

VIVALDI

Flute Concerto in D major

Op. 10 No. 3 'Il Gardellino' (RV 428)

Context

Vivaldi wrote approximately 350 concertos, of which over 230 were for solo violin. Wind instruments were uncommon in Italy and were only used at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice (where he worked) after Vivaldi's death. However, the Prussian virtuoso flautist, Johann Quantz, visited Venice in 1726; it may have been this that led Vivaldi to write his Opus 10 set of six concertos for the flute. The set was published in Amsterdam in 1728.

The 'Il Gardellino' Concerto (meaning 'goldfinch') is the third in the set. It is not known which came first – the music or the nickname. The piece follows Vivaldi's most common three-movement structure: Fast – Slow – Fast.

Structural outline

The first movement, *Allegro*, follows a ritornello structure, typical of the Baroque concerto:

Bars 1–12	Ritornello 1	12 bars	D major
Bars 13–20	Solo 1	8 bars	D major
Bars 21–26	Ritornello 2	6 bars	D major
Bars 26–47	Solo 2	21 bars	D major to B minor
Bars 47–53	Ritornello 3	6 bars	B minor
Bars 53–95	Solo 3	43 bars	B minor via F# minor to D major
Bars 96–100	Final ritornello	5 bars	D major

The second movement, *Cantabile*, is scored only for the solo flute and the basso continuo. The character of the music is based on the *Siciliano* – a Baroque dance of slow tempo and lilting rhythmic character in compound metre. In keeping with this model, Vivaldi structures the movement as a simple Binary form: two balanced sections, each repeating, the first cadencing in the dominant (A major), the second returning the music back to the tonic.

The third movement reverts to an *Allegro* tempo and is again based on a ritornello structure. Significant appearances of the ritornello theme are heard as follows:

Bar 1: in the tonic (D major)

Bar 40: in the dominant (A major)

Bar 89: in the relative minor (B minor)

Bar 112: in the tonic

Vivaldi's musical style

Look and listen for the following features:

- Contrasts of texture between ritornellos played by the 'ripieno' (tutti) and solo passages accompanied by fewer players
- Melodic lines using scales, arpeggios and triadic figuration
- Sequences (melodic and harmonic) – both ascending and descending
- Moments of harmonic colour derived from secondary dominant 7ths, diminished 7ths and the Neapolitan 6th.

VIVALDI
Op. 10 No. 3 (RV 428)

Flute Concerto in D major 'Il Gardellino'

I

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Allegro

Flute *f*

Violin I *f*

Violin II *f*

Viola *f*

Violoncello/
Basso continuo *f*

6

Fl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc./
B.c.

Starter notes

Bar 1: ritornello is played in octaves by the *ripieno*; solo flute decorates with arpeggio figures

Bars 1-4: implied harmony alternates I and V (tonic and dominant)

Bars 5-8: circle of 5ths progression underpinning the descending sequence

Additional student notes

Which instruments are playing in the basso continuo?

BACH

Violin Concerto in A minor

BWV 1041

Context

Of the solo concertos Bach wrote, only 17 survive and of those very few were original works. BWV 1041 is one of them. It is likely to have been written in the late 1710s or early 1720s, a period in which Bach was given the opportunity to spend more time than hitherto on instrumental works.

Structural outline

The piece is in the Vivaldian model of three movements: Fast – Slow – Fast. The first movement, *Allegro*, has the following basic structure:

Bars 1–24	Ritornello
Bars 25–51	Episode
Bars 52–84	Ritornello
Bars 85–141	Episode
Bars 142–71	Ritornello

The second movement, *Andante*, does not follow a standard structural scheme. Instead, a sense of cohesion is created from the repetition of the opening continuo figure, interspersed with two solo melodies. Within these melodic building blocks, there is a typical and recognisable tonal journey:

Bars 1–14	C major – G major
Bars 15–36	G major – D minor – A minor – G minor – C minor
Bars 39–46	C major

The third and final movement, *Allegro assai*, is structured in this way:

- Full opening and closing ritornello sections
- Solo episodes interrupted by small recurrences of the opening of the ritornello from bars 25–116 (at bars 43, 60 – slightly extended – and 90)

Central features

Tonality: Bach's tonal scheme for the three movements reflect the overall character: A minor for the outer fast movements and C major for the calm, slow middle movement. Within that framework Bach skilfully works the music through different keys, giving a variety of characters to a relatively small number of ideas (on which ritornello structures rely).

Harmony: The harmony in this concerto is rich, full of boldness and, in places, quite unexpected. There is much use of expressive dissonance such as 9–8 suspensions, striking appoggiaturas and chromatic harmony.

Rhythm: The vibrancy of the music owes a lot to the rhythmic language of the three movements; the use of anacrusis and ties is ubiquitous and the rhythmic flourishes of the solo line lend an urgency and driving force to the outer movements.

Texture: Bach provides a superb model of how to control texture for dramatic effect. Whether simply reducing forces in solo sections, omitting the continuo (e.g. sections of the second movement) or the use of fugal counterpoint (in the third movement), the variety is spectacular and creates drama throughout the music.