

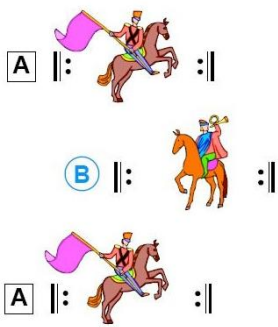


Form and Structure in Music

5 MINUTES READING #1

“In writing music, the structure of each piece is a very important factor”

- Leo Orstein



Questions to think about:

1. Why does music need to be organised?
2. What would music which wasn't organised sound like?
3. Think of a piece of music that you know really well – it could be a song you know by memory or off by heart. Think about how the entire piece is formed of different sections – these may be verses or choruses and try writing out or drawing a simple image to illustrate the form and structure of your chosen song or piece.

When a composer is writing a piece of music, they must plan their work every bit as carefully as an architect designing a building. In each case, the finished work must have continuity, balance and shape – or **form**. But whereas architecture is concerned with a balance in space, music is a balance in time. In music, we use the **form** to describe the way in which a composer achieves this balance by arranging and setting in order their musical ideas – the way in which they design and build up the music.

We can think of the form of a piece of music as being the overall structure of the piece. But the composer must add to their basic structure with interesting detail and to do this, they use a variety of musical materials.

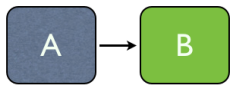
Even in a fairly short piece of music, a composer rarely finds that one musical idea is enough. But too many ideas, following each other in a haphazard fashion, would make the music appear disorganised and without purpose – to lack **form** and **structure**. So, they must aim at a careful balance between the two basic ingredients of all musical **forms** and **structures**: repetition and contrast.

Repetition and Contrast

Some repetition and contrast of musical ideas is necessary in order to bind the music together – to bring unity to the piece. Some melodies may be heard twice, or even more, during a piece. Think of these as ‘musical landmarks’ to help you find your way around the music.

It is also very important, however, for the composer to introduce new and contrasting ideas, so that the music has variety and interest and doesn't become boring! Composers can do this in several ways. The most likely is that they will bring in a new tune or melody. But there are other ways of making musical contrasts including a change of key (major to minor or minor to major), rhythm, tempo, dynamics, mood, texture, timbre/sonority and duration. A composer may only use one of these at a time, or they may use several, depending upon how striking a contrast they wish it to be.





Binary Form

5 MINUTES READING #2

“Music’s exclusive function is to structure the flow of time and keep order in it.”

- Igor Stravinsky



Questions to think about:

1. Can you think of any pieces of music that you know that are structure in Binary Form with two different sections?
2. If you were to design a poster to illustrate Binary Form to show to a Year 6 student, what would be the best way to visually describe this?
3. Look at the music to the right which is in Binary Form. How does the length of the A section compare to the length of the B section? What other features of Binary Form can you identify in this music?

Music which is structured in **Binary Form** is divided into two sections and often described by the letters **AB**. However, **AB** is slightly misleading because it suggests that the form is built on contrast (A versus B), but there is usually a lot of similarity and repetition of elements between the first and section sections. Binary Form is a flexible way of arranging musical material – it is the most common pattern for movements based on dance rhythms in the Baroque period (roughly 1600-1750) and is found in other types and styles of music too.

Music in Binary Form has a clear division into two parts, usually marked with a double bar line and each part is usually repeated shown by repeat markings/symbols.

There is a continuity rather than contrast in the musical material throughout the piece – a similar rhythm is found throughout, musical motifs are often repeated and varied through the whole piece and overall there is a single ‘mood’ or ‘tone’ that defines the piece.

The harmony usually outlines a progression from chord I to chord V and back to chord I across the whole piece. Binary form outlines a kind of ‘journey’, from the opening chord I to the middle of the piece (double bar), and then back again to the chord I at the end. Because the second half has this ‘journeying back’ function, is it sometimes longer than the first half. The combination of simplicity with powerful effect in this ‘journey and return’ metaphor may go some way to explaining why Binary Form became so popular over a long period.

Sonata Opus 1 No.7
G.F.Handel



Ternary Form

5 MINUTES READING #3

“If you look at music, you see theme, variations, you see symmetry, asymmetry, you see structure and these are related to the skills in the real world.”

- Dave Van Ronk



TERNARY FORM

Questions to think about:

1. The **B** section in a piece of music in Ternary Form provides some “musical contrast”. Think about the Elements of Music and what you could change in the music in the **B** section to achieve some musical contrast. Pitch is one – there are many other ways!
2. The song “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” is in Ternary Form. Write the words out and label the three different sections.

A piece of music in **TERNARY FORM** divides into three sections **ABA** – making a kind of ‘musical sandwich’.

A Statement	B Contrast (an episode)	A Repetition
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The **A** sections use the same music. **B** presents a contrast in some way – the filling in the sandwich! We call **B** an ‘episode’, meaning a section which contrasts with the music heard before and after it, and which usually appears once only.

When the **A** section returns at the end again, it may be exactly the same as when it was first heard, or the composer may decide to change it in some way to add more interest. But it will always be recognizable as a return of section **A** after contrast of music in section **B**.

If the final **A** section is an exact repeat of the music heard in section **A** at the beginning of the piece, then there is really no need for the composer to write out the music of **A** all over again. So you may find at the end of section **B** the Italian words *da capo*. This means ‘repeat again from the beginning’ and you must then look for the word *fine*, meaning ‘end here when the music is repeated’. What the composer is simply saying is ‘after **B**, play **A** again’, so in a ternary form piece printed in this way the design is quite clear – *da capo* will be found at the end of **B**, and *fine* will mark the end of section **A**. The origin of this is found in many arias from operas and oratorios written during the 18th century. As the final **A** section was often an exact repetition of the first **A** section, composers rarely bothered to write out the music of **A** again. Instead, then merely wrote *da capo* at the end of the **B** section. Arias written out this way are called ‘da capo arias’.

Points to remember about Ternary Form:

- The music divides into three sections **ABA**
- The **A** sections are recognizably the same music. **B** is a contrast.
- The final **A** section may be an exact repetition of the first **A** section, or it may be varied in some way.
- The final **A** section may be followed by a *coda* or ‘rounding-off’.
- The music may be printed in abbreviated *da capo* layout.



Rondo Form

5 MINUTES READING #4

“Songs have some kind of structure that connects with people’s hearts”

- Sir Paul McCartney



Questions to think about:

1. How many times do you think the main theme (A) could ‘keep coming around’ in a piece of music in Rondo Form before the listener would get bored? Is there an ‘ideal’ number of times?
2. Food and sandwiches (or biscuits shown above!) have often been used to depict Rondo Form. What other ways can you think of to visually depict the form and structure of Rondo Form?
3. The extract mentions a change in key as being one way of achieving musical contrast in the episodes. Can you think of any others?

In **RONDO FORM**, the main theme or melody (**A**) keeps ‘coming round’, with contrasting sections (**B, C, D** and so on) in between – like a ‘double decker’ musical sandwich.

These contrasting sections – the fillings in the sandwich – are called *episodes*. The main theme or melody (**A**) begins and ends in the tonic key each time; each episode can be in a different but related key. A plan for a simple rondo with two episodes looks like this:

A	B	A	C	A
Main Theme	1 st Episode (contrast)	Main Theme	2 nd Episode (another contrast)	Main Theme

Notice that in writing a rondo, the composer is using the two basic ingredients of music form and structure: **REPETITION** and **CONTRAST**. The repetitions of the main theme bind the music together and bring unity to the piece; the episodes present contrasts to hold the interest of the listener.

Some rondos have three, or even more, episodes. But there is a problem here – not that the composer will be unable to think up enough contrasting music for the episodes, but that by bringing round the main theme too many times they will risk boring the listener! There is a rondo by the 17th century French composer, Couperin, in which the main theme comes around nine times! So, to keep the music interesting, the main theme (**A**) may be shortened or varied in some way when it returns. In 17th century rondos, contrast between the sections may be slight, relying more upon changes of key than on introducing completely different tunes. Composers after the 17th century use bolder musical contrasts between the sections. Sometimes a *coda* may follow the final appearance of the main theme at the end (**A**) to ‘round the piece off’.

Points to remember about Rondo Form:

- The plan for rondo form is **A B A C A D A.....**etc.
- **A** begins and ends in the tonic key each time.
- Each episode (**B, C, D** and so on) is a contrast in a related key.
- When the main theme (**A**) reappears, it may be shortened or varied.
- The final appearance of **A** may be followed by a *coda*.



Musical Phrasing

5 MINUTES READING #5

“That’s what intrigues me; songwriting and song structure and expression”

- Geddy Lee

In music, a **PHRASE** is a unit of musical meter that has a complete musical sense of its own, built from figures, motifs and cells and combining to form melodies, periods and larger sections. Musical **PHRASING** gives the music **FORM AND STRUCTURE** – it divides longer sections of music into smaller ‘chunks’ or sections. Think of a paragraph in writing and how this is then divided into smaller sentences – a musical **PHRASE** is like a written or spoken sentence – complete in itself but part of a bigger whole.

Look at the following melody to “Row, row, row you boat”. You can see that the melody is divided into two musical **PHRASES** – phrase 1 (2 bars in length) and phrase 2 (also 2 bars in length).



Questions to think about:

1. The nursery rhyme “Row, row, row your boat” is shown as an example of a melody which is made up of two musical phrases. Can you think of any other nursery rhymes which have a 2-phrase structure?
2. Think about “Twinkle, twinkle, little star” – how many musical phrases does this have?
3. Think about the chorus of your favourite pop song. How would you describe the musical phrasing?

PHRASES in music are shown by long curved lines called **PHRASE MARKS**. Any notes within these phrase marks form a complete musical sentence and the performer plays these in a way in which a sentence is spoken, perhaps with a slight ‘break’ at the end of one phrase before starting the next – a bit like taking a breath when speaking between sentences. Look at the following musical example by Haydn. Here, his melody is based on two musical **PHRASES** shown by **PHRASE MARKS** above the notes.



A **4-BAR MUSICAL PHRASE** is very popular in music which is often ‘balanced’ or ‘answered’ by another 4-bar musical phrase which is called **BALANCED** or **REGULAR PHRASING**.



Treble Clef Pitch Notation

5 MINUTES READING #6

“Music is the divine way to tell beautiful, poetic things to the heart.”

- Pablo Casals



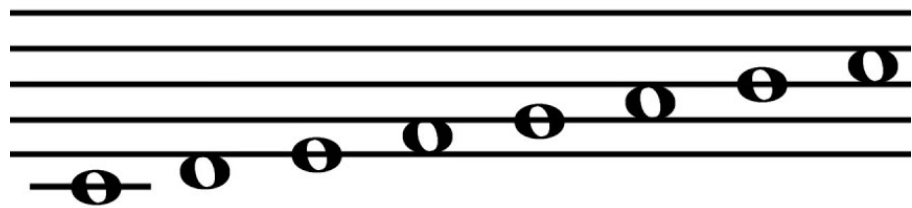
Questions to think about:

1. The notes in the spaces of the Treble Clef spell the word **FACE** as they rise. The notes on the lines of the Treble Clef are **E, G, B, D, F** – can you think of a catchy phrase which can help you remember them? (*Every, Green, Bus, Drives, Fast* is one example)
2. What would happen if we didn't write music down using notation? Can you think of any examples of music which aren't written down?

NOTATION means the way in which sounds can be expressed on paper. The monks of medieval times were the first to write down sounds and indicate their pitch by using horizontal lines. At first, a single line was used. Later, more were added, making a staff of perhaps four, five, six or even as many as eight lines.

Eventually, the five-line staff was agreed upon as being the most useful and the easiest to read. The different notes are placed on (*across*) the lines of the staff, or in the spaces between them. The higher a notes position on the staff, the higher its pitch.

To name the pitch of a note, the first seven letters of the alphabet are used: **A B C D E F G**. After **G**, we return again with **A**. Look at the image below:



It is clear that the sounds steadily rise in pitch. But no clue is given to the precise pitch of any of these notes. For this, a sign is needed at the beginning of the staff called a **CLEF** (meaning 'key'). A clef fixes the pitch of one of the five lines of the staff – and so gives the 'key', or clue to the other lines and spaces.

The **TREBLE CLEF** is used to show the pitch of notes lying above middle C. It is sometimes called the “**G**” clef and in fact was originally a decorative letter **G**. The treble clef fixes circles around the second line of the staff – fixing this line as the note **G**. The violin, trumpet, flute and other instruments of high pitch use the treble staff. This is what happens to the notes in the example above when a treble clef is placed in front of them.

