

October 12, 2007

Binary form:

- Binary form is one of the standardized musical forms that emerged in the 17th century.
- Because of its relative simplicity, it often was (and is) one of the first musical forms to be studied. As the name implies, a binary form will consist of two main sections. This simplicity makes it readily accessible to the student of musical form.

Example 1 from handout (Haydn, Hob. 3/iii):

Menuetto.

The musical score is presented in five systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 1-5) begins with a piano (p) dynamic and includes a trill (tr) in measure 3. The second system (measures 6-9) contains triplets (3) in measures 6 and 7, and a repeat sign in measure 9. The third system (measures 10-14) continues the melodic line. The fourth system (measures 15-18) features trills (tr) in measures 15 and 17. The fifth system (measures 19-24) concludes with triplets (3) in measures 21 and 22, and a final trill (tr) in measure 23.

- Mm. 1-8:
 - This Haydn minuet begins with a modulating period (the first eight measures, up to the repeat).
 - Because of the small scale, there is no room for a true transitional section. Instead, the modulation occurs immediately with the addition of the F# in m. 4. Following this, the move to G major is confirmed with the descending scale in mm. 6-7.
 - This opening period already shows evidence of a binary form:
 - The thematic material is given in these first eight measures. It is also standard for a binary form to begin with a modulating period that moves from the home key (I) to the key of the dominant (V). Here is a chart, plotting our progress so far:

Thematic material:	:	A	A'	:
Key:		I	V	

- Mm. 9-16:
 - The second section of a binary form returns to the home key (from the dominant, where the first section left off). Therefore, in this section, the composer must introduce some element to loosen the grip of the dominant key. In this case, we find accidentals in mm. 8-9.
 - The return to I:
 - The accidentals in mm. 8-9 constitute a vii°/ii chord which resolves to ii in m. 10.
 - The ii chord of m. 10 behaves the way a proper pre-dominant chord should, and moves to a dominant chord (V_2^4) in m. 11. This dominant chord leads to an imperfect authentic cadence in m. 12.
 - Mm. 13-16 constitute a dominant pedal, bringing us back to the home key in m. 17 with the return of the opening thematic material.

9

13

Pedal

vii°/ii ii V^7 I^6

I

- Mm. 17-24:
 - In the final eight measures of the piece, we have the same material as the beginning (recomposed this time, so that it does not modulate). When the opening material from the first section returns to close the second section of a binary form, it is known as a “rounded binary.”

Rounded binary:

- A rounded binary is one in which the thematic material from the beginning of the first section returns to end the second section.
- This is a two-stage *harmonic* process:
 - I to V
 - and then V to I
- This is a three-stage *melodic* process:
 - Opening material
 - Something else
 - Return of the opening material (recomposed to end in the home key)
- The rounded binary form should not be confused with “ternary form,” but more on this later...
- Not all binaries are rounded. Some are “simple binaries.”

Simple binary:

- A simple binary will unfold according to the following plan:

Thematic material:	: A	A' :	: A	A' :
Key:	I	V	V	I
- (Note the reversal of thematic/key relationships. In the first section, A is in the home key and A' is in the dominant. In the second section, A is in the dominant key and A' is in the home key.)

Incipit binary:

- It is common for the two sections of a binary to begin with the same (or at least similar) thematic material, differing only in key. This is known as an “incipit binary.”