Context:

* Antonio Vivaldi, 1678-1741.
* He was born in Venice where he worked as a composer and violinist (and a priest for a while). In 1703 he was appointed violinist and the Ospedale della Pieta, a girls’ orphanage in Venice.
* The concerto in D minor was composed as one of a set of 12 concerti in Vivaldi’s op. 3, l’estro armonico published in Amsterdam in 1711.
* L’estro armonico contained concerti for string instruments in various groupings. While no.11 is for two violins, cello and strings (trio sonata), others were written for four violins, cello and strings (e.g. concerto no . 1 of the set in D major).
* The concerti were grouped in threes in the set:
* First a concerto for four violins, cello and strings then one for two violins, cello and strings then a concerto for solo violin (and strings).
* The concerto is an example of the *concerto grosso* i.e. a concerto with a group of soloists (concertino) accompanied by an ensemble (ripieno) that was very popular in the Baroque era. The form was developed and pioneered by Vivaldi’s earlier contemporary Corelli in Rome.
* Vivaldi and Albinoni developed a slightly different style of the concerto grosso in Venice, one that was more structured, often with fewer movements (Albinoni favoured a three-movement concerto).

**Concerto in D minor op. 3 no. 11 Vivaldi Wider Listening**

Composers for comparison:

Corelli

Bach

Tartini

Purcell

Leonarda

Gabrieli

Handel



* Vivaldi’s developments: begins the concerto energetically before then transforming the passage into an uncertain rhythmic change. It is the soloists that introduce the musical ideas and the ripieno develops them
* The idea of contrasting forces was very popular in the Baroque era and should be investigated.

Melody

Wider listening by element

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| Handel concerti grossi op. 6 | * Melodies are often long and complex but are less decorated than Vivaldi’s in general. * The melodies are often developed in sequences (a very popular technique of melodic development in the Baroque era). |
| Shostakovich concerto for piano, trumpet and string orchestra mvts 1 and 4. | * Mvt 1 opens with the solo piano and trumpet like the Vivaldi and his concerti grossi in general. * Mvt 4: the solo instruments have prominent solo melodic parts. * Throughout the concerto, the piano and trumpet have the main melodic interest with the string orchestra being a secondary accompaniment. Sometimes the strings do take over melodies when the solo instruments rest or sometimes a bit of imitation. |
| Beethoven violin concerto in D major mvt 1 | * Also structurally relevant: as an example of the later classical concerto form, the Beethoven violin concerto commences with a long orchestral tutti to introduce the main theme(s). * In contrast, Vivaldi, in the style of the concerto grosso, introduces the principal or first melodic idea in the ripieno (the soloists). |

Structure/form

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| Corelli Christmas concerto | * Has 6 movements. * Not all Baroque concerti grossi followed the same exact form unlike the Classical and Romantic symphony which was quite fixed with usually four movements. |
| Corelli op. 6 no. 1 mvt 2 | * This movement follows a largo-allegro structure. * Similar to the Vivaldi mvt 2 (if we see it as a three-movement concerto), which is allegro - adagio - allegro. * An example to demonstrate that there could be two or more sections within a single movement. |
| Handel concerti grossi op. 6 | * The concerti in this set have five moments mostly, some have six. * Different to Vivaldi’s which have three or four. |
| Shostakovich concerto for piano, trumpet and string orchestra | * The first movement opens with the solo instruments. * Like a Baroque concerto grosso rather than a Classical or Romantic concerto. |
| Beethoven violin concerto in D, mvt 1 | * As mentioned in melody, begins with an orchestral introduction. |
| Siciliano | * The siciliano rhythm creates quite distinctive short one or two bar phrases. |

Harmony/tonality

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| Handel  Coronation Anthem, The King Shall Rejoice mvt. 2  Dixit Dominus, Dominus a dextris tuis | * Long chains of suspensions on *of thy salvation.* * Chains of suspensions |
| Corelli op.3 no. 11, presto | * Extensive use of the circle of fifths. * One such progression does a full circle and more! * Varied harmonic rhythm - in the second half of the progression the rhythm is doubled to add interest and variety. * Many of the chords are also 7th chords which are dissonant and need to resolve, thus creating and relieving harmonic tension with each chord. |
| Handel concerto grosso op. 6 no. 12 | * This concerto is in B minor (H-moll), but the third movement is in E major. * In the Vivaldi all the movements are in the tonic D minor (common in his music). |
| Purcell 3 Part sonatas, no. 3 in D minor, canzona | * Includes a conventional touch: a concluding coda over a sustained dominant pedal in a fugal movement. * The Vivaldi fugal allegro (end of mvt 1 or mvt 2 depending on interp!) has this same dominant pedal nearing the end. |

Texture

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| Gabrieli sacrae symphoniae, sonata pian’e forto | * Gabrieli was composing at the shift between the Renaissance and Baroque eras. * The emphasis of this work is on contrast, both textural and dynamic. * In the Vivaldi, we see textural contrast between the adagio e spiccato (chordal homophony) and the allegro (fugal polyphony) * Sonata pian’e forto from the 1597 publication has designated instrumentation to create this textural contrast: one group contains a cornetto and three sackbuts and the other a viola and three sackbuts. |
| Handel concerto grosso op. 6 no. 12, largo mvt 1 | * In one section: three forceful dotted semiquaver patterns in the full ripieno alternate with the concertino which is monophonic at points (just one of the soloists plays). * This creates quite a stark textural contrast. |
| Shostakovich concerto for piano, trumpet and string orchestra | * A similar texture to the concerto grosso form with piano and trumpet serving as the ‘concertino’ and the string orchestra the ‘ripieno’. * This form was unusual once solo concerti became the norm in the Classical era. * In the fourth movement, allegro con brio, the piano and the trumpet both have prominent solo parts. |
| Tippett concerto for double string orchestra | * Despite being called a concerto, the instrumentation in fact calls for two equally balanced string orchestras. * The word concerto refers to the Baroque principle of different and opposing groups to achieve contrast rather than the modern-day concerto featuring a soloist. * There are no concertino/ripieno oppositions either. The textural interest doesn’t come from this either. |
| Brahms piano concerto no. 1 mvt 2 | * Strings and a very reduced wind section accompany the solo piano here. * An example to demonstrate the greater possibilities of textural contrast and variation using a modern-day orchestra rather than a string orchestra and basso continuo. * In the Vivaldi, it is nearly always all the ripieno that plays in a tutti section. Sometimes the harpsichord and bass is omitted which does create quite an effective contrast in the sound and texture of the accompaniment. |

Sonority/Dynamics

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| Tippett concerto for double string orchestra | * Uses two opposing groups to achieve contrast in sound despite the two groups having the same sonority. |
| Handel concerti grossi op. 6 | * Op. 6 is a set of 12 concerti grossi also written for two violins, cello and strings. * The same instrumental grouping as the set work and a very common grouping in the Baroque era in general. |
| Isabella Leonarda 12 sonatas op. 16, sonata quarta | * Mvt 5 = solo violone i.e. viol solo + organ + continuo. Makes for contrast with the other movements which feature a concertino. |

Tempo/metre/rhythm

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| Handel concerto grosso op. 6 no. 12 | * The second movement is an allegro, but doesn’t have the driving quavers so distinctive of Vivaldi’s rhythmic style. * Does have quite an exciting offbeat quaver accompaniment though. |
| Handel Pastoral Symphony | * Uses the siciliano rhythm. Specifically linked with the evocation of pastoral scenes. |
| Corelli Christmas Concerto, Op. 6, No. 8 last mvt | * Is another well-known siciliano movement. |
| Siciliano rhythm | * Use of this dance rhythm is a vestige of the sonata da chiesa form that came before the concerto grosso and was in essence a suite of dances: sarabande, gigue etc. |