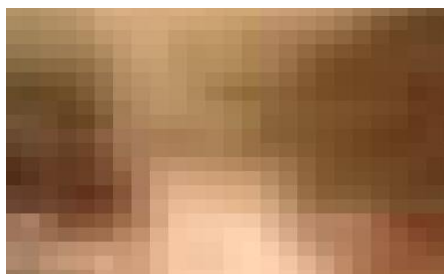


Binary and Ternary Form

Broadening our Focus



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Parts and the Whole

- We will now let our focus zoom out from phrases and periods of music to the different sections or *parts* of music, and how these parts form a whole
- The different parts of a piece of music are often articulated by important harmonic arrivals, by major cadences, and often by pauses

Binary and Ternary

- If a piece of music has two main parts in it (A and B) it has a *binary* form
- If a piece of music has three main parts in it (A B A) it has a *ternary* form
- (Although ternary could also describe ABC, music is usually organized around the principles of recurrence and *repetition*, with the return of A in ternary being musically significant)

One-Part Form

- Although binary and ternary are the most frequently-encountered musical forms, other types of organization are also possible, such as *one-part form*
- A piece in one-part form is very brief, often just a period, such as a Chopin Prelude

Binary Form

- Binary form (A B) is particularly common in music of the Baroque period
- Baroque dances such as the Allemande, the Courante, the Sarabande, and the Gigue always have two parts
- Double bars and repeat signs are often used in such pieces (“*two-reprise binary*”), making it easy to locate the beginnings and endings of the two parts

Characteristics of Binary

- The two parts do not need to be the same length (*unbalanced binary*)
- The two parts may be highly contrasting in style or they may be based on similar materials
- The first part may be harmonically complete with an authentic cadence in the home key (*sectional* or *closed*) or it may be incomplete (*continuous* or *open*)

Rounded Binary

- If a portion of the A section returns at the end of the B section, we call it a *rounded binary* form
 - Sometimes described as (A B ½ A)
- To be considered rounded binary rather than ternary (ABA) form, the portion of the A section that comes back should not sound like a complete return of A, and should never be repeated in its entirety

Ternary Form

- Ternary Form (or ABA form) is one of the most common forms in music
- It conveys contrast or variety (A to B) and return, creating unity (A ... A)
- Unlike rounded binary, the return of A sounds complete (it may be an exact or varied repetition of A)
- The B section may have a contrasting character and is often in a different key

Simple and Composite Forms

- *Simple* binary and ternary forms can be used as internal sections of larger-scale *composite* forms
- For example, a composite ternary form might have three separate sections (ABA) whose internal construction is also ABA:

A [ABA] B [ABA] A [ABA]