DT501/1 History of Music: Classical/Romantic

Dr Adrian Smith

Lecture 5: Orchestral Music (4)
The Concerto

A Brief History of the Concerto until 1750

- Definition: an instrumental work that maintains a contrast between an orchestral ensemble and a smaller group or a solo instrument, or among various groups of an undivided orchestra (Grove Music Online)
- Late 16th century – the term referred to music for mixed vocal and instrumental ensembles where the instruments had independent parts rather than merely doubling the vocal parts.
- Late 17th century – purely instrumental concertos begin to appear in Italy as composers experimented with contrasts between tutti and solo passages in sonatas performed by string orchestras. Also influential where the trumpet sonatas of Bolognese composers Torelli and Cazzati.

A Brief History of the Concerto until 1750

- Two main types appear

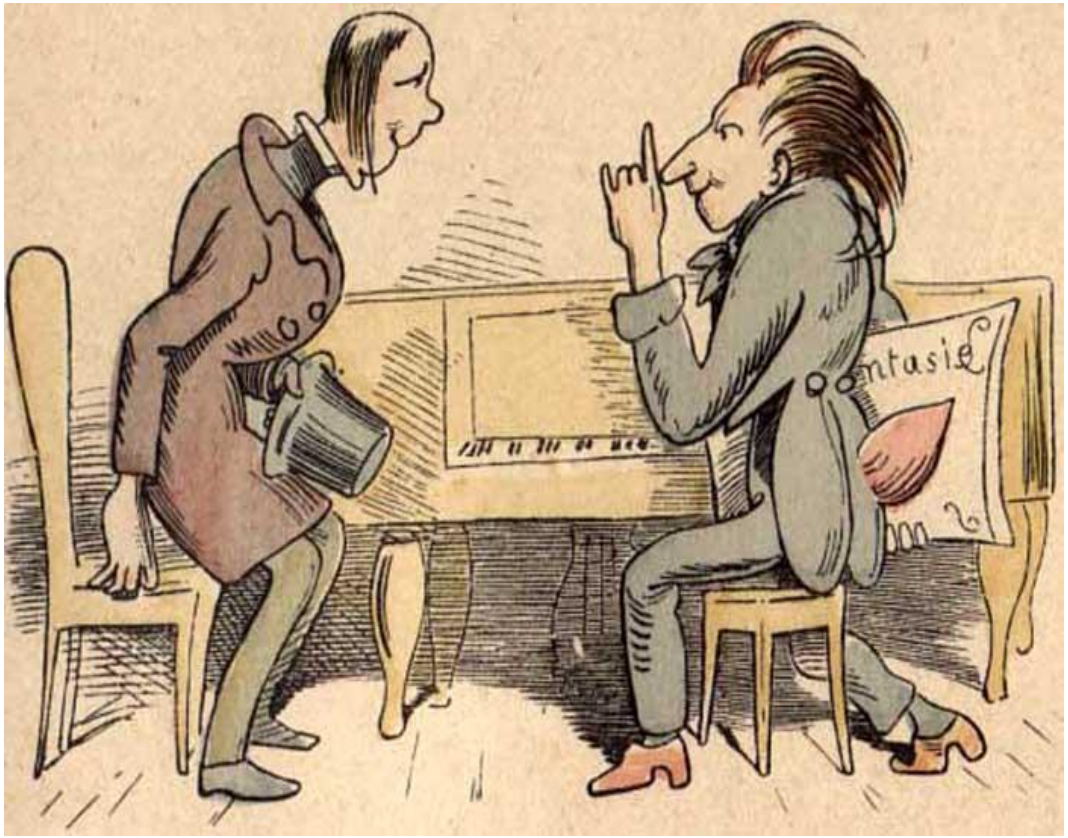
  – Rome: the concerto grosso consisting of the *ripieno* (main body of strings) and the *concertino* (consisting of two violins, cello and continuo)

  – North Italy: the solo concerto written for a simple string orchestra in four parts with principle (solo) violin or cello.
- Early 1700s the 'ritornello form' developed by the Venetian composers Albinoni and Vivaldi.
- **Ritornello** – a refrain of two or more phrases played in full by the orchestra at the beginning of the movement and which recur in full or in part at various intervals throughout the movement.
- In the works of Vivaldi the concerto form of three movements (fast-slow-fast) becomes standardised.
- The ritornello form reaches its highest sophistication in the Baroque era in the concertos of Bach.

The Concerto in the Classical Period

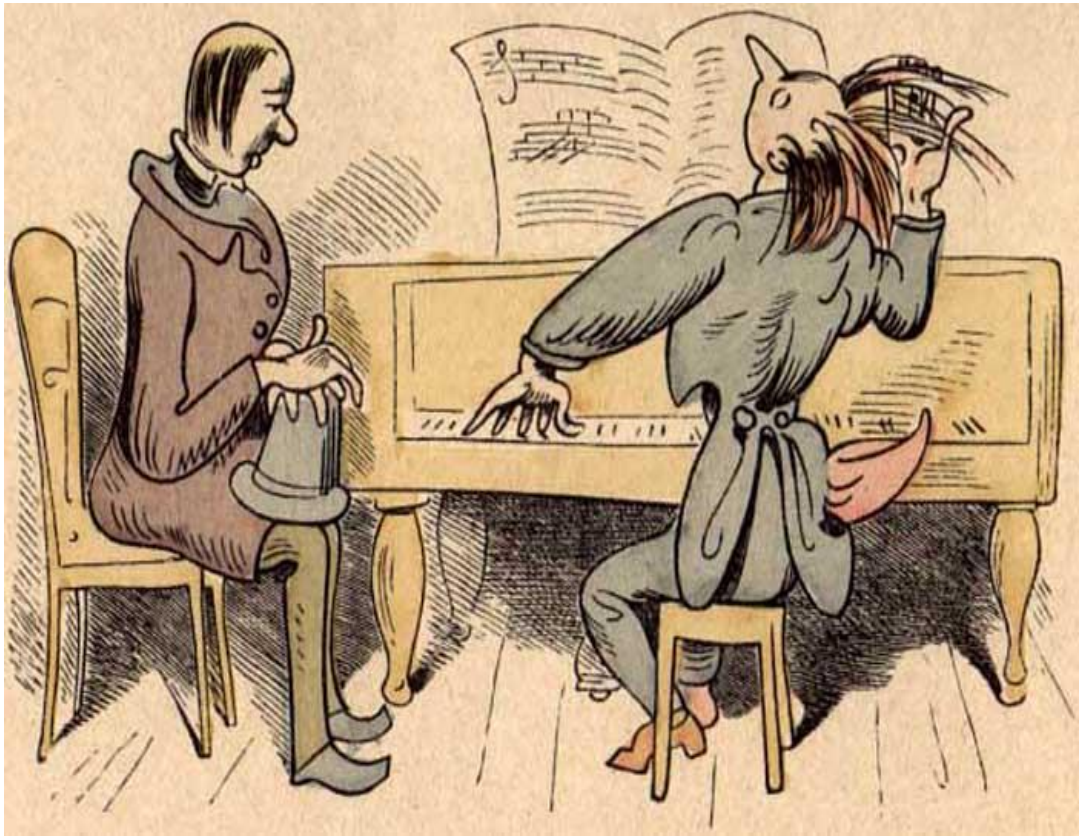
- By 1750 the solo concerto replaces the concerto grosso as the dominant form.
- The classical concerto retains ritornello form but over time blends it with aspects of sonata form.
- Composed for a greater range of instruments.
  – violin and flute most popular until 1760s
  – by late 1770s and 80s the piano becomes the most frequent soloist.
- Impacted by the aesthetics of the Gallant Style
  – suspicion of virtuosity/emphasis on elegance and lyricism
  – emergence of a market for amateur performers. Many concertos by C. P. E. Bach and J. C. Bach were composed for amateurs with written out ornamentation and cadenzas.

The Virtuoso



Silentium

The Virtuoso



Introduzione

The Virtuoso

Capriccioso

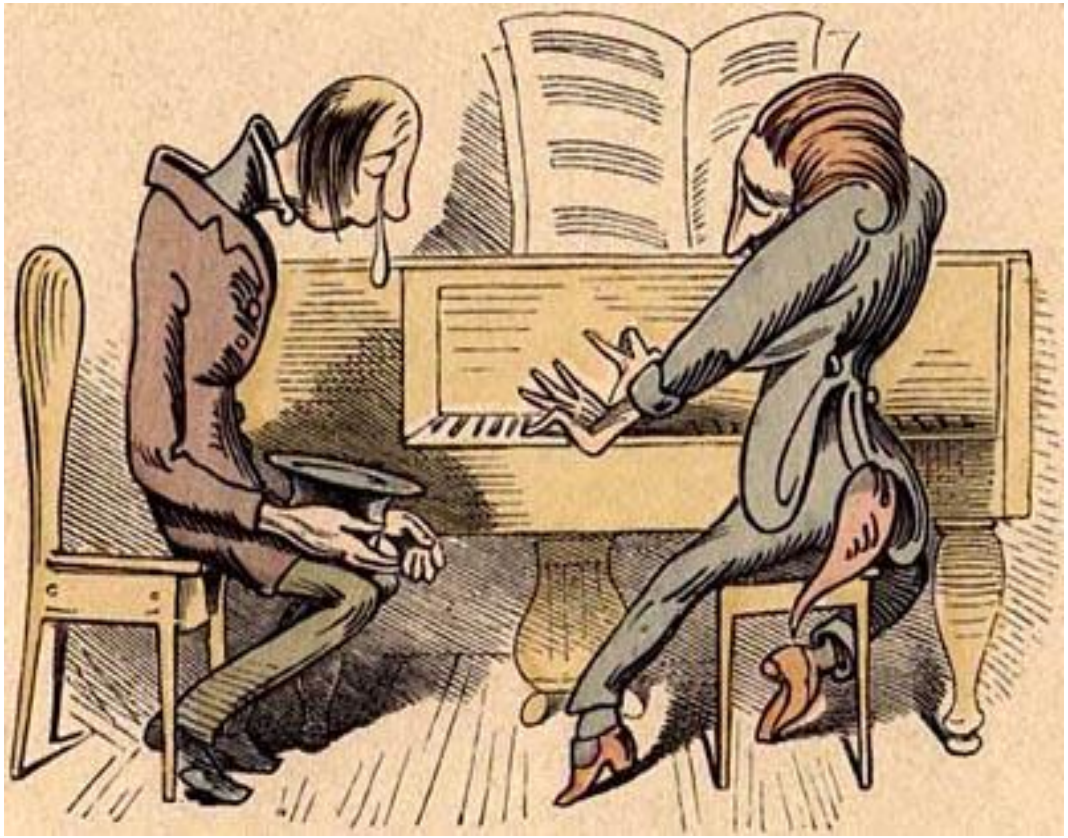
The Virtuoso

Fuga des Diavolo

The Virtuoso

Adagio

The Virtuoso

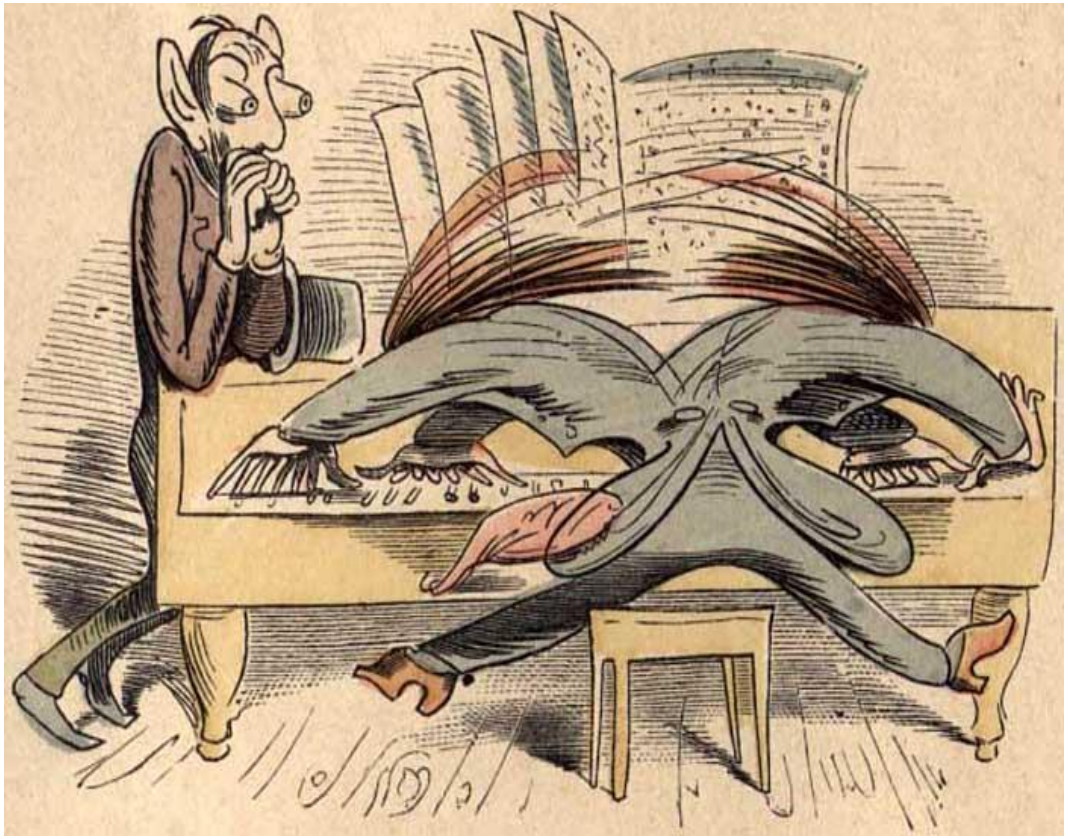


Adagio con Sentimento

The Virtuoso

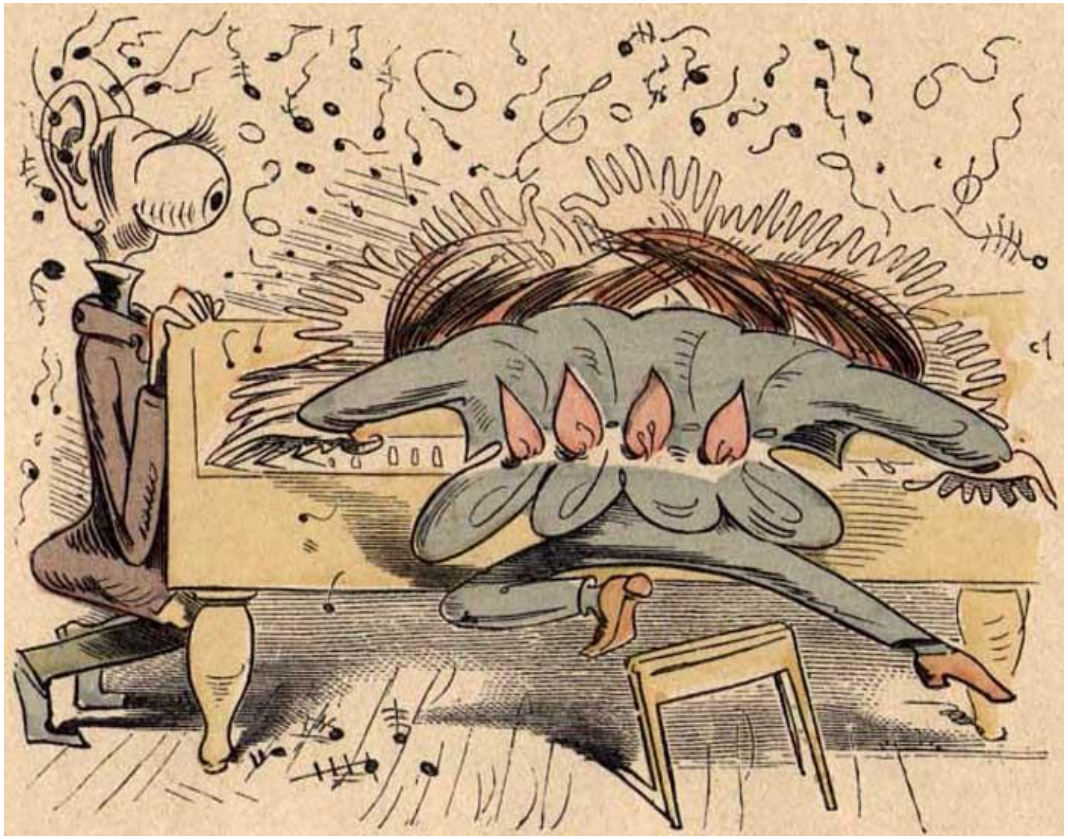
Forte Vivace

The Virtuoso



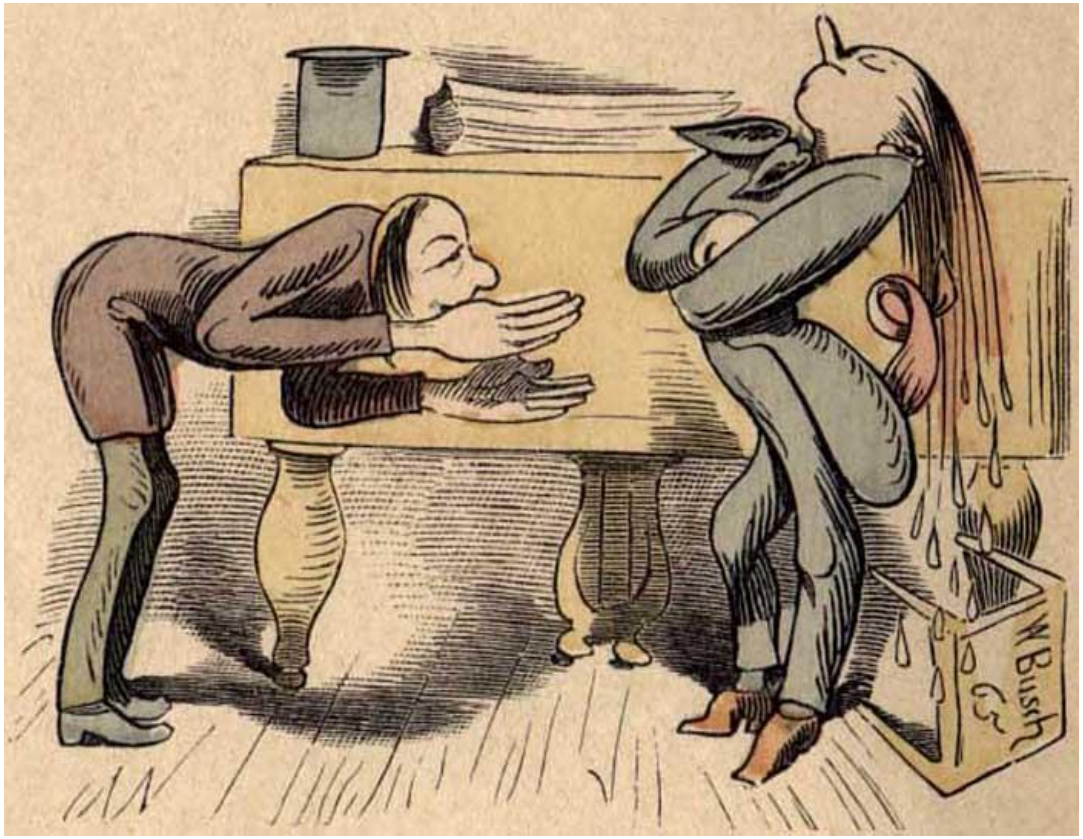
Fortissimo Vivacissimo

The Virtuoso



Finale Furioso

The Virtuoso



Bravo Bravissimo

The Concerto and Virtuosity

‘The concerto has no fixed character…At the most basic level, it is nothing but a practice session for composers and players, and a totally indeterminate aural amusement, aimed at nothing more’.

Johann Georg Sulzer and Johann Philipp Kirnberger: *General Theory of the Fine Arts*

‘Concertos are a special proving ground for virtuosity, and hardly one in a hundred can claim to possess any artistic value’.

Johann Karl Friedrich Triest

The Concerto and Virtuosity

‘a well worked-out concerto is a passionate dialogue between the concerto player and the accompanying orchestra. He expresses his feeling to the orchestra, and it signals him through short interspersed phrases sometimes to approval, sometimes acceptance of his expression, as it were…In short, by a concerto I imagine something similar to the tragedy of the ancients, where the actor expressed his feelings not towards the pit, but to the chorus. The chorus was involved most closely with the action and was at the same time justified in participating in the expression of feelings’.

Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802)

Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782)

- Early concertos exhibit the influence of his brother.
- After his exposure to Italian opera he adopts a new aesthetic devoted to clarity and stability.
- Many of his concertos aimed the amateur market, stressing simplicity and clarity.
- Important innovator in the formulised and balanced placement of the ritornellos.
- Major influence on the young Mozart who arranged three of his sonatas as concertos.

Classical Concerto Form

1) Opening ritornello – similar thematic layout to a sonata exposition but remains in the tonic.
2) Solo exposition – essentially the same as a sonata exposition. Modulates to the dominant.
3) Subordinate key ritornello – resembles the closing section of a sonata exposition in that it reaffirms the new key.

4) Solo development – functions the same as a sonata development.

5) Solo recapitulation – same as sonata recapitulation except that it must 'recapitulate' elements from the opening ritornello and solo exposition into a single section.
6) Closing ritornello – essentially the same as a sonata recapitulation's closing section but it is interrupted by the soloist's cadenza.

J. C. Bach: Concerto for Keyboard in E-flat Major

Ritornello	Bar	Tonality
1st theme	1	tonic
Transition	12	to HC
2nd theme	25	tonic
Closing theme	31	

Solo Exposition	Bar	Tonality
1st theme	44	tonic
Transition	59	mod.
New theme	71	
2nd theme	85	dom.
Closing theme	91	

Ritornello	Bar	Tonality
Closing theme	106	dom.

Solo Development	Bar	Tonality
New material	115	mod
Cadence	144	V of Eb

Solo recapitulation	Bar	Tonality
1st theme	146	tonic
Transition	161	
2nd theme	171	
Closing theme	177	

Cadenza	Bar	Tonality
Cadenza ad libitum	191	

Closing ritornello	Bar	Tonality
Closing theme	192	tonic

Musical features of J. C. Bach's Concerto for Keyboard in E-flat Major

- Lightly scored for harpsichord/piano and strings. Aimed for the amateur market.
- Galant style song-like themes with simple accompaniment (alberti bass, alternating chord tones etc.).
- Balanced, symmetrical phrasing.
- Absence of any major conflict between the orchestra and soloist.
- The soloist has two functions

  – as continuo player during the ritornello sections

  – as soloist elsewhere.

Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach (1714 –1788)

- Prolific composer of concertos, output numbers some 50 works.
- One of the most unjustly under-rated composers in the history of western classical music.
- Concerto for Cello in A minor (H. 432)

  – Idiosyncratic style: extreme shifts in texture, mood, register and harmony.

  – Rapid-fire dialogue between the soloist and the tutti.

  – extreme segmentation of the ritornello.

Mozart's Development of the Concerto

- The most important 18th century composer of concertos.
- 27 piano concertos, 5 violin concertos, four horn concertos, 2 for flute, 1 each for bassoon, oboe, clarinet, and flute and harp.
- Highly idiomatic writing across all his concertos.
- Full integration of the sonata principle in concerto form.
- Operatic sense of drama. Short and long range contrasts in mood and expressivity.
- New conception of the dialogical potential of soloist and orchestra.

Orchestra/Soloist Dialogue

Mozart generally follows three types of dialogue

– Intimate: usually found in the solo exposition and recapitulation, tends to bond or reconcile the two forces.

– Internal: interaction within either of the forces, i.e. dialogue between the woodwind instruments.

– Confrontational: pits the orchestra against the soloist. Most frequently encountered in the development section.

Specific techniques:

– Alternating a theme/motive

– Splitting a theme

– Imitation

– Echo

– Smooth phrase joining

– Juxtaposition of opposing material

Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491
Analysis of themes in Orchestral Ritornello and First Solo Episode

ORCHESTRAL RITORNELLO	BAR	TONALITY
<u>First Subject Area</u>		
Main theme [a]unison + orch. restatement	1	tonic
Alternating semiquaver flourish [b]	28	
<u>Transition</u>		
Repeated note motif + octave leap [c]	35	
<u>Second Subject Area</u>		
Descending scale [d]	44	
Lyrical theme in counterpoint[e]		
Tutti on [a]		
<u>Closing Section</u>		
Closing theme [f] in counterpoint with [d]	74	
Closing Tutti on fragments of [a] in martial rhythm	91	

SOLO EXPOSITION	BAR	TONALITY
<u>First Subject Area</u>		
New theme	100	tonic
<u>Transition</u>		
Tutti on [a]	118	
Fragments of [a]	124	mod
<u>Second Subject Area</u>		
New theme [g] combining previous elements	148	relative major
Woodwind restatement of [g]	156	
False closing section – virtuosic figuration	165	
Additional new theme with turn figure and descending broken chord.	201	
<u>Closing Section</u>		
Virtuosic passagework with [a] in counterpoint	220	e-flat to F-sharp to E-flat
<u>RITORNELLO</u>		
Closing theme from opening ritornello	265	relative major

Prescribed Listening

J. C. Bach: Concerto for Keyboard and Strings in E-flat major, Op. 7, No. 5 (first movement)

C. P. E. Bach: Concerto for Cello in A minor (first movement)

Mozart: Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491 (first movement)

Prescribed Reading

For a detailed overview of the concerto's development up to and including the classical period read the entry on 'the concerto' in *Grove Music Online*.

Read the analytical accounts of J. C. Bach's Concerto for Keyboard and Strings in E-flat major and Mozart's Piano Concerto in A major in the *Norton Anthology of Western Music.*

A good overview of the development of the concerto during the classical period can be found in Simon P. Keefe: 'The Concerto from Mozart to Beethoven: aesthetic and stylistic perspectives' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Concerto,* pp. 70–92.