

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 4)

Baroque Concertos

Solo concerto

- A multimovement work written for **orchestra** and one **solo instrument**
- The word *concerto* comes from the Latin word *concertare*, to *fight* or *contend*—a sort of contest between solo and orchestra; the same word in Italian and French means to *join together*.
- Early Baroque concertos are mostly written for **violin** as the solo instrument (such as the solo concertos nos. 6 & 12 of Torelli's op. 6 of 1698); concertos for other instruments began to emerge later in the eighteenth century, including the **cello** concertos of Giuseppe Jacchini (op. 4, 1701) and Leonardo Leo, the **oboe** concertos of Handel and Albinoni, and the numerous concertos for **flute**, **bassoon**, and other instruments by Vivaldi and Telemann.
- **Antonio Vivaldi** was one of the most prolific composers of Baroque concertos, composing approximately 425 concertos for one or more soloists, including about 350 **solo concertos** (two-thirds for solo violin) and 45 **double concertos** (over half for two violins).
- Most Baroque solo concertos (especially in the later period) follow a three-movement plan: **fast–slow–fast**
- The first and the final movement are often in **ritornello form**

Concerto grosso

- An instrumental concerto that features a small group of soloists (**concertino**) that are pitted against a larger orchestra (**ripieno**).
- Concerto grosso is the earliest type of concerto emerged in the Baroque period.
- Two musical genres contributed to the creation of the concerto grosso: (1) polychoral works; (2) trio sonata
- One of the earliest concerto grossi were composed by **Arcangelo Corelli**. Among his most celebrated works are his Concerto grossi, op. 6. His concerto grossi resemble his **trio sonatas**, with the ripieno sometimes joining in and doubling the concertino group to provide additional contrast with respect to instrumental forces.
- Beginning with Giuseppe Torelli and Antonio Vivaldi, the concerto grosso came more and more under the domination of the **solo concerto** in matters of form and instrumental treatment, following a three-movement plan (**fast-slow-fast**).
- The first and last movements are often in **ritornello form**.

Ritornello form

A **ritornello** (Italian for “brief return”) is an opening musical idea that returns at several points over the course of a work, usually after contrasting material of some kind. In a Baroque concerto, a ritornello is performed by the entire orchestra, hence it is also called the **tutti** section.

The contrasting sections are called **episodes**, which often make use of melodic sequences (the repetition of a musical motive at successively higher or lower degrees). In a Baroque concerto, the episodes are performed by the soloist(s), featuring technically demanding passages for virtuosic display. Hence an episode is also called the **solo** section.

The first and last ritornellos are in the **tonic**, the second in the **dominant** or **relative major**, and the remainder in **related keys**, including the dominant minor in a minor-key work.

Central (and often final) **ritornellos** are usually shorter than the opening one, merely stating material selected from it and frequently omitting the opening theme.

The intervening **solo sections** may or may not incorporate material from the ritornello sections. They normally have the function of carrying out the **modulations** from key to key, each new key being confirmed and stabilized by the eventual entry of the tutti.

In many other Vivaldi concertos, however—notably those from earlier sets such as op. 3 (1711)—the entire middle area from the beginning of S2 to the final section is more varied, often simply alternating brief tutti and solo statements; ritornellos are **irregular** in length, placement, and choice of material.

J. S. Bach became acquainted with Vivaldi’s concertos by transcribing nine of his concertos for organ and clavier at Weimar around 1714–17. The formal design of Bach’s *Brandenburg* Concertos and his three violin concertos bear the influence from Vivaldi.

Antonio Vivaldi, Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra, *La Primavera* (Spring), from *The Four Seasons* (1725)

A solo concerto scored for violin, string orchestra and basso continuo.

Each movement or section depicts certain scenes or ideas related to a particular season, and Vivaldi placed lines from the accompanying poem in corresponding places of the musical score.

Movement 1 – Form

Rit 1	Solo 1	Rit 2	Solo 2	Rit 3	Solo 3	Rit 4	Solo 4	Rit 5
E+	E+	E+	E+	B+	B–	C#–	C#–	E+

Ritornello 1 (“Spring has come, and joyfully”)

Allegro
tutti

f *p* *f* *p*

B e festosetti La salutan gl’augei con lieto canto,
Canto degl’uccelli
solo
m m m m m m

f

Solo 1

(“The birds greet it with happy song”)

B e festosetti La salutan gl’augei con lieto canto,
Canto degl’uccelli
solo
m m m m m m

f

15

Ritornello 2

tutti

tr

Solo 2

("And the streams, fanned by gentle breezes, flow along with a sweet murmur")

C E i fonti allo spirar de' Zeffiretti
Scorrono i fonti

p

32 Con dolce mormorio scorrono intanto.

Ritornello 3

f

Solo 3

("Covering the sky with a black cloak, thunder and lightning come to announce the season")

D Vengon coprendo l'aer di nero ammanto E lampi e tuoni ad annunziarla eletti;
Tuoni

44

45

Ritornello 4

tutti

f

Solo 4

(“When these have quieted down, the little birds, return to their enchanting song”)



Ritornello 5



Movement 2 – Largo e pianissimo sempre

The instrumental parts portray different characters from the poem.

Soft murmuring of the leaves and branches

Slumbering of the shepherd

E quindi sul fiorito ameno prato Al caro mormorio di fronde e piante Dormel
IL CAPRARO CHE DORME

Largo 85

Violino principale

(mf)

MORMORIO DI FRONDE E PIANTE

I. *pp sempre* *(segue)*

II. *pp sempre* *(segue)*

Viole

IL CANE CHE GRIDA

sempre f si deve suonare sempre molto forte e strappato

Barking of the shepherd's faithful dog

The entire movement is in binary form – the first part (A) modulates to the dominant minor (G# minor) at the end; the second part (A') stays and ends on the home key of C# minor.

Each part can be divided into three portions: an establishment of the home key (6 bars), followed by a sequential passage (about 6 bars), ending with concluding passage of a cadence (4 bars).

Movement 3 – Danza pastorale

The instrumental parts portray different characters from the poem.

Dancing of the nymphs and shepherds
over the pastoral fields

DANZA PASTORALE
Di pastoral zampogna al suon festante Danzan Ninfe e Pastor nel tet.
Allegro 125

Violino principale

I. Violini

II. Violini

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabbassi

Organo (o Cembalo)

Drone: the festive sounds of the country bagpipes

J. S. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major (1721)

The set of six concerto grossi was dedicated to the Margrave of Brandenburg, in hope of having some money or favours in return. Each of the concertos was scored for a different and unusual combination of instruments.

This concerto grosso is scored for a **concertino** group consisting of a **flute**, a **violin**, and a **harpsichord**, together with a **ripieno** group consisting of a **string orchestra** (violins, violas, cellos, and double bass) and **basso continuo**. Given this instrumental setting, the **harpsichord** in this work performs two functions – as both a soloist and a continuo player.

Bach adopted the formal procedures of **Vivaldi**, especially in the use of ritornello form for both the first and third movement. Compared to earlier concerto grossi, Bach's composition requires extraordinary **virtuosity** from the concertino players, who are given many extended solo passages.

The ritornello theme is announced by the entire orchestra in tutti. Bach extracts certain motifs from this opening theme for development within the solo episodes.

This musical score shows a solo episode in D major, consisting of four staves. The first staff is marked with a box 'A' and contains the following motifs: an arpeggio (D4-F#4-A4), a turn (G4), and a 4-note scale (A4-B4-C5-D5). The second staff is marked with a box 'B' and contains a 'reaching over' motif (E5-F#5-A5). The third staff contains a continuation of the 'reaching over' motif. The fourth staff is marked with a box 'C' and contains a continuation of the 'reaching over' motif.

Bach introduces a new theme in the middle of the movement. This new idea is in the minor mode (F# minor) and features two neighboring motions.

This musical score shows a new theme in F# minor, marked *pp* (pianissimo). The theme is written for the Flute and consists of two neighboring motions: F#4-G#4 and G#4-A5.

The movement ends with a long episode for the harpsichord solo. It consists of fast running scales and arpeggios for the harpsichordist to display his techniques and performance skills.

This musical score shows a harpsichord solo episode, marked 155. The solo is written for the Cembalo and consists of fast running scales and arpeggios in both hands.

The movement closes with a complete restatement of the ritornello theme.