

Listening Guide

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 arpeggio figurations 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.

RECAPITULATION

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:

Musical notation for the woodwind answer, marked *p* (piano). It shows three staves: Flute, Oboes, and Bassoons. The Oboes and Bassoons play a lyrical melody, while the Flute has a more active, decorative line. The notation is in 3/4 time and includes the word *etc.*

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:

Musical notation for the solo piano Theme 1, marked *p* (piano). The notation is on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) in 3/4 time, showing a solo piano melody with a chromatic line and a fermata, followed by the word *etc.*

Idea of theme 2 in alternation of soft and loud statements; woodwind dialogue heard near opening, extended by piano.

Closing—chromatic line, extended by piano with cadential trill.

DEVELOPMENT

Theme 1 in G major—in woodwinds; answered by dramatic piano statement reminiscent of solo exposition; short modulatory section, with virtuosic piano line; orchestral *crescendo* brings return to C major.

RECAPITULATION

Theme 1—opening in solo piano; answer with *forte*, disjunct theme, E-flat major; woodwind dialogue returns; loud/soft alternating theme returns.

Theme 2 returns in tonic.

Cadenza—solo piano, ends with cadential trill.

Coda—woodwinds play theme 1, which is then decorated in solo piano, followed by soft statement of closing theme.

Third Movement: Allegretto, Presto; theme and variations form, 2/2 meter, G major

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Opening dancelike theme, in 2-part (binary) form.
Series of variations on the theme, with melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elaborations.

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

a 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):

