

W.A. Mozart, *Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 23 in A major, K.488*



The Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 23 in A major is divided into three movements:

1. **Allegro**
2. **Adagio**
3. **Allegro assai**

The piece is scored for one flute, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, and orchestral strings. It is approximately 25 minutes long.

Wolfgang Amadeus 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.

In the works of his mature series, Mozart created a unique conception of the piano concerto that attempted to solve the ongoing problem of how thematic material is dealt with by the orchestra and piano, and with the exception of the two exceptionally fine early concertos KV. 271 (*Jeunehomme*) and KV. 414 (the "little A major") all of his best examples are from this series. He strives to maintain a mean between a symphony with occasional piano solos and a virtuoso piano fantasia with orchestral accompaniment; twin traps that later composers were not always able to avoid. His resulting solutions are varied (none of the mature series is really similar to any of the others structurally, apart from at a broad level) and complex.

The Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 23 was finished, according to Mozart's own catalogue, on March 2, 1786, around the time of the premiere of his opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*. It was one of three subscription concerts given that spring and was probably played by Mozart himself at one of these.

The first movement is mostly sunny and positive with the occasional melancholic touches typical of Mozart pieces in A major. The second, slow movement, in ternary form, is impassioned and somewhat operatic in tone. The piano begins alone with a theme characterized by unusually wide leaps. The dynamics are soft throughout most of the piece. The middle of the movement contains a brighter section in A major announced by flute and clarinet that Mozart would later use to introduce the trio "*Ah! taci ingiusto core!*" in his opera *Don Giovanni*. This is the only composition that Mozart wrote in the key of F sharp minor. The third movement is a rondo, shaded by moves into other keys as is the opening movement (to C major from E minor and back during the secondary theme in this case, for instance) and with a central section whose opening in F sharp minor is interrupted by a clarinet tune in D major, an intrusion that reminds us, notes Girdlestone, that instrumental music at the time was informed by *opera buffa* and its sudden changes of point of view as well as of scene.