

The Phrase

Part Three: Motivic Structure

Motive

- A *motive* is a very small unit (a brief musical idea) that is repeated (and often varied) within a phrase or composition
- It can be a rhythmic motive or a melodic motive or both
- Motives create unity within a composition
- Motives are recognizable even when they are varied or *transformed*

Motivic Transformations

- Repetition
- Transposition
 - Real (exact transposition)
 - Tonal (intervals not exact—the motive is kept within the current key signature)
- Sequence (a series of transpositions)
- Imitation (echoed in another voice)
- Intervallic expansion and contraction

Motivic Transformations

- Inversion (upside-down / “mirrored”)
- Retrograde (backwards)
- Retrograde Inversion (backwards *and* upside-down)
- Rhythmic motive only (pitch varies)
- Fragmentation
- Addition
- Deletion

Motivic Transformations

- Augmentation (twice as long)
- Diminution (twice as short)
- Extension (similar to phrase extension)