

Basic Factors in Form

- Time
- Repetition and contrast
- Tension and relaxation

Form in Art



Time

- Unlike many other art forms, we can only experience music in time
- As we listen in time, we must make use of our musical memory to compare what we hear with what has happened before
- In order to understand musical form, we must be able to answer the questions "Have I heard this before?" and "How is this different than that?"

Rhythm

- Rhythm is when things happen in music: "the organization of sound in time"
- The most basic element of music (there can be no music without rhythm)
- When we talk about rhythm, we usually mean the changing surface durations which contrast with a more steady meter

Meter

- At the simplest level we have a recurring pulse or *beat*
- Above this level, we have patterns of strong and weak beats, creating *meter*
- At levels higher than the notated measure, we might hear longer patterns of *hypermeter* (strong and weak measures)
- Metric patterns create unity, while surface rhythms create variety

Repetition and Contrast

- The principle of repetition is that we enjoy hearing things come back again
- The principle of contrast is that we tire of hearing the same thing repetitively
- Repetition creates formal unity; contrast creates variety
- Composers strive to create an interesting balance between unity and variety

Nutcracker Themes

Theme 1 (Horn theme)



Theme 2 (string / bassoon theme)



Other Kinds of Rhythm

- Besides the durations of the notes on the surface, there are other kinds of rhythms
- Harmonic rhythm
- Rhythms of texture or timbre changes
- Rhythms of form
- Any parameter can have its own rhythm

Types of musical tension

- Harmonic tension: moving towards harmonic goals, with the arrival providing harmonic resolution
- Tonal tension: moving away from the home key to distant keys (and back)
- Increased harmonic activity
- Increased dynamic intensity
- Increased rhythmic activity
- Increased textural density

Articulation of formal units

- How can we find the beginnings and endings of musical events?
 - Pauses (rests and longer notes)
 - Cadences (harmonic goals)
 - Half (ends on V) HC
 - Perfect / imperfect (ends V-I) PAC/IAC
 - Deceptive (ends V-vi) DC
 - Plagal (ends IV-I) PC
 - Parametric change

Summary

- The study of form is the study of when events happen in time and how these events relate to one another
- Harmony and tonality establish a framework for the unfolding of musical form, filled in expressively by melody
- The processes of tension and relaxation in different parameters create the illusion of forward motion through time