

Chapter

10

KEY WORDS

alap
binary form
gat
genre
jhala
jor
sonata
sonata form
tan
ternary form

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this unit, the student will understand that:

1. Form in music refers to its structure and organization.
2. Every culture has standardized shapes and forms which occur in performance.
3. Binary or two-part form is found in many diverse cultures around the world.
4. Call-and-response is structured as a musical conversation; call-and-response forms are found in work songs and religious music.
5. There are many different forms used in Western classical music. Sonata form was one important method of composition developed in the nineteenth century.
6. In North Indian classical music, a performance falls into distinct predetermined sections that, while individually shaped by the musician, are subject to traditional rules of form.
7. Some forms involve even less overall delimitation; rather than presenting a fixed order of sections or events, however general, they furnish a pool of possibilities.

Television Program

Form: The Shape of Music

Audio Selections

- | | |
|--|---|
| 52. "The Plains of Boyle" | 14. Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor, First Movement |
| 53. "Hé Mandu" Waulking song from Scotland | 56. "Penitentiary Blues" |
| 54. "Lay Down Body" | 57. "Woman Blues" |
| 55. "Pure Religion" | 58. "Rag Kamod" |
| 17. "The Comet" | 35. "Mandiani" |

Form: The Shape of Music

"I have been told that a young would-be composer wrote to Mozart, asking advice as to how to compose a symphony.

Mozart responded that a symphony was a complex and demanding musical form and that it would be better to start with something simpler. The young man protested. 'But Herr Mozart, you wrote symphonies when you were younger than I am now.' And Mozart replied, 'I never asked how.'"

-ISAAC ASH

How does a composer or an improviser hold an audience's attention over an extended period of time? What gives a piece or a performance a sense of wholeness, coherence, or unity? In this chapter we explore musical form, the component of music that specifically refers to how it is structured and shaped over time. Form refers to the organization of all the musical elements in a piece or performance, including rhythm, melody, dynamics, texture, and timbre, and how they are held together. In every culture, music is governed by rules that lay out standardized shapes and arrangements which occur in performance. The creativity of composers and performers is reflected in how they manipulate these standardized structures to manifest their own individual expression.

The expressive arts can be divided into those that can be perceived in a moment and those that unfold over time. We can view a painting or sculpture and see the entire work in a matter of seconds. Music, dance, and theater, on the other hand, develop before us. These arts create an experience that is comparable to a journey that takes place over time. The structure of the journey—how it moves from beginning to end—can be described as its form.

While we might think of melody and rhythm as the basic building blocks of music, form may be viewed as the architecture of music. According to Gage Averill, musical form refers to the total organization of all individual parts:

When we talk about form, we're talking about the shape that a piece or performance of music takes from beginning to end. Included in this is a notion that a piece has a beginning, an end, and some kind of way of dividing the piece or structuring the piece from moment to moment. Human beings are pattern seeking creatures and we want to understand a larger unit as being made up of smaller units.¹

In a general sense, form refers to the organization of all the musical elements in a piece or performance, including rhythm, melody, dynamics, texture, and timbre, and how they are held together. We can look at the overall structure of an entire symphony, the form of its individual movements, and the smaller constructions that make up each movement. Mary Jo Pagano suggests that a composition's overall form is similar to an architect's plan for an entire building:

The form is like a blueprint in the same way that an architect might decide whether he's going to make a skyscraper or whether he's going to make a little log cabin. They're different blueprints.²

The smaller or inner forms can be thought of as the rooms of the building—individual movements or sections that make up the whole. In a song with many verses, for example, we can look at the form in its entirety or the makeup of one stanza with music and text.

Genres. In every culture, music is governed by rules that lay out standardized shapes and arrangements which occur in performance. The creativity of composers and performers is reflected in how they manipulate these standardized structures to manifest their own individual expression. They work within genres—a term that refers to general types, categories, and styles of music, such as reggae, alternative rock, Bosnian ganga, and opera—of which form is an integral part. A genre includes the preferred timbres, textures, texts, as well as forms used, while form itself just indicates the structure of a performed entity. A given form may actually be common to many genres, as we will see later with call-and-response and the blues.

Musical forms may be entirely predetermined and predictable, or they may be malleable in various ways. Fiddle tunes in the Anglo-Irish tradition, for example, fall into the former category. They are a closed form, meaning that they are composed pieces of set length. Most tunes are divided into two sections that are each eight measures long. Many other kinds of compositions have general sections, but the length of these may vary widely from one piece to the next. Sonata form, a recipe for composition developed in Europe during the nineteenth century, is one such example. The three sections—exposition, development, and recapitulation—are governed by certain rules, but the content, instrumentation, and length of each section was left up to the individual composer.

Other forms are even more open-ended: the general structure is predetermined, but what happens in performance is not. As will be shown below, the twelve-bar blues is a good example of a song form that is expanded in performance. Each verse has a chord progression of fixed length that is repeated over and over again, but the number of times that the pattern is repeated is not usually planned. A single blues tune may be played for five minutes or for thirty minutes depending on the inspiration of the performers. The form—built from the consecutive repetition of the chord progression—serves as the springboard for the performers' improvisations.

North Indian classical music performances provide an even more flexible example of form, in which rules determine the relative order

of events, but not the length or most of the musical content. The ways in which a performer introduces, expands, and develops a short pre-composed composition in a certain raga are both dictated by tradition and completely individual. The overall structure is preordained, but the details are flexible.

Some forms involve even less overall delineation: rather than presenting a fixed chain of events, however general, they furnish a pool of possibilities. These open forms necessarily involve improvisation, as one or more musicians make spontaneous decisions in performance. Much of African music involves open forms. In group performances, one musician is often the decision-maker who signals the other musicians to move from one section to another. This kind of spontaneous composition is generative: musicians have a stock of musical material that they can put together differently in each performance.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

While forms vary significantly from culture to culture or within one culture, all music contains a beginning, ending, and the musical events that occur in between. In many cultures, the structural framework of a piece or performance includes a distinctive beginning and ending. David Reck describes the importance of these opening and closing sections:

Beginnings are, after all, the first things we hear in a musical performance or a piece; they grab us by the scruff of the neck or gradually, subtly, pull us into the magical happenings of sounds. Endings are what we are left with, a last (and maybe lasting) impression. Together, they are the extremities of a musical island in a sea of time.³

As discussed later in the chapter, North Indian classical music performances characteristically begin with a slow opening section called “alap” in which the performer outlines the pitches and mood of the raga. In Javanese gamelan, a short introductory phrase called the “buka” played on one instrument formally begins the composition. In Western classical music, there are many examples of introductions and preludes that range in length from a few bars of music to a whole movement.

In many cultures, formulaic patterns or sequences signal the end of a section or performance. In Western classical and popular music, these patterns are called *cadences*. Cadences are composed of chords that move toward resolution and which evoke a sense of conclusiveness. As shown in the previous chapter, this resolution, signified by the return to the tonal

All Music Has

- Beginning
- Events
- Ending

center, is most often achieved by the sequence moving from the V (dominant) chord to the I (tonic) chord.

In the music of North India, a "tihai" (a melodic sequence repeated three times) often marks the conclusion to a performance. Expanded endings can also be used to form a complete section, such as the codas found in Western classical music genres. A coda, meaning literally "tail" in Italian, can be either a concluding passage or section of a composition that is added to augment or heighten the sense of finality.

Other conventions are also used as ending devices. In many cultures, a slowing down of the tempo indicates the conclusion of a piece. In Javanese gamelan compositions, for example, all the instrumentalists slow down together, pause as the final gong strikes, and then come in together to play the last note. In many kinds of popular music, performers commonly end by repeating the last line of a song over and over again as they gradually fade out.

REPETITION, CONTRAST, AND SECTIONS

While musical beginnings and endings are important cornerstones of composition or performance, equally important are the events that move and develop the music from start to finish. How does a composer or an improviser hold her audience's attention over an extended period of time? What gives a piece or a performance a sense of wholeness, coherence, or unity? In many musical traditions, the techniques used employ varying degrees of repetition and contrast. Repetition jogs the memory of the listener and helps to establish guideposts throughout the performance, while contrast creates interest and anticipation.

Repetition

Repetition can take place on many levels, ranging from the restatement of a single motif, theme, passage, or rhythmic pattern, to the recapitulation of whole sections. The use of repetition as a structuring device differs from culture to culture. In many African drumming traditions, for example, interlocking percussion patterns are played over and over again in performance. In the Anglo-Celtic ballad tradition, the music stays the same from verse to verse while the text changes in order to tell a story; repetition also occurs in the metrical and rhyming scheme of each line of a single verse. Japanese traditional music, described by Tomie Hahn, on the other hand, is often structured like a narrative, moving from beginning to end with little large-scale repetition:

Form in Japanese music is based primarily on narrative, where the narrative actually takes you through the piece rather than the repetition of a melody. This really greatly contrasts with Western music or other styles of music around the world where the statement of a melody which comes back again and again is integrated throughout a piece. In Japanese music it is actually quite unusual to have the exact repetition of a melody. I think this is really quite close to the way social life is in Japan where it would be very offensive to say the same thing again and again to one person . . . So this [technique of musical composition] somewhat mirrors speech in Japanese social life.⁴

Contrast

The use of contrast also occurs on many levels in composition and performance. While much of the classical music in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and America relied on structural principles balancing repetition and contrast in order to produce symmetry and unity, twentieth-century composers have refused to be bound by the same aesthetic and analytical principles. Some have rejected the notion of form as a pre-planned structure. Chance music—a compositional technique developed in the 1950s in which certain elements of a piece were left up to chance in performance—is just one method of composition that often develops more through contrast than repetition. According to composer George Perle, “varieties of programmed chaos have been a regular part of the avante-garde scene for a long time.”

Sections

In talking about form, we tend to look at the larger structures in a composition or performance—the overall plan and the pieces that are used to put it together. In this function, the term often indicates discrete sections that can be expressed by the use of letters. For example, music in a two-part structure—defined as binary form—is made up of an A section and a B section. Music in a three-part form in which the first and third sections are identical (ternary form) is built on a pattern of A B A. If one main theme or section alternates with different themes or sections, the resultant form can be labeled as A B A C A D A, etc. While this terminology arises from European and American usage, it can be used as a model to discuss music from many traditions.

Binary form is perhaps the most common of musical structures found in many diverse cultures all over the world. In Irish traditional dance

music, for example, most of the tunes have a two-part or A B structure. As stated above, the two sections are the same length—eight measures long—and each is usually repeated. The resultant form in performance becomes A A B B—the A section is played twice followed by the B section played twice. The entire tune is then repeated again in exactly the same format. Musicians may repeat the tune as many times as they want, although typically, tunes are played through three or four times, at which point the musicians may switch to another tune.

In many song traditions, a standardized pattern of musical lines and lyrics make up a verse or A section. Some song forms, including many that are found in the Anglo-American tradition, have only one section. Examples include Christmas carols such as “Silent Night” or “Joy to the World.” Other songs have a B section that functions as a chorus. While the lyrics change for each repetition of the A section, the words for the B section stay the same. This binary form is often called verse/chorus. A well-known song in verse/chorus form is “Jingle Bells.”

In the following section, we explore another binary form that is found in many cultures around the world. Call and response is both a structure and a way of performing. It balances the individuality of one performer with the collective unity of a group. In the remainder of the chapter we will discuss form in Western classical music, the blues, and in the classical music of North India.

CALL AND RESPONSE

Call-and-response form replicates social interaction, structuring music as a kind of stylized conversation. Sometimes this dialogue is a literal question-and-answer format in song: “Ain’t that a groove?” James Brown repeatedly sings in his 1960s hit of the same title. “It’s so groovy!” the chorus of female backup singers enthusiastically replies. “Do you love me?” he reiterates towards the song’s end, his voice rising in pitch and intensity. “Yes, I love you!” the women faithfully assure him each time.

Sometimes the form involves imitation. For example, Native North American stomp dances are often structured around an improvising leader who sings short rhythmic phrases which are repeated immediately by the dancers (Example 1). A call-and-response “conversation” may be abstract, as in the alternation of vocables in Example 1; it can be playful, like the refrain of “Ain’t That a Groove,” and it can be an intrinsic part of spiritual expression, as in many religious practices throughout the world. What unites all these examples is the basic two-part form: a “call” which presents a musical and/or verbal idea, and a “response” which replies to the call.



When listening to the hornpipe “The Plains of Boyle” played by Jerry O’Sullivan, Brian Conway, and Pat Kilbride, you can hear how the regularity of the phrases makes it easy to follow the changes and repeats. Each section is made up of two phrases of four measures. Note the high degree of repetition that occurs because of the repetition of section and the repetition of the whole tune. Because the music is traditionally linked to dance, this regularity of phrase and section is essential in keeping the dancers on track and in time.

Example 1: Cherokee Stomp Dance led by Luman Wildcat (excerpt)

Occasionally call-and-response form can be heard in a solo performance. Blues musicians often alternate sung lines with melodic phrases played on their instrument, creating a sense of two voices: one which sings the song, and another which continuously comments on or compliments it. Some solo songs are structured as dialogues, like the classic Scottish ballad "Lord Randall," in which the first half of each verse presents the questions of a dying young man's mother, and each second half furnishes his replies. But for the most part the inherent reciprocal nature of call and response is embodied by the interaction of two or more participants. Often the call is performed by a soloist who may be improvising to some extent, and the response is performed by a group. A few examples will give a general sense of the many approaches to and functions of this ubiquitous musical structure.

Work Songs

Group work songs are often cast in call-and-response form. In such cases the overall rhythm provides the proper pace for the job at hand. The leader—usually chosen for a spirited voice and perhaps an ability to improvise—spurs the work along and keeps the workers' motions synchronized. The group's participation eases the monotony of their tedious and tiring task and often gives them more strength, power, and focus to get the job done.

Sea shanties, work songs sung by sailors in earlier times, were often in call-and-response form: the workers could pause for breath as the "shanty-

man" sang a line, and then they would bellow their choral response while hauling the halyards or pushing the capstan. In such cases the leader did not participate in the manual task: his work was to sing strongly, sustaining the men's morale with boasts about their ship and crew, jokes about others, and references to the pleasures they would seek out when the ship reached land.

Example 2 shows the basic repeating form of a women's work song from the Hebrides Islands off the western coast of Scotland. This is one of many songs used for "waulking": a communal process of beating newly-woven woolen cloth on a table to make it denser, a necessary practice for these cold, windswept islands. As the women pound the cloth rhythmically, this song—each verse a few lines of text framed by vocables—allows them to imagine flying away to an idealized castle and lover (Example 3).

Example 2: "Hé Mandu" sung by Mrs. Kate MacLeod and Chorus
(1st verse)

The musical score for "Hé Mandu" is presented in three systems, each with a solo part (treble clef) and a group part (bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Brackets with the number '2' above the notes indicate a two-measure rest or a specific rhythmic pattern.

System 1:

- Solo:** 'stru-agh nach dig - eadh siod 'gham iar - raidh
- Group:** Hé man - du hé man - du

System 2:

- Solo:** gille 's li - tìr hì ri o - ro each is diol - laid
- Group:** hé man - du hì ri o - ro each is diol - laid

System 3:

- Solo:** hé man - du hì ri o - ro hó ró hù ó
- Group:** hé man - du hì ri o - ro hó ró hù ó



A performance of this waulking song.

Example 3: "Hé Mandu" full text

		verse 1:	
group:	Hé mandu		(vocables)
solo:	'S truagh nach digeadh		Alas, that this does not
group:	hé mandu		(vocables)
solo:	siod 'gham iarraidh		come to fetch me:
group:	hé mandu		(vocables)
solo:	gille 's litir		a messenger and a letter,
group:	hì ri oro		(vocables)
	each is diollaid		a horse and a saddle
	hé mandu hì ri oro hó ró hù ó		(vocables)
following verses:			
If I had the sparrow's wing,			
the bird's' power of flight, the wild duck's foot,			
I would swim across the narrows,			
the Sound of Islay, the Sound of Orkney.			
I would go into the castle			
and I would bring my sweetheart out;			
I would not ask whose she was.			
My Donald was well-reared—			
not on green pond water			
but on the milk of brown-haired women.			

Religious Usages

As call and response can unify spirits and hands in work, so it can also unify hearts and souls in worship. Sometimes such moments are built into key parts of a ritual: "Lift up your hearts," the celebrant sings or speaks in some versions of the Christian liturgy. "We lift them up unto the Lord," the congregation responds. "Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God," the celebrant continues. "It is meet and right so to do" the group confirms. In such cases the soloist embodies spiritual leadership, and the responding group articulates communal affirmation. In other cases the soloist may act more like a prompter, as in the practice of "lining out" hymns and psalms which survives today in parts of Europe and America: a soloist sings each line first, and then the congregation repeats the line all together. Or a soloist might present a narrative of a religious experience, while the recurring group response personifies support and encouragement, as in the next example.

African-American religious music has always involved call-and-response form, from the ring shouts dating from the slavery era to the gospel music of today. In a ring shout, the caller, or “songster,” sits beside the “sticker,” who rhythmically beats the floor with a broom handle. Standing behind them, the “basers” provide polyrhythmic handclapping and vocal responses. The “shouters” also respond, as they move in a counter-clockwise ring with shuffling steps. This tradition has been documented since the slavery era, and has survived despite numerous historical attempts to purge southern Black churches of what some people considered an inappropriate form of worship. In fact, the ring shout derives from African practices rather than European ones, which is probably what upset the reformers.

Example 4 shows the basic repeating pattern for a traditional ring shout which survives in some African-American communities on the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. After a brief introduction the pattern is established: the leader improvises his calls with traditional lines depicting a peaceful death (“you ought to lay down body, get your rest”) and a mighty resurrection on judgment day (“tombstone’s moving, grave is a-birthing, soul is rising”). Matching the story, the unchanging response and rhythm intensify, in a powerful celebration of the soul’s victory (Example 5).

Example 4: “Lay Down Body” sung by the McIntosh County Shouters (excerpt)



A performance of this ring shout.

The musical score is arranged in five staves. The top staff is for the 'songster' and the second staff is for the 'reponse'. The bottom three staves are for 'clapping 1', 'clapping 2', and 'sticker'. The songster's part consists of two phrases: 'Lay down bo - dy' and 'Wea - ry bo - dy Lay'. The response part consists of two phrases: 'Laydown a lit - tle while' and 'Laydown a lit - tle while'. The clapping and sticking parts provide a rhythmic accompaniment to the vocal parts.

Example 5: "Lay Down Body" full text

Introduction:	Lay down body, lay down a little while
Songster's lines:	This old body, oh, is tired Lay down body, this old body Old soul and body is so tired Old soul and body need resting You oughta lay down body, get your rest You don't worry, lay down body Lay down body, you don't worry My Lord'll wake you, oh, when He calls Soul and body Tombstone's moving, grave is a-bursting Soul is rising, oh body, weary body You'll be happy, a happy end Sing oh hallelujah You'll be happy, problems be over My problems over, my problems over I made it home, I made it home I made it home at last (etc.)

Musical "Conversations"

Throughout the world, many musical genres involve some version of call-and-response form. While some examples involve the alternation of a soloist with an essentially unchanging group part, call and response is also used as a technique within composition or improvisation to suggest dialogue—a musical conversation. Such musical interactions can be partially or entirely verbal, or they can be completely non-verbal.

Verbal. As noted earlier, some songs are dialogues set to music, and opera—Western and non-Western—abounds with examples of pre-composed musical conversations. Improvised verbal musical conversations are rarer, but they can be found. For example, when competing rappers perform contemporary versions of "the dozens," their spontaneous rhymed insults are addressed to each other. In parts of Africa, the rhythms and relative pitches of local tone languages can be replicated on instruments, producing "speech" which can be understood by cultural insiders; in such cases, interplay between such instruments—or between instruments and human voices—can result in a fully verbal musical interchange. The African eth-

nomusicologist and musician Francis Bebey cited an example from Gabon in which a xylophone “converses” with young female dancers.⁵

Xylophone: Hey there, girls!
 Dancers: Yes!
 Xylophone: Where are you from?
 Dancers: We are from Endoumsang, from Nseme Nzimi's family. You can tell from his eyes that he is sad and would be capable of dying from hunger right next to a pile of sugar cane.
 Xylophone: Aha?
 Dancers: Aha!
 Xylophone: A poor country . . . ?
 Dancers: Is one where a man must rely on his flocks to live.
 Xylophone: The sin of adultery . . . ?
 Dancers: You forgive your brother if he steals from you, don't you?
 Xylophone: Cocoa leaves . . . ?
 Dancers: I made a mat from some this evening.
 Xylophone: An evil place . . . ?
 Dancers: Is where you never meet the man you love.
 Xylophone: Spinster's letters . . . ?
 Dancers: Never mention men.
 Xylophone: Aha?
 Dancers: Aha!

Partially Verbal. Sometimes musical “conversations” are only partially verbal, involving a singer and an instrument which may replicate speech or song, or which is played in a way that produces abstract responses to the singer's words. Such practices were common in early jazz bands: as the singer took a breath between phrases, one or more instruments filled the intervening beats with short improvised lines which often bore a direct relationship to what was just sung. Some solo performers create this kind of call-and-response “conversation” between their voices and their own accompanying instruments.

Non-Verbal. Musical call and response can also be entirely non-verbal. One concrete example is pre-arranged signaling—such as when the lead drummer in an African ensemble plays a rhythmic phrase which means “switch to the next section”—but some other examples are more abstract, suggesting a real non-verbal conversation between two or more musicians. Jazz is a music built for this kind of interaction: a fully-engaged jazz musician is listening to every other musician who is playing at the moment, and all of the improvisations—solo or backup—affect each



Reverend Gary Davis's guitar sometimes finishes phrases for him, “sings” a phrase while he speaks it, and, prompted by his command “talk to me,” responds with an energetic musical affirmation of the need to “have that pure religion” before you can cross the river Jordan into heaven. Yet another level of “conversation” occurs in each of the song's verses, with Davis accosting a sinner—“Where you goin' old liar?”—and speaking the sinner's response: “Goin' to tell some lies.”

other. The American pianist Tommy Flanagan described this phenomenon in piano duo recordings he has made:

You don't know what the other player is going to play, but on listening to the playback, almost every time, you hear that you related your part very quickly to what the other player played just before you. It's like a message that you relay back and forth. . . . Or, if we're switching off every eight bars, there will be something in my eight bars that's related to the last part of the soloist before me. . . . You want to achieve that kind of communication when you play. When you do, your playing seems to be making sense. It's like a conversation.⁶

Such unrehearsed interactions may be heightened by the musicians' reactions to unexpected occurrences. The American ethnomusicologist and musician Paul Berliner describes such an occasion: "Once when Benny Bailey finished a solo a few measures early at a performance at the Jazz Showcase, pianist Jodie Christian spontaneously filled in the progression with a melodic phrase comprising a series of large, descending intervals, which saxophonist Jackie McLean immediately seized for the opening of his own solo."⁷

This is call and response at its most minute and extemporaneous level, as improvising musicians react to each other with split-second timing, creating a moment of collective composition. The example pushes the boundaries of the form a bit—the "call" in this case was simply an unexpectedly early ending to a solo, and the pianist's fill-in could be described as a response that the saxophonist treated like a call by responding to it—but we can see that it is built on the same basic principles as the more straightforward examples we have looked at. Whether in work, worship, or pleasure, call-and-response form can unify and synchronize minds, hearts, and voices in powerful idealizations of human interactions.

FORM IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

There are many kinds of form in Western classical music, but as violinist Timothy Ying states, the music is most often organized around the idea of "things repeating and things developing":

Essentially they all take the same tack that something has to happen over time, and you have various things that will come back and repeat. And those repetitions are signals for your ear, they are the sign points for structure. So whether it's a sonata form, whether it's a binary or ternary form, these aural sign points are what indicate

to you when the various sections occur. . . . It's a constant conflict between repeating something that you know and changing it—what's the same and what's different.⁸

As stated earlier in this chapter, form can be analyzed on different levels ranging from the structure of an entire work to the form of one verse. In this discussion of form, we will examine form as a mold or recipe which composers use to shape their compositions.



▲ Timothy Ying

Binary Form

Binary form is also used to structure compositions in the Western classical tradition. Many instrumental pieces from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, for example, are composed as dance forms that fall into a two-part structure. The pavane, galliard, minuet, sarabande, gavotte, gigue, and contredanse were popular dances that provided models for composition. Some of these pieces were used for dancing while many others were meant only for listening. Like Irish traditional dance music, these compositions often have repeated A and B sections usually of the same length that can be abbreviated as:

I: A :| I: B :| in which everything between the I: :| signs is repeated.

While the form is actually A A B B in performance, it is also called binary form.

The dance suite became a popular genre in the Baroque period (1600–1750). Suites were written for many of the orchestral and chamber ensembles of the period, as well as for solo harpsichord and lute. Each suite had at least several movements, each in binary form and based on a particular dance. Composers used the standardized dance forms of the period to write stylized music that was essentially for listening. Each dance in the suite was distinguished by its meter, special rhythms, and tempo. The sarabande, for example, was a slow dance in 3/4 that often had a marked accent or emphasis on the second beat of the measure; the gavotte was characterized by a long upbeat of two quarter notes and performed at a moderate tempo.

Although the order of the dances was left up to the individual composer, the general method was to place dances with contrasting rhythms and tempos next to each other—a slow stately sarabande would be followed by a sprightly bourée. Many suites ended with giges, a fast and lively dance thought to have derived from the Irish jig. Other dance forms included the allemande, courante, minuet, and siciliana.

The Baroque trio sonata and solo sonata were two other multi-movement genres in which binary form was used. Trio sonatas were actually written for four instruments: two upper range melody instruments such as violin, flute, or oboe, one bass instrument, and harpsichord. The solo sonatas were usually performed with three instrumentalists: a solo melody instrument with continuo accompaniment from harpsichord and cello or bassoon. Johann Sebastian Bach wrote some sonatas meant to be performed by one instrument—beautiful compositions for solo cello, violin, and flute.

Like the dance suites, many of the movements of the trio sonata or solo sonata were modelled on dances in binary form. Other sonatas had several contrasting movements that were designated by their tempi; a common plan was slow—fast—slow—fast. Georg Philipp Telemann, Bach, and George Frideric Handel were Baroque composers who wrote many sonatas and trio sonatas for various combinations of the popular instruments of the day, including the recorder, flute, violin, oboe, bassoon, and cello.

Ternary Form

As discussed earlier, ternary form refers to music in a three-part structure that follows a pattern of A B A. The A sections contain exactly the same music while the B section contains contrasting material. There are many examples of ternary form in both the classical and popular repertoires. “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” is an example of a song in ternary form.

The thirty-two-bar song form is found in nearly all songs derived from Western European musical traditions, including art songs, folk songs, jazz tunes, and rock. In performance, the thirty-two bars are derived from four eight measure sections—A A B A. Musicians play the A section twice, the B section—called the bridge in popular music—once, and then go back to the A section again. This pattern of A A B A lays out the framework for the song.

Sonata Form

Sonata form—also known as sonata-allegro form and not to be confused with a sonata—is one of the most important forms of the Classical and Romantic periods and remains in use today. It was developed in the eighteenth century and used by many composers, including Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The form was often employed as the first movement of a long work, such as a symphony, sonata, concerto, piano trio, or string



In “The Comet,” the thirty-two bar pattern is repeated over and over again as the musicians improvise within the set structure of the form.

The rhythm, chord structure, and the length of the song keep the musicians together as they take turns improvising.

quartet. Like ternary form, sonata form falls into three sections, called the *exposition*, *development*, and *recapitulation*, but in this case, the recapitulation is not an exact repeat of the exposition.

Sonata form is a recipe or mold and a method of composition that composers employed. While the overall structure is subject to clearly articulated rules and procedures, the musical content is left completely up to the individual composer. In sonata form, each section plays a different function in developing the piece:

There is a progression of events that happen. So just like in a novel you've got a structure, some kind of conflict, and then the conflict escalates. And finally you reach a crisis point, and then there's some kind of resolution. We all feel great after the resolution.⁹

In the exposition section, the composer introduces or “exposes” the most important musical material in the form of themes and motives. Expositions must have at least one theme presented in the tonic key. Every exposition then has a change of key or modulation in which a new theme or themes may be introduced. The most common modulation is to the dominant. The exposition is often repeated in performance.

In the development section, composers get to develop the ideas from the exposition, and as Mary Jo Pagano states, it's the development section that allows composers to be creative:

The development section is probably one of the reasons why composers really favor this form because it gives them a chance to explore tonal possibilities. . . . It's a way of trying on different coats so to speak. Sometimes a composer will take themes—it can be the first theme, the second theme, or parts of that theme, and explore them and develop them, turn them upside-down, put them in different keys, develop the ideas. At the end of the exposition becomes a point of great tension. Right after that tension we resolve to the recapitulation.¹⁰

The recapitulation begins with a return of the first theme in the original key, a return home after the journey through the development section. The recapitulation is literally a “recap,” a restatement of musical material from the exposition. This section resolves the tension of the development section. A coda may occur at the end of the recapitulation.

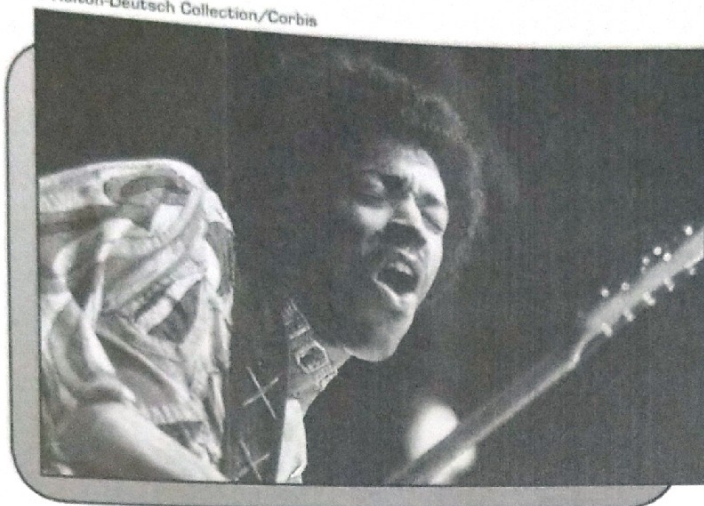
The above examples demonstrate only a few of the many musical forms found in the Western classical idiom. We will now examine form in an important popular American genre known as the blues.



Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor, first movement, provides a good example of sonata form.

[Additional listening information is at the end of the chapter.]

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▲ Jimi Hendrix in Concert

TWELVE-BAR BLUES

Sometimes a musical form seems to take on a life of its own, well beyond the time and place in which it originated. From its beginnings among poor African Americans in the southern United States around the late nineteenth-century, twelve-bar blues form has spread to just about every corner of the earth where guitars are played. It has served as the foundation for tender love songs, searing rock anthems, defiant social protests, and advertising jingles. Teenagers have danced to it in urban parks in Tokyo, adults have cherished it in rural road houses, and stockbrokers have sipped martinis to it in posh nightclubs. The visionary

electric guitarist Jimi Hendrix learned his instrument by playing it, and Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones all began their careers with it. It is vigorous today, with a good number of thriving blues clubs, dedicated performers, and a loyal audience.

Like most song forms, twelve-bar blues is strophic: it is made up of stanzas (or verses), and each stanza uses the same overall musical structure. Musicians define this particular form by referring to its repeating stanzaic structure of twelve bars. A bar (or measure) of music is a steady grouping of beats; each of the twelve bars of this form is a group of four beats. These bars are further grouped into three phrases of four bars each.

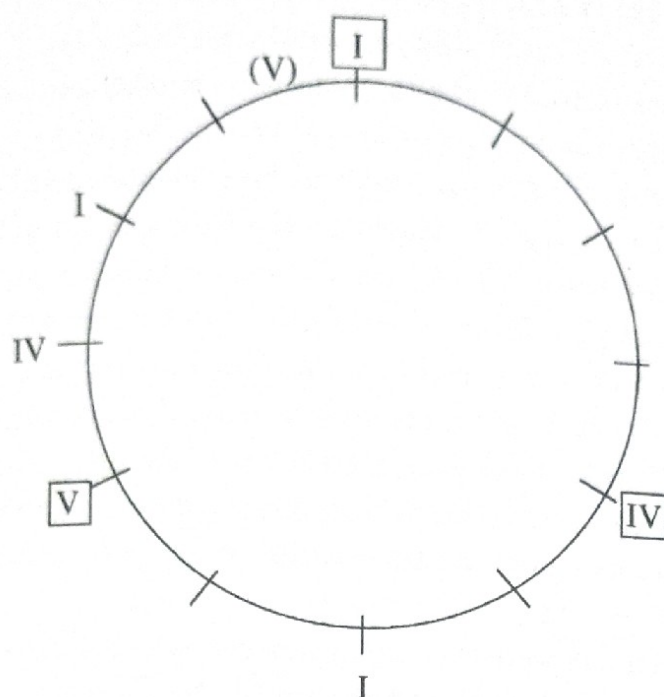
The basic harmonic structure of the form is shown in **Figure 1**: the first phrase remains with the I chord (perhaps briefly going to the IV chord in the second bar); the second phrase begins with a strong statement of the IV chord, then returns to I for its second half; and the V chord marks the beginning of the third phrase, which characteristically moves to the IV chord before resolving to I for its second half. Often musicians finish the cycle with a reference to the dominant V chord to emphasize the return to I at the start of the next cycle (or at the resolution at the end of the song). There are a few other blues harmonic patterns, and a larger number which might be called “bluesy,” but this twelve-bar form is by far the most widely-used structure in blues.

Blues lyrics are usually couplets, two lines which rhyme and form a complete sentence. These couplets can fit into the twelve-bar form in various ways, but the most common is what is called AA'B verse form. In this form, the first line of the couplet (A) is sung during the cycle's first phrase



“Penitentiary Blues” is a twelve-bar blues with an AA'B verse structure. For the last verse Hopkins uses a formal device known as “stop time”: the beginning of the cycle is interrupted for his conversation with his mother and father, while his guitar punctuates the exchange with a single repeated motif; then the cycle resumes as the guitar plays the IV chord. Although the result is a verse with more than twelve bars, musicians think of this practice as a modification of the standard twelve-bar form: “stop time” literally means briefly stopping the cycle and then resuming it.

Figure 1: 12-Bar Blues Harmonic Structure



and is repeated with musical variation (A') in the second phrase; the third phrase carries the second line of the couplet (B).

The full story of blues is also the story of African Americans in the twentieth century. It encompasses all of the rural and urban troubles and migrations, and the hope, despair, anger, and pleasure of thousands of individuals. Our brief introduction to this story begins shortly after the turn of the century, in a place that was still reeling from the effects of a slavery era and a Civil War: the southern United States.

Early Blues

Although W. C. Handy referred to himself as “The Father of the Blues,” he was not the form’s originator—he was one of the first people to make a comfortable living with it. Handy himself told a story of his chance meeting with blues, “the weirdest music I had ever heard,” in a Mississippi train station in 1903. Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, another popular entertainer who was sometimes billed as “The Mother of the Blues,” recalled her first encounter with blues in a small town in Missouri around 1902, describing the sound as “strange and poignant.”

Such references make it clear that blues singing was already widespread in the southern United States well before the first blues recordings were made in the early 1920s. By that time blues songs and instrumen-

Source: Courtesy Library of Congress.



▲ Bessie Smith

tals—mostly using the twelve-bar pattern—could be found in at least two distinct types, which might be referred to as “vaudeville” and “downhome.”¹¹ Since many vaudeville performers, including Handy and Rainey, first heard blues from downhome musicians, it makes sense to begin by investigating this rural style.

Downhome Blues. Slavery had been abolished in 1863, but in the early twentieth century blacks in the southern United States were still kept at the bottom of society. The tenant farming system enforced poverty and debt, “Jim Crow” laws locked in segregation, blacks had no legal rights, and they were regularly harassed by police and other whites. For most, there was no escape from a system which required hard labor from dawn to dusk all week excepting Sundays. Saturday night was a time of celebration: barbecues, conviviality, and “juke joints,” black-operated shacks where one might find homemade whiskey, fried fish, gambling, music (often blues), and dancing.

Sunday mornings were for church services, which also featured music, but of a different kind. Still, although many preachers condemned blues as “the Devil’s music,” both the juke joint and the church involved ceremonies of renewal and symbols of group bonding. Their ritual leaders—preacher and blues singer—even used similar rhetorical conventions. And through their different worldviews, both institutions taught the same basic message: “treat people right.”¹²

Many of the earliest downhome blues recordings from this period must be understood as truncated improvisations rather than as through-composed “pieces.” 78 rpm technology required a break in the music every two or three minutes, when the recording disk ran out of space. Sometimes blues songs were issued on two sides of a record, labeled “Part 1” and “Part 2,” but usually the musicians just recorded a two-to-three minute version of each song. In their natural contexts, these songs could be performances lasting a half hour or more: a musician with a strong ability to improvise verbally and instrumentally could keep a song going as long as his or her imagination held out without becoming repetitive, pleasing both dancers and listeners.

As Jeff Titon has demonstrated, a song’s identity usually involved a basic melody and accompaniment, though these could be quite flexible, and a “foundation stanza” which gave the song its title and general subject. Linked to this in the singer’s mind were one or more “supporting” stanzas, which directly related to the theme, and perhaps the imagery, of the foundation stanza. Finally, the singer knew and could call forth spontaneously a large number of “unlinked” stanzas, which may have little or

no direct relevance to the subject of the foundation stanza, but which fit in well with the melody, rhythm, and character of the song.¹³

"Pony Blues". For example, Charley Patton's 1929 recording of "Pony Blues" (Example 6) begins with the foundation stanza, establishing the song's title, theme, and imagery. In local slang at that time, a "rider" was a lover; elaboration of the horse/rider metaphor is a hallmark of this song's lyrics, and it is also expressed musically as Patton imitates the clapping of horse's hooves on his guitar. The second stanza is unlinked: its humorous portrayal of someone trying to make a phone call may well just function here as a good vehicle for singing a higher melody which Patton alternates with the tune of the preceding stanza. A supporting stanza follows, presenting a further development of the horse/rider imagery. The next three stanzas are less directly supportive, though they deal with themes in love relationships: first an ironic expression of prefer-

Example 6: "Pony Blues" text

Hitch up my pony, saddle up my black mare
Hitch up my pony, saddle up my black mare
I'm goin' find a rider, baby in the world somewhere

Hello central, 'tsa matter with your line
Hello central, matter now with your line
Come a storm last night, tore the wires down

Bought a brand new Shetland, man already trained
Brand new Shetland, baby already trained
If you get in the saddle, tighten up on your rein

And a brownskin woman like somethin' fit to eat
Brownskin woman like somethin' fit to eat
But a jet black woman, don't put your hand on me

Took my baby to meet the mornin' train
Took my baby, meet that mornin' train
And the blues come down, baby like showers of rain

I got somethin' to tell you when I gets a chance
Somethin' to tell you when I get a chance
I don't want to marry, just want to be your man



"Woman Blues," recorded in 1944, demonstrates how a creative musician can use the twelve-bar form to create an elaborate improvisation with playfully shifting moods.

ence for women of mixed race (Patton was comparatively light-skinned himself), then a starkly contrasting depiction of a heartbreaking moment of farewell, and finally a supremely nonchalant parting shot.

Charley Patton performed at juke joints and parties in the Mississippi Delta region, an area rich in both fertile farmland and blues. From contemporary accounts, we know that he was a consummate improviser, able to stretch a song well beyond the three-minute recording limit. He recorded "Pony Blues" around the beginning of his recording career, and it appears from his use of unlinked and semi-supporting stanzas that he was improvising to a certain extent. By the next year, when he recorded some of his most powerful songs, he clearly had begun to form his songs more consciously into three-minute compositions when recording them.

Vaudeville and Jazz Blues. Vaudeville singers used many different song forms, but blues were often featured, largely because blues records were selling particularly well at the time. Vaudeville blues were usually in twelve-bar form with AA'B stanzas, involving call and response between a solo female singer and one or more male instrumentalists. The words were seldom improvised, so the previous observations about downhome blues stanza relationships do not apply here, except as possible elements of the creative processes of vaudeville songwriters.

A concurrent New Orleans-based African-American genre which had ties to the vaudeville style, and eventually replaced it, became known as jazz. Jazz instrumentalists often used twelve-bar blues form as a basis for improvising, and for structuring songs and instrumental compositions.

Later Developments

At the time of the first recordings some general blues performance styles had already developed. Vaudeville and jazz musicians toured extensively, further spreading their styles across the country. By comparison, downhome styles remained more local and less commercially successful. But in the early 1940s more and more southern blacks were migrating to northern industrial centers, looking for better work and a better life. In response to these new environments—and, sometimes, new technologies—a new blues style began to take shape.

From Downhome to Uptown. One of these southern migrants was McKinley Morganfield, known to his friends as Muddy Waters, an outstanding young local musician who moved from the Mississippi Delta region to Chicago in 1943. He met other migrant musicians there (almost all working as laborers, like himself), and began performing with them on weekends. A new blues sound was developing in Chicago, influenced

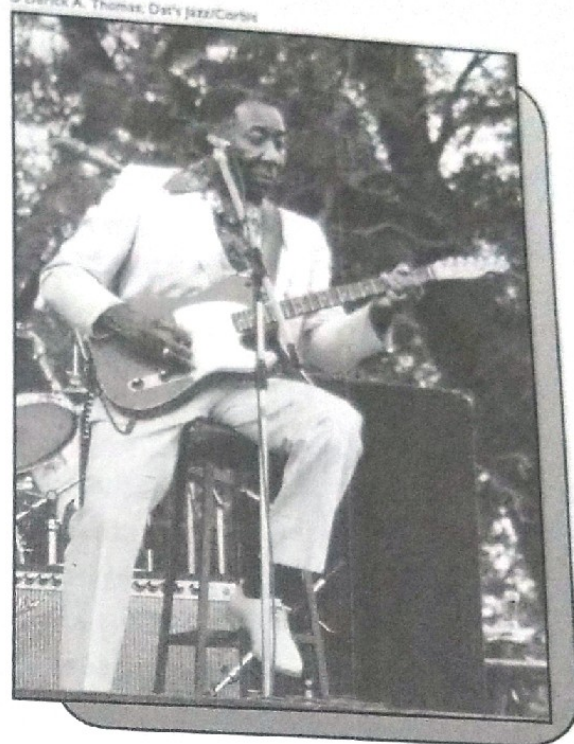
to some extent by jazz groups, and also by a technological development: the electric guitar.

Although some technological innovations—such as steel resonators and strings—had already increased the volume of the guitar, it was still an instrument that could not be combined successfully with louder instruments like the piano, trumpet, and drum set. With the advent of electric instruments, jazz guitarists could play in a full band—horns, piano, and all. Muddy Waters, with his subtle melodic guitar technique often augmented with a slide bar or “bottleneck,” was among the first downhome-style musicians to exploit the electric guitar’s ability to mix nuanced solo playing with other instruments.

Microphones and sound systems offered a similar potential for the voice, and these new possibilities fit perfectly with a popular attraction to the jazz “rhythm section”—the combination of piano, bass, and drums which provided a driving beat and solid harmonic basis. Among Waters and his colleagues, the “Chicago blues” style developed: a powerful group sound involving an electric guitar played melodically, a rhythm section (perhaps with a second electric guitar replacing or augmenting the piano’s role), amplified voice, and perhaps an amplified harmonica as well.

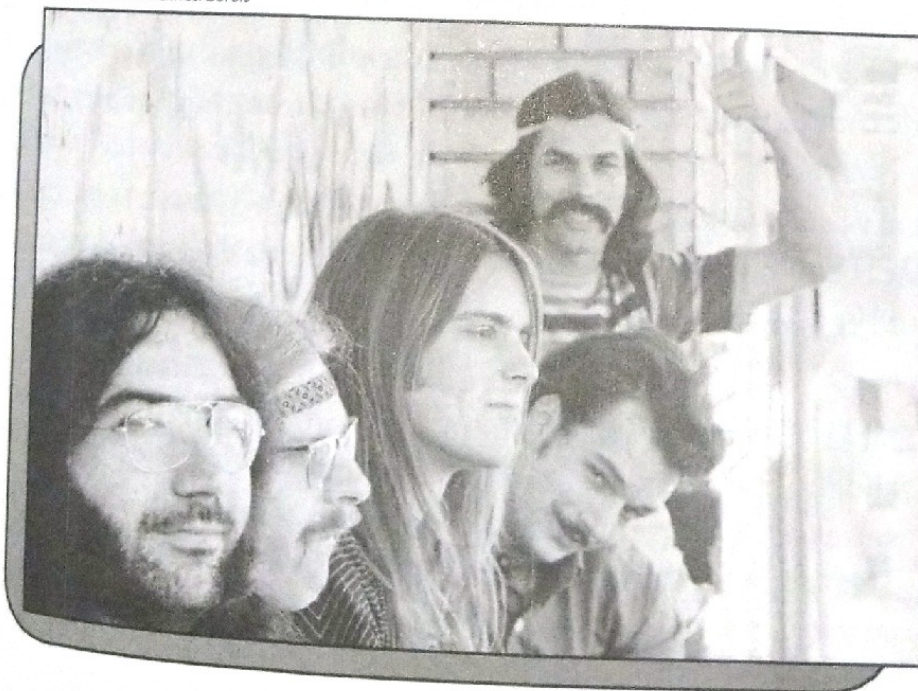
The Chicago blues style spread across America, with hit records by Muddy Waters and others. When a new generation took it on in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a number of new branches developed, all using

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▲ Muddy Waters performing at Capital Radio Jazz Festival

© Michael Ochs Archives/Corbis



◀ Grateful Dead. L–R: Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzmann, Mickey Hart (standing).

twelve-bar blues form to various extents: some brief, bland developments like the twist and surf music, and some longer-lived, more vital ones like rhythm & blues. Early rhythm & blues musicians such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Jerry Lee Lewis used twelve-bar blues form extensively, often speeding it up to a feverish pace. Many of the "British invasion" groups of the early 1960s started out by imitating Chicago blues recordings, and several of the later "psychedelic" groups, such as the Grateful Dead and Hot Tuna, featured extended arrangements of twelve-bar blues songs.

Today the Chicago style and some of its offshoots are the mainstays of a widespread "blues revival." Though these styles are not often heard in the most commercially-oriented venues, they have devoted audiences in smaller institutions and festivals, and talented young musicians continue to fill the shoes of their elders.

Bebop and Cool Jazz. In the 1930s and 1940s blues was still essentially an African-American genre. By contrast, jazz was increasingly claimed by white audiences as "American" (that is, not necessarily black) music. "Big bands"—groups with carefully scored "swing" arrangements for multiple brass and reed instruments along with a rhythm section—played the popular music of the day, often with white leaders and singers, and white Broadway composers wrote hit songs which capitalized on jazz idioms.

Bebop. To some young African-Americans in the early 1940s, mainstream jazz was a music that could no longer articulate their world, which was still one of social and economic marginalization. A subculture began to develop, with young black men wearing berets, goatees, and outrageously baggy "zoot suits," speaking "hip talk" with unique words and phrases, and playing a new form of jazz: *bebop*. Pioneered by the saxophonist Charlie Parker, the trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, and others, bebop was both intellectual and visceral, serious and irreverent, meticulous and wild.

The mainstream jazz establishment was outraged, in some of the same ways that the popular-music establishment of the 1980s railed against rap music and the hip-hop subculture:

To a certain extent, this music resulted from conscious attempts to remove it from the danger of mainstream dilution or even misunderstanding. For one thing, the young musicians began to think of themselves as serious musicians, even artists, and not performers. . . . This attitude certainly must have mystified the speak-easy-Charleston-Cotton-Club set of white Americans, who had identi-

© Bettmann/Corbis



▲ Dizzy Gillespie

fied jazz only with liberation from the social responsibilities of full citizenship. It also mystified many of the hobbyists, who were the self-styled arbiters of what Afro-American music should be. Most of the jazz critics and writers on jazz (almost all of whom, for obvious reasons, were white) descended on the new music with a fanatical fury. The young musicians were called “crazy” (which stuck in the new vernacular), “dishonest frauds,” or in that slick, noble, patronizing tone that marks the liberal mind: “merely misguided.”¹⁴

Bebop was fast and virtuosic; most people couldn’t figure out how to listen or dance to it. Like hip talk, it was full of unfamiliar idioms. But just as hip talk was based on the grammatical substructure of standard English speech, so bebop was built on the foundations of jazz: choruses and bridges, alternation of improvising soloists, and even common forms, including twelve-bar blues. Some admirable recorded examples of bebop versions of twelve-bar blues include Charlie Parker’s “Billie’s Bounce,” “Bloomdido,” and “Now’s the Time.”

At one point in his all-too-brief career, Parker hired a young trumpet player named Miles Davis to fill in for Gillespie. Davis proved equal to this daunting task, and went on to become one of the most prolific innovators in the history of jazz. Bass player Calvin Hill recalled that “in the old days when I used to buy records, I was always into Miles, whatever Miles came up with. Like, you could hardly wait for the newest Miles Davis record to come out because you knew he was going to come out with something different. You just couldn’t wait. You’d go out and buy the record and rush home and put it on and see what was new.”¹⁵ In the 1950s “what was new” included a genre which came to be known as *cool jazz*.

Cool Jazz. While bebop emphasized vigorous dynamism and technical wizardry, cool jazz portrayed more finely-nuanced moods, elevating introspective thoughtfulness over dazzling displays of virtuosity. Like most innovations, it was not universally accepted right away. At first, one of the jazz musicians Berliner interviewed “hated Miles Davis’s cool jazz playing,” with its dark sound and minimal use of vibrato. Whenever a Davis record came on the radio, he turned it off immediately.¹⁶ But this musician, and many others, were soon won over. As LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka) wrote: “[Davis] had a deep connection to the basic blues impulse, and he could insinuate more blues with one note and a highly meaningful pause than most cool instrumentalists could throughout an entire composition.”¹⁷

Sometimes Davis and other cool jazz players did more than “insinuate” blues: occasionally they even based their music on the old twelve-bar

© Michael Ochs Archives/Corbis



▲ Miles Davis

form. Two excellent recordings of Davis and his band improvising on the twelve-bar blues cycle are "Bags' Groove" and "Freddie Freeloader."

Later jazz styles tended to use twelve-bar blues form less, almost as if bebop and cool jazz had finally summed up all that could be said with it. But these older styles are still played by many musicians, and to many the ultimate test of a jazz player's technical skill is still whether he or she is able to "play bop." Although twelve-bar form is not currently involved in the forefront of jazz innovation, it is something that unites all jazz musicians. In situations where instrumentalists "meet on the stand"—that is, they have never played together until they find themselves sharing the stage somewhere—one of the quickest and most effective ways to get to know each other musically is to improvise together on a form they all know: the twelve-bar blues.

FORM IN THE CLASSICAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC OF NORTH INDIA

Like the blues and jazz, North Indian classical music develops primarily through improvisation. Musicians elaborate on a small amount of precomposed material, which is often in binary form. While jazz and

blues musicians commonly base their improvisations on harmonic progressions, North Indian musicians focus on melody, following the rules of the particular raga which they are singing or playing. Their overall performance falls into distinct predetermined sections that, while individually shaped by the musician, are subject to traditional rules of form.

Modern performances of North India classical instrumental music typically include the following sections: 1) a three-part *alap* (improvisation), 2) a two-part slow or medium tempo *gat* (composition), 3) improvisations based on the *gat*, 4) a fast *gat*, and 5) improvisations based on the fast *gat*.

The *alap* itself is divided into three parts: 1) the *alap* proper, in free rhythm; 2) the *tor*, in which a medium-tempo pulse is established; and 3) the *jhala*, in which the pulse accelerates. The *alap* is accompanied only by a drone played on the plucked *tanpura*. The *gats* and *gat*-based improvisation are accompanied by *tabla*, and performances typically include one or more *tabla* solos, in which the drummer takes "center-stage," accompanied by the soloist, who for the time being marks time by repeating the first line of the *gat*.



The gat itself usually includes two parts: the *sthayi*, which explores the lower and middle octaves of the player's range, and the *antara*, which goes into the upper octave. The soloist's gat-based improvisations include rhythmic play, called *layakari*, and fast, virtuosic passages, called *tans*.

To help you understand the overall form of the performance, we are including a chart (Figure 2) which shows the timing of the various sections. Minutes and seconds are shown above the horizontal boxes; the nature of each section is described within its box. Listening to the recorded example, you can observe the musical form of Buddhadev Das Gupta's im-

Figure 2: "Rag Kamod" (audio 58) performed by Buddhadev Das Gupta



Buddhadev Das Gupta plays "Rag Kamod" on the plucked sarod, accompanied on tabla by Ray Spiegel and on tanpura by Ira Land-garden. The performance includes alap, jor, jhala, a medium-tempo gat, improvised rhythmic play, tans, a fast gat, and tabla solos. This nine and one-half minute exposition is complete, but brief; a full concert performance might last for an entire hour. The soloist—in this case, Buddhadev Das Gupta—can tailor his improvisations to suit his mood and fit the available time.

1. alap

0:00	0:06	0:43	1:05	1:56
tanpura	alap begins	second "limb"	third "limb"	

2. jor and jhala

1:58	2:25	2:56	3:25	3:38
jor—first "limb"	second "limb"	jhala—first "limb"	second "limb"	

3. medium tempo gat

3:40	4:08	4:21	4:36
	sam	sam	
sthayi	layakari	layakari	layakari
4:54	5:04	5:12	5:24
antara	layakari	triplet layakari	tabla solo

5:39 5:52 6:12

tan	tan	tabla solo
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4. fast-tempo gat

6:25	6:38	6:46	7:12	
<i>sthayi</i>	<i>antara</i>	<i>tans</i>	<i>"tremelo" tans</i>	
7:24	8:01	8:29	9:12	9:23
		<i>high sa</i>		<i>last sam</i>
<i>acceleration</i>	<i>jhala</i>		<i>final tihai</i>	

provided *alap*, *jor*, and *jhala*, each of which may be divided into coherent melodic “limbs.” Each limb focuses on a somewhat different set of notes, shaping the playing like paragraphs in an essay. In writing, the content of a paragraph is the subject matter addressed by the author; in *alap*, the content is a set of notes and melodic motives.

“In my beginning is my end” would be an appropriate description of the form of North Indian classical music. Every performance begins and ends with the keynote, *sa*. Each exposition begins slowly, gradually revealing the melodic character and mood of the *raga*. Compositions, which serve as a point of departure and return for episodes of rhythmic play (*layakari*) and virtuoso passage-work (*tans*), gradually increase in tempo, building to a series of climaxes of rhythmic and melodic tension before the final return to *sa* and *sam*, the respective beginnings of the *raga* and *tala*.

FLEXIBLE AND OPEN FORMS

As we have seen, Western composers have worked with structures like sonata form, in which the general sections—exposition, development, and recapitulation—are fixed, but the content and length of these may vary widely from one piece to the next. Similarly, a North Indian *alap* improvisation usually follows a preset overall shape, but performers will fill out that shape in different ways on different occasions, taking more time with one section and less with another, or expanding or contracting the overall length. The overarching structures of the sonata or *alap* are foreordained, but the details are malleable. The former requires the imagination of a composer while the latter is shaped in performance by the imagination of the improviser.

As stated earlier in the chapter, some forms involve even less overall delimitation: rather than presenting a fixed order of sections or events, however general, they furnish a pool of possibilities. These “open” forms necessarily involve improvisation, as one or more musicians make spontaneous decisions in performance. Much of African music involves open forms, and we have seen that a solo *mbira* player may improvise on a basic harmonic structure for as long as sufficient inspiration is maintained. In group performances, one musician is often the leader, the decision-maker who signals the other musicians to move from one possibility to another. In West African drum ensembles, open group forms are usually directed by a lead drummer.



▲ A West African drum ensemble

Lead Drumming in West Africa



A West African lead drummer performs several functions. He improvises infectious rhythms which inspire and enliven the musicians and dancers. He keeps the tempo under control, ensuring that the music does not slow down or speed up. In some cases, he may “speak” through replication of the varying pitches and rhythms of a local tone language, drumming out proverbs, salutations, praises, or encouragements. And when accompanying an improvising solo dancer, he artfully matches his drumming to the individual characteristics of the dancer. The master Ghanaian drummer Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai described such practices to the American ethnomusicologist John Chernoff:

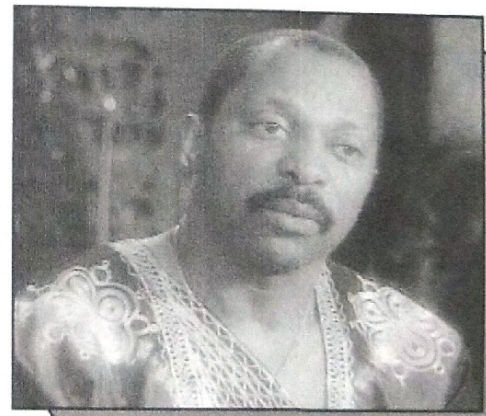
Immediately a dancer comes to us, we give him his beat. Because already we know the type of his dance, we just play in accordance with his feet and the movement of his body, and we get him. . . . But when we are playing alone and there are no dancers, and I keep on changing the beat, that means that I am talking with the drum. When a dancer comes to look and not to dance at any particular moment when I am drumming, then he knows what I am doing. That dancer knows what I am saying with my drum.¹⁸

Another important function of the lead drummer is literally to lead the music and dancing with predetermined signals. A given ensemble piece involves a basic polyrhythmic cycle and a fundamental dance step, but there are also various other cycles and steps which may alternate with the central ones. Specific rhythmic patterns played by the lead drummer tell the musicians and dancers when to begin and end the whole performance,

▼ Michael Wimberly



▼ Jalal Sharriff



▼ Nafisa Sharriff and Madou Dembele



and when to switch into an alternative polyrhythm and/or step and when to switch back. The lead drummer is entrusted with a kind of spontaneous generation of form.

Example 7: "Mandiani"

Example 7 shows the basic polyrhythmic cycle of "Mandiani," a West African drum ensemble piece with an open form. Performed in Mali, Guinea, and Senegal, it is named for a great musician of the past, and invokes his spirit as a blessing. The *agogo* bell and the low *djun djun* and *songba* drums provide an unchanging basis, while various patterns may be played on *djembe* drums.



A performance of "Mandiani," begins with a short song followed by the lead drummer's signal to start the drumming. As the other drummers play the basic polyrhythmic cycle, the lead drummer improvises and accompanies the dancers, matching their rhythms. On the lead drummer's signal, the group finishes together with a unison rhythmic phrase.

agogo

djembe

djembe

djembe

djembe

songba

djun djun

hands/feet

OR:

▼ A Performance of "Mandiani"



Flexible and Open Forms in Jazz

This performance of "Mandiani" may be viewed as a kind of call-and-response form: the leader's signals provide the call, and the others respond in specific ways. Some jazz performances are structured similarly: while the piece's chord progression sets a basic form, a leader may determine how many times the progression is repeated, who solos and for how long, and when the group switches between composed and improvised sections. Alternatively, musicians may make such decisions through group consensus, either before or during a performance. Particularly creative and cohesive groups might even spontaneously depart from a piece's chord progression together, using the composed form as a flexible point of departure and return. The saxophone player Lee Konitz recalled such moments when he played in pianist Lennie Tristano's group:

When we would play "All the Things You Are," we would get to the point where the music was moving so intensely that the music would start to leave the song form, the actual structure of the song. We might get involved with one tonal area and just stop the progress of the song right there and play freely in that area. That could just stretch out as completely as we would want it to go and then return to the song. This was a note-to-note kind of playing. It was an impressionistic utilization of the song.¹⁹

Sometimes jazz musicians are involved with practices which are even more open, perhaps dispensing with chord progressions and compositions altogether, allowing the overall form to be determined largely by consensus during each performance. This kind of spontaneous generation of form, which arose during the 1950s and early 1960s, is generally referred to as free jazz. Repudiating the formal conventions which to many seem synonymous with jazz, free jazz players seek to create an extemporaneous music which is unfettered by predetermination. For example, the saxophonist Gary Barz spoke of improvising on chord patterns which he made up as he went along:

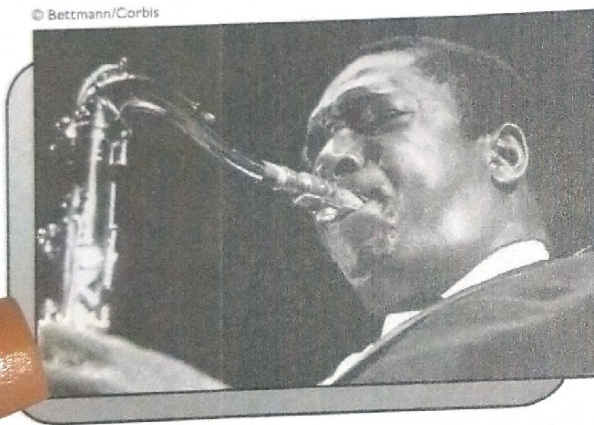
You just keep going on and on; it's one long melody. I don't think it's that different from how I ordinarily play because it's the same music, just another type of song, really, where you don't have the structure set up before you play. So, you work out your own structure as you play, really taking improvisation to the epitome.²⁰

Other jazz musicians found free jazz intriguing, but difficult to enter into. One unnamed musician confided to Paul Berliner, "I'd get up to solo and I wouldn't know what to do; to play chord changes or to ignore

them—just play colors, textures. Sometimes, I'd let a whole chorus go by without playing, turn around, and walk off the stage."²¹ But some found a stimulating challenge in free jazz playing. The drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson recalled playing with the saxophonist Albert Ayler, who even wanted to work with free rhythm in his group:

He'd say, "Fill all that space out. I don't care how you do it, but do it." He didn't want any space or holes in the music. He wanted to hear rhythms all over. The only thing he'd tell me was, "No time, I don't want to hear ching-ka-ching-ka-ding—no bebop." . . . There was a pulse to the music because of the melody being played, but not the kind of pulse you were normally listening for. The time-feeling was more suspended, like waves that moved along with the song.²²

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▲ John Coltrane in performance

To some people, the notion of free jazz is unacceptable: such music can no longer be called jazz. To others, it can be some of the most powerful music-making imaginable: the music is so completely linked to the moment of its performance that it contains all the exhilaration of a dramatic voyage of discovery. Drummer Keith Copeland described a particularly unusual performance by the now-legendary saxophonist John Coltrane, in which the improvisational intensity caused the pianist and bass player to stop playing, leaving drummer Elvin Jones with Coltrane "just blowing up and down, an endless flow, [while

Jones] remained in back of him just bashing, slashing, and crashing away. . . . Trane and Elvin played at such an energy level all the time that it scared you to death the whole time you were listening to them. It was just a constant conversation between them, all the time."²³

Open and flexible forms can enact social values such as enlightened leadership, group consensus, and individual expression. Since they always involve some level of improvisation, they also underline the immediacy of here-and-now experience. No two performances will be identical, so open forms cannot be thought of as finished works of art; rather, they are dynamic processes which are revealed only through each unique realization.

SUMMARY

Form is one of the most important components of music, determining the parameters and shape music takes in performance. It can be perceived on many levels, from the internal structure of a brief song to an hour-

long performance of one raga. Whether the form is pre-set, as in the first movement of the Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or open-ended, as in the North Indian sarod performance, forms are governed by rules that are understood and shared by composers, performers, and listeners within a particular culture. Forms are reflections of existing models that are shaped and molded differently by each individual musical creator. Musical forms will continue to evolve as composers and improvisers seek to create new meanings and new ways of ordering time in the music they create.

ADDITIONAL LISTENING

AUDIO #14: BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN C MINOR, FIRST MOVEMENT

The famous first theme or motive of the exposition occurs in the opening four measures. A continuation, based on this opening motive, follows and then the motive itself repeats (0:17). A further continuation of the theme is marked by a long crescendo. The French horn announces the bridge (0:42) that will move the music to the second theme (0:46). Played by the strings and woodwinds it has a lyrical feeling which is in direct contrast to the first theme. The end of the exposition section is based on the opening theme (1:14). The entire exposition then repeats (1:24).

The development section begins with the opening theme played on the French horn in a new key (2:49). There is a development of the continuation of the theme and then a powerful passage based on the same rhythm of the continuation (3:12). The bridge theme is played and developed (3:26). The bridge theme is then fragmented: the strings play two notes followed by the woodwinds playing two notes (3:38). The fragmentation continues with the two sections alternating one note (3:46). A loud passage based on the opening theme runs directly into the recapitulation that begins with the opening motive (4:11).

After the recap of the opening motive and continuation, there is a suddenly a slow oboe cadenza (4:30). After a second continuation, the French horn announces the bridge leading to the second theme (5:04). While the strings and winds play this theme, the timpani is playing the rhythm of the first theme. The coda begins with a series of repetitions of the continuation (5:47) and a new march-like theme (6:16). Finally the first motive is played loudly with brass (6:57), followed by a continuation of the theme, and a strong conclusion.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Form refers to the organization of all the musical elements in a piece or performance, including rhythm, melody, dynamics, texture, and timbre, and how they are held together.
2. In every culture, music is governed by rules that lay out standardized shapes and arrangements which occur in performance. The creativity of composers and performers is reflected in how they manipulate these standardized structures to manifest their own individual expression.
3. In talking about form, we look at the larger structures in a composition or performance—the overall plan and the pieces that are used to put it together. In this function, the term often indicates discrete sections that can be expressed by the use of letters.
4. Binary form is perhaps the most common of musical structures found in many diverse cultures all over the world. Irish traditional dance music, call-and-response, Baroque dance pieces, and North Indian instrumental gats are some musical examples structured in binary form.
5. Musical genres, such as the blues and North Indian classical music follow certain rules of form upon which musicians elaborate or improvise on in performance.
6. Some forms involve less structure; rather than presenting a fixed order of section or event, they furnish a pool of possibilities. These “open” forms necessarily involve improvisation, as one or more musicians make spontaneous decisions in performance.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is musical form?
2. What is characteristic about musical form in culture? How is the creativity of composers and performers expressed in terms of form?
3. What are some of the different levels that can be used to talk about form in a composition or performance?
4. What is one of the most common musical structures or forms that is found in many diverse cultures all over the world? Give examples.
5. How does a blues musician use form in performance?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How is form in music different from form in the visual arts?
2. On how many levels can you describe a composition's form?
3. What is binary form? List three different genres that are structured in binary form.
4. Describe some of the contexts in which call and response is used.
5. What is sonata form?
6. What is the basic blues structure? How do musicians use that structure in performance?
7. What are the typical sections of a contemporary North Indian classical instrumental performance?
8. How is the performance of free jazz different from playing the blues?

References

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4. Hahn, interview 1996.
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8. Ying, interview 1997.
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11. Tilton, 1994: xvi–iii.
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13. Ibid.: 33–8.
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15. Berliner, 1994: 276.
16. Ibid.: 277.
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