

What is a Concerto?

A concerto is an instrumental composition usually in _____ movements, and featuring a _____ contrasting against the orchestra.

The word concerto may come from a _____ word meaning 'to strive', or from an Italian word meaning 'get together'. Late 16th century composers used it as a title for pieces for one or more voices with instrumental accompaniment, and also for pieces written for two (or more) opposing groups, providing contrasts of various kinds, e.g. in pitch, dynamics, timbre (tone-colour).

Who is Alban Berg?

(Born Vienna, 9 February 1885; died there, 24 December 1935).

“One of the principal figures responsible for bringing to maturity the atonal style of 20th-century classical music.”



Alban Berg, a pupil of Arnold Schoenberg, spent most of his life in Vienna except for occasional travels. Because he received an inheritance, he was able to devote his life to music. He composed orchestral music, including FIVE ORCHESTRAL SONGS (1912), chamber music, songs, and two sensational operas, WOZZECK (1925) and LULU (1937). WOZZECK is possibly the most frequently-performed operatic work in the atonal medium. After his death, he became widely recognized as a composer who broke tradition and mastered a radical technique, blending the two to create a 20th-century Viennese school of music.

The so-called Second Viennese School of Arnold Schoenberg has exercised a strong influence over the course of music in the 20th century. Schoenberg's pupils Alban Berg and Anton Webern, each with an individual musical language, put into practice the general principles of atonality, music without tonality or key-centre, and twelve-note music or serialism, music based on a series of the twelve semitones or half-steps of the modern scale.

Opera

Berg wrote two important operas, *Wozzeck*, a study of insanity, based on the play by Büchner, and the unfinished *Lulu*, based on Wedekind.

Orchestral Music

Berg's *Violin Concerto* and *Chamber Concerto* are an important part of 20th century repertoire. His *Lyric Suite*, for string quartet, was later orchestrated in part, while the delicately orchestrated *Three Pieces* of 1914-1915 form an occasional part of modern concert repertoire.

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- Q1. When was Alban Berg Born?
 - Q2. Where did he come from?
 - Q3. Why might he be called one of the principle figures in the 20th century?
 - Q4. What is serialism?
 - Q5. What is a tone row?
 - Q6. How might we invert a tone row? Can you work it out?
 - Q7. What might Retrograde Inversion mean?
 - Q8. What do you think 'RI – 5' means?
 - Q9. Make your own tone row and try inverted the notes.
 - Q10. What might we mean if we write about Prime orders when analysing music?

