

Ritornello Forms!

The baroque *ritornello* is the instrumental prelude/interlude/postlude of an aria or solo concerto.

Handel, “Pena tiranna” (CP:96)

The ritornello (a single phrase) appears several times during the movement, always in the tonic key.

A	B	A (<i>da capo</i>)
Ritornello Solo (vocal) Ritornello		Ritornello Solo (vocal) Ritornello

Bach, Mass in B minor, “Agnus dei” (CP:149)

This ritornello has an internal cadence, and Bach brings the two phrases back separately.

9	23	27	45
Ritornello: A+B (i)	Solo (vocal)	Ritornello: A (v)	Solo (vocal)
			Ritornello: B (i)

Bach, “Erbarme dich” (CP:143)

This aria uses a five-part form very much like the one we saw in the “Agnus dei”.

9	23	27	47 (<i>dal segno</i>)
Ritornello (i)	Solo (vocal)	Ritornello (v)	Solo (vocal)
			Ritornello (i)

Vivaldi, Concerto in A minor, Op. 3/6, iii (CP:82)

Here is the textbook version of “Vivaldi’s Ritornello Form”. The R sections are supposed to be tonally stable, and feature the movement’s “tune”. The S sections are supposed to be sequential/modulatory, and rather than using the “tune”, they are full of virtuosic passagework for the soloist.

R1 (motivic)	S1 (episodic)	R2	S2	R3	S3	R4
--------------	---------------	----	----	----	----	----

But in actual *pieces of music*, Vivaldi often mixes the R and S sections in a much more flexible way. S1 and S3 both use the same material as the R sections. And R2 and R3 both get “interrupted” by the soloist.

95	124	144	165	185	209	232
R1 (motivic)	S1 (motivic)	R2	S2 (episodic)	R3	S3 (motivic)	Coda (R4)
	(soloist plays R material)	(soloist interrupts in m. 149)	(purely sequential...)	(soloist interrupts in m. 203)	(begins like an R...)	

The Baroque ritornello

Typical division of a Baroque ritornello into three zones, each potentially made up of multiple, detachable little segments:

Vordersatz (initial statement),
Fortspinnung (“spinning out”),
Epilog (ending phrase).

Vordersatz: defines tonic chord by reference to its dominant. *How* it does that—arpeggios, scale, etc.—is flexible: anything is possible. The segments are defined, though, principally by *what they do* (rather than by their melodic content).

Fortspinnung: founded on the absence of defined tonic or authentic cadence resolving the tonic. Thus it most frequently uses conventional sequences or other voice-leading patterns. Often delays any strong tonal articulation. Frequently multiple *Fortspinnung* units are present (e.g., several sequences)

Epilog: begins when *F* steps onto foreign territory (e.g., when *F* arrives at dominant, setting up resolution to tonic). Can be hard to locate onset exactly, but it's not uncommon for it to be just a bar or so (even after a 30-bar *V+F*).

[1] Handel, “How beautiful are the feet”, *Messiah*, No. 36. Aria for soprano

[illegible]

[2] Bach, Violin Concerto in E major, BWV 1042, I

Violino concertino

Continuo

Allegro

4

6 6 6 6 9 8

7

7

6 6

7

7

6 5 6 6 6 6 6 5 6 5 6 6 7 5 6 9 7 7 5

10

6 9 7 6 6 6 7