



WHY LEARN MUSICAL FORM?	3
MUSICAL FORM: A DEFINITION	4
LEVEL 1: SMALL SCALE	5
LEVEL 2: MEDIUM SCALE	7
LEVEL 3: LARGE SCALE	9
THE BASIC IDEA CHEAT SHEET	- 11
THE SENTENCE CHEAT SHEET	12
THE PERIOD CHEAT SHEET	13
HOW TO USE THE CHEAT SHEET	ΓS 14

Please note, this guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the free beginner's composing course.

http://artofcomposing.com/free



WHAT IS MUSICAL FORM, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

WHY LEARN MUSICAL FORM?

Musical form is sometimes neglected by modern day composers. You may have heard someone say something like this. "There is no need to stick to antiquated musical forms, because they have been overused by composers of the past, and don't offer anything new."

Now there are a lot of things wrong with statements like the one above, but let me point out what is true. Musical form has been used by great composers of the past, like Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Mahler, Chopin, Ravel, Stravinsky... well I think you get the point.

The reason great composers used traditional musical forms is because, musical form gives you specific and predictable tools to use in your compositions. You always have the choice not to use them if you want.

It is not really about the path that you take. It is about all the tools and techniques that you gain through experience with form.

*Note: This guide makes much more sense if you've actually gone through the free course. So go through it!

WHAT IS MUSICAL FORM, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

MUSICAL FORM: A DEFINITION

Musical Form is an **emergent** feature of music that happens over **time** when you combine the separate elements of:

- 1. Melody
- 2. Harmony
- 3. Rhythm
- 4. Tempo
- 5. Texture

Part of the mystery of musical form, is why it creates certain feelings of time or **temporality**.

tem·po·ral·i·ty

/,tempə'ralitē/

noun

1. the state of existing within or having some relationship with time.

Ultimately, you need to understand how all of these techniques effect the listener. When you do, your ability to craft your piece is greatly enhanced.

There are three main levels of musical form that we are concerned with. Small scale, medium scale, and large scale.

LEVEL 1: SMALL SCALE MUSICAL FORM (INTRATHEMATIC)

This is the level where you create the themes that make up your pieces.

intra

prefix

on the inside; within.

LEVEL 1: SMALL SCALE MUSICAL FORM

On the small scale level, are formal elements like:

- 1. Motives
- 2. Ideas
- 3. Phrases
- 4. Cadences
- 5. Loosening Techniques

Motive: "A collection of several notes constituting the smallest meaningful melodic or rhythmic configuration."

¹ Caplin, William Earl. "Glossary of Terms." Analyzing Classical Form: An Approach for the Classroom. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. 710. Print.

Idea: "Minimally, a two measure unit. A constituent member of a phrase."2

Phrase: "Minimally, a four measure unit, often (though not necessarily) containing two ideas."

Cadence: "A general term for the engendering of thematic closure."4

Loosening Technique:

Techniques used to create nonconventional thematic structures, including expansion, extension, compression, interpolation, fusion, asymmetrical grouping, functional redundancy, and harmonic instability.

LEVEL 1: SMALL SCALE MUSICAL FORM

² Ibid. p. 708.

³ Ibid. p. 710.

⁴ Ibid. p. 708.

LEVEL 2: MEDIUM SCALE MUSICAL FORM (INTERTHEMATIC)

On this level, you take the themes that you created on the intrathematic level (small scale), and turn them into larger movements - like sonata form, minuet/trio, and concerto.

SCALE MUSICAL FORM

inter

prefix

between.

On the medium scale level, are formal elements like:

- 1. Themes
- 2. Expositions
- 3. Transitions
- 4. Developments

Theme: A section of music, that you can consider complete, but that also forms a part of a larger work. The theme is built off of a standard set of expected features, that create the sense of beginning,

middle, and end. It ends with a cadence.

Exposition: "An initiating section function consisting of a main theme (group), transition, and subordinate theme (group)."5

Transition: "A thematic function, that destabilizes the home key and loosens the formal organization in order for a subordinate key to be established and eventually confirmed."

Development: "A medial section function standing between an exposition and a recapitulation. It creates the loosest formal expression in the movement, and it may contain a pre-core, one or more cores (or core substitutes), and a retransition."

LEVEL 2: MEDIUM SCALE MUSICAL FORM

⁵ Ibid. p. 707.

⁶ Ibid. p. 714.

⁷ Ibid. p. 706.

LEVEL 3: LARGE SCALE MUSICAL FORM

LEVEL 3: LARGE SCALE MUSICAL FORM

This level is concerned with the way your movements work together to create an organic whole.

On the large scale level, are large formal elements like:

- 1. Sonata Form
- 2. Large Ternary Form
- 3. Sonata Without Development
- 4. Rondo
- 5. Minuet/Trio Form
- 6. Theme and Variations
- 7. Concerto Form

Sonata Form: "A tripartite full movement form consisting of an exposition, development, and recapitulation; a slow introduction and a coda may also be added."8

Large Ternary Form: "A tripartite full movement form, consisting of a main theme, an interior theme, and a return of the main theme."

Sonata Without Development: "A bipartite full-movement form

⁸ lbid. p. 713.

⁹ Ibid. p. 709.

LEVEL 3: LARGE SCALE MUSICAL FORM consisting of an exposition followed by a recapitulation."¹⁰

Rondo: "Any one of a number of full-movement forms in which a single refrain alternates with two or more couplets." 11

Minuet/Trio Form: "A tripartite full movement form consisting of a minuet proper, a trio, and a da capo (of the minuet proper)."12

Theme and Variations: "A multipart, full-movement form, consisting of a main theme followed by an indefinite number of varied repetitions of that theme." 13

Concerto Form: "A full movement form, containing six-sections: opening ritornello, solo exposition, subordinate key ritornello, solo development, solo recapitulation, and closing ritornello."14

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 713.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 712.

¹² Ibid. p. 709.

¹³ Ibid. p. 714.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 705.

THE BASIC IDEA CHEAT SHEET

Note: This will make much more sense if you go through my free beginner's course. That goes for all the cheat sheets.

http://artofcomposing.com/free

The purpose of the basic idea is to establish the characteristic motives in a piece of music. It groups together several different motives into two measures. The basic idea is so powerful, because it is small enough to group with other ideas to create themes, but large enough to break apart and use in other areas of a piece of music.

The Basic Idea Guidelines:

- 1. Two measures in length.
- 2. Establishes and prolongs tonic harmony.
- 3. Establishes the characteristic material.
- 4. The melodic end is often marked by silence.
- 5. Usually has a character of melodic opening up. This means the opening motive actually goes upwards.

Basic Idea Harmony Ideas				
Meas	Measure 1 Measure 2		sure 2	
I		V		
I		VI		
I		IV		
		IV		
I	V	I		
	VIIº6	I		
I	IV	I		
I	V	V	I	
I	II	V	I	
	#	VI		
I	b VII	I		

THE SENTENCE CHEAT SHEET

The sentence is a conventional main theme type, that is extremely common in classical music.

It is made of two phrases, the presentation phrase and the continuation phrase.

The Sentence Guidelines:

- 1. 8 measures in total length.
- 2. Presentation phrase is 4 measures.
- 3. Consequent phrase is 4 measures.
- 4. It must end in a cadence. The cadence can be either an authentic cadence (ends on tonic) or a half-cadence (ends on dominant).

The tables below show techniques that can be used in each section of the sentence.

Presentation Phrase			
Basic Idea	Repetition		
Harmony: See Harmonic Ideas Above	Exact		
Melodic Opening Up	Statement-Response		
Characteristic Material	Model-Sequence		

Continuation Phrase			
<u>Continuation</u>	<u>Cadential</u>		
Harmonic Acceleration	Liquidation		
Fragmentation	Half-Cadence (HC)		
Increase Surface Rhythm	Imperfect Authentic Cadence (IAC)		
	Perfect Authentic Cadence (PAC)		
	Melodic Closing Down		

THE PERIOD CHEAT SHEET

The Period is the other preeminent theme type from the classical era. Together with the sentence, they make up the bulk of main themes in classical music.

The period is also a two phrase theme, with an antecedent and a consequent.

Antecedent Phrase			
Basic Idea	Contrasting Idea (CI)		
Harmony: See Harmonic Ideas Above	Half-Cadence		
Melodic Opening Up	IAC (Requires PAC in Consequent)		
Characteristic Material	New melodic-motivic material		
	Different Texture		
	Different Dynamics		
	Different Articulations		

Consequent Phrase				
Basic Idea (Repetition)	New Contrasting Idea	<u>Cadential</u>		
Exact, S-R, Sequential Rep.	Merges with cadential	PAC		
Elision with HC from CI		HC		
Modulation to new key		IAC		
		Melodic Closing Down		

HOW TO USE THE CHEAT SHEETS

Each cheat sheet is designed as a reference to what you learn in the free beginner's course. If you haven't been through the course, they will probably not make sense, so that is a requirement.

http://artofcomposing.com/free

To use them, you would do something like this:

- 1. Write a basic idea
 - 1. Draw two blank measures.
 - 2. Pick a recommended harmonic progression.
 - 3. Using that progression, and the guidelines, write in your basic idea.
- 2. Pick a theme type.
 - 1. Follow the guidelines.
 - 2. Use the table to pick options for each section of the theme.
 - 3. The bold options, are the defaults. If the option doesn't have anything in bold, pick any of them.
- 3. Finish your theme.
 - 1. Write out the rest of the blank measures (should total 8).
 - 2. Write out the harmony of each section.
 - 3. Write out the melody.

HOW TO USE THE CHEAT SHEETS Thanks for going through this guide and for just being the kind of composer that wants to improve their craft. The world needs great composers now more than ever. Music is such a uniting force, and the more people making it - the better.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. You can always email me at jon.brantingham@artofcomposing.com.

If you received this from a friend, then you are probably missing out on some other awesome things Art of Composing has to offer you. Go sign up for the free beginning composing course... because it's free.

http://artofcomposing.com/free

THANK YOU