Mozart: Piano Concerto in G major, K. 453

DATE OF WORK: 1784

MOVEMENTS:
I. Allegro; first-movement concerto form, G major
II. Andante; first-movement concerto form, C major
III. Allegretto, Presto; theme and variations form, G major

First Movement: Allegro; first-movement concerto form, 4/4 meter, G major

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:
Opening orchestral ritornello, or exposition, contrasts with solo piano exposition that follows (double exposition).
Elegant melodies and colorful harmonies.
First-movement concerto form featuring 4 themes, including one introduced in piano exposition.
Solo cadenza in improvisational style develops out of earlier melodic ideas.

ORCHESTRAL RITORNELLO (EXPOSITION), in G major
Theme 1—refined theme in violins, with woodwind figurations:

Transitional theme—forceful, in full orchestra.
Theme 2—gently undulating theme in violins, answered in woodwinds:

Closing theme—stated quietly in orchestra.

SOLO EXPOSITION
Theme 1—piano enters with sweep into main theme, decorated, in G major; woodwind accompaniment; scales and arpeggios in piano.
Transitional theme—orchestral ritornello; piano with decorative part; modulates to key of dominant.
Piano theme—introduced by piano alone in D major, then presented in woodwinds:

Theme 2—in piano, with string accompaniment.
Closing—decisive, in D major.
DEVELOPMENT
Virtuosic piano part, references to piano theme. runs and arpeggios against woodwinds; various modulations, leading back to tonic.

RECIPITULATION
Theme 1—returns in strings, with woodwind accompaniment; piano joins in with decorated version of theme.
Transition theme—forceful, in full orchestra.
Piano theme, solo, in G major, more decorated, with light orchestral accompaniment.
Theme 2—in piano, then in woodwinds, now in G major.
Cadenza—solo piano, variations on earlier themes; ends on dominant.
Closing—final ritornello, in G major.
(Shorter recordings stop here.)

Second Movement: Andante; first-movement concerto form. 3/4 meter, C major

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:
Expressive dialogue between solo piano and orchestra; lyrical woodwind lines.
First-movement concerto form, with languid opening theme and contrasting 2nd theme (with loud-soft alternation).

ORCHESTRAL EXPOSITION
Theme 1—gentle, quiet idea in strings, ends with fermata (hold):

Answer by woodwinds in lyrical dialogue:

Flute

Bassoons

Theme 2—alternates forte in strings with piano in woodwinds, in G major.
Closing—chromatic line, in strings and woodwinds.

SOLO EXPOSITION
Theme 1—solo piano, in C major; answer in dramatic statement in G minor:
WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Opening dance-like theme, in 2-part (binary) form.

Series of variations on the theme, with melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elaborations.

Theme 1—elegant, dance-like tune in full orchestra; theme in 2 sections (8 measures each), each repeated: a b

| a section: |
|---|---|
| a section: |

| b section: |
|---|---|
| b section: |

Variation 1—solo piano, with melodic ornamentation, each part of theme repeated: 
Variation 2—woodwinds introduce each part of theme, repeated by orchestra over piano figurations in triplets.

Variation 3—solo woodwind instruments in dialogue, answered by piano; more lyrical than opening.

Variation 4—strings introduce theme, now in mysterious mood in minor key; answered by syncopated, chromatic piano line:

Variation 5—loud march in full orchestra, characterized by quick descending pattern at beginning of phrases; answered by piano; transition in piano leads to cadenza.

Piano elaborates cadence; no cadenza performed.

Coda—Presto tempo; long closing section features new theme and highly virtuosic piano writing; opening theme heard in varied form (piano version shown):

HAYDN’S TRUMPET CONCERTO

“The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky.”

—JOHN DRYDEN

In addition to his symphonies and string quartets, Joseph Haydn also wrote some thirty-five concertos for various solo instruments. His Concerto for Trumpet in E-flat major is considered one of his finest.

In Haydn’s time, the trumpet had not yet advanced beyond the natural form of the instrument (having no valves), capable of playing only disjunct or triadic passages, due to acoustical limitations. But Haydn’s colleague, court trumpeter Anton Weidenger, developed an experimental trumpet with keys, not unlike woodwind instruments, that allowed it to play in the instrument’s full range with all diatonic and even chromatic notes of the scale. This was a short-lived development, because the more modern, valved trumpet was soon invented (in 1803). Haydn’s trumpet concerto, written for Weidenger’s keyed trumpet, was first performed in 1800, after which the original manuscript was lost until 1929. Since its discovery, this work has been central to the repertory of every trumpet player.

The concerto is set in a standard but compact three-movement form. It opens with an Allegro in first-movement concerto form that flaunts the new instrument’s ability to play highly lyrical melodies and virtuosic passages. The second movement, similar to the one played by Weidenger for Haydn’s Trumpet Concerto.