

OCR AS & IB HL/SL set work: Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F, first movement

by Alan Charlton

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INTRODUCTION

This resource is the first of a series to support the teaching of the three new OCR AS Prescribed Orchestral Scores in Unit G353: Introduction to Historical Study in Music, for examination in June 2016. The primary focus of this article will be on the **Expressive Use of Instrumental Techniques, Tonality (The Language of Western Tonal Harmony)** and the **Context** of the work. Additionally, since Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 is also one of the two new set works for IB Higher Level, other elements of music in this movement will also be discussed (for example melody and rhythm). However, due to limitations of space, movements 2 and 3 will not be discussed in this article.

Exam board requirements

In the **OCR AS specification**, knowledge of the AS set works are tested in Sections B and C of the Unit G353 examination paper, Introduction to Historical Study in Music.

In Section B, students are provided with a short printed extract from one of the three prescribed orchestral scores. They answer questions based on this and on two different recordings of the same extract. This section is worth 25 marks (the prescribed jazz works make up the remaining 15 marks available in this section).

In Section C, students answer one question from a choice of three on the background to the prescribed works.

In the **IB HL/SL specification**, Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 (all three movements) is one of the two prescribed set works for IB HL and SL for examination in the May and November sessions in 2017 and 2018. Knowledge and understanding of the set works is tested in Section A of Paper 1 (the listening paper). In this section, three questions are set, from which students have to answer question 3, comparing the two set works, and then choose either question 1 or 2, which are on the respective individual works. Students have clean scores of the set works with them in the examination. Each question carries 20 marks, so the set works account for 40 out of 140 total marks for the paper at HL and 40 out of 120 marks for SL.

Additional resources

Scores: Philharmonia, Eulenburg and others publish miniature scores of individual Brandenburg concertos. Reductions and arrangements are also available: search for 'Brandenburg' at www.boosey.com.

Recordings: a good recent, authentic performance is recommended, with perhaps a much older performance on modern instruments for comparison.

Further reading (most relevant to IB teachers/students):

- Malcolm Boyd: *Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos* (ISBN 0521387132).
- *Oxford Composer Companions: JS Bach*, edited by Malcolm Boyd (ISBN 0198606206), contains comprehensive entries on subjects and concepts related to Bach.
- *Bach* by Malcolm Boyd (ISBN 0460860364) is a highly readable biography and survey of the music.

JS BACH

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was a German composer and organist, and one of the most important composers of the Baroque period. During his lifetime, he was more renowned for his virtuoso organ playing than for his composing, which was only known by a small circle of people. Born in Eisenach, he was the son of an organist, Johann Ambrosius Bach, but was orphaned at the age of ten, going to live with his brother in Ohrdruf, where he studied organ and harpsichord. Key events of his life are as follows:

- 1700–1707** Worked as a chorister for three years and then as an organist.
- 1707** Married Maria Barbara.
- 1708** Became organist in Kapelle of Duke of Saxe-Weimar (where he wrote much church and organ music).
- 1717** Became Kapellmeister at the Court of Cöthen (where he composed mainly instrumental compositions, including the Brandenburg Concertos, many suites and sonatas).
- 1720** His wife died.
- 1721** Married Anna Magdalena.
- 1723** Became cantor of St Thomas's Church, Leipzig (where he wrote much church music, including many cantatas, the major oratorios – including the St Matthew Passion – and major keyboard works including the *Art of Fugue* and the Goldberg Variations).
- 1750** He died.

BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

JS Bach's set of six Brandenburg Concertos occupies a central position in the history of the Baroque concerto grosso, and display a degree of technical sophistication that has rarely been matched.

Background and original performance circumstances

Bach wrote the Brandenburg Concertos while he was employed as Kapellmeister at the court of Cöthen from 1717–1723. In Germany at this time, it was common for a court to employ a band of musicians who would play music for official functions, such as banquets, dancing and church services, as well as for the enjoyment of the members of the court, either as listeners or performers. How much and what sort of music was performed depended on the tastes of the head of the court.

The 'Kapell' or band of musicians at Cöthen was relatively new, having been built up by the young Prince Leopold, who was himself an accomplished musician and who had studied music in various different royal courts across Germany. He was mostly interested in instrumental music, and as a result Bach's output at this time is dominated by instrumental works. In addition to the Brandenburg Concertos, Bach also composed orchestral suites, much keyboard music including the French and English Suites, the violin sonatas and partitas, and the cello suites.

So if the Brandenburg Concertos were written at Cöthen, why are they called the 'Brandenburg' Concertos? Because they were dedicated to the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, whom Bach met when he travelled to Berlin in 1719 to buy a new harpsichord. Bach played the harpsichord in front of the Margrave, who was impressed enough to commission him. Bach dedicated the score to the Margrave, on 24 March 1721, and from the flattering tone of the dedication on the score and the letter that accompanies it, it is possible that he was seeking future employment with him.

Bach's first wife had died in 1720 and his brother in early 1721, so these unhappy events would have encouraged him to look elsewhere for employment. The first performances of the Brandenburgs presumably took place in the castle at Cöthen, since their instrumentation matches the players available there, and some of the music was adapted from music that had been written and performed before the Margrave's commission materialised. It is not known whether they were ever performed to the Margrave, but he did add the score to his library, from which parts could have been prepared by his own copyists.

The Baroque concerto grosso

The **concerto grosso**, meaning a concerto for several instruments, was developed by Italian composers such as Corelli and Vivaldi in the early 18th century. In the concerto grosso, a small orchestra is divided into two main instrumental groups: a small group of soloists called the **concertino**, and the rest of the orchestra, known as the **ripieno**. The music was divided into sections scored for concertino (**solo** passages) and those scored for the concertino plus the ripieno (**tutti** passages).

The concertino would consist of, say, two violins and a **continuo** group (eg cello and harpsichord) and tended to be given more soloistic music. The ripieno players were often less skilled and so had less technically challenging music.

The general form of the concerto grosso was basically an alternation of tutti and solo passages. The tutti passages were based on a recurring idea called a **ritornello** (literally 'return'). The ritornello would open the movement in the tonic, and return regularly in related keys, often in a shortened form, with its final statement concluding the movement in the tonic.

In between these ritornellos were **episodes**, played by the concertino. These used material that contrasted with the ritornello (although it sometimes included short snatches of ritornello material) and which was usually more soloistic, giving the players the chance to display their skills.

Tonally, the episodes usually modulate, while the ritornello statements usually do not. The whole structure thus sees a journey from the tonic, through several related keys (such as the dominant, relative major or minor and the subdominant) before returning finally to the tonic.

The structure of a simple ritornello movement therefore looks something like this:

Section	Instrumental forces	Key
Ritornello 1	Solo + ripieno + continuo	tonic
Episode 1	Solo + continuo	(modulates)
Ritornello 2	Solo + ripieno + continuo	related key 1
Episode 2	Solo + continuo	(modulates)
Ritornello 3	Solo + ripieno + continuo	related key 2
Episode 3	Solo + continuo	(modulates)
Ritornello 4	Solo + ripieno + continuo	tonic

However, as the concerto grosso developed, the structure became more complicated. The divisions between solo and tutti sections were often less clear-cut, and solo sections were sometimes interrupted by short injections of ritornello material. A common feature of the Brandenburg Concertos, for example, is that the ripieno sometimes accompanies solo passages, with a dynamic marking of piano.

Instrumentation

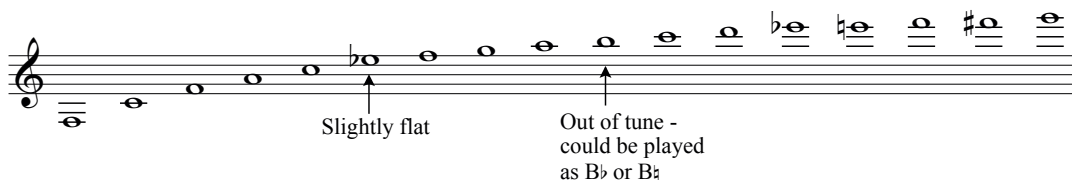
The instrumentation of the Brandenburg Concertos is remarkable for its unusual combinations of instruments in the solo groups. This may have arisen because Bach wanted to give solo opportunities to all the 'Kammermusicus' players (the solo players) available to him at Cöthen. He might equally have been exploring the possibilities of unusual combinations of instruments, both for their timbral possibilities and the compositional challenges they created. The solo instruments used in the six Brandenburg Concertos are as follows:

- Brandenburg Concerto No. 1: 2 corno di caccia (horns), 3 oboes, 1 bassoon, 1 violin piccolo
- Brandenburg Concerto No. 2: 1 trumpet, 1 recorder, 1 oboe, 1 violin
- Brandenburg Concerto No. 3: 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos
- Brandenburg Concerto No. 4: 1 violin, 2 recorders
- Brandenburg Concerto No. 5: 1 flute, 1 violin, 1 harpsichord
- Brandenburg Concerto No. 6: 2 violas, 1 cello

In the score of Brandenburg Concerto No. 2, indications concerning instrumentation are as follows:

- **Tromba:** refers to a natural trumpet in the key of F. The technique of playing very high trumpet parts, known as clarino parts, was thriving in Bach's time, but died out later in the 18th century before being revived in the 20th century.

The notes playable by a natural trumpet in F are as follows:



- **Flauto dolce:** a treble recorder in F. There has been debate over whether the flauto dolce was in fact a flute, the argument being that a recorder would be drowned out by the trumpet. Authentic performances with period instruments have proved that the balance between a recorder and trumpet is satisfactory, however.
- **Oboe:** an oboe
- **Violino:** a violin
- **Violino I; Violino II:** first and second violins
- **in ripieno:** indicates that the instrument is part of the ripieno group, rather than the solo group
- **Violone:** a type of bass viol that uses a similar register to the present-day double bass
- **Cembalo:** a harpsichord. This would have added filler harmonies, reading from figured bass notation (the numbers written above its part, for example at bars 107–111). The marking **Tasto solo** (bar 102) indicates that the following music is to be played as it is, without additional harmonisation.
- **Violoncello e Cembalo all'unisono:** the cello and harpsichord play the bassline in unison (with the harpsichord adding suitable harmonies as discussed above).

In between those times, various instruments have been substituted for the high F trumpet, including the soprano saxophone, the horn and the clarinet, and sections of the part have often been transposed down the octave.

THE CONTINUO

The continuo, or basso continuo, was an almost obligatory presence in Baroque ensemble music. The continuo referred to the group of instruments that would play the bassline and provide a harmonisation to it. Typically, this would include a harpsichord or organ (or sometimes both), and other bass instruments such as the cello, the violone, the bassoon and sometimes bass lutes such as the archlute. While the bowed instruments and the bassoon would just play the bassline, the chordal instruments would also be expected to add appropriate harmonies that would fit in with the rest of the texture. Often, a figured bassline was given, but where it was not, it was up to the keyboard player to devise a harmonisation that would work.

Whereas in a lot of Baroque music the continuo parts all play from the same line, in the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2, the continuo consists of cello and harpsichord only. The violone is treated as a ripieno instrument and thus often drops out in solo sections.

At Cöthen, a ripieno player (called 'Musicus') was presumably less skilled and hence less highly paid than their 'Kammermusicus' colleagues, and the contrast in their respective parts in the Brandenburg Concertos perhaps represents the differences in their respective abilities.

The Baroque approach to instrumental writing was very different to that of composers in subsequent eras.

In Bach's contrapuntal style, textures were made up of several individual parts that had similar musical material. Each part was equally important in the contrapuntal texture, and the same material was frequently passed between different parts, so there was very little difference in the type of instrumental writing for different instruments: Bach writes similar material for, say, oboe, recorder, violin and cello. Once the initial selection of instruments has been made at the beginning of a movement, there is little obvious attempt to exploit an individual instrument's tone for colouristic effect. In the first movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2, this rule is broadly followed, with a few exceptions.

- The material for the **ripieno instruments** is generally simpler than that for the soloists, for example:
 - the viola part in the opening ritornello has fewer semiquavers and more quavers than the solo parts.
 - the ripieno has accompaniment textures in bars 50–55 and 72–74.
 - the ripieno has sustained notes in bars 86–93.
 - the ripieno instruments tend to play more in the middle of their registers rather than the soloists do, for example in bars 50–57.
- The material played by the **continuo instruments and violone** has the quality of a bassline. It often moves in quavers and has fewer semiquaver passages than the rest of the parts. Characteristics of the material in quavers include:
 - disjunct lines in quavers based around broken chords (eg bars 3–8).
 - repeated notes in quavers (eg bars 50–55).
- The **solo violin part** is more virtuosic than the ripieno violin parts, including:
 - double stops (eg bars 33–34, 51, 73).
 - rapid string crossings exploiting the sound of the open A string (bars 92–3).
- The solo **trumpet part** is written in such a way that all of its music corresponds with the notes it can physically produce. Its part is only simplified if it cannot physically produce the expected notes. Examples of this include:
 - bar 103, where there is a unison statement of the ritornello theme – the solo trumpet is the only instrument not to play strictly in unison.
 - bars 21–2, where the solo trumpet's statement of the theme previously played by the other three soloists is altered.
- The solo parts play in slightly different registers: the trumpet and recorder have more material at the top of their registers, while the violin and oboe often play towards the middle and bottom of their registers.

Main thematic material used in Bach, Brandenburg Concerto no.2, Movement 1

Themes introduced in opening ritornello (R1-4)

Bars 1-2 Bars 3-4

R1a R2a

violin I violin I

Bars 5-6 Bars 7-8

R1b R2b

violin I violin I

Bar 1 Bar 1

R3 R4

Continuo and violone Trumpet

Themes introduced in episodes/solo sections (S1-6)

Bars 9-10 Bars 13-14

S1 S2

solo violin solo violin

Bars 33-35 Bars 32-34

S3 S4

Vn I Tpt.
Vn II Oboe

Bars 50-52 Bar 50

S5 S6

Violin I continuo

- Note that the **violone** sounds an octave lower than written and so provides the lowest note in the texture. For this reason, it sometimes differs slightly from the cembalo/cello line to make the bassline clearer and less muddy when the cembalo/cello have semiquavers (eg bar 10, last quaver, and bar 12, beats 3–4).

Treatment of soloists

While the material, the type of instrumental writing and the level of difficulty of the four solo parts are all broadly the same, Bach achieves a great deal of variety in the constantly changing way in which he allocates different contrapuntal parts between them. At the same time, he is also careful to ensure that the four soloists are treated

equally in importance, by sharing the main material equally between them. In doing so, he has to overcome problems such as the incomplete compass of the trumpet and the different ranges of the four instruments.

His ingenuity in the way he treats the soloists can be clearly seen in some of the episodes:

Note that the labels A, B, C and D here are used purely to describe the following textures and do not refer to any 'official' labelling of themes.

EPISODE 1 (BARS 9–22)

In this episode, the four soloists are introduced one by one, with each being given the same two-bar melody (A) followed by a countermelody in semiquavers (B).

bar	Instrument playing 'A'	Instrument playing 'B'	Key
9–10	violin		F major
13–14	oboe	violin	F major
17–18	recorder	oboe	C major
21–22	trumpet	recorder	C major

So each instrument plays the melody (A), and the only instrument that does not play countermelody (B) is the trumpet, which would find it difficult.

Note also that the modulation to C major enables the recorder and trumpet to play melody A in a higher register than the violin and oboe. This enables the recorder to be heard more clearly (since it is louder towards its upper range), and also enables the trumpet to be able to play the majority of A using its available notes, even though its melody still needs to be somewhat adapted.

EPISODE 4A (BARS 59–67)

This fugue-like passage again shows how Bach was concerned with distributing material equally between soloists. There are four pieces of material:

- A (bars 60–61 in the recorder, the same as A in episode 1 just discussed)
- B (the semiquaver accompaniment of violin bars 60–61)
- the descending line in quavers in bars 64–5 in the recorder
- D (a variant of C)

These ideas are distributed between the four soloists in the following way:

bars	recorder	violin	oboe	trumpet
60–1	A	B	-	-
62–3	B	A	-	-
64–5	C	B	A	-
66–7	D	C	B	A

Note how A is passed between the four instruments in turn. After playing A, each instrument then plays B, followed by C, followed by D (although the passage is cut short). Material is thus distributed equally between the instruments in changing combinations.

BARS 107–114

Again, there are four different pieces of material here:

- A (bar 5 of the ritornello)
- B (running semiquavers)
- C (an ascending and descending arpeggio in quavers)
- D (legato repeated quavers on the same note)

Bach distributes these in the following way:

bar	trumpet	recorder	oboe	violin
107	D	B	C	A
108	D	B	A	D
109	C	A	D	B
110	D	D	B	A
111	D	B	A	C
112	D	A	D	B

- In bars 107–112, A and B are being played, with either D, or D and C.
- In bars 107–112, the trumpet has only D and C – the simplest material – because there are too many accidentals for it to play A and B.
- A is played twice by each of the remaining instruments.
- In bars 107–112, the instrument playing A changes each bar.
- In each bar in bars 107–112, recorder, oboe and violin play a different combination of A, B and either C or D: these combinations change every bar, and only bars 109 and 112 use the same combination (ADB).

This illustrates how, in his distribution of contrapuntal material between the instruments, Bach was aiming to create numerous different textural combinations, while ensuring that the material was also shared fairly equally among the soloists.

Structure

The first movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 is in ritornello form but it is, as the Bach scholar Malcolm Boyd says, 'one of the most complex structures in all Bach's concertos'. The difficulty in analysing it is that, because most of the instruments play for much of the time, it can be hard to tell where the ritornellos and episodes start and end. Additionally, the episodes mostly use melodic material from the ritornellos, so the clear-cut distinction between the two types of section is blurred. These points are examples of how Bach was developing the structure from a block-like alternation of different material into a more unified, integrated whole.

Activity: hand out example sheet 2 [a PDF can be downloaded from here]. Using the example sheet, students could label the themes in the score and identify places where they recur. They could also try to work out where the ritornellos and solo sections occur from the themes used and the instrumentation, and identify the keys of the ritornellos.

A similar passage occurs at bars 50–55.

Note that for OCR, the structural understanding need not be as detailed as this. IB candidates will need to understand the structure of the movement in a similar amount of detail.

The labelling of themes is relevant to IB students but is not examined in the OCR specification. It can, however, help OCR students better understand the structure.

In the analysis below, the ritornellos that end in a perfect cadences are deemed to be 'complete', and the music between each of these are considered to be an episode and numbered accordingly. The truncated statements of the ritornello that don't end with a perfect cadence (ie at bars 46–9, 68–71, 75–6 and 94–95) are deemed to be 'incomplete'. Note that this analysis is only one interpretation of the movement, and many other ways of interpreting it are possible.

The labelling of the themes corresponds to that used in Example 2 – thematic material.

Bars	Section	Key	Other points
1–8	Ritornello 1	F major	Full statement of ritornello in tonic. There are four ideas in the main melody in the recorder – R1a (bars 1–2), R2a (bars 3–4), R1b (5–6), and R2b (7–8) – plus the semiquaver idea in the continuo R3 (bars 1–2) and the quaver arpeggio ideas in the trumpet R4 (bars 1–2).
9–10	Episode 1a	F major	Played by concertino – the violin's theme (S1) is introduced. It is played only by concertino instruments in this movement.
11–12	(Ritornello opening)	F major	Tutti
13–14	Episode 1b	F major	Concertino: S1 in oboe, S2 in violin
15–16	(Ritornello opening)	C major	Tutti
17–18	Episode 1c	C major	Concertino: S1 in recorder, S2 in oboe
19–20	(Ritornello opening)	C major	Tutti
21–22	Episode 1d	C major	Concertino: S1 in trumpet, S2 in recorder
23–28	Ritornello 2	C major	Tutti
28–35	Episode 2	C major modulating to D minor	Includes a two-bar phrase of ritornello material in D minor (31–32). Suspension idea (S3) and imitative idea (S4) first appear in 33–35.
36–39	Ritornello 3	D minor	
40–45	Episode 3a	D minor modulating to F major	Derived from ritornello material.
46–49	(Ritornello opening)	F major	Doesn't end in a perfect cadence.
50–55	Episode 3b	F major modulating to B flat major	Uses ritornello material in a harmonic sequence; S5 and S6 introduced.
56–59	Ritornello 4	B flat major	
59–67	Episode 4a	B flat major modulating to C minor	Fugue-like texture using S1 and S2.
68–71	(Ritornello opening)	C minor	Doesn't end in a perfect cadence.
72–74	Episode 4b	C minor modulating to G minor	Similar to bars 50–55, using ritornello material, S5 and S6.
75–76	(Ritornello opening)	G minor	Doesn't end in a perfect cadence.
77–79	Episode 4c	G minor modulating to G minor	S3 suspensions reappear.
80–83	Ritornello 5	G minor	
83–93	Episode 5a	G minor modulating to A minor	S3 suspensions at bars 90–93.
94–95	(Ritornello opening)	A minor	Doesn't end in a perfect cadence.
96–98	Episode 5b	A minor modulating to A minor	S3 suspensions, S4 and ritornello material used.
99–102	Ritornello 6	A minor	

Bars	Section	Key	Other points
103–106	Ritornello 7 (opening)	F major	Near unison statement of ritornello theme in 103–104; doesn't end in a perfect cadence.
107–114	Episode 6	F major modulating to F major	Similar to bars 50–55, using ritornello material, S5 and S6 mirrors bb 50–55.
115–118	Ritornello 7 (conclusion)	F major	

Points of interest:

- There is a recognisable pattern of keys used, each defined by the perfect cadence with which the ritornello material ends (these are marked in bold above).
- The idea of interrupting the concertino sections with short snippets of ritornello material from the tutti, first heard in bars 9–22, continues through the movement. So the final ritornello (103–119) is interrupted by an episode from bars 107–114, and previous episodes are interrupted by incomplete fragments of ritornello at bars 46–9, 68–71, 75–76 and 94–95.
- Solo sections often use ritornello-derived material, thus blurring the line between solo and ritornello sections.
 - for instance, in bars 40–46, the solo instruments play a contrapuntal texture based on material from the opening bar of the movement: the melodic phrase in violin I, the semiquavers in the continuo and the quaver arpeggio idea in the trumpet.
- Solo sections are also linked by additional motivic and textural ideas:
 - the suspensions in the ripieno strings at bars 33–35 (S3) recur at bars 77–9, 90–93 and 96–98.
 - the syncopated violin I line (S5), the counterpoint above it and the detached quaver chords in the ripieno at bars 50–55 recur at bars 72–74 and 107–112

Thus the solo sections are more motivically unified than in standard ritornello form concertos.

Harmony

The harmony in the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 contains many features of Bach's harmonic writing, although this movement is less chromatic than some of his music. Features of interest include:

- **Pedal notes** are occasionally used:
 - Dominant pedals: bars 70–71 beat 3 (continuo, violin II, viola, trumpet); 92–93 beat 2 (continuo).
 - Inverted pedals: trumpet bars 3–4 and 31–32
- **Doubling in 3rds, 6ths or 10ths** is another common feature of Bach's counterpoint. Examples occur in bars 33–34 (compound 3rds and 6ths between recorder and cello), bar 66 (recorder/solo violin in 6ths) and the first halves of bars 70 and 71 (recorder/solo violin in 3rds).
- **Suspensions** are another common way of achieving harmonic variety, and they sometimes appear in repetitive sequences (known as **chains of suspensions**), such as at bars 33–35 in violin I.
- **Cadences**, especially perfect cadences, are used frequently. There are examples of perfect cadences at the end of each full ritornello statement (eg bar 8), and an imperfect cadence at bar 69 beat 4–bar 70 beat 1.
- The **harmonic rhythm**, or number of chord changes per bar, is an important means of controlling the pacing and momentum. Bach varies the harmonic rhythm constantly: in the opening, for instance, the first harmony, F major, lasts for two bars, while in bars 3–4, there are four changes of harmony per bar. The sequential passages vary, too, with some containing one change of harmony per bar (eg bars 50–55), and others a change of harmony every half-bar (eg bars 77–79).

HARMONIC SEQUENCES

This movement is particularly notable for its frequent use of sequential harmonic progressions: repeated harmonic patterns that are often used to modulate to new keys.

bar nos.	Chord sequence	frequency of chord changes	Description
33–36	Gm7 - C7 - F7 - B flat 7 - Em7 - A7 - Dm	half a bar	circle of 5ths (descending)
50–56	F7 - D7 - G7 - E7 - A7 - F7 - B flat	one bar	pattern of down a 3rd then up a fourth
60–67	the chord sequence [ii-V-I-ii-V-I] is repeated in B flat major (60–1), G minor (62–3), E flat major (64–5), C minor (66–7)	new key every two bars	pattern of descending 3rds
72–75	C7 - F7 - D7 - G	one bar	circle of 5ths (descending)
77–80	Cm7 - F - B flat 7 - E flat - Am7 - D7 - Gm	half a bar	circle of 5ths (descending)
90–92	Gm7 - C - F7 - Bm7 half diminished - E7 - Am	half a bar	circle of 5ths (descending)
96–99	Dm7 - G7 - C7 - F7 - Bm7 half diminished - E7 - Am	half a bar	circle of 5ths (descending)
107–113	B flat 7 - G7 - C7 - A7 - D7 - B dim7 - C7	one bar	pattern of down a 3rd then up a 4th

This section is relevant to IB students and is not examined in the OCR specification.

Rhythm

The first movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 is characterised by a strong sense of momentum, partly generated by the almost continuous quaver movement and large numbers of semiquavers. The sense of momentum is also aided by the changing harmonic rhythm, the inexorability of the harmonic sequences, the sometimes abrupt changes of texture between solo and tutti groups and the constant swapping of melodic material between different parts.

Other points of interest include:

- New phrases often begin on an upbeat, allowing the music to pass seamlessly from the end of one phrase into the start of another (eg the upbeat to bar 9).
- The ends of phrases are often extended into the start of the next one with a 'tail' such as a downward scale (eg oboe and recorder at bar 8 beat 4).
- Occasional interruptions of quaver movement in the bassline create additional rhythmic interest (eg bar 61 beats 1–2, bar 83 beat 4–85 beat 3, bars 92–3).
- Occasional syncopations help to create additional rhythmic excitement (eg bar 7, viola, bars 50–55, violin I).
- Occasional dotted rhythms (eg oboe bar 98).

This section is relevant to IB students and is not examined in the OCR specification.

Melody

Bach's use of melody in the Brandenburg Concertos, and in his works generally, is closely and inextricably linked with harmony. In order to be able to write the intricate counterpoint he favoured, his melodies had to be devised so that they could be combined easily with other melodic ideas. The natural way to do this was to have a very clear sequence of chords in mind when actually writing the melody. This would make it much easier to devise other contrapuntal parts that could use the same harmonic progression as a guide.

So melodies in the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 tend to be largely based on motifs that fit easily into a harmonic scheme, and tend to be based around

- scales (eg bar 4 beats 3–4, recorder; bar 55, recorder)
- scale fragments (eg bar 5, beat 4, recorder)
- arpeggios and broken chords (eg bars 1–2, trumpet)
- figures that outline a triad (eg bars 1–2, recorder)

- written-out ornaments such as turns, lower and upper auxiliary notes, trills, mordants (eg bar 3, beat 1, recorder is similar to an inverted turn; bar 25, violin II is similar to an inverted mordant)

Other melodic features of interest include:

- **Melodic sequences**, which often coincide with harmonic sequences (eg in bars 96–98, the recorder, solo violin, ripieno viola and violone parts are all sequential, descending a step each bar).
- Short motives and phrases are often extended through **repetition** (eg in bar 1, the recorder melody on beat 1 is repeated on beat 2, and beat 3 repeated on beat 4; the whole of this one-bar melody is repeated in bar 2).
- **Inversion** is sometimes used (eg recorder in bar 40 is an inversion of the solo violin line in the same bar).
- A limited amount of **chromaticism** appears (eg bar 72–74, the descending bass line).
- However, most of the melodic material is **diatonic**.

PERFORMANCE

Because they have been such an important part of the repertoire for hundreds of years, the Brandenburg Concertos have received countless interpretations and recordings. The best way to gain an insight into performance traditions is to compare different recordings, perhaps a modern performance on authentic instruments and a older performance on modern instruments, and if possible for students to try to explore the contrasting interpretations on their own instrument or sequenced performance.

In performance, pretty much every aspect of the music can be interpreted differently, so try to run through these as fully as you can:

TEMPO

- What is the metronome mark?
- Is it flexible? If so, where does it speed up and slow down?
- How long do pauses and silences last?
- How long are the gaps between movements?

PITCH

- Is it performed at Baroque pitch (roughly a semitone lower than present-day concert pitch) or concert pitch?

INSTRUMENTATION

- Which solo instruments are used?
- Which ripieno instruments are used, and how large is the ripieno?
- Which continuo instruments are used?

TYPES OF INSTRUMENTS

- Are period instruments used (eg natural trumpet instead of modern trumpet, violine instead of double bass, Baroque oboe instead of modern oboe)? How does this affect the sound?
- Are the string players using gut strings and Baroque bows? (This will produce a lighter sound than modern instruments.)

STYLE OF PLAYING

- Do the string players use open strings?
- Do string players use portamento (slides between notes)?
- Do string players use vibrato? If so, do they use it all the time or just in selected places?
- How do players use vibrato in long held notes?
- Does the harpsichord player spread chords? If so, when?

ORNAMENTATION

- Are any ornaments added to those in the score?
- How are trills played? Do they start on the upper or lower note, how fast are they, and do they speed up or slow down?

This section is of most relevance to OCR students and is optional for IB

PHRASING

- How is the music bowed/slurred/phrased? Are there differences from the score or between the recordings?

ARTICULATION

- How short are notes played: to their full value or separated?
- Are any particular notes stressed, eg the first quaver of a 3/8 bar, or the first quaver in each pair of quavers in a 3/4 movement?
- Are any particular notes 'thrown away', such as a short note that ends a phrase?
- How accented are syncopations and hemiolas?

DYNAMICS

- Where do dynamic changes occur? Do they differ from those in the score?

PITCH AND RHYTHM

- Are there any changes to notes in the score, for example passages being played at a different octave, solo parts being changed or extra embellishments added?
- Are there any rhythmic changes, eg *notes inégales* (short notes of equal value being played in a dotted way)?
- How thick or detailed is the figured bass realisation in the continuo?

SUMMARY

This resource should enable OCR and IB students to acquire a good understanding of:

- the background and original performance circumstances of the work.
- Bach's use of instrumental colour and instrumentation, especially his treatment of solo and ripieno instruments, and his constant swapping of material between instruments.
- the structure of the movement.
- the main harmonic features of the movement, particularly the use of sequences.
- the general tonal structure of the movement.

Additionally, IB students should have a good understanding of:

- the main thematic material of the movement, being able to identify motives when they are used.
- harmonic features used in the movement.
- melodic features of the movement.
- rhythmic features of the movement.

OCR students should also have gained confidence in identifying features to listen out for when comparing two different interpretations of the movement.

The resource should provide a useful exam preparation for OCR students, which can be enhanced with practice questions and practice in score-reading (eg reading alto clef, identifying musical symbols and markings).

IB students should gain a good insight into the structure and musical features of the movement as well as features of the musical style of Bach and of Baroque music in general. They will need to build on their knowledge of the work further by analysing movements two and three.