Rondo Form

The Classical Rondo

▸ The classical rondo features a recurring refrain called the *rondo theme* (or the *principal theme*), separated by digressions called *episodes*

▸ The classical rondo is a light and spritely type of piece with a tuneful and easily recognizable rondo theme

▸ It is often found as the final movement in symphonies, sonatas, string quartets and concertos

The Rondo Theme

▸ The rondo theme is always stated in the tonic key whenever it returns

▸ The phrase structure of the rondo theme is usually quite clear, with regular phrase lengths forming a harmonically closed period

▸ Sometimes when the rondo theme is repeated, it is varied slightly—this is done to prevent monotony

▸ Often, the rondo theme is shortened when it returns

The Episodes

▸ The episodes usually contrast with the rondo theme, although they may use similar motives

▸ The episodes are often in closely related keys—for example, the first episode tends to be in the dominant key or the relative major

▸ The episodes may either be *thematic* (presenting their own contrasting themes) or *developmental* (developing motives from the rondo theme in several keys)

▸ The main parts of the rondo are sometimes connected by short *transitions* and the rondo as a whole is often followed by a *coda*

Five- and Seven-Part Rondos

▸ The most common rondo types are *five-part* (A B A C A) or (A B A B' A) and *seven-part* (A B A C A B' A)—with A representing the recurring rondo theme

▸ Five-Part Rondo:

Rondo	Episode I	Rondo	Episode II	Rondo	(Coda)
A	B	A	B' or C	A	
I / i	V / III	I / i	related key	I / i	

▸ Seven-Part Rondo:

Rondo	Episode I	Rondo	Episode II	Rondo	Episode III	Rondo	(Coda)
A	B	A	C	A	B' or D	A	
I / i	V / III	I / i	related key	I / i	I / i	I / i	

Sonata-Rondo Form

▸ Sonata-Rondo form is an interesting combination of sonata form and rondo form

▸ It is essentially a seven-part rondo in which the second episode is a development section

▸ It can also be thought of as a sonata form with a reprise of the principal theme before the development section (in place of the closing theme) and at the end of the recapitulation (in the coda)

Exposition			Development	Recapitulation		
Rondo	Episode I	Rondo	Episode II	Rondo	Episode III	(Coda)
I	V	I	related key	I	I	I
primary	secondary	?		(all in tonic)		