

Piano Trio in G Minor

Op. 17. Movement 1.

Clara Schumann 1846.

Points of interest

* The mass production of pianos in the early 19th century.
* The rise of the piano virtuoso.
* The role of women composers in the 19th century.
* The development of chamber music.

**Most commonly used time signatures**

**4/4 - 4 crotchet beats in a bar.**

**3/4 - 3 crotchet beats in a bar.**

**2/4 - 2 crotchet beats in a bar.**

**6/8 – 6 quaver beats in a bar.**

Instrumental Music

Set Work 2

**Harmony & Tonality**

* The harmony used is functional throughout.
* Modulations are made to related keys via perfect cadences.
* Chromatic chords such as the diminished 7th and the augmented 6th add colour to the music.
* Suspensions and appoggiaturas are used to create harmonic interest.
* Cycles of 5ths are used to assist with modulation.

**Melody**

* There are two melodic lines which are developed throughout, the 1st & 2nd subjects.
* The 1st subject features periodic phrasing and is based around primary chord shapes.
* The 2nd subject features more chromatic melody lines.
* Sequences are used to develop the melodic lines.
* Imitation of the melody is used.
* The melody is often fragmented.

**Structure**

* The concerto as a whole is divided into four movements; *Allegro Moderato, Scherzo & Trio, Andante & Allegretto.*
* The first movement is in sonata form.

(Exposition, development & recapitulation).

* A codetta is used to bring the movement to a conclusion.
* The movement develops two subjects both characterised by key.

**Social & Historical Context**

**Sonority**

**Texture**

**Rhythm, Metre & Tempo**

* The piano trio was a popular form of Romantic chamber music.
* The strings are almost entirely arco.
* Pizzicato features occasionally in the cello.
* Double stopping is used to create interest in the string writing.
* The piano part is virtuosic in nature.
* Instruments use a wide tessitura.
* Pedalling on the piano is seldom indicated.
* Dynamics are used to create drama in the music.
* The movement is in common time.
* Simple rhythms are used.
* Syncopation is used to create melodic interest.
* Continuous quaver passages help provide the movement with momentum.
* Tempos sometimes slow when approaching a change of key.
* Dotted rhythms are used in more homophonic passages.
* Rests are used to define some cadential points.
* The concerto is characterised by the use of different textures.
* The opening subject is presented in melody dominated homophony.
* Imitation and dialogue between instruments is introduced.
* The use of homorhythmic passages creates interest.
* Pedal notes are used to stabilise the harmony.
* Piano textures include, broken chord shapes, off beat chords, block chords and doubling at the octave.
* Clara Schumann had to publish music under her husband’s name.
* The piano was readily available to purchase in wealthy homes.
* Piano playing was seen as a good pastime for wealthy ladies.
* Romantic music began to use more chromaticism to create drama.
* The piano trio was a staple form of entertainment in wealthy homes.
* Clara Schumann moved in musical circles and was acquainted with Brahms from whom she learned composition techniques.

Wider listening: *Leider* – Fanny Mendelssohn, *Mass in D* – Ethel Smyth, *Winterreise –* Schubert, *Piano Concerto No. 1 -* Liszt.