

= Piano Concerto No. 24 (Mozart) =

The Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor , K. 491 , is a concerto for keyboard (usually a piano or fortepiano) and orchestra composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart . Mozart composed the concerto in the winter of 1785 ? 1786 , finishing it on 24 March 1786 , three weeks after the completion of the Piano Concerto No. 23 (K. 488) in A major . He premiered the work in early April 1786 at the Burgtheater in Vienna .

The work is one of only two minor @-@ key piano concertos that Mozart composed , the other being the No. 20 (K. 466) in D Minor . None of Mozart 's other piano concertos features a larger array of instruments : the work is scored for strings , woodwinds , horns , trumpets and timpani . The concerto consists of three movements . The first , Allegro , is in sonata form and is the longest opening movement for a concerto that Mozart had hitherto composed . The second movement , Larghetto , is in the relative major of E flat and features a strikingly simple principal theme . The final movement , Allegretto , returns to the home key of C minor and presents a theme followed by eight variations .

The work is one of Mozart 's most advanced compositions in the concerto genre . Its early admirers included Ludwig van Beethoven and Johannes Brahms . Musicologist Arthur Hutchings considered it to be Mozart 's greatest piano concerto .

= = Background = =

Mozart composed the concerto in the winter of 1785 @-@ 86 , during his fourth season in Vienna . It was the third in a set of three concertos composed in quick succession , the others being No. 22 (K. 482) in E @-@ flat major and No. 23 (K. 488) in A major . Mozart finished composing the No. 24 shortly before the premiere of The Marriage of Figaro ; the two works are assigned adjacent numbers of 491 and 492 in the Köchel catalogue . While composed at the same time , the two works contrast greatly : the opera is almost entirely in major keys while the concerto is one of Mozart 's few minor @-@ key works . The pianist and musicologist Robert D. Levin suggests that the concerto may have served as an outlet for a darker aspect of Mozart 's creativity at the time he was composing the comic opera . The premiere of the concerto was either on 3 or 7 April 1786 at the Burgtheater in Vienna ; Mozart would have featured as the soloist and conducted the orchestra from the keyboard .

In 1800 , Mozart 's widow Constanze sold the original score of the work to the publisher Johann Anton André of Offenbach am Main . It passed through a number of private hands during the nineteenth century before Sir George Donaldson , a Scottish philanthropist , donated it to the Royal College of Music in 1894 . The College still houses the manuscript today . The original score contains no tempo markings ; the tempo for each movement is known only from the entries Mozart made into his catalogue . The orchestral parts in the original score are written in a clear manner . The solo part , on the other hand , is often incomplete , due to Mozart notating only the outer parts of passages of scales or broken chords . This suggests that Mozart improvised much of the solo part when performing the work . The score also contains a number of late additions , including that of the second subject of the first movement 's orchestral exposition . There is the occasional notation error in the score , which musicologist Friedrich Blume attributed to Mozart having " obviously written in great haste and under internal strain " .

= = Overview = =

The concerto is divided into the following three movements :

Allegro in C minor (3 / 4 time)

Larghetto in E @-@ flat major (cut common time)

Allegretto (Variations) in C minor (cut common time)

The concerto is scored for one flute , two oboes , two clarinets , two bassoons , two horns , two trumpets , timpani and strings . This amounts to the largest orchestra for which Mozart composed

any of his concertos . It is the only one of Mozart 's piano concertos that is scored for both oboes and clarinets . Robert D. Levin writes : " The richness of wind sonority , due to the inclusion of oboes and clarinets , is the central timbral characteristic of [the concerto] : time and again in all three movements the winds push the strings completely to the side . " The solo instrument for the concerto is scored as a " cembalo " . This term often denotes a harpsichord , but in this concerto , Mozart used it as a generic term that encompassed the fortepiano .

= = First movement = =

The first movement is longer and more complex than any that Mozart had hitherto composed in the concerto genre . It is in 3 / 4 time ; among Mozart 's piano concertos , No. 11 in F major and No. 14 in E @-@ flat major are the only others to commence in triple metre .

The first movement follows the standard outline of a sonata form concerto movement of the Classical period . It begins with an orchestral exposition , which is followed by a solo exposition , a development section , a recapitulation , a cadenza and a coda . Within this conventional outline , Mozart engages in extensive structural innovation .

= = Exposition = = =

The orchestral exposition , 99 measures long , presents two groups of thematic material , one primary and one secondary , both in the tonic of C minor . The orchestra opens the principal theme in unison , but not powerfully : the dynamic marking is piano . The theme is tonally ambiguous , not asserting the home key of C minor until its final cadence in the thirteenth measure . It is also highly chromatic : in its 13 measures it utilises all 12 notes of the chromatic scale .

The solo exposition follows its orchestral counterpart , and it is here that convention is discarded from the outset : the piano does not enter with the principal theme . Instead , it has an 18 @-@ measure solo passage . It is only after this passage that the principal theme appears , carried by the orchestra . The piano then picks up the theme from its seventh measure . Another departure from convention is that the solo exposition does not re @-@ state the secondary theme from the orchestral exposition . Instead , a succession of new secondary thematic material appears . Musicologist Donald Tovey considered this introduction of new material to be ? utterly subversive of the doctrine that the function of the opening tutti [the orchestral exposition] was to predict what the solo had to say . ?

One hundred measures into the solo exposition , which is now in the relative major of E @-@ flat , the piano plays a cadential trill , leading the orchestra from the dominant seventh to the tonic . This suggests to the listener that the solo exposition has reached an end , but Mozart instead gives the woodwinds a new theme . The exposition continues for another 60 or so measures , before another cadential trill brings about the real conclusion , prompting a ritornello that connects the exposition with the development . The pianist and musicologist Charles Rosen argues that Mozart thus created a " double exposition " . Rosen also suggests that this explains why Mozart made substantial elongations to the orchestral exposition during the composition process ; he needed a longer orchestral exposition to balance its " double " solo counterpart .

= = Development = = =

The development begins with the piano repeating its entry to the solo exposition , this time in the relative major of E flat . The Concerto No. 20 is the only other of Mozart 's concertos in which the solo exposition and the development commence with the same material . In the Concerto No. 24 , the material unfolds in the development in a manner different from the solo exposition : the opening solo motif , with its half cadence , is repeated four times , with one intervention from the woodwinds , as if asking question after question . The final question is asked in C minor , and is answered by a descending scale from the piano that leads to an orchestral statement , in F minor , of the movement 's principal theme . The orchestral theme is then developed : the motif of the theme 's

fourth and fifth measures descends through the circle of fifths , accompanied by an elaborate piano figuration . After this , the development proceeds to a stormy exchange between the piano and the orchestra , which the twentieth @-@ century Mozart scholar Cuthbert Girdlestone describes as " one of the few [occasions] in Mozart where passion seems really unchained " , and which Tovey describes as a passage of " fine , severe massiveness " . The exchange resolves to a passage in which the piano plays a treble line of sixteenth notes , over which the winds add echoes of the main theme . This transitional passage ultimately modulates to the home key of C minor , bringing about the start of the recapitulation with the conventional re @-@ statement , by the orchestra , of the movement 's principal theme .

= = = Recapitulation , cadenza and coda = = =

The wide range of thematic material presented in the orchestral and solo expositions poses a challenge for the recapitulation . Mozart manages to recapitulate all of the themes in the home key of C minor . The themes are necessarily compressed , presented in a different order and with few virtuosic moments for the soloist . The last theme to be recapitulated is the secondary theme of the orchestral exposition , which has not been heard for some 400 measures and is now adorned by a passage of triplets from the piano . The recapitulation concludes with the piano playing arpeggiated sixteenths before a cadential trill leads into a ritornello . The ritornello in turn leads into a fermata that prompts the soloist 's cadenza .

Mozart did not write down a cadenza for the movement , or at least there is no evidence of him having done so . The lack of a Mozart cadenza led many 19th @-@ century composers and performers , including Johannes Brahms , to write their own . Uniquely among Mozart 's concertos , the score does not direct the soloist to end the cadenza with a cadential trill . The omission of the customary trill is likely to have been deliberate , with Mozart choosing to have the cadenza connect directly to the coda without one .

The conventional Mozartian coda would have seen the soloist with hands in lap (or perhaps conducting) while an orchestral tutti concluded the movement . In this movement , Mozart breaks with convention : the soloist interrupts the tutti with a virtuosic passage of sixteenth notes , and accompanies the orchestra through to the final pianissimo chords . These chords bring an end to the movement in the concerto 's home key of C minor .

= = Second movement = =

Alfred Einstein , writing in 1962 , said of the concerto 's second movement that it " moves in regions of the purest and most moving tranquility , and has a transcendent simplicity of expression " . Marked Larghetto , the movement is in E @-@ flat major and cut common time . The trumpets and timpani play no part in the movement ; they return for the third movement .

The movement opens with the soloist playing the four @-@ measure principal theme alone ; it is then repeated by the orchestra . This theme is , in the words of Michael Steinberg , one of " extreme simplicity " . This was not always the case : Mozart 's first sketch of the movement was much more complex . Mozart likely simplified the theme to provide a greater contrast with the dark intensity of the first movement . After the orchestra repeats the principal theme there is a very simple four @-@ measure bridge passage that Girdlestone calls to be ornamented by the soloist , arguing that " to play it as printed is to betray the memory of Mozart " . Following the bridge passage , the soloist plays the initial four @-@ measure theme for a second time , before the orchestra commences a new section of the movement , in C minor . A brief return of the principal theme , its rhythm altered , separates the C minor section from a section in A @-@ flat major . After the A @-@ flat major section , the principal theme returns to mark the end of the movement , its rhythm altered yet again . Now , the theme is played twice by the soloist , the two appearances being connected by the same simple four @-@ measure bridge passage from the beginning of the movement . Girdlestone argues that here " the soloist will have to draw on his imagination to adorn [the simple bridge passage] a second time " . The overall structure of the movement is thus ABACA . The use of a recurring

principal theme (" A " , in E @-@ flat major) and two secondary sections (" B " , in C minor , and " C " , in A @-@ flat major) makes the movement characterisable as being in rondo form .

In the middle statement of the principal theme (between the C minor and A @-@ flat major sections) there is a notational error which , in a literal performance of the score , causes a harmonic clash between the piano and the winds . Mozart probably wrote the piano and wind parts at different times , resulting in an oversight by the composer . Alfred Brendel , who has recorded the concerto on multiple occasions , argues that performers should not follow the score literally but correct Mozart 's error . Brendel further argues that the time signature for the whole movement is a notational error : played in cut common time , the movement is , in his view , too fast .

= = Third movement = =

The third movement features eight variations on a C @-@ minor theme . Hutchings considered it " both Mozart 's finest essay in variation form and also his best concerto finale . "

The tempo marking for the movement is " Allegretto " . Rosen opines that this calls for a march @-@ like speed and argues that the movement is " generally taken too fast under the delusion that a quick tempo will give it a power commensurate with that of the opening movement . " Pianist Angela Hewitt sees in the movement not a march but a " sinister dance " .

The movement opens with the first violins stating the theme over a string and wind accompaniment . This theme consists of two eight @-@ measure phrases , each repeated : the first phrase modulates from C minor to the dominant , G minor ; the second phrase modulates back to C minor . The soloist does not play any part in the statement of the theme , entering only in Variation I. Here , the piano ornaments the theme over an austere string accompaniment .

Variations II to VI are what Girdlestone and Hutchings separately describe as " double " variations . Within each variation , each of the eight @-@ measure phrases from the theme is further varied upon its repeat (AXAYBXY) . Variations IV and VI are in major keys . Tovey refers to the former (in A @-@ flat) as " cheerful " and the latter (in C) as " graceful " . Between the two major @-@ key variations , Variation V returns to C minor ; Girdlestone describes this variation as " one of the most moving " . Variation VII is half the length of the preceding variations , as it omits the repeat of each eight @-@ measure phrase . This variation concludes with an extra three @-@ measure passage that culminates in a dominant chord , announcing the arrival of a cadenza .

After the cadenza , the soloist opens the eighth and final variation alone , with the orchestra joining after 19 measures . The arrival of the final variation also brings a change in metre : from cut common time to compound duple time . The final variation and the coda which follows both contain numerous neapolitan @-@ sixth chords (which , in C minor , are composed of F , A @-@ flat and D @-@ flat) . Girdlestone referred to the " haunting " effect of these chords and stated that the coda ultimately " proclaims with desperation the triumph of the minor mode " .

= = Critical reception = =

Ludwig van Beethoven admired the concerto and it may have influenced his Piano Concerto No. 3 , also in C minor . After hearing the work in a rehearsal , Beethoven reportedly remarked to a colleague that " [w] e shall never be able to do anything like that . " Johannes Brahms also admired the concerto , encouraging Clara Schumann to play it and writing his own cadenza for the first movement . Brahms referred to the work as a " masterpiece of art and full of inspired ideas . "

Among modern and twentieth @-@ century scholars , Girdlestone states that the concerto " is in all respects one of [Mozart 's] greatest ; we would fain say : the greatest , were it not impossible to choose between four of five of them . " Referring to the " dark , tragic and passionate " nature of the concerto , Einstein states that " it is hard to imagine the expression on the faces of the Viennese public " when Mozart premiered the work . Musicologist Simon P. Keefe , in an exegesis of all of Mozart 's piano concertos , writes that the No. 24 is " a climactic and culminating work in Mozart 's piano concerto oeuvre , firmly linked to its predecessors , yet decisively transcending them at the same time . " The verdict of the Mozart scholar Alexander Hyatt King is that the concerto is " not

only the most sublime of the whole series but also one of the greatest pianoforte concertos ever composed ". Arthur Hutchings 's view is that " [w] hatever value we put upon any single movement from the Mozart concertos , we shall find no work greater as a concerto than this K. 491 , for Mozart never wrote a work whose parts were so surely those of ' one stupendous whole ' . "