

# Western Classical Tradition

Baroque Genres



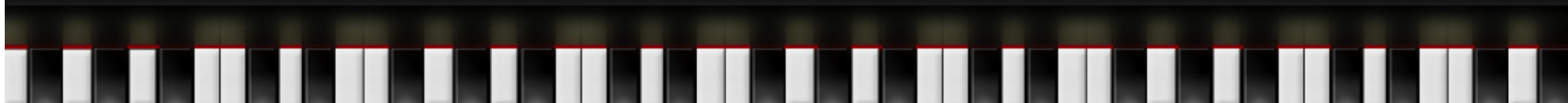
# The Suite

- # A suite is a collection of dances
- # Many suites were written by baroque composers for the harpsichord or orchestra
- # The different dances in a suite were usually in the same key, and in binary form.



# Binary Form

- # A piece in binary form has two sections of roughly equal length
- # The first section (A), is answered by the second section (B)
- # Usually, each section is repeated
- # French composers often included dances in rondo form, which is a multi-sectional form, e.g. ABACADA



# The Minuet

- # A popular dance during the baroque period was the minuet
- # This is a stately dance in  $3/4$  time
- # A minuet is in binary (AB) form, but often two different minuets (usually in a contrasting key) were played one after the other, with the first minuet repeated at the end to form an overall ABA (ternary form) structure



# Minuet Diagram

**A<sub>1</sub>**  
Minuet 1

**B**  
Minuet 2

**A<sub>2</sub>**  
Minuet 1

||: a :||: b :||

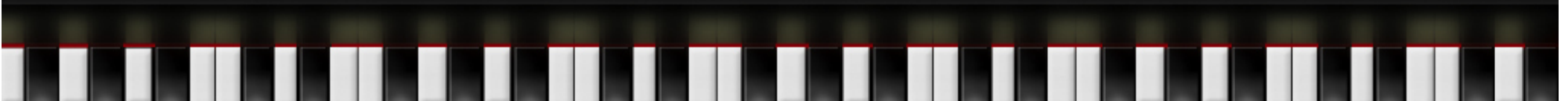
||: c :||: d :||

| a | b ||



# Listening activity

- # Listen to 2 minutes from Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*
- # Each minuet is in **binary form**, with both the A and B sections repeated
- # In both minuets there is an **imperfect cadence** at the end of the A section in the first minuet
- # Note the contrasting **tonality** of the two minuets – the first is in a **major** key, the second is **minor**



# Listening activity

- # The first minuet is repeated after the second minuet, making an overall **ternary** form movement, but this time the A and B sections are not repeated
- # This is common in structures of this sort, though nowadays it is not unusual for all the repeats to be observed



# The concerto

- # A concerto is an instrumental composition that features a soloist (or small group of soloists) contrasted against a larger group of accompanying instruments (an orchestra)
- # This was a popular genre with baroque composers, because it gave them the opportunity to contrast dynamics and instrumental timbres between the solo instrument (or group) and the fuller sound produced by the larger, accompanying group of instruments





# Types of concertos

- # There were many types of concertos in the baroque period, with different numbers of solo instruments, but the two most popular types were the **solo concerto**, and the **concerto grosso**
- # The solo concerto has one instrument (the solo) contrasted against a larger group
- # A concerto grosso ('great concerto') has a small group of solo instruments called the **concertino**, contrasted against a larger, accompanying group, called the **ripieno**



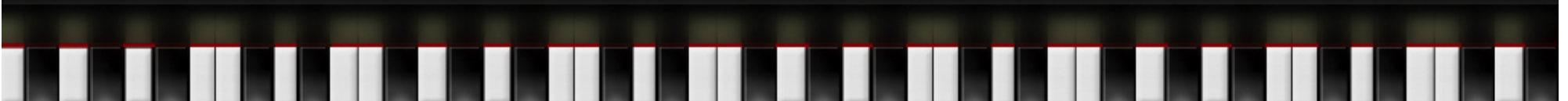
# Types of concertos

- # In both types of concerto it is usual to begin with all the instruments playing the music together
- # This is called a **tutti**
- # After that, there are alternating solo **episodes** interspersed with the orchestra playing short repeated versions of the opening tutti



# Tierce de Picardie

- # Quite often in baroque pieces, a movement in a minor key will end on a final chord in the tonic major
- # For example, a piece in G minor will end in G major
- # This is an example of a *terce de Picardie*



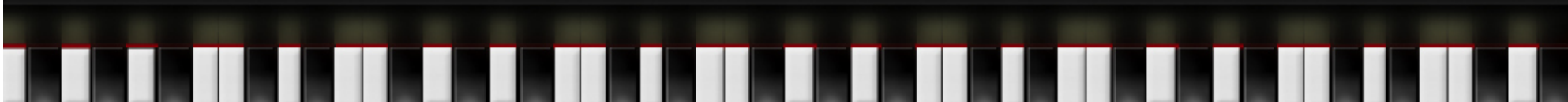
# Listening Activity 1

- # Listen to the opening of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 2 in F major
- # At the opening, all the instruments play together (**tutti**), introducing the musical melodies and ideas
- # After this, instead of a soloist, the instruments that make up the solo group, or **concertino**, are introduced in pairs in between passages of music played by the accompanying group (**ripieno**)



# Listening Activity 2

- # Listen to the opening of Pachelbel's *Canon*
- # The ground bass is played first, and then different melodies are added in turn, weaving around each other and the ground bass to produce a rich **contrapuntal** texture
- # In this piece, each new melody has quicker notes than the previous one
- # The repeated ground bass does not change, providing an 'anchor' which helps to unify the piece



# Listening Activity 3

- # Listen to the opening of Vivaldi's 'Spring' from *The Four Seasons*
- # The opening music has all the instruments playing together
- # This is followed by the solo violin playing a **duet** with another violin
- # After this the main group of instruments returns, and the excerpt finishes with the solo violin alternating with the other instruments
- # Listen to the characteristic sound of the harpsichord **continuo** accompanying the orchestra



# Ground Bass

- # The use of a ground bass was popular in baroque music
- # This enabled the composer to achieve unity in the music
- # This is because the ground bass was repeated throughout the piece
- # The ground bass structure also allowed for variety, as new melodies could be added above the ground bass



# Listening Quiz

- # Listen to the opening of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 2 in F major
- # After the opening **tutti**, which term best describes the texture when the solo group of instruments play: harmonic/homophonic or polyphonic/contrapuntal?
- # Give a suitable time signature for this excerpt
- # Name the brass instrument you can hear in this excerpt

