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CONCERTO

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The Concerto

After the symphony, the concerto remains one of the best known and most familiar forms of orchestral music. The word itself has some ambiguity in its derivation and some variety in its original meaning. The suggested origin in the Latin *concertare*, to contend or dispute, is partially contradicted by the alternative derivation from *conserere*, to join together, although it might be added that the latter word also has the meaning of joining together in battle. Early uses of the Italian word *concerto*, however, imply concerted musical performance, as does the modern Italian word *concertare*, rather than giving any sense of competition or conflict.

From the later seventeenth century the word *concerto* has generally been applied to instrumental rather than vocal music. In earlier years it might indicate both and the word does occasionally appear in the earlier eighteenth century as a title of music for voices and instruments. The general meaning of the word, however, and the one normally in use today, is limited to music for instruments.

Concerto grosso

There is an element of contrast, if not of conflict, in the form of concerto that was developed in Italy in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. This came to be known as the *concerto grosso* or big concerto, not from the size of the form but from the contrast it provided between the whole orchestra, known as the *concerto grosso*, and a small group of soloists, the *concertino* or little concerted group.

Among the first composers to use the term *concerto grosso* to indicate the whole composition rather than one group of players was Arcangelo Corelli. For him and for many of his contemporaries the *concerto grosso* was a development of the *trio sonata*, a composition in several movements for two melody instruments, a bass instrument such as the cello or bass viol and a chordal instrument such as the harpsichord, the last two providing what had come to be known as the *basso continuo*. The *continuo* had become an essential element in the period we now know as the Baroque, which developed in the late sixteenth century and continued into the middle years of the eighteenth and suggested an increased interest in harmony, the effects of notes sounded together, rather than the interweaving of melodies known as counterpoint.

The *trio sonata* itself might be a *sonata da chiesa*, a church sonata, or a *sonata da camera*, a chamber sonata, the latter using secular, dance forms. The *concerto grosso* at first followed much the

same pattern and could be a *concerto da chiesa*, a church concerto, or a *concerto da camera*, a chamber concerto. Instructions were published explaining how a *trio sonata* could be turned into a *concerto grosso* simply by adding more instruments to the loud passages and leaving a small group of three players, with a harpsichord, to play the softer passages. The church composition was often in four movements, slow – fast – slow – fast. The fast movements were often fugal in character, making use of an element of counterpoint, where a melody or part of a melody enters imitatively in part after part. The chamber concerto or sonata made use of common dance patterns of the time, such as the German *Allemande*, the *Sarabande* and the *Gigue*, allowing for considerable variety in the number and choice of dances and movements.

Solo Concerto

The *concerto grosso* survived into the eighteenth century but was gradually replaced by the solo concerto. The former has been revived by some composers in the twentieth century. The solo concerto, a concerto for one solo instrument contrasted with the rest of the orchestra, existed in the time of Corelli in the late seventeenth century, but came into its own primarily in Venice in the early years of the eighteenth, most notably with the violinist-composer Vivaldi.

At the same time the word *concerto* was used to indicate what may be described as a *ripieno concerto*. *Ripieno* players in the orchestras and ensembles of the period were those who formed the main body of the orchestra, not soloists, the true *concerto grosso*, not members of the *concertino*, the smaller solo group. A *ripieno concerto* is an orchestral composition for rank-and-file only, for the orchestra itself, without the distinction of a soloist or solo group.

It is, of course, the solo concerto that has proved the most enduring of forms. In Venice in the first forty years of the eighteenth century Vivaldi provided solo concertos for a variety of instruments. While most were for his own instrument, the violin, he also provided concertos for solo recorder, flute, oboe, bassoon and cello, as well as double concertos for pairs of instruments and multiple concertos for groups of solo instruments. These last do not follow the pattern of the earlier *concerto grosso* but, like the concertos Vivaldi wrote for a single solo instrument, use a form of three movements, fast – slow – fast, a form that was largely followed in subsequent developments. It was left to Bach and Handel to provide keyboard concertos. Bach transcribed concertos by Italian composers, including Vivaldi, for solo harpsichord, without the orchestra, and transcribed his own violin concertos for solo harpsichord and orchestra or for two or more solo harpsichords, again with the orchestra. Handel provided organ concertos for his own use, played by him in the intervals of his

English oratorios and cannily giving London audiences their money's worth. The orchestra generally consisted of strings, in four parts, first and second violins, violas, cellos and double basses, the last two playing the same part. The texture would be filled out by a chordal instrument, usually the harpsichord. While Vivaldi's orchestra in Venice always took this form, Handel in England made use of oboes, in addition to the strings, as well as other wind instruments, when the occasion allowed.

The Baroque Solo Concerto

The usual form of the Baroque solo concerto made use, in the outer movements, of a *ritornello*, a refrain, a passage that might return in full or in part in the orchestra to provide a contrasting framework for the intervening passages of solo material and solo display. The central slow movement was generally in the form of an *aria*, a song-like melody for the soloist, sometimes lightly accompanied by the whole orchestra and sometimes by only a few instruments or simply by the *basso continuo*, bass instrument and harpsichord, alone.

The Classical Concerto

With composers of the so-called classical period of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Haydn, and, in this respect more significantly, Mozart, followed by Beethoven, the solo concerto developed into a work of greater length and complexity. It continued to follow the earlier pattern of movements, fast – slow – fast, but now made use of the relatively complex form that had established itself in the symphony and sonata and other forms of instrumental composition. The classical symphony or sonata first movement, described below, presented its themes in an opening section, the exposition. The classical concerto, more often than not, allowed the orchestra to present its themes, followed by an exposition for the soloist, but the presence of two distinct elements, the soloist and the orchestra, brings an element of the earlier *ritornello* form, an orchestral framework for solo episodes as the movement continues. The slow movement might offer an elaborate solo aria, extended melodic material for the soloist, with orchestral accompaniment and intervention, and the last movement a *rondo*, a movement in which a principal theme is used to frame a series of contrasting episodes and again with elements of *ritornello* structure.

The classical orchestra made use of a woodwind section of flutes, oboes and bassoons, and, increasingly, included clarinets. French horns were usual, while a pair of trumpets and drums found an occasional place. The basic element remained the four-part string orchestra. Less well-to-do musical establishments might make do with pairs of oboes and French horns together with what was little more than a quartet of string instruments. While Haydn, not a great virtuoso himself, provided a

limited number of concertos, some for keyboard, for cello and for violin and a remarkable work for a newly developed form of trumpet, Mozart elevated the form to a new height in the piano concertos he wrote for his own use and in concertos for French horn, for bassoon, for clarinet, for oboe, for flute and for flute and harp. He also wrote a number of violin concertos and completed two multiple concertos in a form that was winning popularity in the later eighteenth century, the *sinfonia concertante*. One of these was written for a group of solo wind instruments with orchestra and another for solo violin and viola with orchestra.

The Romantic Concerto

Beethoven had expanded the concerto, as he expanded the symphony, the sonata and, indeed, many of the forms that he had inherited. His career coincided with the development of so-called romanticism and with remarkable changes both in the form of instruments and in instrumental technique. The result was an increased emphasis on the solo performer, who might now pit himself as a champion against the power of an even fuller orchestra. There is a greater element of display and a romantic heroism about the whole enterprise. The piano, in particular, with its stronger iron frame, offered many possibilities, while the technical achievements of violinists such as Paganini opened up a new field of endeavour for performers. There are experiments with form and the music of concertos inevitably follows the developments in harmony that provided a much wider musical vocabulary.

The Twentieth-Century Concerto

In the twentieth century there have been new and innovative *ripieno* concertos, concertos like the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, that offer varied prominence to different players and groups of players in the orchestra. There have also been compositions that are concertos in all but name. Solo instruments of all kinds have been used but a common feature remains in the use of a soloist or group of soloists in contrast or competition with the rest of the instrumental ensemble, a continuing element of David against Goliath, varying in their degree of collaboration,

FORM:

[1] The Baroque Solo Concerto

The three-movement form of solo concerto developed in Venice in the work of Vivaldi and his near contemporary Albinoni generally began with a brisk movement in *ritornello* form. The *ritornello* would be played first by the whole orchestra, *tutti* (= all). This would be followed by a related passage for the soloist, shifting in key to the dominant, the nearest related key, based on the fifth note of the major scale, or, in minor key works, to the relative major, the key based on the third degree of the minor scale, using the same notes. The *ritornello* would intervene, in the new key, followed by a solo passage, the process continuing until the final *ritornello*, in the home key. A similar form was generally used in the third movement, while the second, slow movement, would take the form of an *aria*, a song-like theme for the soloist, lightly accompanied.

[2] The Classical Solo Concerto

With Mozart the solo concerto, still in three movements, took on elements of the newly developed sonata and symphony. The first movement generally opens with an orchestral *ritornello* that includes two themes, the second a lyrical contrast to the first. Both themes or subjects are in the tonic or home key. The second section of the movement starts with the soloist, often with the first theme. What follows, shared between soloist and orchestra, allows the former to lead the way to the secondary key, the dominant in a major-key work, often with the second theme, as well as possible new material of his own. The orchestra enters in a third section, making further use of the *ritornello* material in the secondary key. Here there is development of the earlier material and new material may be introduced. The fourth section is the equivalent of the recapitulation of sonata-allegro form (so-called first-movement form or sonata-form), bringing a varied repetition of the material of the first two sections, in the home key, and including a *cadenza*, a passage of solo display, generally unaccompanied.

The slow movement may be in tripartite form, a first theme finally repeated and framing a contrasted central section. It may also be slightly more complex, offering an element of *rondo* form, with a principal theme returning to frame intervening episodes. Some slow movements offer variations on a theme.

Final movements are often a combination of *rondo* and sonata-form. The essential element of the former is the recurrence of a principal theme to frame intervening episodes, while the essential element of sonata-form lies in its key-structure.

It will be noticed that the classical concerto differs, in general, from the classical symphony in the number of its movements. The symphony is frequently in four movements, the third of which would be in the form of a *Minuet* and *Trio*, or, as usual with Beethoven, the *Scherzo* and *Trio* derived from it. This relatively simple form, its origin in a dance, would have left little opportunity for solo display and generally has no place in a concerto.

[3] The Romantic and Twentieth-Century Concerto

Many concertos in the nineteenth century follow the earlier three-movement pattern and something of the general form of these movements. There is, however, much greater latitude in form and generally a much greater element of display. Composers like Liszt and Chopin adapted the form to their own characteristic needs, with the former making use of his own principle of thematic transformation, the development of a common theme through the movements, and even of the symphonic poem, with its extra-musical meaning, in his works for solo piano and orchestra. In some cases the solo part, demanding as it may be, is so intertwined with the orchestral texture that the concerto becomes more of a symphony, an orchestral composition that includes a solo instrument. This might seem to be the case with the two great piano concertos of Brahms, with the violin concerto of Sibelius, or, more recently, with Benjamin Britten's *Cello Symphony*.

Some composers have chosen to use other titles for works that are, in essence, concertos, in that they employ a virtuoso soloist together with an orchestra. Compositions of this kind may take various forms and it is, therefore, impossible to provide the kind of simple plan, as was the case with the concertos of Baroque and Classical composers.

CD 1 From Corelli to Beethoven

1 Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)

Concerto grosso, Op.6, No.8 in G minor: Allegro
Capella Istropolitana • Jaroslav Kr(e)chek (Naxos 8.550403)

Arcangelo Corelli was born in 1653 at Fusignano into a family that had, since the fifteenth century, enjoyed considerable prosperity. Violin lessons from a priest at Faenza, continued at Lugo, led, in 1666, to removal to Bologna, a famous musical centre, and to study under teachers of the greatest distinction. By 1675 Corelli was in Rome, employed as a violinist in various performances. He served as a chamber musician to Queen Christina of Sweden, at least intermittently, until her death in 1689, and in 1687 led 150 string players, with a hundred singers, in a concert in honour of the ambassador of King James II, Lord Castlemaine, entrusted with negotiations for the return of England to the Catholic faith. At the same time Corelli received even more significant patronage from Benedetto Pamphili, great-nephew of Pope Innocent X, created cardinal in 1681 and an exact contemporary of the composer. In 1687 he became *maestro di musica* to Cardinal Pamphili and took up residence in his Palazzo on the Corso, with his pupil, the violinist Matteo Fornari and the Spanish cellist Lulier, his colleagues in many performances. In 1690, after the appointment of Cardinal Pamphili as papal legate to Bologna, Corelli moved to the Palazzo della Cancelleria, to the service of the young Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, the gifted great-nephew of Pope Alexander VIII, remaining there until his death in early 1713.

Corelli enjoyed great distinction in Rome as a violinist and composer. His set of twelve *Concerti grossi*, Op.6, was published posthumously, but had already been widely heard and imitated. His other surviving compositions include four dozen *Trio Sonatas* and a dozen *Sonatas* for violin and *basso continuo*, the sonatas all published in his lifetime. The first eight of the *Concerti grossi* are in the form of *concerti da chiesa*, church concertos, and the remaining four in the form of *concerti da camera*, chamber concertos. The eighth concerto, written for Christmas Eve, includes a famous final movement in the form of a *Pastorale*, an evocation of the scene near Bethlehem at the birth of Christ, when shepherds, represented here and in many other such concertos by a shepherd dance, watched over their flocks by night. The preceding movement, marked *Allegro*, allows the two solo violins of the *concertino* to enter in imitation one of the other, followed at once by the *ripieno*, the whole string

orchestra. The movement continues with contrasts between the smaller *concertino* group and the *ripieno*, the rest of the orchestra, and with imitative entries between the upper parts.

2 Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709)

Sonata a cinque: Andante & Allegro

Miroslav Kejmar, trumpet • Capella Istropolitana • Peter kvor (Naxos 8.550243)

Giuseppe Torelli was born in Verona in 1658, the sixth child of a health inspector employed at the customs office. In the early 1680s he moved to Bologna and was accepted as a member of the Accademia Filarmonica in June 1684, described then as a violinist, but later given the title of composer. Bologna was an important musical centre, with much activity based on the great Basilica of San Petronio. Torelli became a member of the musical establishment of the Basilica in 1686. The church itself was one of the largest in Italy, with acoustics that favoured large-scale performances and were material in the early development of the Baroque concerto. In this the Bologna works for solo trumpet and strings were of great importance. Torelli continued as an intermittent member of the *cappella* (musical establishment) of San Petronio until it was temporarily disbanded in 1696. Meanwhile he had served elsewhere as a violinist and in 1698, with the castrato Pistocchi, son of a Bologna violinist, he entered the service of the Margrave of Brandenburg at Ansbach, moving in 1699 to Vienna. By 1701 he was again in Bologna, serving in the newly re-established *cappella* of San Petronio under his former teacher and junior by three years, Giacomo Antonio Pertì, whose music he had tried to introduce in Vienna. Torelli remained in intermittent service of San Petronio until his death in 1709, the temporary nature of his employment in Bologna attributable to his wider fame as a performer and demands elsewhere on his abilities.

As so often in the history of music, Torelli's compositions for solo trumpet were inspired by a particular player, in this case Giovanni Pellegrino Brandi, a virtuoso performer, who was regularly engaged for the patronal feast of San Petronio. The Baroque trumpet itself differs from the modern valve trumpet by the fact that it is limited to the notes of the harmonic series and can, therefore, only play consecutive notes at a very high register. The technique of *clarino* performance of this kind was largely developed at San Petronio, where such instrumental performances could be heard in instrumental preludes to the Mass on major feast days. Torelli's *Sonata a cinque* (Sonata for five parts) is in the form of a church sonata or concerto, with an opening slow movement leading to a quicker second movement, the latter fugal in texture, with one part entering after another in imitation.

3 Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni (1671-1751)

Oboe Concerto Op.9, No.5: Allegro

Anthony Camden, oboe • The London Virtuosi • John Georgiadis (Naxos 8.550739)

The eldest son of a well-to-do paper merchant in Venice, Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni was born in 1671 and as a child studied singing and the violin. His family circumstances made it unnecessary for him to seek employment as a musician and he soon found the time to turn to composition, completing the first of his fifty or so operas in 1694. In the same year he published a set of twelve *Trio Sonatas, Op.1*, dedicated to Corelli's patron, Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni. His career as a composer brought him a reputation outside his native city, with operas performed in Naples and in Florence. In 1705 he married a singer and is reputed to have run a singing school. At all events, on the death of his father in 1709 he was exonerated from the burden of the family business, now managed by his younger brothers. His first set of six *Sinfonie* and six *Concerti* had been published in 1700 as his *Opus 2*, and further sets of concertos followed, including the twelve *Concerti a cinque, Op.9*, of 1722, dedicated to the Elector of Bavaria. He provided an opera for the celebration of the marriage of the Elector's son, Karl Albrecht, to the younger daughter of the former Emperor Joseph I, and his music found an audience in major cities in Europe, with publication in Amsterdam and in London and transcriptions in Germany. He spent his later years in apparent retirement, dying in Venice in 1751.

Albinoni was an immensely prolific composer, as the list of his operas testifies. In instrumental music his significant achievement lies in the concertos he wrote for the oboe. While in Bologna the trumpet and the cello had proved popular solo instruments, as the concerto developed, in Venice, with Vivaldi, it was rather the idiom of the violin that predominated. The oboe itself remains the principal soprano double-reed instrument, developed from the earlier shawm, with its more forceful tone. Its English name derived from the French *hautbois*, the oboe underwent various changes in the mid-seventeenth century, gaining in the process a considerable degree of flexibility and finding a secure place in instrumental ensembles, as well as a continued position in outdoor music, notably in military bands, where, in Germany at least, it came to replace the German shawm. By the 1690s the oboe had been heard in opera in Venice and was used in the Basilica of San Marco. Its growing popularity ensured that it should also be taught in the great charitable institutions of Venice, the four *Ospedali*, including the Pietà where Vivaldi taught. Albinoni's first set of twelve concertos for one or two oboes was published in 1715, followed in 1722 by the *Concerti a cinque, Op.9*. This last set offers four groups

of concertos, the first of each group a concerto for solo violin, followed by a concerto for oboe and a concerto for two oboes. The fifth of the set, for solo oboe, strings and harpsichord, is in the usual three movements, fast – slow – fast. The tuneful final *Allegro* treats the oboe idiomatically in a series of entries, framed by a recurrent *ritornello*.

4

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Violin Concerto Op.8 No.6 (Il piacere): Allegro

Béla Bánfalvi, violin & director • Budapest Strings (Naxos 8.550189)

It was with Vivaldi that the solo violin concerto came into its own. Vivaldi himself was born in Venice in 1678, the son of a musician who became a member of the musical establishment of the basilica of San Marco in 1685. Ordained priest in 1703, he was appointed violin master at the Ospedale della Pietà in the same year and intermittently continued his association with that institution for much of his life. A remarkable virtuoso performer, he also enjoyed great facility as a composer and published his first set of twelve *Trio Sonatas, Op.1*, in 1705, or, if this is a reprinted edition, perhaps slightly earlier. The Pietà, where he was employed, was one of four such establishments in Venice, charitable institutions for the education of illegitimate, indigent or otherwise unwanted girls, each of the four well known for its standards of musical performance. Vivaldi's career also brought involvement in the opera-house, principally in Venice, and the composition and direction of fifty or so operas. His compositions include some five hundred concertos, among which *The Four Seasons* remains some of the most generally popular, then as now. Weakness of health prevented him from celebrating Mass as a priest, but did little to impede his achievements as a performer and composer. By 1741 it seemed that fashions in Venice were changing and Vivaldi sought new audiences in Vienna, where he died shortly after his arrival in the city, before he was able to secure for himself any necessary patronage.

Vivaldi's concertos generally follow a three-movement pattern, with two outer fast movements framing a slow central movement. While *The Four Seasons* have a very precise programme, added in accompanying sonnets that describe each feature depicted, others may offer more general pictures, and the majority lack any overt programme. The outer movements make use of a recurrent *ritornello*, framing solo entries, while the slow movement is generally some form of *aria*, often lightly accompanied by the string orchestra and continuo, or simply by the latter. The influence of his work was wide and J.S.Bach, who transcribed six of Vivaldi's concertos as works for solo harpsichord,

owed a great deal to his example, following Vivaldi's general pattern in his own concertos. The concertos that form Opus 8 were published in 1725 in Amsterdam under the title *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* (The Contest between Harmony and Invention), which suggests the dichotomy between reason and imagination or even, anachronistically, between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The set of twelve concertos, dedicated to Count Wenzel von Morzin, a cousin of Haydn's later patron, starts with *The Four Seasons* and the sixth, in C major, has the title *Il piacere* (Pleasure), descriptive of its general mood. The first movement is in the expected *ritornello* form.

5 George Frederick Handel (1685-1759)

Organ Concerto, Op.4, No.4 in F major: Allegro

Simon Lindley, organ • Northern Sinfonia • Bradley Creswick (Naxos 8.553835)

There is an element of paradox in the career of George Frideric Handel. Born in Halle in 1685, the son of a distinguished and elderly barber-surgeon, he gave up his other studies to become a musician. As a student at the University in Halle, he found employment at the Cathedral as an organist. He soon moved to Hamburg, where he served as a harpsichordist and composer at the Opera, before moving to Italy, the source of all opera. He remained there from 1706 to 1710, distinguishing himself in a keyboard contest in Rome with Domenico Scarlatti, with the latter declared the better harpsichordist and Handel the better organist. A meeting with a Hanoverian court official in Venice led to appointment as director of music at the court of the Elector, the future King George I of England, followed, almost at once, by leave to visit London for the staging of a new Italian opera. Handel soon settled in London, heavily involved in the business of Italian opera, until opportunity suggested the viability of English oratorio, a form that might appeal to Protestant and xenophobic susceptibilities. Texts, often biblical in origin, were in English, not Italian, and the dramatic improbabilities of contemporary Italian opera and something of its expense were avoided. Handel's last Italian opera for London was staged in 1741, the year before the first performance of his most famous oratorio, *Messiah*, to be followed by a series of such works, culminating in 1752 with *Jephtha*. Handel died in London in 1759.

Handel's Italianate musical background facilitated vocal composition of all kinds. His gift for melody was equally shown in a variety of instrumental compositions. He contributed notably to the body of *concerti grossi*, most significantly in the set of *Twelve Grand Concertos in Seven Parts*, Op.6, written and published in 1739.

His innovative concertos for the organ were devised in response to a perceived need, as a by-product of his English oratorios, and were used to provide music for the intervals between acts and parts of these works. Two sets of six concertos each were published in 1738 and 1740 respectively, followed, a year after his death, by a third such collection. The concertos are in three or four movements, largely following the pattern established by Corelli, and provided Handel with a vehicle for his own performance as an organist and at times as an improviser.

Handel's set of six *Organ Concertos, Op.4*, had its first authorised publication in 1738, after an earlier pirate edition. The fourth of the concertos was first performed at Covent Garden in 1735, with the first London performance of the oratorio *Athalia*, which had been given two years earlier in Oxford. The first of the four movements, scored for oboes and strings, starts with an orchestral *ritornello* and it is this that is used in varying degrees to frame the solo episodes. The solo part is written for manuals only, as was usually the case at this period in English organ music.

6 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No.2 in F major: Allegro assai
Capella Istropolitana • Bohdan Warchal (Naxos 8.550047)

Johann Sebastian Bach was born into a flourishing dynasty of musicians active in Saxony. On the death of his musician father he was taken into the household of an elder brother, organist at Ohrdruf, and established himself as an organist in the early years of the eighteenth century, serving at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen before his appointment in 1708 as court organist to Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Weimar, the elder of the two brothers who jointly ruled the duchy. In 1714 he was promoted to the position of Concertmaster to the Duke, but in 1717 left, after a brief spell in prison for his temerity in seeking to leave, to serve as Court Kapellmeister to the young prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. At Cöthen he found life particularly congenial. His duties were largely secular, since the Pietism of the court had relatively little need for church music. It was during his years at Cöthen, the summit of his social career and the happiest time of his life, that he wrote a quantity of instrumental music. The marriage of the Prince to a woman whom Bach described as '*amusica*' led, in 1723, to his departure to take up the position of Thomascantor in Leipzig, as an employee there of the City Council. While the step seemed inevitable, it was, nevertheless, a position that was of a much lower level than the court appointment that he felt compelled to leave. In Leipzig Bach was responsible for the music of the five principal city churches. In his first years he composed a quantity of cantatas, cycles of works

for use throughout the church year. In 1729 he was able to take responsibility for the University Collegium Musicum, a group of professional and amateur musicians, for whom he wrote, among other things, a number of harpsichord concertos. In other respects Bach's responsibilities were in part those of a schoolmaster, duties that occasionally brought conflict with the authorities. He was able during this period to organize and arrange earlier compositions, which were now published. His final work, however, *the Art of Fugue*, remained unfinished at his death in 1750.

The six *Brandenburg Concertos* were completed at C \ddot{u} then, possibly using some compositions written earlier at Weimar. In 1721 Bach presented the set to the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, the youngest son of the Great Elector, Frederick William I of Brandenburg-Prussia, the Hohenzollern ruler who established the power of Prussia. The concertos are very varied in their instrumentation. The second, in the key of F major, is scored for a solo trumpet, recorder, oboe and violin, with strings and harpsichord, and is in the three movements usual in the concertos of Vivaldi. The third of these opens with a theme presented in the high register of the Baroque trumpet, a reminder of the great skill exercised by contemporary performers, with accompaniment from harpsichord and cello. The solo oboe enters in imitation, followed by the solo violin and finally by the recorder, and the theme so offered forms the basis of the movement, as it continues in miraculous counterpoint.

7

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Concerto in C minor for Two Harpsichords: Allegro

Robert Hill & Michael Behringer, harpsichords • Cologne Chamber Orchestra • Helmut Müller-Brühl (Naxos 8.554217)

Bach demonstrated in the *Brandenburg Concertos* the varied possibilities of the *concerto grosso*, as in *Brandenburg Concerto No.2*, and, in three of the six, of the *ripieno concerto*, the concerto without a specified solo group or soloist. He was a pioneer in the development of the solo harpsichord concerto, while those that he wrote for two harpsichords also lent themselves to private domestic performance within his family on the two solo instruments only. The *Concerto in C minor for Two Harpsichords* is an arrangement, made in Leipzig for the Collegium Musicum, of an earlier work, written while he was at C \ddot{u} then, for solo violin and solo oboe, with strings and continuo. Following the Venetian model, the work is in three movements, the last of which unfolds with characteristic vigour and impetus. The *ritornello* principle is followed, with interventions from the soloists between the framing passages for the whole

body of strings. Here, as in other concertos for two or more harpsichords, it may be supposed that Bach was joined by one or more of his sons in performance.

8 Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788)

Cello Concerto in A major: Allegro assai

Tim Hugh, cello • Bournemouth Sinfonietta • Richard Studt (Naxos 8.553298)

Carl Philipp Emanuel was the second surviving son of Johann Sebastian Bach and was born in Weimar in 1714, the year of his father's promotion to the position of court *Konzertmeister*. He and his youngest brother, Johann Christian, whose education he undertook after their father's death in 1750, were the most successful and stable of the sons of the family, Carl Philipp Emanuel in Berlin and then, more happily, in Hamburg, and Johann Christian in Milan and then, at first as a composer of Italian opera, in London. Carl Philipp Emanuel was three when the family moved to Cöthen, where he attended the Lutheran Latin School and had his musical training from his father. His father was anxious that his sons should have a satisfactory general education. Certainly the authority of attendance at university would, in his own case, have strengthened his resistance to the difficulties he encountered with the authorities in Leipzig. It was, indeed, partly with the university education of his sons in mind that J.S.Bach had decided to leave Cöthen. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach matriculated as a law student at the University of Leipzig in 1731 and continued his studies from 1734 at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder. In 1738, rejecting the opportunity to serve as travelling companion to a young gentleman, he entered the service of Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia as harpsichordist, moving with the court to Berlin in 1740, on the accession to the throne of the Prince, better known as Frederick the Great. In Berlin and Potsdam Bach continued his duties as a harpsichordist in a court of generally conservative musical tastes, employed to accompany the King, a flautist, in evening concerts, but limited in his opportunities, although he was able to mix with a distinguished enough group of musicians and men of letters. The death of his godfather Telemann in 1767 offered the chance of succeeding him as city director of music in Hamburg and from 1768 until his death he made his home there. C.P.E.Bach, better known in his time than his father, had a distinguished reputation as a keyboard-player and until his death in 1788 continued to enjoy respect as a man of wide intellectual interests, no mere working musician.

Bach arranged three of his harpsichord concertos at first as flute concertos and then as concertos for cello. The *Cello Concerto in A major*, originally written and then twice arranged in the

early 1750s, is in the expected three-movement form. The third movement is introduced by the string orchestra, before the first entry of the soloist in music that is both stimulating and technically demanding in its expressive verve and energy. It is a reminder that the Prussian court employed cellists of considerable ability, as it did in the subsequent reign of the cello-playing nephew of Frederick the Great, Frederick William II.

9

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Trumpet Concerto in E flat major: Finale: Allegro

Miroslav Kejmar, trumpet • Capella Istropolitana • Peter Škvor (Naxos 8.550243)

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in the village of Rohrau, near the Danube border of Austria and modern Slovakia, the son of a wheelwright. His musical training was principally, from the age of eight, as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. After leaving this establishment, he earned a living as best he could in Vienna, teaching and in performance as a violinist and keyboard-player. He found his first steady employment in 1759 as director of music for Count Morzin, and from 1761 in the service of one of the richest families in the Empire, the Esterházy. At first deputy to an ageing and jealous Kapellmeister, at whose death in 1766 he was able to assume the title as well as the duties of the position, for the greater part of his life he served Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. The Prince's main establishment was first of all at Eisenstadt, but soon the magnificent and relatively isolated palace of Esterháza was ready, with its theatres and permanent musical establishment for which Haydn was now responsible as administrator, composer and director. The death of Prince Nikolaus in 1790 released Haydn to make two extended visits to London and to settle principally in Vienna, while recalled briefly to Eisenstadt by one of the Prince's successors. He died in Vienna in 1809, as Napoleon's soldiers again entered the city. Prolific in a variety of genres, he left a quantity of sonatas, symphonies, chamber music, operas and church music, the products of a long and fruitful career.

While Haydn played a leading part in the development of the symphony and, in chamber music, of the string quartet, he made a less significant contribution to the classical concerto. Three violin concertos survive, with two well known cello concertos, a group of keyboard concertos, a horn concerto, a set of commissioned concertos for two *lire organizzate*, a form of hurdy-gurdy popular in the 1780s, and a concerto for the newly invented keyed trumpet. Attempts were being made to widen the possible range of the trumpet. The Baroque instrument was confined to the notes of the harmonic

series and was, therefore, only able to play melodies of adjacent notes in its highest register. The art of *clarino*-playing was highly developed, but the lower register of the instrument could only produce the widely spaced lower notes of the series. The trumpeter Anton Weidinger, who had joined the Vienna court orchestra in 1792, devised a keyed trumpet, which made consecutive lower notes possible. The new instrument was soon to be replaced by the more satisfactory valve trumpet, in more or less general use from the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto* is in three movements. The last of these is in sonata-rondo form. It uses the sandwich form of the rondo, with a principal theme framing intervening episodes, while the key structure is that of the sonata-allegro. The first theme is announced by the orchestra, repeated by the trumpet. A contrasting second theme is introduced by the soloist and dialogue with the orchestra leads to the return of the main theme. The material is developed, as in the first movement of a sonata or symphony, before the main theme returns, to frame one further contrasting episode and bring the concerto to a close.

10 **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

Piano Concerto No.23 in A major, K.488: Allegro

Jenő Jandö, piano • Concentus Hungaricus • Mátyás Antál (Naxos 8.550204)

The only surviving son and youngest child of Leopold Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in 1756 in Salzburg, where his father was a leading musician in the service of the ruling Archbishop. His remarkable gifts as a musician soon became apparent and as a child he was taken by his father on extended tours of Europe, in which he and his sister could demonstrate their abilities, an object of amazement to all who heard them. At the same time the young Mozart eagerly absorbed the cultural and musical influences that he met on his journeys. These included in the 1770s visits to Italy, where he fulfilled commissions for operas in Milan, then under Austrian suzerainty, making a continuing impression on those he met, but always failing to secure any position for himself. In Salzburg once more, restricted by the expectations of a less indulgent patron, the new Archbishop, he was appointed concert-master, but sought escape from a position that seemed to offer little opportunity. Resigning in 1777, he visited Mannheim and Paris, but failed to find a position commensurate with his abilities. Re-engaged in Salzburg, he eventually quarrelled with his patron during the course of a visit to Vienna in 1781. He spent the remaining ten years of his life largely in Vienna, enjoying varying success after his first appearances there and never securing a position that he could regard as satisfactory in providing an outlet for his genius

and adequate reward. An imprudent marriage in 1782 did little to help, now deprived, as he was, of his father's very necessary advice and presence. He died in 1791 at a time when his fortunes might have taken a turn for the better. There seemed, at least, a prospect of employment at the Cathedral, while his last German opera, *The Magic Flute*, was enjoying considerable success. His ambitions had always lain in the composition of opera and these were magnificently realised in the operas, German and Italian, that he wrote in Vienna. In other respects he made a remarkable contribution to many forms of music, in a language that has a beauty of its own, by turns exuberant and poignant. He remains one of the best-loved composers of all.

Mozart himself was both violinist and pianist, although his father, distinguished as the author of an important book on violin-playing, had reason to complain of his son's later reluctance to practise the violin. His five solo violin concertos were written in 1775, when he was concert-master in Salzburg. Of his 27 listed keyboard concertos, the first were arrangements, made as an eleven-year-old and in 1772, of the work of other composers, particularly those of Johann Christian Bach, youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, whom he had met in London and in Paris. Half a dozen concertos were written during his adolescence in Salzburg, but it was Vienna that first heard the great series of concertos that he provided principally for his own use in subscription concerts in the imperial capital. These last nineteen piano concertos were written between 1782 and 1788, with the last concerto composed and performed in January 1791, eleven months before his death.

Mozart's *Piano Concerto in A major, K.488*, was completed on 2nd March 1786 at a time when he was busy with the composition of an Italian opera for Vienna, *The Marriage of Figaro*. The work, which is in the expected three movements, is scored for flute, two clarinets, two French horns, two bassoons and strings. The first movement is opened by the strings, echoed by the wind instruments and leading to the introduction of a second subject by the strings, with a hint of poignancy. This material is duly expanded by the soloist, entering with the first theme, and in this soloist's exposition also re-introducing the second theme, now in the related dominant key of E major. There is a central development, starting with a new theme and moving to darker-hued keys in the course of the dialogue between soloist and orchestra. The recapitulation brings back the first and second subjects and before the movement ends there is a cadenza, written by the composer and preceded by the characteristic orchestral chords that make of this prolonged solo passage an extended cadence, its end signalled by the conventional trill, a signal for the orchestra to be ready to provide the conclusion to the movement.

11**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

Clarinet Concerto in A major, K.622: Adagio

Ernst Ottensamer, clarinet * Vienna Mozart Academy * Johannes Wildner (Naxos 8.550345)

The clarinet developed during the course of the eighteenth century from the more primitive single-reed *chalumeau*, with its limited and lower range, leaving its name in modern use to indicate the lower range of the modern clarinet. The upper range was developed by the introduction of a so-called register key, which gave the instrument an extended higher range and allowed a possible contrast of tone-colour between the rich timbre of the lower notes and the more flute-like upper notes. During the later eighteenth century the clarinet gradually found a place in the orchestra, with the appointment of the first clarinetists to the Vienna court orchestra in 1787. The two players thus appointed were the Stadler brothers, for the younger of whom, Anton Stadler, Mozart wrote his *Clarinet Concerto in A major, K.622*, a month or so before his death in December 1791. Stadler had developed a new form of clarinet, a basset clarinet, with an extended lower range, and it was for this instrument that Mozart wrote his concerto, as well as a quintet for clarinet and string quartet. The basset clarinet never enjoyed wide popularity and Mozart's concerto and quintet were both published with the slight adjustments necessary for a clarinet of normal compass. Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto*, in the usual three movements, has at its heart a slow movement of particular beauty, giving every possibility to the expressive powers of the instrument and its inherent hints of underlying sadness. The movement is in ternary form, a repeated outer section framing a contrasted central section. The means used are of the simplest, the result ineffable.

12**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

Horn Concerto No.4 in E flat major, K.495: Rondo: Allegro vivace

Michael Thompson, French horn * Bournemouth Sinfonietta (Naxos 8.553592)

Various experiments with the French horn were made in the course of the eighteenth century but it was in the nineteenth that the introduction of valves made the instrument chromatic throughout its range. Like the natural trumpet, the natural horn was confined to the notes of the harmonic series, capable of playing adjacent chromatic notes at the height of its register, a task that often enough might be undertaken by *clarino* trumpet-players. There had been experiments with a hand-stopped trumpet, but the hand-stopped horn provided a much more viable form of instrument, with the bell

held downwards, rather than above the head, as had once been the practice. By inserting the right hand in the bell of the instrument it is possible to change the pitch and therefore to play adjacent notes in much of the range. It was with this current technique in mind that Mozart, in the 1780s, completed his three E flat horn concertos. These, with a number of other compositions for the instrument, were written for an old friend of the family from Salzburg, Ignaz Leutgeb, who had settled in Vienna in 1777 and had a cheese-shop there. He was a pioneer in the technique of hand-stopping and continued his parallel career as a horn-player until 1792, when he retired.

In the *Horn Concerto No.4 in E flat major, K.495*, completed in June 1786, the last movement is a cheerful rondo, with the hunting-horn never far away. The main theme is introduced by the soloist, followed by the orchestra, which employs pairs of oboes and horns in addition to the usual strings. The soloist brings in a secondary theme, before the return of the main theme once more. A further episode introduces a sadder, minor key in what is essentially the development section of a sonata-rondo movement. There is the briefest of cadenzas, a short flourish, before the soloist announces the main theme yet again, the principal material of the concluding section.

13 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Triple Concerto in C major: Rondo alla polacca

Dong-Suk Kang, violin • Maria Kliegel, cello • Jenő Jandó, piano

Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia • Béla Drahos (Naxos 8.554288)

The Archbishop-Elector of Cologne had his court and musical establishment in Bonn, where Beethoven was born in 1770. His grandfather had been Kapellmeister to the Elector and his father was employed as a singer, although excessive drinking and dissipation had seriously diminished his usefulness. Beethoven was trained from childhood as a musician and in due course entered the service of the Elector, exercising his abilities as a string-player and keyboard-player. An attempt to study with Mozart in 1787 was frustrated by the illness and death of his mother, but in 1792, again with the encouragement and support of the Elector, he returned to take lessons with Haydn. Beethoven claimed to have learned little from his teacher, but took the opportunity of working with other distinguished musicians, while launching his own career as a pianist and composer. The introductions he brought with him from Bonn proved valuable to him and he benefited throughout his career in Vienna from the generosity and forbearance of a number of patrons.

By the turn of the century Beethoven had begun to experience increasing deafness, which

gradually made performance difficult and then impossible. At the same time it brought about increasing social isolation and a parallel increase in eccentricity. Musically he was able to explore an element that some of his contemporaries regarded as academic, counterpoint, the art of setting melodies against each other. While his earlier compositions follow the tradition of Mozart, little by little he introduced innovations, stretching and expanding existing musical forms to bursting-point. He seemed to represent a new kind of artist who could please himself rather than serve the immediate interests of a patron, as earlier musicians had done. While his work was firmly rooted in the classical tradition of Haydn and Mozart, it nevertheless set a challenge to the next generation of composers, which they tried to meet in various ways.

Beethoven died in 1827, leaving an impressive body of work. His music challenged those who came after him, but at the same time suggested new paths of development. As a virtuoso pianist, it was natural that he should provide himself with concertos for his own concert use. Five such works were published by him, as well as an innovative *Choral Fantasia*, a work for solo piano, chorus and orchestra, and one that came to grief at its first under-rehearsed performance. His *Violin Concerto* is among the greatest examples of its kind, its present familiarity obscuring some very novel features. Two possible slow movements for an earlier, unfinished violin concerto were published in 1803 and 1805 as *Romances* for solo violin and orchestra.

Less often heard is the demanding *Triple Concerto*, for solo violin, cello and piano, exploring the form of the *sinfonia concertante*, the multiple concerto popular France and used by Mozart during and after his stay in Paris in 1778. Beethoven's concerto was completed in 1804 and originally dedicated, it may be presumed, to his pupil the Archduke Rudolph, son of the late Emperor Leopold II, who had started his lessons with Beethoven in 1803, at the age of fifteen. It was first published in 1807 with a dedication to Prince Lobkowitz and had its first public performance the following year, when it was coolly received. The work is scored for an orchestra that includes flute, pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, French horns, trumpets and timpani, with strings. It makes relatively modest demands on the pianist, originally the Archduke himself, but presents greater technical challenges to the violinist and, above all, to the cellist, originally Anton Kraft, a former member of Haydn's orchestra at Esterháza. The last of the three movements is described as a *Rondo alla polacca*, a Polish rondo, the adjective a reference to the rhythmic structure. The solo cello introduces the main theme, which will return to frame intervening episodes. The violin follows, at first in a contrasted key, and eventually all three join the orchestra in the theme. The first intervening episode, equivalent to the second subject of a sonata-allegro movement, follows with a flurry of activity, ending tentatively as the return of the main theme draws near. The second episode very correctly appears in the key of A minor, the relative minor of C

major, the key of the concerto and the movement. The main theme returns, suggested first by the solo violin over busy cello runs and trills from the piano. Material from the first episode is heard, in the key of C, and the conclusion, the final *coda* is formally combined with reminiscences of the main theme and of other elements in the movement.

14 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Piano Concerto in E flat major, Op.73, (Emperor Concerto): Rondo: Allegro
Stefan Vladar, piano • Capella Istropolitana • Barry Wordsworth (Naxos 8.550121)

The last of Beethoven's concertos, the fifth for solo piano, popularly but mistakenly known as the *Emperor Concerto*, was completed in 1809 and first published in 1810 in London. The work was dedicated to Beethoven's pupil and patron, the Archduke Rudolph, and was first performed in public in 1811, the year of its publication in Leipzig. There is a distinctly martial if not positively imperial aspect to the work, which was written under the very difficult economic and physical circumstances of the time. In May 1809 Vienna was under attack by the forces of Napoleon and most of the leading families, including the imperial family, had taken refuge elsewhere. During the bombardment of the city Beethoven had sheltered in the cellar of his unreliable brother Carl Caspar, covering his head with a pillow to protect what remained of his hearing against the noise of the cannons. On 12th May Vienna surrendered, the French occupation bringing hardship to householders, from whom a levy was exacted, coupled with a continuing shortage of money and food.

The third movement of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.5 in E flat major, the Emperor Concerto*, is in the expected sonata-rondo form so often now used for final movements. The work is scored for the same forces as the *Triple Concerto*, with clarinets now an established element in the woodwind section, while trumpets and drums, with the martial key of E flat major, give their own character to the music. The main theme is announced by the soloist over sustained notes from the French horns that provide a link with the preceding slow movement. Contrast is provided in a first episode, as the soloist introduces a new theme, still in the key of E flat major but soon moving to the expected dominant key of B flat major. The soloist re-introduces the main theme, before moving, after passages of considerable virtuosity, to a version of the main theme in C major. The French horns contradict this and the soloist now turns to the key of A flat major. Now oboes and bassoons suggest a further change of key and the soloist offers the main theme in the key of E major, developing it as before. The final key of E flat major is eventually reached, the theme suggested by

the violins, under piano trills. The main theme is followed by the material of the first rondo episode and the whole is capped by the gradual return of the main theme to provide an emphatic *coda* that includes a remarkable passage for the solo piano and timpani before the final swirl of sound.

DISC 2 From Mendelssohn to the Present

1 Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)

Concerto in D minor for Violin, Piano and Strings: Allegro molto
Marat Bisengaliev, violin • Benjamin Frith, piano • Northern Sinfonia • Andrew Penny
(Naxos 8.553844)

The composer Felix Mendelssohn was immensely precocious and benefited at the same time from the intellectual and cultural interests and connections of his family. Born in Hamburg in 1809, the son of a banker, he moved with his family to Berlin in 1812 and by the age of eight was studying composition with Carl Zelter, a friend of Goethe, to whom the young Mendelssohn was introduced. Even as a child he was writing works of major importance, including, in 1825, his *Octet* and a year later his *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His interest in the music of J.S.Bach led in 1829 to a Berlin revival, under his direction, of the *St Matthew Passion*. In the same year he made his first and very successful visit to England, where he continued to be welcome. Visits to Scotland and Italy suggested symphonies drawing inspiration from those countries. He returned from Italy in 1831 to perform his hurriedly written *Piano Concerto No.1* in Munich and to travel to Paris, where he met Liszt and Chopin. In 1833 he took employment in Dÿsseldorf as city director of music, but left in 1835 to become conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. In 1841 he was induced to move to Berlin, at the request of the King of Prussia, to direct the music section of the Academy of Arts, but was happy soon to return to Leipzig, where he established a Conservatory. He died in 1847, exhausted by a life that had involved intense activity as a composer, performer and conductor. His music is largely classical in form and inspiration, but makes good use of the new harmonic and instrumental resources now available to him.

Mendelssohn wrote a number of concertos, the first of them in early adolescence. He wrote his first *Piano Concerto* in 1822, to be followed in 1831 by the more mature *Piano Concerto No.1 in G minor* and in 1837 by his *Piano Concerto No.2 in D minor*. His first *Violin Concerto* was also tackled in 1822, but it was not until 1844 that he wrote his famous *Violin Concerto in E minor*, an essential element in any violinist's repertoire. The early 1820s brought two concertos for two pianos and in the same period, in 1823, he composed his *Concerto in D minor for violin, piano and strings*. The third and last movement of this work is typical of Mendelssohn in its youthful exuberance and brilliance. The classical form is that of the sonata-allegro. The first part of the movement offers a first subject of some brilliance,

introduced by the piano, followed by the solo violin. The second subject is more gently lyrical. There is a short central development before the return of the first subject in a recapitulation that brings its own elements of contrapuntal and dramatic development and an emphatic and demonstrative conclusion. The assurance of the writing, influenced by the work of contemporary composers such as Weber, is testimony to the astonishing ability of the fourteen-year-old composer.

2 Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Piano Concerto No.1 in E flat major: Allegro maestoso

Joseph Banowetz, piano • Czechoslovak Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava) • Oliver Dohnányi (Naxos 8.550187)

Franz Liszt was born at Raiding in Hungary in 1811, the son of a steward employed by Haydn's patrons, the Esterházy. As a boy he showed extraordinary musical ability and money was raised, after he had played to the Hungarian nobility in Pressburg (the modern Bratislava), to send him to Vienna. There he took lessons from Czerny and was apparently kissed by Beethoven, after a performance, a remarkable testimony from a composer who was now stone-deaf. In 1823 the Liszts moved to Paris, a city that Liszt himself was later to regard as his home. From here he undertook concert tours as a pianist and it was here, in 1831, that he heard the violinist Paganini and resolved to follow his example of virtuoso performance. Liszt became one of the most remarkable pianists of his time, outstanding even in a city of pianists like Paris. Wherever he went, he fascinated audiences and was the object of much feminine adulation. Liaison with a married woman, the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult, who was to be the mother of his three children, led to extensive travel abroad and, after their separation, to a change of direction in career. In 1848 he settled in Weimar as Director of Music Extraordinary to the Grand Duchy, joined now by Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, the estranged wife of a Russian prince. Here he turned his attention to a new form of music, the symphonic poem, orchestral compositions that sought to interpret in musical terms works of literature or matters of personal or political relevance. It was at Weimar that Liszt wrote the final versions of his two *Piano Concertos*. The last period of his life he described as *une vie trifurquée* (a three-pronged life), divided between Rome, where he moved in 1861, devoting himself largely to music of religious inspiration, Hungary, where he had come to be regarded as a national hero, and Weimar, where he regularly returned to hold classes and give advice to younger musicians. One of his daughters, Cosima, once the wife of the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, married Wagner and it was at Bayreuth, where his daughter did little to make him welcome, that he died in 1886.

Liszt completed his *Piano Concerto No.1 in E flat major* in 1848, assisted by Joachim Raff in its orchestration. The work was revised in 1853 and again in 1856. It was first heard in Weimar in 1855 in a performance conducted by the French composer Berlioz and with Liszt as the soloist. The concerto is in four movements, thematically closely connected. While the movements follow the pattern of the symphony, with an inner slow movement and a *scherzo*, a more light-hearted movement, before the rapid final movement, the thematic pattern derives from Liszt's practice of thematic transformation, a procedure one hostile contemporary critic described as 'the life and adventures of a theme'. The same critic took exception to the use of a triangle in the third and fourth movements, referring to the work as 'Liszt's triangle concerto'. The orchestra also includes a piccolo and trombones, in addition to the instruments used by Beethoven in his *Emperor Concerto*, which is in the same key. The opening figure, heard at the beginning from the strings, is of great importance in what follows. The soloist in this romantic virtuoso concerto introduces a cadenza after a few introductory bars, echoing the later practice of Beethoven and embarking on the first of its thematic adventures that lead it into lyrical contrast and into stranger keys, before the original E flat major is restored, amid delicate pianistic decorative tracery. The piano dominates throughout the movement, with a series of cadenza-like ornamental passages, playing a rôle of romantic heroism, unshackled by earlier tradition.

3 Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Violin Concerto in D major: Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

Takako Nishizaki, violin • Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra • Kenneth Jean (Naxos 8.550153)

Russian composers in the second half of the nineteenth century were largely influenced by the general cultural and political nationalism of the period. The group of five composers led by Balakirev, the so-called Mighty Handful, were inspired by Russian ideals. Tchaikovsky, while the recipient of advice from Balakirev, took a more cosmopolitan path. Born in 1840, he had abandoned the government service for which he had been educated to enter the newly established Conservatory in St Petersburg. From there he joined the staff of the parallel institution in Moscow, leaving only after the promise of disinterested support from a rich widow, Nazezhda von Meck, whom he was barred from ever meeting. This patronage coincided with the disaster of his brief marriage and a subsequent unsuccessful attempt at suicide. The support he now received allowed him to concentrate on his career as a composer and as a conductor of his own music, at home and abroad. He died in 1893, either of cholera, the official explanation, or by his own hand, to avoid a possible homosexual scandal, if scandal it would have been.

Tchaikovsky wrote a number of orchestral works, including six symphonies, symphonic fantasias and other works based on literary sources, and a number of works for solo instrument and orchestra. These last include two completed concertos for piano and one for violin. The *Violin Concerto in D major* was started in March 1878 in the Swiss resort of Clarens, where he had taken refuge from his marital problems at home. Tchaikovsky was accompanied by his young friend and former student, the violinist Iosif Kotek, with whom he read through a great deal of music, including Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*. It was two days after playing this work that he began his own violin concerto, which was completed in a remarkably short space of time. When he played the work through with Kotek the central slow movement seemed in some ways unsatisfactory and was replaced by a *Canzonetta*. Tchaikovsky would have liked to dedicate the concerto to Kotek and allow him the first performance, but prudently decided to offer it, instead, to the leading violinist in Russia, Leopold Auer. Preoccupied by his other manifold responsibilities in St Petersburg, Auer delayed and then rejected the work, which he claimed needed revision, and it was left to the young violinist Brodsky to give the first performance of the work in Vienna in 1881. Critical reaction was mixed and in one notable case contemptuous, particularly of the last movement, which has a lively Russian element to it.

The finale of the concerto opens dramatically with a fragment of the main theme of the movement, after which the solo violin has its own introductory cadenza, leading to the principal theme. This is followed by a gypsy-like and mellower secondary theme, again offered by the soloist, who soon moves into a more energetic mood, before melting into something more romantic, following the intervention of the woodwind. The main theme returns, developed before the re-appearance of the secondary theme, heard finally in violin harmonics, and the gentler woodwind melody. After this the violin leads the way back to the main theme and to the concluding section, in all its brilliance and virtuosity.

4

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Double Concerto in A minor for Violin and Cello: Andante

Ilya Kaler, violin • Maria Kliegel, cello • National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland • Andrew Constantine (Naxos 8.550938)

Johannes Brahms was the son of a jobbing musician working in Hamburg. His childhood passed in relatively humble circumstances and his early ability as a pianist allowed him, even then, to supplement the income of his family by playing in dockside taverns. He was able, however, to study

under a sound teacher and to perform in public and start writing music of his own. In 1853 he embarked on his first concert tour, with the émigré Hungarian violinist Reményi, meeting the violinist Joachim in Hanover and visiting Liszt in Weimar. Through Joachim he became a welcome member of the circle around Schumann and his pianist wife Clara in Düsseldorf. Schumann was impressed by the potential he detected in the work of Brahms, greeting him as a successor to Beethoven. Schumann's breakdown in the following year and his death in 1856 led Brahms to give what help he could to Clara Schumann, with whom he remained on close terms until her death in 1896. After seasonal employment at the court in Detmold, he returned briefly to Hamburg, before finally settling in Vienna, where he lived principally for the rest of his life. Here he came to be accepted by many as the true successor of Beethoven and as the champion of pure, abstract music, as opposed to the music of the New German School of Liszt and Wagner. His life settled into a routine of composition during summer holidays in the country and performances as a pianist, notably as a soloist in his own two concertos. For his friend Joachim he wrote his *Violin Concerto* and, in partial amends for a quarrel, a *Double Concerto for violin and cello*. He died in Vienna in 1891.

The concertos of Brahms expand the form very considerably, with the two concertos for piano representing as much symphonies with solo piano as concertos in the traditional sense. In 1887, staying for the summer by Lake Thun in Switzerland, he wrote to Clara Schumann of a new concerto he was writing for violin and cello, an unusual combination of instruments. In his letter he expressed regret that he did not have a more intimate knowledge of the two instruments, as he had of the piano, but found the prospect of handling the medium amusing. Clara Schumann, replying, gave him every encouragement and was present when the work was first rehearsed at Baden-Baden by Joachim and the cellist of the Joachim Quartet, Robert Hausmann, accompanied by the composer. Joachim suggested various revisions to the string parts, which formed part of subsequent changes made by the composer in the work, which was given its first public performance in Cologne in 1887. The central slow movement of the concerto opens with a rising fourth from the French horns, echoed by the woodwind. Violin and cello proceed with the statement of a main theme of intense beauty, reflecting as so often, the beauty of the natural surroundings in which the movement was written. A second theme is introduced by pairs of flutes, clarinets and bassoons, to be developed by the soloists. There is a brief cadenza-like passage, leading to the return of both themes. The form of the movement, as so often with slow movements, is ternary, the main theme of the outer sections framing a contrasted central section.

5 Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Piano Concerto No.1 in F sharp minor: Andante

Bernd Glemser, piano • Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra • Antoni Wit
(Naxos 8.550809)

Sergey Rachmaninov combined the careers of composer and performer, in the latter capacity one of the greatest pianists of his time. His father's relative extravagance and the consequent depletion of the family fortunes had the happy result that he was able to embark on a musical career, studying first on a scholarship in St Petersburg and then, under stricter discipline, away from home, in Moscow. Here he distinguished himself as a composer and as a pianist and began a career that brought very considerable early success in Russia, after the set-back when his *Symphony No.1* was indifferently performed under the direction of Glazunov and severely criticized by the composer and critic César Cui, one of the famous Five, the so-called Mighty Handful of nationalist composers. It was after hypnotic treatment that his creative urge resumed with his *Piano Concerto No.2*, completed and first performed in 1901. This remains one of the best loved of all romantic piano concertos. In these years he also began to establish himself as a conductor, but his career at home came to an end with the Revolution of 1917. Leaving Russia, he was now obliged to support himself and his family by a concentration on performance, particularly in America, where the material rewards were more considerable. While continuing with his American concert tours, he moved with his family to Paris in 1929 and then to Switzerland. In 1939 the advent of war took him back to America, where he spent the last years of his life. He gave his last concert in February 1943, part of a planned concert tour that had to be cancelled. He returned home to Los Angeles, where he died at the end of March.

Rachmaninov wrote four piano concertos as well as the famous *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* for solo piano and orchestra. He wrote the first movement of the *Piano Concerto No.1 in F sharp minor* in 1890, at the age of seventeen, while still a student in Moscow. He completed the whole work the following year and performed the first movement in Moscow in March 1892. The concerto was dedicated to his former teacher, Alexander Ziloti, and was extensively revised in 1917 after a number of earlier performances. The second, slow movement, marked *Andante*, has been described as a Russian nocturne and in this respect has something in common with the two concertos of Chopin. The new key of D major is reached in a short orchestral introduction, led by the French horn and continued by the piano, which then announces the rhapsodic main theme. There is a central section of greater intensity, before the orchestra returns to its own version of the main theme, accompanied by elaborate piano textures, in the unmistakable musical language of Rachmaninov.

6

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Violin Concerto in D major: Moderato mobile

Vera Tsu, violin • Razumovsky Sinfonia • Yu Long (Naxos 8.553579)

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was the second son of the distinguished Viennese music critic Julius Korngold, who himself, had been a pupil of Bruckner. The boy showed remarkable ability and began his study of composition at the age of six. In 1906 he played his new cantata *Gold* to Mahler, who was deeply impressed and advised lessons with distinguished teachers outside the Conservatory. The connection with Mahler continued, while others also were showing an interest in the boy's abilities. His father allowed the first publication of a number of compositions in 1910 and his ballet *The Snowman* was staged at the Court Opera and performances of other works followed in concerts by major orchestras in Austria and Germany. Success continued with two operas staged in Munich in 1916 under the direction of Bruno Walter, who later conducted both works at the Vienna Court Opera. In 1920, when his third opera, *Die tote Stadt* (The Dead City), was staged in Hamburg and Cologne, he made his début as an orchestral conductor, now embarking on a career as composer, conductor and pianist. All this came to an end, as it did for so many, with the accession to power of Hitler and the National Socialist Party, with its anti-semitic racial policies. Korngold, however, had moved to Hollywood in 1934, where he renewed an earlier association with Max Reinhardt, and remained in America after the German annexation of Austria in 1938. In America he found a new career as a composer of film-music, with two Oscar-winning scores, the first for *Anthony Adverse* in 1936 and the second, in 1938, for *Robin Hood*. He wrote his last original film-score in 1946, thereafter giving his attention to compositions of another kind. His *Violin Concerto* was completed in 1945 and first performed by Heifetz in 1947, while a *Cello Concerto*, originally written for his last film-score, *Deception*, with Bette Davis, has had an independent existence in the concert-hall.

It is idle to speculate on what might have been and on what Korngold might have achieved without his diversion into Hollywood and the inevitable suspicions this aroused in the more rarefied atmosphere of the concert-hall. His musical language is that of late romanticism and in this idiom his film-scores continue the tradition in which he had been nurtured in Vienna. For years his friend, the violinist Bronislaw Huberman, co-founder of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, later the Israel Philharmonic, urged Korngold to compose a concerto for him. The first performance was eventually given in 1947 by Heifetz, four months before Huberman's death. Korngold dedicated the concerto to the widow of Gustav Mahler, Alma, whose third husband, Franz Werfel, had just died. In the concerto

he was able to draw on material from earlier film-scores, notably for the opening theme of the first movement, which is derived from the score for *Another Dawn*. The soloist enters at once with a gently lyrical theme, followed by the orchestra, to which the violin adds its own rhapsodic embellishments, before moving into material of a more playful kind. The material is developed, returning to the romantic mood of the opening, with its hints of Rachmaninov and of its own origin. There is a vigorous cadenza, interrupted by the orchestra from time to time, before it returns with the main theme, followed by the solo violin, in continuing rhapsody. The movement ends in an energetic final passage. The whole concerto suggests what might have been, had Korngold been able to continue as a composer in the European tradition in which he had been brought up.

7

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Viola Concerto (revised version): Finale: Allegretto

Hong-Mei Xiao, viola • Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra • Janós Kovacs (Naxos 8.554183)

The Hungarian composer Béla Bartók was born in 1881 in an area of the country that is now part of Romania. His father, director of an agricultural college, was a keen amateur musician, while it was from his mother, a teacher of mathematics, that he had his first piano lessons. The death of his father in 1888 led to a less settled existence, as his mother resumed work as a teacher, eventually settling in Pozsony (the modern Bratislava, capital of Slovakia). It was there that Bartók passed his early adolescence, counting among his school-friends the composer Ernő Dohnányi. Offered the chance of musical training in Vienna, like Dohnányi he chose instead Budapest, where he won a considerable reputation as a pianist and in 1907 joined the teaching staff of the Academy of Music. At the same time he developed a deep interest, shared with his compatriot Kodály, in the folk-music of his own and adjacent countries. As a composer Bartók found acceptance much more difficult, particularly in Hungary, which was, in any case, beset by political troubles. Meanwhile his reputation abroad grew, particularly among those with an interest in contemporary music, and his success both as a pianist and, internationally, as a composer, coupled with increasing dissatisfaction at the growing association between the government of Admiral Horthy and National Socialist Germany, led him in 1940 to settle in America. There he held brief university appointments at Columbia and Harvard, before increasing ill-health brought a degree of poverty that it was difficult to alleviate in a time of war. He died in 1945, leaving a *Viola Concerto* incomplete and his *Piano Concerto No.3* in a more nearly finished state.

Bartók's compositions for piano and orchestra include three concertos, a *Rhapsody*, a *Scherzo* and a *Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion and Orchestra*. He also wrote two *Rhapsodies* for violin and orchestra and two *Violin Concertos*, as well as the well known *Concerto for Orchestra*. The *Viola Concerto* had been commissioned by the violist William Primrose and a version was made of the sketches that Bartók left by his former pupil, the violist and composer Tibor Serly. This version of the concerto has, until recently, been the form in which the concerto has been heard. In 1995 the composer's son Péter Bartók released the original sketches, allowing, under his supervision, a new reconstruction by Nelson Dellamaggiore, with the participation of the violist Paul Neubauer. The third and last movement of the *Viola Concerto* is very characteristic of the composer. It is in the form of a dance-movement, drawing clear inspiration from traditional Hungarian material. It starts with an energetic dance, continued by the orchestra before the soloist, in passage-work of seemingly perpetual motion, leads to a folk-dance of another kind. Over this the soloist plays a melody in the flute-like tones of harmonics, the strings lightly touched to produce a higher note. With a return of nervous energy, the soloist proceeds towards the close, which comes rather earlier than Bartók might himself have intended, had he lived to complete the concerto.

8 Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Clarinet Concerto: Allegro vigoroso

Robert Plane, clarinet • Northern Sinfonia • Howard Griffiths (Naxos 8.553566)

Gerald Finzi belongs to a generation of English composers that has, until recently, suffered some neglect. His music is tonal and attractive, firmly based in English traditions to which the descriptive adjective 'pastoral' has been applied, in addition to more pejorative terms elsewhere. Born into a family of Italian-Jewish origin, Sephardic on his father's side and, less happily, belonging to the Ashkenazim tradition on his mother's, Finzi was the youngest of five children. His father died in 1909 and he was brought up by his mother. His three brothers died early, in close succession, the third as an airman in 1918. He and his mother had moved, during the war, from London to the Yorkshire town of Harrogate, where he was able to study with Ernest Farrar, a former pupil of Stanford. Farrar was killed in action in 1918 and there followed less sympathetic lessons with Edward Bairstow, organist of York Minster, and a musician of a more conservative cast of mind. It was in pursuit of the spirit that had inspired Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst and other English composers, that Finzi was drawn to Gloucestershire, where he settled for a time. In the 1920s he took lessons in counterpoint, establishing strong friendship with the composers Howard Ferguson and Edmund Rubbra, and much encouraged

by Vaughan Williams, Holst and Bliss. The last of these found some work for Finzi at the Royal Academy of Music in London, teaching second-study composition. His compositions, meanwhile, enjoyed varying success, with a *Violin Concerto* eventually heard in 1928 and a *Piano Concerto* that brought various seemingly intractable difficulties, before the material served its purpose in other compositions. In 1939 he and his artist wife settled in a farm-house near Newbury. This allowed Finzi to concentrate on composition, while living a relatively simple country life. Here he could also pursue his literary interests and his study of earlier English music. Contact with the Three Choirs Festival brought commissions and the composition of his best-known work, *Dies Natalis*. The war caused inevitable disruption, with duties in London at the Ministry of War Transport, and his life could only resume its more peaceful course after 1945, when he was able to give fuller attention to the Newbury String Players, an amateur orchestra that he had established in 1940. With this ensemble he was happy to allow a hearing of the work of composers whose work he found congenial. He died in 1956, three weeks after conducting the first performance of his *In terra pax* at the Three Choirs Festival.

Finzi's *Clarinet Concerto* was completed in 1949 in response to a commission from the Three Choirs Festival, that year to be held at Hereford Cathedral. It was performed there with Frederick Thurston as the soloist and the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra under the composer's direction. The first movement opens with a strong statement from the strings, leading to a sequence very much in the manner of Elgar. A stridently repeated octave figure precedes the entry of the solo clarinet with the principal theme of the movement. The clarinet leads the way to a more lyrical second subject. There is a relatively short development section and a recapitulation that is followed by a more extended *coda*, an undemanding cadenza, inserted at the suggestion of Vaughan Williams, and a more stately conclusion. The whole movement represents a very characteristic English mood of gentle rhapsody, fitting the gentle contours of the countryside where it was written and the region in which it was first performed.

9

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

Guitar Concerto: Allegretto non troppo

Norbert Kraft, guitar • Northern Chamber Orchestra • Nicholas Ward (Naxos 8.550729)

The guitar has found a new place for itself in relatively recent times as a popular solo instrument in concertos, often with a Spanish or Latin American flavour. Although the earlier forms of guitar were associated with more intimate forms of music-making, the Italian virtuoso Mauro Giuliani wrote

three guitar concertos with full orchestral accompaniment and caused a sensation when the first of these was played in Beethoven's Vienna in 1808. The period brought the instrument great popularity throughout Europe. The modern classical guitar was developed in the second half of the nineteenth century and there were parallel changes in playing technique. Through the performance of virtuosos like Segovia, a number of composers turned their attention to the possibilities for the instrument in concertos. The most widely popular of these are the concertos by the Spanish composer Joaquín Rodrigo, the Italian-born Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, the Mexican Manuel Ponce and the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos. This last composer established himself during the second quarter of the twentieth century as the leading composer of his native country. As a young man he travelled widely in Brazil, engrossed in the study of various forms of indigenous and imported music, and learning, too, from the popular music of the streets of Rio de Janeiro. He spent the years between 1923 and 1930 principally in Paris, where he had contact with leading musicians of the time, including Ravel, from whose influence he profited. At home in Brazil once more he struggled to introduce contemporary music to audiences, but came into his own in 1932, after the national revolution, when he assumed responsibility for music education, dealing with massed choirs and bands in a position specially created for him. In 1942 he established a National Conservatory in Rio and in 1945 set up the Brazilian Academy of Music, an association of the most distinguished composers in the country. By the time of his death in 1959 he enjoyed an international reputation equal to that he enjoyed in Brazil. He left a varied quantity of compositions of all kinds, including important music for the guitar, an instrument on which he had some skill himself.

It was chiefly in his later years that Villa-Lobos turned to the for him uncharacteristic form of the traditional concerto. The works he wrote in this form, including five piano concertos and concertos for harp, for harmonica and for cello, were generally composed in response to commissions from virtuoso performers. Composed in 1951, his splendid *Guitar Concerto* was written for Segovia, who gave the first performance in February 1956. The composer had no objection to the use of a microphone for the soloist, to allow a greater degree of freedom, overcoming a problem of balance between orchestra and soloist. The concerto is in three movements and provides considerable variety of material in changing textures and rhythms, all imbued with the spirit of Brazil and its Iberian tradition. Contrasting episodes in what is broadly rondo form in the third of these movements provide a series of passages in which the guitar is joined by different instruments of the orchestra, solo clarinet, oboe, bassoon, viola and French horn, before its brusque conclusion.

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat major: Allegretto

Maria Kliegel, cello • Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (Katowice) • Antoni Wit
(Naxos 8.550813)

While Rachmaninov chose exile abroad, like his compatriot Stravinsky, Dmitry Shostakovich belonged to a younger generation, educated primarily under the systems initiated by the new government after the Russian Revolution of 1917, with which his family would at first have had some sympathy. Born in 1906, the son of an engineer, he entered the Petrograd/Leningrad Conservatory, where he received every encouragement from the director, Glazunov. He graduated first as a pianist in 1923 and in 1925 as a composer, for the latter occasion composing the first of his fifteen symphonies. He enjoyed growing success in his early years but in 1936 suffered the sudden condemnation, on the orders of Stalin, of his hitherto successful opera *A Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. This censure brought professional and material consequences, while reflecting, as it did, a division of opinion over official Soviet cultural policy. The earlier years of revolution had allowed radical musical experiment, but at the same time there was a view among another group that music should essentially be for the people, following the principles of Socialist Realism. In the Great Patriotic War that began in 1941 Shostakovich won some favour, particularly for his *Leningrad Symphony*, played in the beleaguered city. In 1948, however, he was again the subject of condemnation, together with other leading Russian composers. This second official reverse led to a certain dichotomy in his work, with some compositions clearly for public consumption and others for a private expression of his genius. His music remains approachable, often very clear in texture and in form. He died in 1975, a month of completing his *Viola Sonata*.

Shostakovich wrote two piano concertos, the first, including a solo trumpet, for his son, Maxim. His two violin concertos were written for David Oistrakh and his two cello concertos for the virtuoso Mstislav Rostropovich. The first of these last was composed in 1959 and the music was given to Rostropovich on 2nd August. Four days later he had memorised it and played it through with the composer at his dacha at Komarovo. The first performance with orchestra took place in October in Leningrad. The work is in four movements, the third of which is in the form of a cadenza. The concerto starts with what is essentially a symphonic movement, dominated by the soloist and the opening four-note motif. This is developed, before other thematic material is introduced. A clarinet assumes prominence, followed by the restatement of the opening theme by a French horn, followed

by the soloist and a passage for solo cello and French horn based on the same material. The impetus that has driven the music forward is relaxed, as the theme winds downward, before a brusque conclusion.

11 Arthur Bliss (1891-1975)

Cello Concerto: Allegro

Tim Hugh, cello • English Northern Philharmonia • David Lloyd-Jones (Naxos 8.553383)

The son of an American-born father, the English composer Arthur Bliss was born in London in 1891. He was a pupil of Charles Wood at Cambridge, where he graduated in music in 1913, before spending a year at the Royal College of Music in London. During the war years he served in the army in France, returning to musical life after demobilisation in 1919. Some of his compositions had already been published and in these earlier years he seemed part of the avant-garde, writing music that was in tune with contemporary continental influences, with Stravinsky, Ravel and the younger group of French composers. In 1921 he became conductor of the Portsmouth Philharmonic Society, with its semi-professional orchestra, and here gained useful experience. The following year saw the composition and inadequate first performance of his *A Colour Symphony* at the Three Choirs Festival, in response to an initiative by Elgar. After a short period in America, he returned to England in 1925 and in the following years established himself as a composer of importance. In 1927 his compositions included an *Oboe Quintet* for Leon Goossens and in 1930 he commemorated those who had died in the war, who included his brother Kennard, in *Morning Heroes*. 1932 brought the *Clarinet Quintet* for Frederick Thurston, followed, the next year, by a *Viola Sonata* for Lionel Tertis. The composition of works for particular performers was to continue with a *Piano Concerto* in 1939 for the pianist Solomon, and in later years a 1955 *Violin Concerto* for Alfredo Campoli and a final *Cello Concerto* in 1970 for Mstislav Rostropovich. The death of Elgar in 1934 found him in the position of the older composer's natural successor. His style had mellowed into an inspired late romanticism, which could satisfy audiences. His well-crafted film-scores for Alexander Korda provided music of distinction for the cinema, while his skill as a composer added significantly to English orchestral and choral repertoire. 1939 found him in America, with his American wife and family, and the dangers of returning to England by ship after the outbreak of war persuaded him to accept an offer from the University of California at Berkeley. In 1941 he was able to return home, working for the BBC and from 1942 to 1944 serving as director of music. The latter year brought his

score for the ballet *Miracle in the Gorbals*, continuing an association with ballet that had started in 1937 with Ninette de Valois' *Checkmate* and continued in 1946 with *Adam Zero*. His collaboration with J.B.Priestley in the opera *The Olympians* brought less satisfaction, when it was staged in 1949 at Covent Garden. In 1950 Bliss was knighted and in 1953 became Master of the Queen's Musick, thereafter providing memorable enough music for occasions of royal and national importance. His last works included music for a television documentary, *Spirit of the Age*, and a choral composition, *Shield of Faith*, for the quincentenary of St George's Chapel, Windsor. He died in the same year, 1975.

Mstislav Rostropovich gave the first performance of Bliss's *Cello Concerto* at the 1970 Aldeburgh Festival. The English Chamber Orchestra was conducted by Benjamin Britten, who persuaded Bliss to change the original title, *Concertino*, to *Concerto*, regarding it as a major work. In a programme note for that occasion the composer recalled his earlier ambition to write such a concerto, from the days when he performed with his cellist brother, Howard Bliss. He described the work as light-hearted, scored for a Mozartian orchestra with the addition only of harp and celesta, providing no problems for the listener, only for the soloist. The solo cello part was, following the composer's normal practice, written with the skill of a particular performer in mind. The last of the three movements is introduced by the timpani with an important rhythmic figure and is impelled forward by the solo cello in music of great energy that eventually relaxes into something more rhapsodic and lyrical. The opening theme returns and a dynamic climax leads to a lively concluding section.

12

Michael Nyman (b.1944)

The Piano Concerto: The Release

John Lenehan, piano • Ulster Orchestra • Takuo Yuasa (Naxos 8.554168)

Born in 1944, by 1964 Michael Nyman had abandoned composition for musicology, occupying himself with a study of Romanian folk-music and editing music by Purcell and Handel. Subsequently he turned his attention to music criticism, coining the word 'minimalism' in a review of a work by Cornelius Cardew. It was through hearing a work by Steve Reich that other possibilities seemed to present themselves, coupled with an invitation by Harrison Birtwistle to provide arrangements of eighteenth-century Venetian songs for a National Theatre staging of a play by Goldoni, *Il campiello*. Stimulated by the result, he continued to work with the same ensemble, adding his own piano-playing

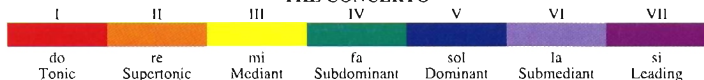
and soon renaming the group the Michael Nyman Band. In addition to music for the concert-hall, Nyman has collaborated with a number of film-directors, notably Peter Greenaway, providing scores that have themselves served as the basis of concert works. *The Piano Concerto* had its origin in the score written for Jane Campion's film *The Piano*. There the Scottish widow Ada goes to New Zealand to marry a settler. Her piano cannot be taken to her house but is left in the house of a neighbour from whom she buys it back, note by note, in return for sexual favours, finally falling in love. The evocative and poignant film ends with her departure, the piano finally lost in the waves from which it had first been dragged.

Nyman's *The Piano Concerto*, which must serve as a postscript to the present collection, an indication of one path that contemporary music is taking, makes direct reference in its title to the film, *The Piano*, hence the use of the definite article. It was written, expanding and developing the film-score, for the 1993 Lille Festival. While it is in one movement, there are four sections, *The Beach*, *The Woods*, *The Hut* and *The Release*. The last of these, with its expansion of material through repetition and increases in intensity, provides a conclusion to a work that goes beyond the usual conventions of the concerto, but provides a characteristic example of the composer's style.

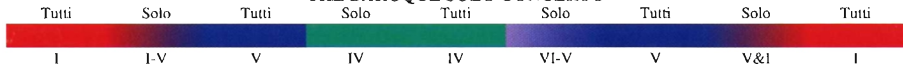
About the Author

Keith Anderson was born in England in 1929. He was educated at Lancing College, with a scholarship in classics and music, and at Wadham College, Oxford, where he took a degree in classics, followed by subsequent degrees at London and Durham in English Literature and Music respectively. After a brief period in Madrid, he moved to Turkey, where he remained for seven years, teaching and finally employed as a translator and broadcaster by the Turkish Ministry of Information. After the military *coup d'état* in Turkey, he returned to Britain, taught for a time at a monastic school in Scotland, and then resumed musical studies, in particular in Manchester as a pupil of Alexandre Moskowsky of the Hungarian Quartet. From 1966 until 1973 he was a Lecturer in Music at a college of education for mature students in Leeds, while continuing to work as a freelance violinist, as an examiner and as a tutor and lecturer for the Open University. In 1973 he moved to the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a member of the University Ensemble and served for three years as chairman of the Music Department. This was followed by a number of years teaching in Hong Kong, principally at the Conservatory, the Academy for Performing Arts and the Hongkong Baptist University, coupled with practical work as a player and conductor. At the same time he followed a busy career as a writer, broadcaster and editor. He has served as editor for Naxos, Marco Polo and associated labels of HNH International since the foundation of the company.

THE CONCERTO



THE BAROQUE SOLO CONCERTO



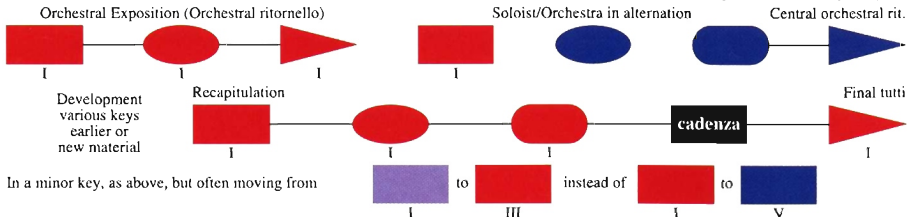
In a minor key (scale starting on VI, la: VI=I):



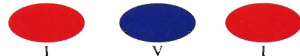
Slow movement. Often in ternary aria form (ABA), with elements of ritornello between solo sections.

THE CLASSICAL SOLO CONCERTO

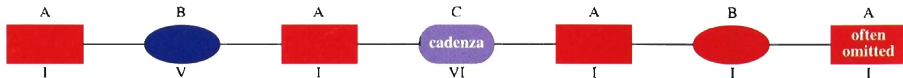
First movement. Generally following pattern of sonata first movement, but with two expositions, one for the orchestra, followed by one for the soloist, with or without new material: Orchestral exposition – Soloist's exposition – Development – Recapitulation. In a major key:



SLOW MOVEMENT: Different forms are used (1) Theme and variations (2) Rondo ABACA (3) Ternary form ABA. The slow movement is generally in a contrasted key, IV or VI, but other choices are possible. Material is shared between orchestra and soloist. Ternary form: (where I = IV or VI and V = I or another key)



LAST MOVEMENT: Often in sonata-rondo form ABACABA. Material is shared between orchestra and soloist:



The above diagrams represent possible forms of the Baroque and Classical concerto. In both, however, there may be a great deal of variety. Later concertos differ considerably in form, although the fast – slow – fast order of movements is often used, with elements of sonata-form key structure in the outer movements.

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JS BACH: Concerto for 2 Harpsichord's, BWV 1060 • CPE BACH: Cello Concerto
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RACHMANINOV: Piano Concerto No.1 • KORNGOLD: Violin Concerto • BARTOK: Viola Concerto
FINZI: Clarinet Concerto • VILLA-LOBOS: Guitar Concerto • SHOSTAKOVICH: Cello Concerto No.1
BLISS: Cello Concerto • NYMAN: The Piano Concerto

