vivacissimo (Tchaikovsky).

Use the recording of Joshua Bell conducting (for a change) and Maxim Eshkenazy on violin, with the Classic FM Orchestra (0:00-1:04).

* Using your knowledge of the Concerto Through Time, compare the two extracts in terms of the use of the solo instrument and orchestra (and how they interact) and how they reflect the music of the periods in which they were written.

See answers on page 173.

When asked to compare extracts, use comparative language, e.g. 'Extract B is slower/faster than Extract A'. Or connect two statements, e.g. 'Extract B is slow, whereas Extract A is fast'.