

In what ways is this sonata a work in the gallant style?

Mozart's 'Sonata in A' can be described as being written in Gallant style. This style was a simple but melodious style that was quite often used in the less complicated dances of the Baroque period, especially in the Minuet. Soon however, the characteristics associated with gallant style spread from only being in dance music to being present in all types of pre – classical music. This style of music is now known as Viennese Classical Music.

The first movement of Mozart's 'Sonata in A' can be described as having a particularly gallant style, especially in the Minuet. The characteristics of galant style are also more obvious in this piece than in any other of Mozart's instrumental music.

There are many references in 'Sonata in A' to the gallant style.

Firstly, there is clear emphasis on a single melodic line. The melody can be clearly heard in the main opening theme over a simple syncopated accompaniment in the bass clef. There is no counterpoint being used and the theme is allowed to stand out on it's own without being dominated by a complicated accompaniment. There is also a repeated 'E' in the bass clef accompaniment which simply adds to the lilt of the melody, making it more interesting to listen to. In each of the different variations, this simple, yet effective accompaniment is continued. In variation 1, single quaver chords consisting of only two notes instead of the usual three are being used to accompany the melody. In bar 23 this is changed again, and this time, the accompaniment is fairly fast moving and consisting of semi quavers. Variation 2 sees evidence of alberti bass being used while variation 3 uses an accompaniment of octaves played in semi quavers. The simple, two note chords are brought back into use in variation 4. In the trio section, the accompaniment appears to be very simple without a great note variation. The melody has become far more complicated by this point and the simple accompaniment highlights this.

At bars 4, 8, 12 and 16 and at other cadence points throughout the piece, period phrasing is evident. A period is usually two phrases of equal length, with the first (antecedent) phrase ending in an imperfect cadence and the second (consequent) ending with a perfect cadence. It is rather like a question and answer happening within the music. Even throughout the different variations where the main theme is changed slightly each time, the periodic phrasing can still be heard resulting in the regular 8 bar patterns that can be heard.

The texture of this sonata is very thin and this results in the melody being very clear. As I have mentioned earlier, there are very often only two parts as in variation 2, and when chords are used as an accompaniment, only two notes are being used instead of the usual three. This can be seen at the start of Variation 1. However, the coda at the very end of this piece is completely different. The accompaniment is very thick and many chords are used. This gives a loud and broad ending to the piece and is something that has been built up through each different variation of the theme. The

coda uses the chords and the thick sound to give a grand sounding finish, as if the piece has come to the end.

The harmonies used are also very simple throughout the piece. The same notes will often be played in the bass accompaniment that have just been played in the melody. As well as giving a lilting feeling to the melody, it also ensures that it is not over shadowed by the accompaniment. An example of this note repeating can be found in the second part of variation 2 where the alberti bass being played in the bass clef is following the lead of the treble clef melody in syncopated rhythm. Only one type of chromatic chord is used in the whole of the Andante and this can be found in the 12th bar of the theme.

The piece has been written using the rondo structure. Related keys are often used throughout the piece to keep it moving and interesting. The Andante does not change from the key of A major but the Minuetto changes to different keys quite a bit. It begins in A major and changes to E major within the first section, moving onto B minor in the second section before returning to A major again before the section has finished. The trio section also has a number of key changes. The last movement contains many movements from major to minor, highlighting the use of rondo structure and again, making the piece interesting for the listener.

The use of Galant style throughout the piece is very effective, whether it is making sure that the melody is the most important part of the music or making certain parts of the piece stand out from others. Certainly, Mozart has made good use of the style and has produced a piece that sounds a lot more complicated than it actually is