

# Western Classical Tradition

The concerto



# 'Classical'

- # The word 'classical' is often used in a general way to refer to any music that is not 'pop' music
- # However, the term also has a more precise meaning, and is used to describe music composed between about 1750 and 1810
- # This is known as the 'classical period'



# 'Classical'

- # Outside music, the word 'classical' is used to describe the architectural styles of ancient Greece and Rome, with their emphasis on simplicity, line, balance and order
- # We also use the term to describe something that is of the highest class, which lasts the test of time and can be held up as an example of excellence (e.g. a classic film or car)
- # These descriptions all apply to music of the classical period, with its emphasis on clear melodic lines, homophonic textures and balance of expression and form.
- # The classical period includes the music of Mozart, Haydn and the early compositions of Beethoven



# The classical concerto

- # We have already learned about two different kinds of concerto: the solo concerto and the concerto grosso
- # The solo concerto was more popular during the classical period
- # It is in three movements (fast-slow-fast)
- # The first movement is usually the longest, and is in modified **sonata form**
- # Sonata form is a structure that consists of 3 main sections called the exposition, development and recapitulation



# The classical concerto

- # The first movement modifications may include a lengthy introduction that introduces the main themes in an orchestral **tutti**, before the main **exposition** section, and the use of solo passages or **episodes**



# Listening Activity

- # Listen to the opening of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto
- # The clarinet was a newly invented instrument that Mozart loved, and the concerto demonstrates its different timbres and range, showing off what it can do
- # The concerto opens with a lengthy orchestral tutti that introduces the main tunes
- # The exposition begins when the solo clarinet re-enters with the main tune
- # Mozart creates a musical dialogue by alternating showy solo passages (accompanied by quiet strings) that decorate or embellish the melodies, which contrast with louder (tutti) orchestral passages



# Cadenza

- # Towards the ends of a movement (usually the first movement, although this could occur in either of the quicker movements) the orchestra pauses, and the soloist plays a showy passage called a **cadenza**
- # This displays the *virtuosity* or brilliant technique of the soloist
- # In most classical concertos the cadenza is *improvised*, or made up on the spot, by the soloist



# Cadenza

- # Later on, composers wrote out their own music or the cadenzas
- # The word *cadenza* means **cadence** and the term is used in a concerto because just before the solo cadenza begins the orchestra pauses on an **imperfect cadence**
- # This signals the start of the cadenza
- # A cadenza usually ends with a trill, a signal to the orchestra that the cadenza is about to end, and that they should resume playing





# Listening Activity

- # Listen to the third movement of Mozart's Horn Concerto no. 4 in E flat major
- # Like many third movements in concertos, it is an example of a **rondo**
- # The word 'rondo' is taken from a Latin word which means 'to return': the main theme (A) keeps on returning, with contrasting sections of music in between
- # The contrasting sections are called **episodes**



# Listening Activity

- # Look at the plan of the movement on the next slide
- # Listen for the different sections, and each re-appearance of tune A
- # Just before the end, the orchestra pauses on an imperfect cadence, and the horn plays the cadenza
- # After this, theme A returns and the movement is rounded off with a **coda**



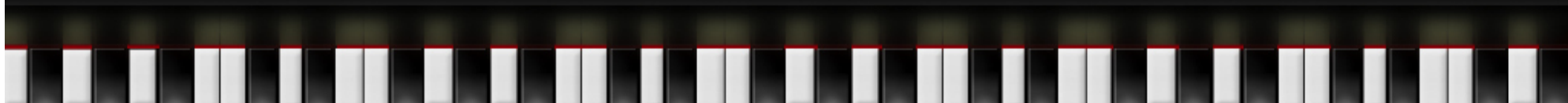
# Listening Activity

A	B	A <sub>2</sub>	C	A <sub>3</sub>	B <sub>2</sub>	Cadenza	A	Coda
Horn has the melody first, followed by the orchestra	Horn has the melody first, then in 'conversati on' with the orchestra	Horn has the melody first, followed by the orchestra	A new melody in a minor key, played first by the horn. Changes to a major key at the end	Horn has the melody first, followed by the orchestra	A different version of B, but with the soloist and orchestra still in 'discussion'	The orchestra pauses on an imperfect cadenza and the horn plays a showy solo	The horn has the melody, followed by the orchestra, which begins the melody before...	...part of the melody is repeated by the horn and the texture builds up to a climax at the end.



# Romantic music

- # The term **Romantic** is applied to music composed between about 1810 and 1910
- # Whereas classical music aimed to balance expression and form, romantic music placed an emphasis on the expression of emotion and feeling, so that this became the most important aspect of the music
- # Romantic music is often powerful and intense, expressing the innermost thoughts and feelings of the composers



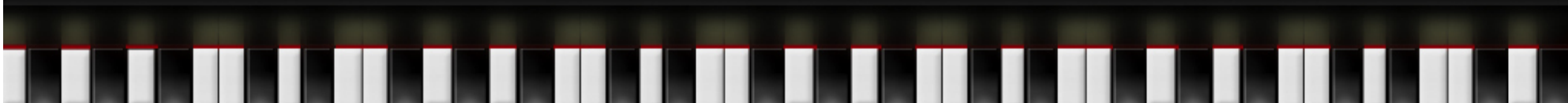
# Listening Activity

- # The orchestra then returns with the melody, while the piano accompanies with even richer, more elaborate chords, eventually calming down to a quiet finish
- # This is a typical romantic concerto – a solo instrument competing with a large orchestra, brilliant technique and showy virtuoso passages from the soloist combined with **dynamic** contrasts and a sense of spontaneity



# Important romantic composers

- # The middle and later music of Beethoven (1770-1827)
- # Schubert (1797 – 1828)
- # Berlioz (1803 – 1869)
- # Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)
- # Chopin (1810 – 1849)
- # Schumann (1810 – 1856)



# Important romantic composers

- # Liszt (1811 – 1886)
- # Wagner (1813 – 1883)
- # Verdi (1813 – 1901)
- # Brahms (1833 – 1897)
- # Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)
- # Dvorak (1841 – 1904)
- # Grieg (1843 – 1907)

