

Musical structure - Cadenza

The cadenza is introduced at the end of the 1st movement as would have been expected by Beethoven's audience. The cadenza was used to show off the virtuosity of the soloist. The cadenza is from bars 417-480. It was often improvised by the soloist and in this case, Beethoven did improvise during the first performance of the concerto as he did not write down the cadenza until after he played it. Originally, the beginning of the cadenza would have appeared as a fermata above a dominant chord (G major) in the score (see below). The orchestra would then have waited to hear the rising trills from the soloist, and an indication from the conductor to know when to start playing again.



The cadenza has a stormy sound, and the pianist goes up and down the keyboard in scales and arpeggios to show off their skills. The two themes from the exposition are also played within the cadenza but with additions. For example, a lot of ornamentation is incorporated in the cadenza and compositional devices, such as both ascending and descending sequence, and trills (bars 469-480), turns and scalar flourishes are used to show that the pianist is proficient at their instrument. The cadenza would also have shown how much musical knowledge the pianist had to improvise using these techniques and compositional devices.