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Formal Units:

- Form in tonal music is organized hierarchically. This hierarchy begins with motives as the smallest structural elements and extends to entire movements or pieces. (One could even make the argument that the individual notes that make up a motive are the smallest unit in this hierarchy.)
- We discussed three of these formal units:
 - Motives (which can combine to make up...)
 - Phrases (which can combine to make up...)
 - Periods

Motive:

- Here are a few characteristics of a motive:
 - A motive is a melodic fragment.
 - It is short, memorable, and recurring.
 - It has distinctive rhythmic and melodic profiles.
- While all of these definitions are correct, they are missing something. The most important characteristic of a motive has to do with the idea of **development**. A motive has the potential for growth and encourages development over the course of the piece.
- Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is often cited as the ultimate example of realizing a single motive's potential. The opening motive is simple and not particularly interesting by itself. Only over the course of the entire symphony—as Beethoven develops the heck out of the motive—are its full significance and potential realized.
- A shorter example can be found in example 2 of the Anthology (Haydn, Hob. 10/ii on page 1). In this short passage, the triplet/third figure in the right hand of the first measure emerges as a motive. In m. 5 and m. 6, the two triplets are separated and each given a short preliminary extension. The triplet figure also appears in the bass in mm. 5-6. Then, in m. 7, the figure is reversed and moved to the beginning of the measure. And so on...

Phrase:

- A phrase is defined as the smallest structural unit that terminates with a cadence. An analogy to language is helpful here. A phrase is similar to a clause. It represents a complete thought, with a beginning, middle, and some sort of arrival point. That arrival point may bring closure, or it might require further information. (You might think that a phrase resembles a sentence, but remember that a sentence could have multiple thoughts, clauses, and resting points—like this sentence, for example.)

Phrase length:

- In Classical music, phrases are typically four measures long. Phrases can be extended (with a "phrase extension") to lengths of five or more measures. Here are some examples:
 - In example 7 from the Anthology (Mozart, K. 279/ii on page 2), Mozart avoids the cadence in m. 4 by repeating mm. 2-3. By delaying the arrival of the cadence, he extends what would be a typical four measure phrase to six measures.
 - In example 10 from the Anthology (Haydn, Hob. 17/i on page 3), Haydn does the same thing repeating mm. 2-3 to avoid the arrival of the cadence.
- Phrase length can also vary according to the tempo. In other words, pieces with slower tempos commonly have two measure phrases, while faster pieces frequently have eight measure phrases.

Period

- A period is a pair of phrases with **complementary cadences**, the first inconclusive, the second conclusive.
- Period vs. Phrase Group:
 - The complementary relationship of the two phrases is the most important part of the definition of a period. If you have the same phrase twice (or a pair of non-complementary phrases) you have a phrase group, not a period.
 - (“Oh, Susannah!” opens with a period, “Deck the Halls” opens with a phrase group.)

Types of periods:

- There are several different types of periods which are defined by the melodic and cadential content of the phrases. It is important that you be able to recognize these defining characteristics and describe any periods you might come across.
- Parallel period:
 - A period where the two phrases have similar melodic content. The melodic similarity may be as short as the opening gesture. In other cases the two phrases may be identical, differing only to accommodate the different cadences.
 - Example 15 from the anthology (Schumann, “Poor Orphan,” *Album for the Young*, Op. 68 on page 4) is a great example of a parallel period. In this case, the two phrases are almost identical.
 - Example 4 from the anthology (Haydn, Hob. 3/iii on page 1) is another example of a parallel period. In this case, however, the two phrases are alike only in their opening sixteenth-note gestures. (Even there, they differ slightly: the pickup to the first phrase has F \natural while the pickup to the second phrase has F \sharp .)
- Sequential period:
 - A sequential period is very similar to a parallel period. Although the two phrases in a sequential period have similar melodic content, the second phrase is transposed.
 - Example 18 from the anthology (Mozart, K. 576/I on page 5) is a good example of a sequential period. The second phrase has the same melodic contour as the first, but is transposed up a step.
- Contrasting period:
 - A contrasting period is the opposite of a parallel period. In a contrasting period, the two phrases—though still complementary—differ in their melodic content.
 - Look at the first eight measures of example 17 in the anthology (Beethoven, Op. 13/iii on page 5). In this example, the two phrases of the opening period have contrasting melodic content.
 - Example 2 from the anthology (Haydn, Hob. 10/ii on page 1) is another good example of a contrasting period.
- Modulating period:
 - A modulating period is one that begins in one key, but whose conclusive cadence is in another (frequently the dominant).
 - Example 6 from the anthology (Haydn, Hob. 9/ii on page 2) is a good example of a modulating period:
 - The two phrases in example 6 each end with a perfect authentic cadence. (The first cadence occurs on the weak beat. Hence, the second is more conclusive.) In this case, however, the second cadence is in a different key:
 - Cadences:
 - M. 4: PAC in F major (the tonic)
 - M. 10: PAC in C major (the dominant)
 - Because the second phrase cadences in a different key, we describe example 6 as a modulating period.
 - Example 4 from the anthology (Haydn, Hob. 3/iii) is another example of a modulating period. The first cadence is an IAC in the home key. By the second cadence, however, we have modulated and end with a PAC in the dominant key.

- Double period:
 - A double period is a group of four phrases that form **two complementary periods**, the first of which is less conclusive than the second. Just as the most important characteristic of a period is that two phrases are complementary, the defining trait of a double period is that the two periods are complementary.
 - Example 19 from the anthology (Mozart, K. 545/ii on page 6) is a good example of a double period.
 - There are four phrases in this example. What are the cadences of the four phrases?
 - M. 4: IAC
 - M. 8: H
 - M. 12: IAC
 - M. 16: PAC
 - The two periods in this example are complementary. It is for this reason that we refer to this as a double period.

An entire piece (!):

- Look at example 21 from the anthology (Haydn, Hob. 7/ii on page 7). How would you describe the structure of this piece? This is another example of a double period:
 - Period 1 cadences:
 - M. 4: half cadence
 - M. 8: PAC in the dominant
 - Period 2 cadences:
 - M. 12: half cadence
 - M. 16: PAC in the home key
- This is an example of a modulating double period. The first phrase concludes with a cadence in the dominant key and the second phrase returns to the tonic. More interestingly, this example demonstrates how the formal hierarchy we've been discussing extends all the way to incorporate an entire piece, in this case a minuet from a piano sonata.

Why are we talking about all of this?

- It is very important to have a firm understanding of these concepts and terms at this early stage. As you will see, due to the hierarchical nature of form, this material is crucial to the topics that we'll be covering later on. Make sure to continually ask yourself what is going on in the music and why!