

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756–1791

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 24 in C minor K 491

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❶	I. Allegro	14:31
❷	II. Larghetto	8:18
❸	III. Allegretto	9:05

Arnold Schoenberg 1874–1951

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra op. 42

❹	Andante –	4:50
❺	Molto allegro [bar 176] –	2:28
❻	Adagio [bar 264] –	6:47
❼	Giocoso (moderato) [bar 329]	5:30

Total Time 51:41

Glenn Gould piano

CBC Symphony Orchestra

Walter Susskind conductor [1–3]

Robert Craft conductor [4–7]

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This record contains two Concerti which represent, virtually, the terminal positions of the literature for piano and orchestra. Possibly greater contrasts and/or historical point could have been obtained had we linked a concerto grosso (Handel, for instance) with a concerto grosso (Hindemith, perhaps) but for the purpose of illustrating the transition into and out of the great concerto manner these two works will do very well indeed. The assumption is, of course, that the concerto *idée* is now more or less an unserviceable mould for the present techniques of musical composition, although in the guessable future composers will undoubtedly find other means to satisfy the primeval human need for showing off.

The 150 years between Mozart's K 491 and Schoenberg's op. 42 added many resourceful variations to the fundamental areas of dynamic contrast and rhythmic stress which helped the baroque masters exploit the solo-tutti antithesis. Somewhere along towards the middle of the eighteenth century the acoustical corollary of the solo-mass idea – the *pian-e-forte* aspect of concerto-grosso style – became fused with the new symphonic adventures in thematic contrast, and the concerto became, in effect, a showpiece adjunct of the classical symphony; and ever since, with a few eccentric exceptions, the evolution of the concerto manner has been inextricably bound up with that of symphonic form.

The one great distinction between concerto technique and that of its symphonic model has always lain in the peculiarly redundant distribution of material which the solo-tutti forces required. The difficulty of supplying to the soloist something to keep him duly occupied that will not, at the same time, wholly disrupt the symphonic flow of events has constituted the concerto

problem through the years, and it is a problem which has only rarely been solved. Perhaps for this reason the most popular and successful (though never the best) of concertos have usually come from composers who were somewhat lacking in a grasp of symphonic architecture – Liszt, Grieg, etc. – composers who had in common a confined, periodic concept of symphonic style, but who were able to linger without embarrassment upon the glowing melodic moment. Perhaps also for this reason, the great figures of the symphonic repertoire have almost always come off second best in concerto writing and their relative failures have helped to give credence to the wide-spread and perfectly defensible notion that concertos are comparatively lightweight stuff. (After all, there is something slightly hilarious when a master of Olympian stature like Beethoven, for instance, from whom we expect the uncompromising pronouncement, qualifies his symphonic “this is my final word” with the concerto-genre equivalent, “this is my final word – but you won’t mind if I say it again.”)

The most unique development of the classical concerto’s attempt to “say it again” was the feature of the orchestral pre-exposition. This two- or three-minute capsule of the basic material from the opening movement allowed the solo instrument, upon its entrance, a greater degree of freedom in treating themes which had previously been heard in some perspective. It also allowed the solo instrument to play throughout the exposition proper more continuously than would otherwise be desirable.

The Mozart Concerto in C minor, perhaps for the very reason that it contains some of the master’s most exalted music, is not a very successful concerto. It opens with a magnificently constructed orchestral tutti – the sort of

pre-exposition which Sir Donald Tovey was always chiding Beethoven for not having written. It consists, in fact, of two or three of the most skillfully architected minutes in all of Mozart. But with the first entrance of the piano we soon modulate to a much less elevated region. Having successfully avoided the mood and pleasure of the relative major key (E-flat) throughout the orchestral tutti, the piano now leads us there with a vengeance – and gets hopelessly stalled in that key. Once, twice, three times, separated by unimag-inative sequences, the soloist caresses E-flat with material wholly unworthy of the magnificence of the introduction. And by the time the tutti material returns in the development we are left wishing that Mozart had given his tutti and a few clavier lessons to Haydn and let the boundless developmental capacities of that gentleman go to work on it.

The writing for the solo instrument, moreover, is somewhat anachronistic, since the left hand of the solost is more often than not engaged in doubling the cellos and/or bassoon parts. Consequently, the total impression of the soloist's contribution is an annoying confusion of fickle virtuosity in the upper registers and an unrealized continuo in the left hand. (The author has taken a very few liberties in this regard which he believes are wholly within the spirit and substance of the work.)

The second movement contains some subtly contrived woodwind scoring that contrasts strikingly with the complete innocence of the solo instrument's principal theme, which, when it is played on the discouragingly sophisticated instruments of our own day is almost impossible of realization. It is the last movement which holds the Mozart of our dreams. Here, in a supremely beautiful set of variations, is a structure with a *raison d'être*, a structure in which

the piano shares without intrusion, in which, as variation upon variation passes by, the chromatic fugal manner which Mozart in his philosophic moods longed to espouse is applied to the ephemeral realm of the concerto with brilliant success.

If the Mozart C minor represents the concerto form as it merged into the virtuoso tradition, the Schoenberg Concerto represents the beginning of the end for that tradition. The solo contribution throughout (cadenzas excepted) is really only that of an enlarged obbligato. This, despite the fact that Schoenberg was at the time of its composition (1942) experiencing a return to large-scale architectural interests and was moreover, upon occasion, experimenting once again with the use of tonality – albeit a somewhat grayer and more stringently controlled tonality than he had used in his early years. It is probably no accident that his Violin and Piano Concertos were written during these years in which he was most conscious of his link with the romantic symphonic tradition, but the Piano Concerto (several notable analysts to the contrary) is not one of the works in this neo-tonal cycle, and is in fact fairly typical of Schoenberg's later twelve-tone writing.

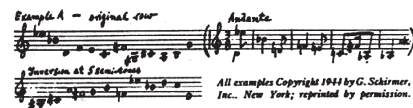
Schoenberg had taken his first, tentative, twelve-tone steps in the neo-classic environment of his middle years – years in which the alarming license of tonal free trade caused him to gravitate toward a rational classicism for which the architectural formulae of the eighteenth century provided scholastic discipline.

As was proper to their eighteenth-century models, his first essays in twelve-tone writing were exercises in straightforward row technique. Such

architectural forms as the dance suite, for example, provided a convenient mould into which the first twelve-tone fluid might be poured. Thus the most marked feature of these early twelve-tone efforts is a rather external poise and grace. Schoenberg had long been aware that before twelve-tone music might be said to have achieved sovereignty, the forms engendered by it would have to own of something specifically related to twelve-tone procedure – something in which the growth of the most minute organism, the embryonic cell of sound, would be reflected. It has been said quite seriously that whatever forms Schoenberg applied to music, the only constant constructive force in his work was the principle of variation. Indeed, the variation concept in its most natural state – that of constant evolution – provides the best synthesis of twelve-tone theory.

Schoenberg, in his early twelve-tone works, frequently presented two transpositions of the row simultaneously, thus making a distinct division between melodic and harmonic participation. In the middle Thirties, he began more and more frequently to use one transposition at a time, subdividing it into harmonic groups so that a succession of chords was formed from the row with points of melodic line appearing as uppermost factors of these chords. Thus the harmonic control of the tone-row was tightened, while the melodic dimension was somewhat released from bondage. By the later Thirties, Schoenberg was attempting to amalgamate both procedures by a simultaneous exposition of two transpositions of the same row – but a row so devised that, should it be reproduced at a specific interval and (usually) inverted, the first six tones of the original become, though in shuffled order, the last six of the inversion, and – if there is anyone who is not now thoroughly confused – vice versa.

The Piano Concerto possesses such a row. Its original form is so arranged that, if it is inverted at five semitones above, the following results (example A):



If these two transpositions are combined, it will be seen that the first six tones of the original and the first six tones of the inversion produce one complete twelve-tone spectrum, while utilizing only the interval combinations of half the row. Thus, within the harmonic range of a full tone-row, a greater economy of interval structure is achieved.

If the row of the Piano Concerto is subdivided into four chords of three tones each, two positions of the same seventh chord are formed by the superposition of tones 1-3 and 4-6 (example B):



The same procedure applied to the consequent tones, 7-9, 10-12, makes a combination of fourth chords and whole-tone units, and passages such as the following are derived (example C):

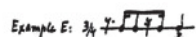


In somewhat subtler ways the two halves of the row are frequently assigned distinctive rhythmic shapes or perhaps consigned to different clefs (example D):



The work is in four movements joined without pause – or perhaps more accurately, with apostrophes – and each of these four movements develops a special aspect of the harmonic treatment of the row. In the first movement, which is a theme and variations, the theme is assigned to the right hand of the piano and consists of the four basic applications of the twelve-tone series – the original form, the inversion, the retrogression and the retrogressive inversion. The inversion and retrogressive inversion appear in the transposition at five semitones. The accompaniment in the left hand consists of discreet comments derived from the row in use. Therefore, the theme of the first movement effects a pseudo-tonal solidarity by confining itself to one transposition (if the inversion at five semitones be regarded as indigenous) of the row. Each successive variation (there are three, separated by episodes of rhythmic preparation) increases the number of participating transpositions of the series and hence puts pressure on the harmonic pace and results in a truncation of the main theme itself. In the first eight bars of variation 3 the original theme, or rather the first of its four sentences, is derived by excerpting and accenting individual notes drawn from no less than seven transpositions plus their complementary inversions.

The second movement is an energetic scherzo propelled by this rhythmic unit (example E):



In this movement, Schoenberg, counting on greater aural familiarity with the properties of the three-tone chord units illustrated in examples B and C, begins disconnecting successive tones of the original row and concocting new melodic and harmonic material by leap-frogging tones 1, 3, 3–2, 4, 6; similarly tones 7, 9, 11 and 8, 10, 12. The even numbers of the antecedent (2, 4, 6) and the odd numbers of the consequent (7, 9, 11) form chromatically adjoining fourth chords, while the remaining tones (1, 3, 5–8, 10, 12) produce a wry diminutive of tones 10–12 from the original set (example F):



Utilizing this division of the series and playing it off against the original's consequent segment of whole-tone units in fourth chords, Schoenberg gradually eliminates all other motives and realizes in the final bars of the scherzo an almost total technical immobility.

If the scherzo is the dynamic vortex of the work, the emotional centre is surely the superb *Adagio* – one of the greatest monuments to Schoenberg's technical skill. Here the procedures of both of the preceding movements are elaborated and com-

bined. The *divisi* melodic leap-frogging of the scherzo creates in the opening tutti of the third movement a new melody of true breadth and grandeur (example G):



Once again, as Schoenberg assumes a greater psychological comprehension on the part of the listener, a further relaxation of the twelve-tone bondage is permitted. The four harmonic blocks of the original row (examples B and C) are concentrated in a long solo for the piano. Then, with consummate mastery, these two procedures are brought together in an orchestral tutti which is one of the grandest edifices of the mature Schoenberg.

The final movement is a rondo – a pure, classically proportioned rondo – in which the central episode is a series of three variations upon the theme of the third movement (example G). In this movement Schoenberg returns largely to the straightforward row technique of the first movement, constructing a principal theme of jocose gallantry with admirable limitation of serial means, and the movement proceeds with the sort of virtuosic abandon and incorruptible simplicity that the rondos of Mozart and Beethoven reveal.

GLENN GOULD