

One phrase, two phrase, three phrase, form

One phrase

We're finally going to dive in to learning how to create larger musical thoughts. To help, today's guest lecturer is Mozart.



ahem Good morning.

Let's start with a single phrase. Even though we all know a phrase intuitively when we hear one, it's a little tricky to define exactly what one is. Some composers say it is the basic musical unit, or it is the length a performer can play in one breathe. Perhaps it's best to illustrate one through an analogy to speech.

Let's take a longer verbal sentence like, "Mozart was the best composer in the history of classical music, and some would go on to say there will never be anyone greater." If this were music, the length of the phrase is everything up to the comma; so notice a phrase isn't necessarily a complete musical thought or a whole sentence. Above, it took too phrases to complete the sentence.

Here's a 4-bar phrase from my Piano Sonata in B \flat Major, mvmt III, k. 333, maybe you've heard of it:

B \flat : I ⁶ vi ii V $\frac{4}{2}$ I⁶ V⁶ I ii⁶ V⁶ $\frac{5}{3}$

I like to do all kinds of things in a single phrase, but you should learn one trick I'm known for.

In a 4-bar phrase, the harmonic rhythm starts off slower, then speeds up 3/4ths of the way through and then relaxes again at the cadential end to the phrase. Above, I use two chords per bar, then four chords happen in the third measure, and then we relax again. As you can hear, it sounds amazing.

Formal analysis:

In a piece of music, you now need to learn how to analyze sections and phrases within each section. When we get to sonata form, this will become ever so slightly more involved, but for now its simple.

Above, we opened the A section of the piece, which we'll label with big 'A'. Within this section, here we have the first phrase, which we'll label with little 'a'. So you would write this above the music or on an analysis chart if you were to make one:

A

a

periods

In the last example, you wouldn't end it there (unless you're Salieri, *snicker snicker*). You would need another phrase to complete the thought.

A *period* is two or more phrases that together create a complete thought or statement.

The first phrase is called the *antecedent*. You may hear it as posing a question, being a comma in the middle of a sentence, or just not being complete on its own (this is what you already heard on the previous page).

The second phrase that completes the thought is called the *consequent*. You may hear it as an answer to the antecedent; both phrases work together to say something complete.

The relationship exists partly because the first cadence is weaker (e.g. HC) than the second cadence (e.g. AC).

Formal analysis:

A

a a'

mmm,
nice.*parallel periods*

If antecedent and consequent start the same way, it's called a parallel period. Just like my music above.

A parallel period is a good way to get a lot out of a little. Also, if you write something as amazing as me, what a pity to only hear it once.

If antecedent and consequent begin differently, it's called a contrasting period.

For our purposes, in the A section, label ant. and cons. as **a and a'**...do this even if you have a contrasting period where ant. and cons. may themselves be contrasting ideas. Still call them a and a'.

compression

Again, in a parallel period, both phrases start the same. The first phrase only needs to make it to V whereas the second needs to make it all the way back to tonic. That creates a situation in which the second phrase needs to get through more information, and thus get to V sooner. How do we do it?

We use a technique called *compression*. It's called compression because it's as if you need to squeeze more information into the same amount of time; however, that's a little misleading because it's not required that you get through the exact same chords, only faster now. Sure, you can do this, speeding up the harmonic rhythm somewhere. Another way, though, is to just cut something out. *In a way, all that is required is that you start the same but hit V sooner.*

To write a parallel period yourself, analyze your first phrase. Then you know what you can cut, or you know all the chords you need to get through quicker on the second phrase.

How does compression work here?

Bb: I ⁶ vi ii V ⁴/₂ I⁶ V⁶ I ii⁶ V⁶₄ = ⁵/₃

Stringing together two periods: simple forms



Now that you have the ability to make periods, you can imagine the next step is to string two periods together, creating an even larger chunk - and from this, simple forms emerge.

Let's start with another example of a parallel period from my Piano Sonata in A Major, k. 281. The first movement is a theme and variations, and this is the stunning theme.

A

a

a'

Let's hear what happens when another period, with a new idea, is then tacked on.



In my actual Sonata in A Major, I didn't write a 2-part song form, but here's how it would sound, and then we'll talk about what this form is:

A

a

a'

B

b

b'

2-part Song Form:
(and analysis)

A

B

a a' b b'

A is a period

B is a period; the 'b' idea contrasts from the 'a' idea

...no return to the 'a' idea

Rounded Binary: (and analysis)

A	B	A'
a	a'	b a''

A is a period

B and A' together make the second period, and it goes like this...

B : single contrasting phrase, 'b', which asks the question (antecedent)

A' : return of the 'a' idea to answer (consequent). Only one of the 'a' phrases returns.

We say rounded because 'a' comes back, and binary because there are still two periods.

(It is also sometimes called 3-part song form because of the big A B A')



This is clearly the best thing to do with this theme, because it's what I actually wrote.
Write in the formal analysis on this one.

A two bar extension.
I just couldn't help myself.





Here's a theme from my Piano Sonata in D Major.
It'll probably be your favorite tune for like a year.
Anyway, analyze it and figure out the form.

Tema.
Andante. (♩ = 120.)