

Two-Part (Binary) Form

TOPICS

Formal Divisions	Simple Forms	Compound Forms
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Open Formal Divisions	Binary Form	

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

Form in music is the result of the interaction of all the structural elements. You are already familiar with the smaller elements of form—phrases and periods—but in this chapter we will begin to consider the organization of complete compositions.

Formal Divisions

A piece of music can generally be divided into two or more major sections, and the boundaries between these sections are called *formal divisions*. Formal divisions are the result of strong harmonic and melodic cadences and rhythmic factors, such as rests, fermatas, longer note values and so on. The formal divisions define the sections of a composition, and these sections are labeled with capital letters: A, B, C, etc. If a section of music is repeated, the same letter is used: A, A, B, B, etc., and if it contains similar material, this is designated by adding primes to the previous letter: A, A', A'', etc.

Open versus Closed Formal Divisions

A section is designated as *closed* if it cadences on the tonic of the composition (the original tonic) and *open* if it cadences elsewhere. Open formal divisions commonly conclude with half cadences, or they may modulate to related keys, which requires a following section or sections to complete the tonal direction.

Simple versus Compound Forms

Smaller compositions are generally in one of the two *simple forms*: two-part (binary) form or three-part (ternary) form. Larger works are generally in *compound form* in which the sections may themselves be complete binary or ternary forms. In volume 1, we will concentrate on the simple forms, reserving our treatment of compound forms for volume 2.

Two-Part Form

Two-part form, also called *binary form*, consists of two main sections. In many binary forms the first section is open, concluding with a half cadence or moving to a related key, whereas the second section, which is often longer than the first section, concludes with a perfect authentic cadence on the tonic. The antecedent–consequent period is a microcosm of the typical binary form.

Figure 16.1

Similar material in both parts:

Part I: A

Begins in D major (I) Cadence in A major (V) (I)

Part II: A'

Begins in A major (I) Returns to D major Cadence in D major (V) (I)

The two sections of a binary form are often repeated, as Figure 16.2 illustrates. Notice the open form of this example.

Figure 16.2

Bach: Menuet II from Partita no. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825.

A Phrase a

1 2 3 4 5

B \flat : I IV_4^6 V^7/IV IV vii^{o6} I V^7 I

Phrase a'

B Phrase b

6 7 8 9 10

IV_4^6 V^7/IV IV vii^{o6} I V V I ii_2^4

Phrase c

D^7 g D^7 g E^b B^b7 E^b F^7 B^b F^7 B^b
 $g: V^7$ i V^7 i $B^b: IV^6$ V^4_3/IV IV V^4_2 I^6 V^7 I

Analysis of Menuet II from Partita no. 1 by Bach

Formal division:	A		B
Phrase:	a	a'	b c
Measure:	1	5	9 13
Key:	B \flat :		g: B \flat :
Cadence:	Half	Half	Perf. Auth. Perf. Auth.

Figure 16.3 is an example of a binary form without repeated sections in which both sections are closed. The material of the second section is quite contrasting with the material of the first section.

Figure 16.3

Folk Song: "Londonderry Air."

Analysis of “Londonderry Air”

Formal division:	A		B
Phrase:	a	a'	b c
Measure:	1	5	9 13
Key:	E \flat :		
Cadence:	Half	Perf. Auth.	Half Perf. Auth.

A type of two-part form very popular in the baroque and classical periods consists of motivic material common to both the A and the B sections. Figure 16.4 typifies this treatment in the classical period. It is essentially in homophonic texture (a single melody line with supporting accompaniment).

Figure 16.4

Haydn: Sonata in A Major, Hob. XVI:5, II: Menuet.

The figure displays a musical score for the Minuet in A Major, Hob. XVI:5, II. The score is in 3/4 time and A major. It is divided into two main sections, A and B. Section A (measures 1-6) contains Phrase a (measures 1-4) and Phrase b (measures 5-6). Section B (measures 7-12) contains Phrase a' (measures 9-12). Motive X is identified in measures 1-4 of Section A and measures 9-10 of Section B. Motive Y is identified in measures 7-8 of Section B and measures 11-12 of Section B. The harmonic analysis below the score shows the following chords:

Section A:

- Measure 1: A (I)
- Measure 2: D (IV⁶₄)
- Measure 3: A (I)
- Measure 4: D (IV)
- Measure 5: (A) g#° (I⁶₄)
- Measure 6: A (I) D (IV)

Section B:

- Measure 7: E⁷ (V⁷)
- Measure 8: A (I) (A) E (I⁶₄) V
- Measure 9: A (I)
- Measure 10: D (IV)
- Measure 11: E⁷ (V⁷)
- Measure 12: A (I) (A) E (I⁶₄) V

Phrase a'

Musical score for Phrase a' (measures 4-7). The score is in G minor. Measure 4 contains a half note G in the bass clef. Measure 5 contains a half note A in the bass clef. Measure 6 contains a half note B-flat in the bass clef. Measure 7 contains a half note C in the bass clef. A dashed line labeled 'Motive X' spans measures 5 and 6. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The bass clef contains a bass line with quarter notes.

g
i

a° D Eb a° F g F⁷

ii^{o6} V VI Bb: [ii^{o6} vii^{o6} V vi V⁷

B

Phrase b

Musical score for Phrase b (measures 8a, 8b, 9, 10). Measures 8a and 8b are repeated. Measure 9 contains a half note B-flat in the bass clef. Measure 10 contains a half note C in the bass clef. A dashed line labeled 'Motive X' spans measures 9 and 10. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The bass clef contains a bass line with quarter notes.

Bb Bb Bb Eb c⁷ Bb g

I I I IV ii⁷ I vi

Phrase b (continued)

Musical score for Phrase b (continued) (measures 11-14). Measure 11 contains a half note C in the bass clef. Measure 12 contains a half note F in the bass clef. Measure 13 contains a half note G in the bass clef. Measure 14 contains a half note A in the bass clef. A dashed line labeled 'Sequence A, Segment 1' spans measures 11 and 12. A dashed line labeled 'Sequence A, Segment 2' spans measures 13 and 14. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The bass clef contains a bass line with quarter notes.

C⁷ F e° A⁷ d

V⁷/V d: [III ii^{o6} V⁷ i

Phrase b'

Musical score for Phrase b' (measures 15-18). Measure 15 contains a half note A in the bass clef. Measure 16 contains a half note D in the bass clef. Measure 17 contains a half note G in the bass clef. Measure 18 contains a half note A in the bass clef. A dashed line labeled 'Secondary Sequence' spans measures 17 and 18. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The bass clef contains a bass line with quarter notes.

A d g A⁷ d g⁷

V i iv V⁷ i iv⁷

Phrase c

Derived from Motive X

g: vii^{°7}/iv c iv₄⁶ i f#^{°7} vii^{°7}

Phrase c (continued)

Secondary Sequence

i D⁷ g D⁷ g f#^{°7} g D g

i V₅⁶ i V⁷ i⁶ vii^{°7} i V i

Phrase d

Sequence B, Segment 1 Sequence B, Segment 2

G⁷ c iv C⁷ F f#[°]

V₂⁴/iv iv⁶ iv V₂⁴/VII VII⁶ vii^{°6}

Phrase d (continued)

Sequence B, Segment 3 (incomplete)

D e^{°7} D⁷ g c (g) D g

V⁶ vi^{°7} V⁷ i iv (i₄⁶) V i

Analysis of Gavotte I from English Suite no. 3 by Bach

Formal division:	A		B			
Phrase:	a	a'	b	b'	c	d
Measure:	1	5	9	15	19	27
Key:	g:	to Bb:	to d:		to g:	
Cadence:	Imp. Auth.	Perf. Auth.	Perf. Auth.	Perf. Auth.	Half	Perf. Auth.

Notice that the first section of the Bach Gavotte is in the usual open form. Either motive X or derivatives of it appear frequently in part A and in part B. This is a compelling force for unification of the two parts and ensures organization in the composition. The motive appears only once in the lower voice (in measures 14–16). The lower voice, for the most part, simply provides supporting counterpoint for the upper voice, which contributes most of the melodic interest.

Two important sequences occur, one in measures 10–14 (sequence A) and the other in measures 27–33 (sequence B). Secondary sequences (sequences of less structural significance) are also found in measures 17 and 25.

The cadences in measures 4 and 26 are considered weak because the melodic line has only a brief pause at those moments and immediately continues to the next phrase.

History

The forerunner of binary two-part form was a structure from the medieval period known as *bar form*. This is a name given to a song form used by the Minnesingers (aristocratic poet–musicians from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries) and Meistersingers (middle-class poet–musicians from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries). Bar form consists of an A part (called *Stollen*) that is repeated and a B part (*Abgesang*) that is not repeated. As bar form developed, the B part began to contain either a section or all of the A part and thus has a rounded binary character (see Chapter 17). Figure 16.6 is an example of the *canzo*, which resembles the bar form. The composition shown in Figure 16.6 was written toward the end of the twelfth century and may have been performed as an unaccompanied solo song.

Figure 16.6

Ventadorn: “Be m’an perdut” (“Indeed All My Friends”), mm. 1–13.

Part A (*Stollen*)

Be m'an per dut lay en - ves Ven - ta - dorn Tuih mei a -
 Non ay ra - zon que ieu ia mays lai torn Tant es vas

mic pos ma do - na no m'a - ma.
 mi bra - va e nos re - cla - ma.

Part B (*Abgesang*)

Musical notation for Part B (Abgesang) in 8/8 time. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are: Tot iorn me fai sem - blan i - rat e morn Car en s'a - mor mi de - lieg

Repetition of the last section of Part A

Musical notation for the repetition of the last section of Part A in 8/8 time. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are: em so - jorn E de res als nos ran - cu - ra nis cla - ma.

The bar form continued into the Renaissance, although its use was not extensive. The two-part concept found its way into a variety of compositions of this period, among them the German part song and the German lied.

It was during the baroque period that the use of two-part form became most extensive. Suite movements of extended length (allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue, minuet, bourree, gavotte, etc.) were written using this construction, and only the basic elements of the older bar form remained.

The classical period, especially the early part, saw considerable use of the two-part form. From the concise shape of the baroque suite movements, the classical composers began to evolve embryonic development sections at the beginning of the second section, the theme (or themes) from the first section were repeated at the end of the second section in the original key, and the result was the sonata form (see volume 2).

The use of the binary form continued through the romantic period, although in greatly diminished numbers. Much greater freedom was taken in adapting the construction to nineteenth-century musical thought. Examples of binary form can be found in the works of Schubert, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Bizet, and Schumann.

Although examples of binary form can be found during the post-romantic and impressionistic period, it was not an essential element in this era. This is also true of later style periods. Although works by Bartók, Villa-Lobos, Britten, and other composers, employ two-part form, the binary form is not a common practice of contemporary composers. Two-part forms are seldom found in jazz and popular music.