

The evolution of the concerto from classical to romantic era assignment



Classical to the romantic era; producing changes within its instrumentation, form thematic material and rhythmic devices. The societal attitudes towards the composition and consumption of the concerto form also changed during this time. A concerto is an arrangement with solo works performed within the piece, alternating between a larger ensemble and the soloist.

The root of its definition was believed to mean to 'skirmish with one another' (Obeyed, 1957), this definition helps explain the idea of a concerto, it displays a notion that the soloist is 'skirmishing' with the meander of the ensemble. The defining characteristic of a concerto is its arrangement. It has a contrast in sound between the orchestra and solo instruments or small ensembles, bouncing between the two or three even. There has been speculation that the concerto form was in fact a variation of the sonata form, yet this is not the case (Simon, 1957).

The sonata was believed to be introduced around 1770, making the concerto, on a timeline, appear before the sonata form. In the early parts of the baroque period the concerto in its traditional form had not yet emerged (Simon, 1957), yet it was in the works, on its way. There were traces on concerto as far back as before 1550 (Obeyed, 1957). The Fantasia of Francesco da Milano for two lutes labeled one of the lutes as 'Lout In concerto. In 1553, Diego Errol also published a piece that included phrases such as '.... En concertina De values; concerted..... Both these examples show that the concerto form was beginning to emerge, but of course it wasn't fully developed as such to the degree that we know it today, these were just hints of its beginning. Starting out as a form of composition, in the early baroque period, the concerto was one of the first standardized

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forms of the concerto form. It was introduced by Archangel Corelli and is of Roman origin. Corelli's famous concerto grosso work, Opus 6, may have been composed as far back as the mid to late 17th century, but was not published till after his death in 1714, some 30 years later, having died in 1713.

This marked the first actual publication of the concerto grosso genre (Carter, 1968). Corelli's Opus 6 was comprised of entirely strings. The solo section known as the concertina that must be made of two violins and a cello. This soloist group then alternated with a larger group called the ripens, which usually consisted of two violins, a bass and a viola, of which the numbers can be increased; there was also sometimes a continuo. This was the standard instrumental setup for the concerto grosso and other composers such as Handel used this.

Bach was a prolific composer during the later parts of the baroque period, he was born in 1685. Most of these works were composed around 1720. Bach was the court organist for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen during this period; this was also the period in which his wife died suddenly, perhaps striking him with inspiration. Many of Bach's concertos used additional and varied instrumentation to those of Corelli and the concerto grosso form. They often had woodwind and brass instruments such as the oboe, recorder, trumpet and piccolo.

There was no standard instrumentation for Bach's concertos, the instruments he used varied from piece to piece. To contrast this, Bach's concerto No. 1 used two horns, three oboes, a violin piccolo accompanied by the bassoon, a

strings section (similar to a ripens) and a harpsichord (this concerto being his most complex). While his concerto No. 4 consisted of a violin and two recorders, accompanied by strings and a harpsichord. Bach used the harpsichord as solo concerto instrument also in some pieces such as his concerto No. 5 and his harpsichord concerto in d minor.

This showed that the solo aspect of the concerto was not just limited to the strings and harpsichord, straying from concerto grosso traditional form. Bach's concertos usually had three movements also, differing from the four of Corelli's opus 6. Following Amadeus Mozart also composed and published a significant number of concerto pieces in his time. As technology and instruments developed and changed, so did the contemporary concerto of that time. Mozart used Piano in his concerto, some even for soloist parts, rather than the outdated harpsichord.

The Instrumentation for his Concerto No. 3, composed during the late classical era (circa 1800), consisted of 2 oboes, 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, a trumpet, timpani, a strings section and a soloist piano. This arrangement also contains scoring for the percussion instrument the timpani, also unlike the concertos from the early 1700s. There is also a much more prominent woodwind section. The concerto form developed greatly from the seventeenth to eighteenth century, in 'arioso' aspects.

It changed in its instrumentation, form, thematic material and its rhythmic devices, yet the main defining characteristic, the soloist segments, remained. Arcangelo Corelli was known as the first to publish the concerto grosso, one of the first concerto forms, later other composers developed and

grew on this genre such as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Bartok and many more all the way up to modern composers such as Barber. All these composers are responsible for the development and change of the concerto form and its devices.