

Cadenzas, embellishment, and transitional fermatas in early Classical/rococo music - Presented by Dr. Kelly Nivison, NFA 2026

Two types of places to embellish: Fermatas and marked cadenzas

- The purpose of each is different.
 - Fermata found usually on a dominant seventh chord and embellishment would act as a transition usually (the *Eingänge*)
 - A cadenza is usually at the succession of a 6/4 and a 5/3 chord on the dominant just before the end of a piece or a solo. Performer is expected to compose something to entertain the audience, not necessarily utilizing melodies found in that movement
- According to Quantz, “The object of the cadenza is simply to surprise the listener unexpectedly at the end of the piece, and to leave behind a special impression in his heart.”
- Embellishment of fermatas was optional
 - “Koch [and Türk] regarded the embellishment of fermatas as optional, writing ‘In the performance of a solo part one has the freedom to decorate the sustained note of fermatas with arbitrary embellishments, or to make a transition from the fermata to the following phrase.’ And J.F. Schubert admitted a portamento alone as a substitute for the usual type of embellishment in certain cases.” Brown p 590-591
 - In French music, it could mean a *point d’arrêt ou de suspension* or *point de Repos* where one may pause there for as long as desired, but without introducing any embellishment or ornament.

Survey of Literature: written examples for flute of the time period

- Preludes and fantasias were used to introduce the key for the piece to follow
 - Hotteterre *L'art de préluder*, Op.7 (1719)
 - [https://imslp.org/wiki/L'art_de_pr%C3%A9luder%2C_Op.7_\(Hotteterre%2C_Jacques\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/L'art_de_pr%C3%A9luder%2C_Op.7_(Hotteterre%2C_Jacques))
 - Delusse composed preludes in his flute treatise, later published as caprices
 - These were meant to show the true technique of a player
 - Hotteterre writes that caprices are “suitable for exercising the embouchure and fingers” and that “they can be used at the end of concertos for the flute.”
 - Delusse marks in his caprices the section that can be used for a cadenza: he used a cross symbol to mark the place in the flute part where the bass can begin its dominant pedal point, as was customary in the French concertos of this period, before finally moving to the tonic at the end of the caprice/cadenza
- Tartini *Traité des agréments de la musique* (1770) - in his treatise on ornamentation in music he writes of basic rules for cadenzas and provides several examples at the end of suitable compositions. Cadenzas should be like short caprices

What the treatise writers state

- C.P.E. Bach in *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (*An Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*) (1759) writes:
 - “Fermata over rests occur most frequently in allegro movements and are not embellished. The two other kinds are usually found in slow, affettuoso movements and must be embellished if only to avoid artlessness. In any event, elaborate decoration is more necessary here than in other parts of movements. ... All of the examples require a slow or at most a moderate tempo. Since such elaborations must be related to the affect of a movement, they can be successfully employed only

- when close attention is paid to a composition's expressive aim. Other similar cases can be surmised through the figured bass signatures." Versuch, i. II, 9, 4-5
- Daniel Gottlob Türk in *Klavierschule* (1789);
 - Each embellishment must be appropriate to the character of the piece (He warned against lively passages in a sad adagio)
 - The embellishment ought, strictly speaking, only to be based on the given harmony (He conceded that 'in general one is not so exact about following this second rule. But one takes care to avoid actual modulations into other keys.'
 - The embellishment ought not to be long; however one is unrestricted in respect to the beat.
 - Dominico Corri in *Select Collection of the most admired songs...* stated that in vocal arias, embellished fermatas should not exceed what is possible in a single breath.
 - Joachim Quantz, *Versuch*, Berlin (1752)
 - Regular Time is seldom to be observ'd in Cadences ... Those for Voice or Wind Instruments ought to be short and so managed that they may be perform'd in one Breath, but those for String Instruments are not limited, but the Performer has as much Latitude given him, as his own Skill and fruitfulness of Invention will permit, but notwithstanding will gain more Applause from the Judicious by a moderate length than otherwise. ...If it is easy to invent cadences in two parts and write them down; it is nevertheless very hard to make them on the spot without having agreed beforehand. However if the advantages offered by imitation and the practice of dissonance are familiar, these difficulties can be overcome.'

Cautions against playing long cadenzas from the time period showing the variety of lengths in the time period and the general attitude toward them

- William Jackson, *Observations on the Present State of Music in London*, London, 1791, p 20-23
 - "The Performer, no doubt, ought to be able to run from the bottom to the top of the keys in semitones but let him be satisfied with having the power, without exerting it ... Cadences with, for ever, a concluding shake [trill] – though sometimes it seems as if it would *never* conclude ..."
- Dr. Burney, *Commemoration of Handel*, London, 1785:
 - "One night, while Handel was [at the harpsichord] in Dublin, Dubourg having a solo [violin] part in a song, and a close to make *ad libitum*, he wandered about in different keys a great while, and seemed indeed a little bewildered, and uncertain of his original key; but at length, coming to the shake [trill] which was to terminate this long close, Handel, to the great delight of the audience, and augmentation of the applause, cried out, loud enough to be heard in the most remote parts of the theatre, "You are welcome home, Mr. Dubourg".'
- DANIEL GOTTLÖB TÜRK, *Clavierschule* (1789), as quoted in JOSEPH P. SWAIN, "Form and Function of the Classical Cadenza," *The Journal of Musicology* 6.1 (1988): 33:
 - "I would say nothing new, but only repeat often heard complaints, if I spoke against the very great abuse of the embellished cadenzas. For it is not seldom that a concerto seems to be played solely for the sake of the cadenzas. The performer struggles not only to achieve pointless length, but also introduces all sorts of ideas that have not the slightest relation with the preceding composition, so that the good impression which the piece has perhaps made upon the listener for the most part has been "cadenza-ed away."

Mozart cadenzas:

- EVA and PAUL BADURA-SKODA, *Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard*, tr. Leo Black (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), 215-216.
 - In almost all Mozart's major cadenzas one can make out a clear division into three; an 'opening' (I), which begins either with one of the themes of the concerto or with virtuoso passage-work.....a middle section (II), which is almost always a sequential development of some important theme or motive from the concerto movement.....This is the starting point for a number of virtuoso runs, arpeggios, etc., which lead to a closing section (III) of the cadenza, usually ending on a trill.

- “Mozart’s Transformation of the Cadenza in the First Movements of his Piano Concertos” by Vincent C.K. Cheung
 - https://web.mit.edu/ckcheung/www/MusicalWritings_files/MozartCadenza_web_19971031.pdf
 - Mozart’s cadenzas tend to start with repeated thematic material that was immediately heard before the cadenza, and stays within the I 6/4 chord harmony. This “bridges the gap” of the fermata and ensures a more seamless integration of the cadenza with the rest of the movement.
 - Cadenzas in Mozart’s time were often out of proportion with the movement – meaning the cadenza was longer than the rest of the movement. Mozart’s own written cadenzas were only 10% or less of the total length of the movement

TABLE 4-1. The duration of the different sections of the first movements with authentic cadenzas available.

Concerto Movement	Total duration (s)	Orch. Exp. (s)	Solo Exp. (s)	Cent. Ritor (s)	Dev.+ Recap (s)	Clos. Ritor (1st half) (s)	Cadenza (s)	Clos. Ritor. (2nd half) (s)	Pf. only (%)	Orch. only (%)	Pf. + Orch. (%)
K. 413 /i	524	74	132	11	223	18	45	21	8.9	23.6	67.8
K. 414 /i	627	118	145	13	248	15	71	17	11.3	26.0	62.7
K. 415 /i	592	100	146	20	223	22	56	25	9.5	28.2	62.4
K. 449 /i	513	115	103	18	174	15	60	28	11.7	34.3	54.0
K. 450 /i	666	110	146	31	241	21	86	31	12.9	29.0	58.1
K. 451 /i	644	132	163	31	211	19	70	18	10.9	31.0	58.1
K. 453 /i	685	130	165	24	232	17	76	41	11.1	31.0	58.0
K. 456 /i	679	120	168	31	239	21	70	30	10.3	29.8	59.9
K. 459 /i	762	122	198	36	280	24	67	35	8.8	28.4	62.7
K. 488 /i	699	131	136	25	268	29	77	33	11.0	31.2	57.8
K. 595 /i	794	154	177	30	301	11	96	25	12.1	27.7	60.1

- A comparison for the above table
 - Mozart G major concerto first movement has 219 measures
 - 10% would be the maximum length for keyboard; Needs to be significantly less than 21 measures
 - Mozart D major concerto first movement has 188 measures
 - 10% of this is 19 measures, so a flute cadenza would need to be significantly less than 19 measures.
- Farrell, Natalie. "Facing the fermata: recreating the classical cadenza in modern performances of Mozart's flute concerti." *Flutist Quarterly*, 2016, p. 34+. Accessed 17 June 2020
 - “Modern flutists (or editors) instead construct their own cadenzas speculatively, often influenced by more contemporary concepts of the cadenza. Consequently, modern performers insert what musicologists Paul and Eva Badura-Skoda describe as a "tumor in an otherwise healthy organism"--an anachronistic cadenza that undermines the stylistic continuity of the pieces.”

Great! So now how do I actually write one?

- General Guidelines
 - The earlier the composer, the shorter the cadenza. Similarly, the later the composer (closer to the Romantic Era), the longer and more elaborate the cadenza.
 - Classical Era concertos: Start with thematic material from the movement and quickly shift to something new

- Use key areas closely related to where you need to cadence. You can use the major, relative minor, parallel minor, and dominant. The dominant can briefly be tonicized with a secondary dominant if desired.
- Use a variety of melodic ideas, textures/affects, and tessitura. Try to stay within the tessitura of the piece (no high A's or C's for instance)
- Write it out metered, but be very flexible with tempo, dynamics, and articulations. The meter can also change!
- If you are playing a multi-movement work, and each movement has a cadenza – usually the first movement will have the longest cadenza
- Keep your cadenza in the affect of the movement (slow movement cadenzas should stay slower and lyrical)
- Most written out cadenzas flutists have for the Mozart concertos are in a Romantic and/or Modern style and are not appropriate.
 - Anything written by Rachel Brown is a great starting point
- Mozart 1st movements and similar
 - Keep the length anywhere from 2-4 lines.
 - Mozart's keyboard cadenzas were roughly 8-10% of the total length of the piece and keyboard/violin cadenzas should be much longer than woodwind cadenzas. They considered breathing to halt momentum, so limit the amount of times you will need to breathe.
- Mozart *Eingänge* and other transitional fermata embellishments
 - These are much shorter than regular cadenzas and stem from what vocalists did at the fermata before repeating a Da Capo aria.
 - You should not use thematic material from the movement
 - Length should be what can be played roughly in one breath, or with only a breath shortly before cadencing
- Handel b minor sonata and similar
 - Alla breve movement ends with the last 5 measures written distinctly different from the preceding movement.
 - If it only had the fermata on the A# and then cadenced, then the performer could choose to play a short transitional embellishment. But Handel wrote more beyond that
 - No embellishment of the measure with the rest
 - The very long note values in the last three measures imply that the performer should embellish here. This embellishment also implies that the performer should not also embellish the fermata, or only play a small ornamentation here. This fermata on the A# is likely a *point d'arrêt ou de suspension* or *point de Repo*
 - The unmeasured prelude or fantasie that could sometimes start pieces and bridge movements was falling out of fashion by this time period. These three measures were likely Handel's way of inserting a short one in this sonata.

This information is only the starting point! I encourage you to read the period treatises and know what musicians of the time were saying about this practice to fully understand how to compose cadenzas for various composers. These rules are not “one size fits all.”

Happy Composing!

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