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## Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, op. 42



Title	Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, op. 42
Time of origin	1942
Premiere	6 February 1944, New York, NBC Orchestra's Radio City Habitat
Duration	ca. 20 min.

Schönberg's Piano Concerto, op. 42, originally commissioned by his former student Oscar Levant, is in one movement, but conceived in four parts with the traditional formal sections of the multi-movement sonata form, as Schönberg explained in the underlying program notes. The opening melody of the Concerto, lasting thirty-nine bars, presents the four modes of the twelve-tone tone row in the following order: basic set, inversion of retrograde, retrograde, and inversion; the two inversions are transposed. "The listener need not be aware of this. The unifying effect of the musical material in a composition is, after all, more often hidden than obvious, whether in Schönberg or Beethoven." (Alfred Brendel) On the autograph score, Schönberg noted that the concerto was composed between 5 July and 29 December 1942; but the earliest surviving sketch is dated 27 June 1942. The musical portion of this sketch consists of nearly four measures for piano solo, equivalent in melodic and rhythmic contour to the final version of measures 1-4, but employs a different twelve-tone row. The opening pages of the sketches that follow contain three different versions of the main theme that use three different tone rows but retain the rhythmic structure. Another sketch uses the final form of the row, suggesting that it was written after the sketch of 27 June. The manuscript includes the four parts of the program (which – according to Schönberg scholarship – is clearly autobiographical), each accompanied by a musical example from one of the four sections of the concerto. The first statement of the program "Life was so easy," is illustrated on this sketch only by a schematic presentation of the row. The second statement, "Suddenly hatred broke out," at the top of the left corner of the page, is matched by a close approximation of the musical material that begins the second section of the concerto, although it appears there in a different transposition. The third section of the program ("A grave situation was created") introduces three sketches which refer to the third part of the concerto, here in a version which differs greatly from the final version. The fourth track ("But life goes on") is illustrated by an identical melodic quotation from the last section of the concerto and is followed by further sketches of motifs from the finale.

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