

Wolfgang Mozart, *Concerto for clarinet and orchestra*, K.622



The **Concerto for clarinet and orchestra, K. 622** was one of Mozart's final completed works, and his final purely instrumental work (he died in the December following its completion). It is scored for 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, and orchestral strings and it is approximately 28 minutes long.

1. **Allegro**
2. **Adagio**
3. **Rondo: Allegro**

The concerto is notable for its delicate interplay between soloist and orchestra, and for the lack of overly extroverted display on the part of the soloist.

W.A. Mozart (27 January 1756 – 5 December 1791), was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical era. He composed over six hundred works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, *concertante*, chamber, piano, operatic, and choral music. He is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers.

Mozart originally wrote the work for basset clarinet, a special clarinet championed by Stadler that had a range down to low (written) C, instead of stopping at (written) E as standard clarinets do. As most clarinets could not play the low notes which Mozart wrote to highlight this instrument, Mozart's publisher arranged a version of the concerto with the low notes transposed to regular range, and did not publish the original version. This has proven a problematic decision, as the autograph no longer exists, having been pawned by Stadler, and until the mid 20th century musicologists did not know that the only version of the concerto written by Mozart's hand had not been heard since Stadler's lifetime. Once the problem was discovered, attempts were made to reconstruct the original version, and new basset clarinets have been built for the specific purpose of performing Mozart's concerto and clarinet quintet. There can no longer be any doubt that the concerto was composed for an extended range clarinet. Numerous recordings of various restorations exist; some of the notable ones include Sabine Meyer with the Berlin Philharmonic, David Shifrin with the Mostly Mozart Orchestra, and Erich Hoerprich with the Old Fairfield Academy.

The first movement (*Allegro*) opens with an orchestral statement of the main theme. The theme is taken up by the soloist, and the music quickly takes on a



more melancholy feel. At the end of this section, the pauses in

the solo part are occasionally taken as a point to perform an *eingang* (cadenza), although no context is offered for a true cadenza. The main theme reappears transposed, and leads to the novel feature of the soloist accompanying the

orchestra with an *Alberti bass*. Further development leads to dramatic turn, which, after a *tutti*, leads back into the main theme. The *Alberti bass* and *arpeggios* for the soloist recur before the movement ends in a cheerful *tutti* in A major.

Possibly the best-known part of this concerto, the beautiful and profound *Adagio* in ternary form (or ABA) opens with the soloist playing the movement's primary theme. The descending notes of the answering theme are more elegiac, and are, like the first, repeated by the orchestra. The development, in which the solo part is always to the fore, exploits both the *chalumeau* and *clarion* registers, and is frequently performed with a final cadenza, which is often a section of the *Larghetto* of Mozart's clarinet quintet.

The closing Rondo has a cheerful refrain, with episodes either echoing this mood



or recalling the darker colours of the first movement. It is a blend of sonata and rondo forms that Mozart developed in his piano concertos, most noticeably the A major Piano Concerto, K. 488.