London Philharmonic Orchestra

GCSE BrightSparks Resources

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

Horn Concerto No. 4

Third Movement: Rondo

(1786)

What is a concerto?

- In the Baroque period (c.1650–1750), there were two main types of concerto:
  - Solo concerto = one soloist and orchestra
  - Concerto grosso = small group of soloists (concertino) and accompanying group (ripieno)
- In the Classical period (c.1750–1820), the solo concerto became prominent, and was usually made up of three movements:
  - First movement – fast
  - Second movement – slow
  - Third movement – fast

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

- Mozart is one of the most prolific and influential composers of the Classical period
- He was well-known for his concertos, and his clarinet concerto is considered by many to be one of his best works. He also wrote concertos for piano, violin, flute and oboe, among other instruments

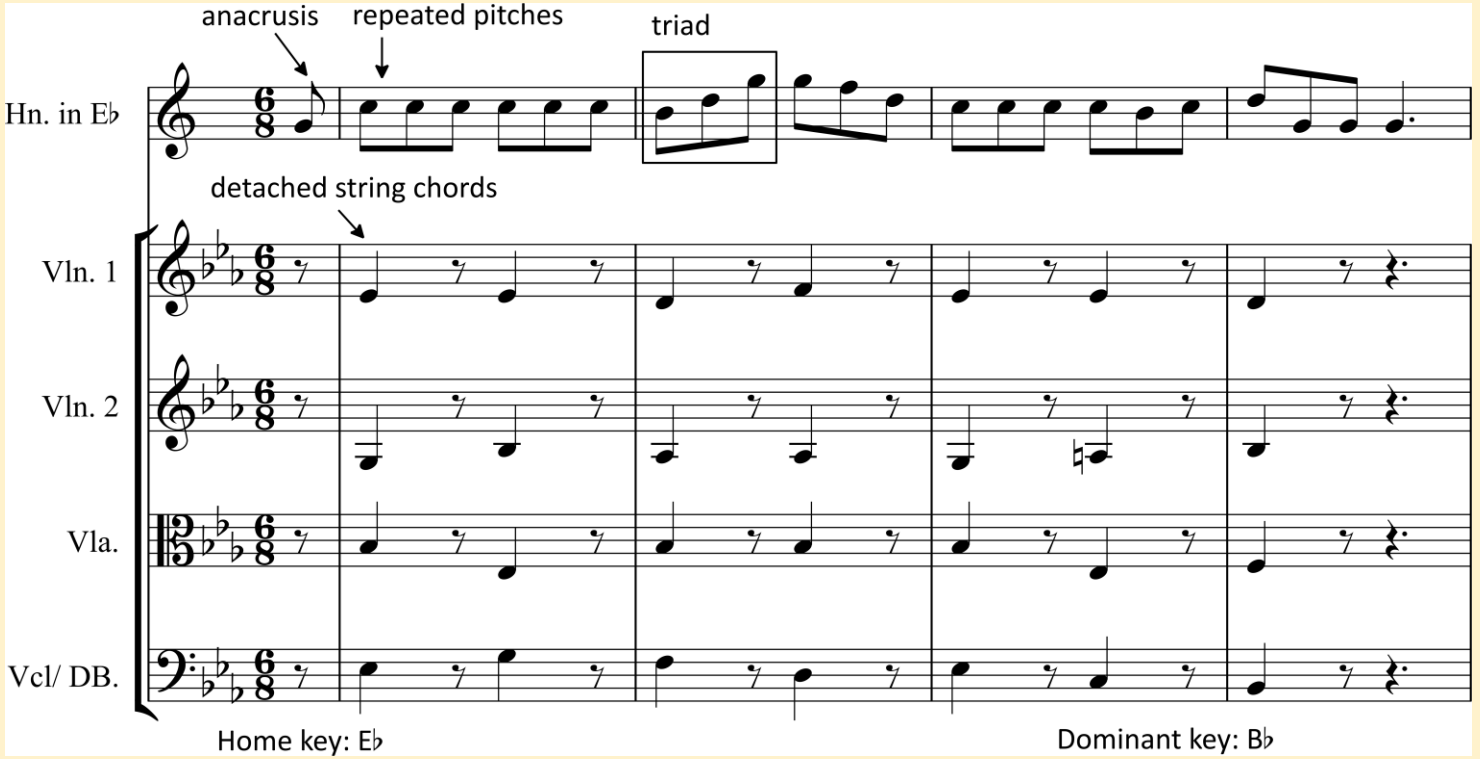
Learn more about the French Horn and Mozart’s Horn Concerto No. 4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMqx0lgmTHY

What is Rondo form?

- The third movement of Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 4 is in Rondo form
- Rondo is Italian for 'round'
- Rondo is a musical shape with one recurring idea (idea 'A')
- The structure is therefore A-B-A-C-A-D-A etc.
- The interspersed sections are called episodes

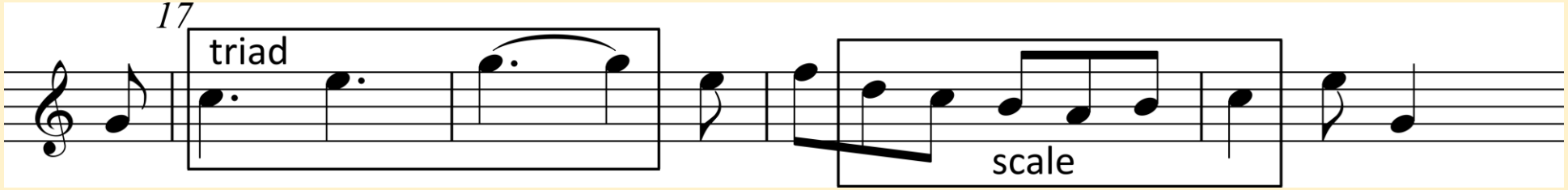
Let's explore the recurring theme 'A' from the third movement of Mozart's Horn Concerto…

Theme A (bars 1–8)

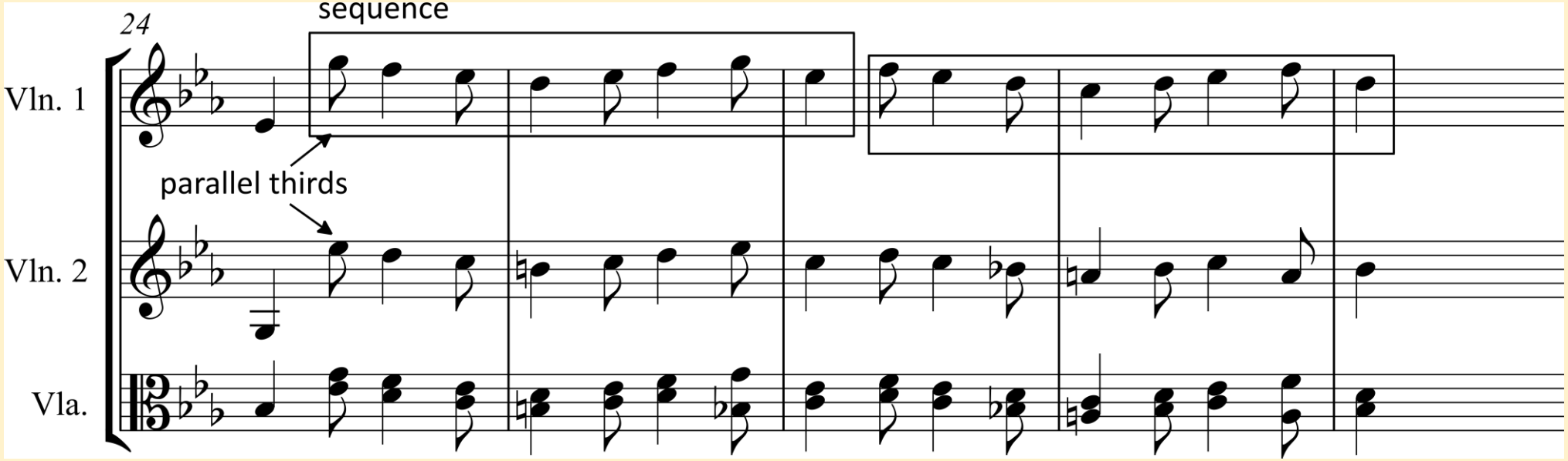


- This very famous theme has a fanfare-like sound
- It starts on the upbeat (anacrusis) and it contains repeated pitches and the outline of a triad
- The key is Eb major and the harmony begins in Eb, moves to Bb (chord V) halfway through and back to Eb at the end
- The theme is first played by the horn accompanied by detached chords from the strings, then it’s immediately repeated by orchestra with louder dynamics

Theme A (bars 17–28)

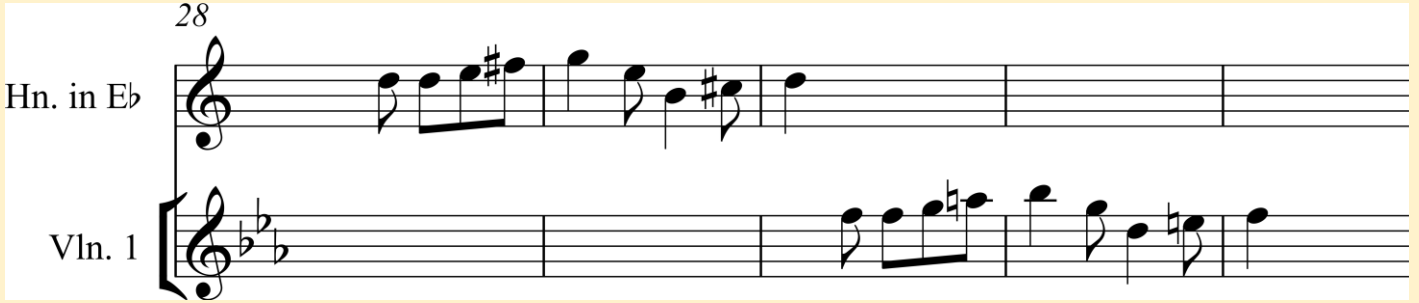


- This theme uses both triads and scales

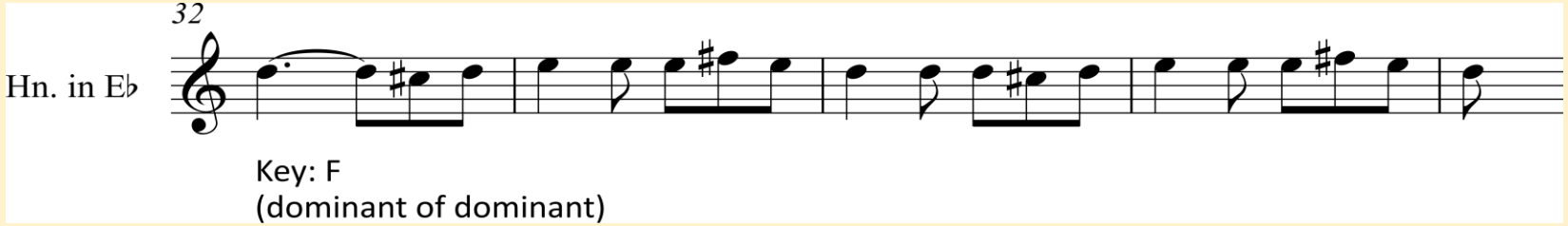


- At bar 24 there are parallel thirds in the violins and violas, using a descending sequence (sequence means the same material repeated on a different starting pitch)

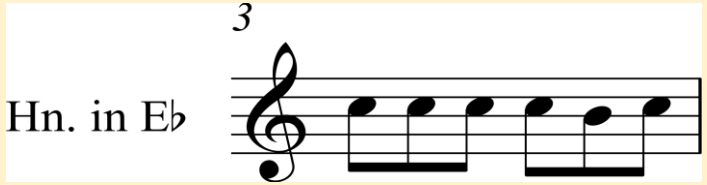
Theme A (bars 28–36)



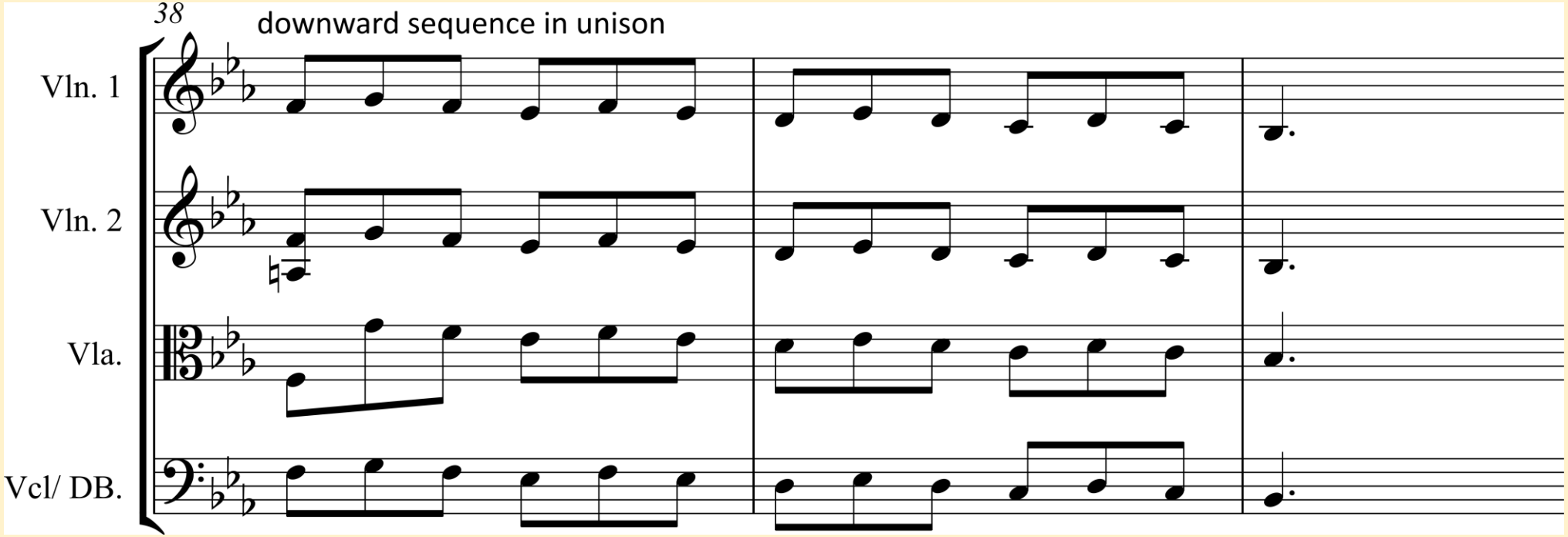
- We are now in the dominant key
- This phrase is imitated by the violins



- Then we have four bars in F, which is the dominant of Bb, so the dominant of the dominant
- The horn's motif is based on bar 3, and we hear it both 'the right way up' and inverted twice



Theme A (bars 36–38)



- There is a descending sequence from the orchestra
- This takes us to the dominant key of Bb and the first episode

First episode (bars 38–67)

- After Theme A we hear the first episode
- The solo horn introduces new material accompanied by sustained string chords
- We are in the dominant key (Bb)
- Violins imitate while the horn adds a countermelody (a second melody)
- At bar 46 four detached chords are answered by a rising arpeggio and falling scale from the horn
- The chords then repeat and are answered by an extended reply from the solo horn
- At bar 60, several devices are combined – there is an 8 bar dominant pedal in the lower strings, an ascending sequence in the upper strings, and a descending chromatic scale in the horn which takes us back to Theme A

Theme A (bars 68–83)

- Theme A returns in the solo horn followed by the orchestra, as before

Second episode (bars 84–120)

- In bar 84, three repeated notes announce the second episode
- The first phrase is in C minor, and the second phrase is in Ab major
- Mozart uses material from earlier but in a new key (Ab major)
- In bar 114, perfect cadences and a descending sequence take us back to the home key and Theme A

Theme A (bars 121–152)

- Theme A returns in the solo horn followed by the orchestra, as before
- In bar 137 the second phrase of the rondo repeats but this time turns minor before modulating to the dominant
- We then hear a repeat of bars 32-37 but this time in Bb major, ready for the third episode

Third episode (bars 153–178)

- The same as the first episode but now in the tonic key (Eb major)
- A hunting horn fanfare is added
- Bar 161 is a repeat of bar 46
- There is a pause on the dominant 7th for the cadenza, a short improvised section by the soloist

Theme A (bars 179–204)

- Theme A returns
- The solo horn introduces the melody as before
- The orchestral repeat is extended and returns to the home key
- There are two perfect cadences
- At bar 198 a segment of the rondo theme is repeated with different harmony and an interrupted cadence (Chord V-VI), then a perfect cadence

Coda (bars 205–end)

- The coda is the ending section of the piece, which re-establishes the home key
- Features alternating tonic and dominant harmony over a tonic pedal (a long note underpinning the texture and harmony)
- Soloist plays arpeggios which show the full range of the instrument