

How did Mozart's orchestral music take the classical age to its peak?

Mozart never composed music exactly to the mathematical structure and style that his friend Haydn and other composers used in the classical period. Mozart took the structure the others used and added his extravagant flair.

In his orchestral piece 'Piano Concerto in A major', Mozart doesn't use any oboes and only has one flute instead of the usual two. He uses a new instrument the clarinet, which he uses two of. Two bassoons and two horns complete the wind section.

He has the strings in the normal four parts with the double basses playing the same notes as the cellos but sounding an octave lower.

The form of this piece is exposition, development and recapitulation.

Mozart begins with an orchestral exposition using periodic phrasing, in which the strings play an eight bar phrase which ends on the dominant and the wind answer this by playing eight bars an octave higher ending on the tonic.

Periodic phrasing could sometimes get a bit predictable, so instead of the eight bar consequent ending at bar sixteen Mozart repeats those two bars using added decoration and starts the next phrase at bar eighteen.

For the link section leading from the first section to the second he has the whole tutti play together for the first time. The flute plays higher than the other instruments so it can be heard above the rest of the ensemble. The violins double the flute tune, sometimes moving down an octave. In bars twenty-three to twenty-six Mozart uses heterophony, the violins still double the flute but play a more elaborate version of the tune.

In bars twenty-eight and twenty-nine a dominant pedal is played by the cellos and double basses and in a dotted rhythm by the French horn. Over the top of this the wind plays fanfares while the violins play descending semiquaver passages leading to the end of this section at bar thirty in the dominant. On the last beat of bar thirty the texture reduces to three parts and the dynamic drops down to *p* this is where the second subject starts. It has a tune played by violin one using falling scales and repeated notes.

When the theme is repeated at bar thirty-eight Mozart adds the first bassoon which doubles the violin tune an octave lower and at bar forty-one adds the flute to the tune an octave higher. Mozart used flutes and bassoons playing melodies two octaves apart a lot.

At bar forty-six a pedal note on A is heard in the cellos and basses. Mozart doesn't return to the tonic key, this is just a passage with the sound of D minor, which is the sub-dominant of A making this the sub-dominant minor. In this new section the first violins are echoed by the woodwind while the parts in between play a semiquaver filling. D minor becomes D major at bar forty-nine and we expect to hear a perfect cadence in bars fifty-one to fifty-two returning us to A major, but Mozart has an interrupted cadence here instead.

Mozart then momentarily uses the relative minor to A major using a new motif in the woodwind at bar fifty-two. The woodwind now 'call' and the first violins respond with an inversion. At bar fifty-five a chromatic scale and a crescendo lead us to a busy violin part with a syncopated

accompaniment in the wind. At bar sixty-two the dynamics drop and melody moves to the solo woodwind in octaves. This is the codetta.

Mozart now brings in the solo exposition, which is the piano. The first subject melody is played with alberti bass as the accompaniment. At bar seventy-one a light string accompaniment enters and the piano starts to intricate the theme. This includes some scale-like figures which become more and more impressive. The tutti re-enters at bar eighty-two and Mozart is still really repeating the opening music. At bar eighty-seven he starts to move the music towards the dominant key which is E major. The piano part is non-thematic figuration. At bar ninety-eight Mozart has persuaded us that we are now well and truly in the key of the dominant and to absolutely confirm this he rests on a chord of B major. This pause prepares the way for the unaccompanied piano to restate the second Subject. This tune was originally heard in A major at bar thirty-one but is now in E major at bar ninety-nine. Again the piano uses ornamentation for the repeat of the theme at bar one hundred and seven. At bar one hundred and fourteen the melody returns to the piano with the left hand playing a decorated version of the horn pedal. At bar one hundred and twenty-four Mozart changes the music and the soloist plays a virtuoso figure. Even though the music has changed Mozart still uses the original harmony. It was traditional in classical concertos to finish off the solo exposition with a passage of solo 'bravura'.

At bar one hundred and thirty-five Mozart uses two of his favourite techniques to announce the start of the 'ritornello'. The first is a chord progression called a 'cadential 6-4' and the second is a long trill. The 'ritornello' starts on the last chord of the cadence at bar one hundred and thirty-seven as Mozart overlaps the ending of the section with the start of the new in the dominant.

The start of the ritornello is the opening melody from bar eighteen but this time written in the dominant. After some semiquaver scales Mozart suddenly stops mid-phrase in the first half of bar one hundred and forty-three, leaving us hanging in suspense as to what will happen next. This interruption makes this a very short ritornello.

The silence in bar one hundred and forty-three introduces the development section. Mozart uses closely-spaced strings, with the cellos often playing higher than the violas. They are playing a set of suspensions. The soloist enters at bar one hundred and forty-nine where the piano starts to decorate the new development theme in delicate two-part counterpoint.

At bar one hundred and fifty-six Mozart uses antiphony, unaccompanied wind instruments play the first two bars of the new theme to plunge from E major to E minor. This is answered by staccato strings who are doubled and decorated by the piano. During these antiphonal exchanges the tonality modulates rapidly in between.

At bar one hundred and seventy we enter the most complex instrumental texture of the movement. The main tune is played by the first clarinet and imitated by the flute one bar later. This motif is based upon the first development theme. However the development theme itself has been developed here, the opening interval of bar one hundred and fifty-six is a fourth, now become a huge gap of a tenth. Below this the piano plays continuous semiquavers in the right hand whilst the left hand and bassoons supply the bass line. This complex pattern is repeated twice in a descending sequence.

At bar one hundred and seventy-eight Mozart starts to prepare his descent back to the tonic key. In the next twenty bars he sounds the dominant as many times as possible, mainly as a pedal note is heard in the cellos, basses and horns. Above these pedal harmonies you can hear the development theme but this time the opening interval has become a semitone. The F

natural in the treble against the E in the bass creates an interval of a ninth, in this case a Minor ninth, this is what we call dissonant harmony.

The texture continues with woodwind and strings in question and answer with the piano enriching the orchestral parts. Bars one hundred and ninety-four to one hundred and ninety-seven are our final bars of the development section and the preparation for the recapitulation in the tonic key. Mozart uses a classical chord to do this, the dominant chord with the seventh note added.

We arrive back at the tonic key of A after the development section. Normally the development would have been spent exploring themes from the exposition, but Mozart uses his own particular 'development theme'. In the recapitulation instead of just playing the exposition again as expected Mozart uses lots of figuration to stop it from sounding too boring. He cuts two bars out so bar two hundred and thirteen is heard earlier than expected. At bars two hundred and twenty-five to two hundred and twenty-seven he adds an extra three bars. Bar two hundred and fifty-eight is the same as bar sixty but then jumps straight to material from bar one hundred and forty-one. Then he uses a section from the development theme in bars two hundred and sixty-seven to two hundred and seventy-five in clarinets and bassoons. At bar two hundred and eighty-two Mozart returns to the exposition music and includes the cadential 6-4 figure, trill and interrupted cadence heard before, the development theme follows this but is cut very short. The orchestra then halts in bar two hundred and ninety-seven on a chord of A. this chord announces the start of the cadenza.

At the end of the cadenza we have a long trill on a dominant seventh chord. The orchestra comes back in and rounds off the movement with material which hasn't been heard since bars forty-nine to sixty-six. Mozart cuts off eight bars from this repeat and then adds four additional bars for the tutti at the end.

As you can see Mozart definitely has his own way of composing and does not stick to the basic outline. Mozart doesn't like to write conventional pieces. He loves showing off and writes complicated pieces that show how good he is. He pushes the classical age to its peak by taking music as far as he can at this time. There is no doubt that Mozart influenced lots of composers of the future by his extremely artistic ways with composing. After his death many composers like Haydn and Beethoven used his ideas to write their own pieces.