

Chapter 1 Form and its criteria

In this chapter we'll investigate basic form principles necessary for understanding and creating compositions.

1.1 What determines form?

Suppose that your composition can be represented by a small black rectangle as in example 1, while the bracket denotes the whole.



Example 1

Questions

1. What could you say about the form, the structure, the components of composition of example 1?

Probably, you could not say anything about its form, apart from the fact that it has a start and an end. Let's modify the rectangle of example 1.



Example 2

Now you could say more about the composition: it seems to consist of two parts, where each part has a begin and an end. You do not know anything about the musical contents of the rectangles. But probably the second rectangle is more or less a **repetition** of the first. If the whole composition gets the label A, then the first rectangle could be labeled as 'a1' and the second as 'a2'. So that is our first tool to determine a form, while using letters to describe the form. In a diagram:

A

a1 - a2 (= a1')

Form analysis of example 2

Use your imagination and answer the following questions.

Questions

2. To what does the separation between the two rectangles refer? Change the separation width to find several answers!
3. If the two rectangles belong together, what does this imply for the end of the first and the second rectangle?
4. Could you translate your answer on the previous question in terms of punctuation marks?
5. How do you translate your punctuation marks into music?

Maybe you found out that the separation between the rectangles can represent a rest, a general pause. If so you found a second tool to determine form: **general pause** or **caesura**.

What about example 3?



Example 3

Still the composition consists of two parts. However, the second rectangle seems to imply another music, that includes some sort of **contrast**.

Questions

6. Describe the first and second rectangle for the following ensembles.

- Example 3 represents a work for string quartet.
- Example 3 represents a work for clarinet and piano.
- Example 3 represents a work for a solo voice.

In fact the questions 18.1.3 implies a thinking on an important dimension of music: **style**. This term refers to the make up of a composition, to special techniques as **timbre** and **register**, **dynamics** and **tempo**. **Texture** is also an important element of 'style', including thick and thin elaborations, or settings as **melody and accompaniment**, a **polyphonic** play between two instruments, or musical dialogues between soli and tutti.

Let's formalize our observations so far.

1.2 The chain form

Form is as easy as a succession of parts (in our graphical examples, parts were represented by 'rectangles'). Such basic form can be defined as a **chain form**.

A chain form consists of a succession of parts

The parts of a composition can be denoted by letters. So the next examples of a chain form will be clear to you: ABCDE or AABBBCCD or AAABCCDDDDDE.

A 'part' can contain one 'rectangles', two 'rectangles', three 'rectangles' etc., where a rectangle in itself is more or less complete, In other words: it has a begin and an end. The end can then compared to the function of punctuation marks such as a full stop, an exclamation mark, a (semi) colon, a comma, or a question mark.

Remark: in many musical forms the general term 'part' can be replaced more specifically by the term 'phrase', that have some special features -as we will discover later.

1.3 Form parameters

Till now, we can discern three criteria to define form:

1. Repetition**2. Style changes****3. General pause (or caesura)**

Notice that these criteria are not necessary independent. Examples:

- repetition of a part can include style changes (e.g. implied by instrumentation)
- style changes can happen after a general pause
- etc.

The fourth criterium is the **cadence**. This will be later investigated thoroughly.

1.4 Background: why form analysis?

Why do I emphasize the analysis of form at the start of our musical journey? Well, the main reason is that you can provide more and useful information about a piece. A small example from Shakespeare's Richard II:

"This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land..."

Your form analysis would probably be: a - a'. And you would probably say that the second subphrase a' is an intensified repetition of the first one. In music, such an analysis could be made by making a table with rows and columns adding dimensions you use for the comparison. Now an example of a simple melody, analyzed on the dimension of style.

The musical notation shows a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in common time (C). The piece starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The first two measures are punctuated (2-2), with the second pair being portato. The dynamic then increases to fortissimo (*ff*) in the third measure. The final two measures are also punctuated (3-1), with the first being legato and the second being staccato. The piece concludes with a ritardando (*rit.*) and a pianissimo (*p*) dynamic.

Example 4

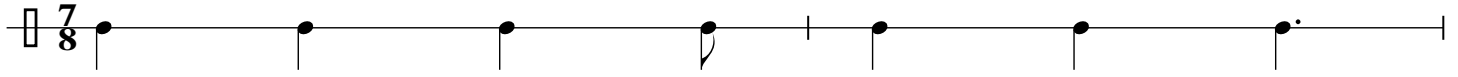
	a	a'
Register:	octave 4	octave 5 (> higher register)
Dynamics:	forte, crescendo to fortissimo	fortissimo, decrescendo to pianissimo
Articulation:	punctuated: 2 - 2 (second pair: portato)	punctuated: 3 - 1 (legato - staccato; detached tone)
Tempo:	no tempo changes	ritenuto (= slowing down) at the end

Presenting the results of a systematic, analytical approach in a table make them easily readable.

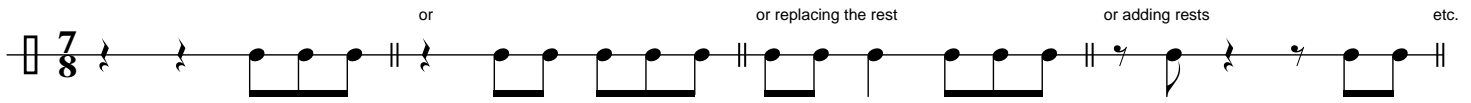
1.5 Assignments

1. Application

Write a composition for two non-melodic percussion instruments, using the explained form ideas. Duration: at least 1 minute. One percussion instrument plays with the following rhythmical pattern:



The other one plays with groups of two and three or combinations of them. Examples:



2. Aural analysis

Define form and form criteria of

- Corelli, Violin Sonata, Op.5 No.12 'La Folia'
- Vivaldi, Lute concerto, RV 93
- Mozart, String Quartet No.15, K.421/417b, movement 1
- Schumann, Album für die Jugend, op. 68, e.g. Melodie, Soldatenmarsch
- Webern, Five movements for string quartet, op. 5, movement 2 and 4
- Beatles, Hey Jude
- Daryl Hall & John Oates, Maneater
- Ron Carter & Cedar Walton, Little Waltz
- Gjeilo, Northern Lights

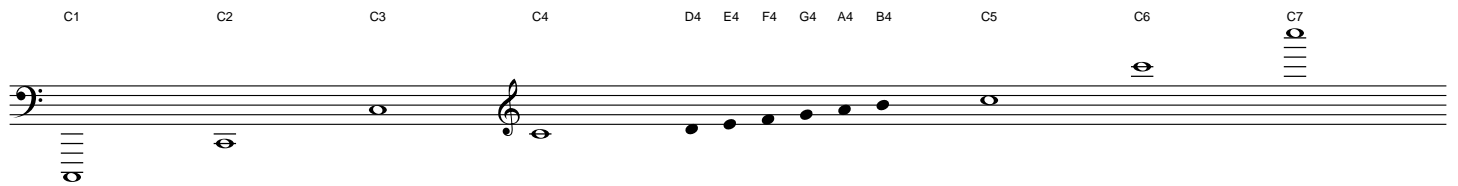
3. Terms text and application

- caesura
- chain form
- compound time (e.g. 7/8)
- contrast
- dynamics
- general pause
- irregular time (7/8)
- non-melodic percussion instruments
- register
- repetition
- rhythmical pattern
- style (or stylus)
- style changes
- timbre
- tempo
- texture

4. Terms music examples

- crescendo
- decrescendo
- time signature
- octave register *
- forte
- fortissimo
- legato
- portato
- staccato
- ritenuto

* Register designations according to International Standards Organization (ISO)



5. In-depth material

- Excursion 1.1 Call and response, concertato, concerto

6. Student's elaboration

- 'Chase', Erik Pielaat