

Basic Forms of Music—Motive and Phrase

Writing begins with the most basic unit—a letter of the alphabet. Letters are then combined into words, then sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and finally into larger works.

Similarly, music begins with a basic unit—the note. It is then combined into larger and larger melodic and/or rhythmic units, until a song or piece is created. Understanding the basic forms of music helps to understand how a composition is organized and structured.

A **MOTIVE** is a short melodic, rhythmic or harmonic element that is used repeatedly throughout a piece. Most music is based on the development and expansion of one or more motives. Perhaps the most well-known motive in classical music is the four note pattern used in the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5:



After its introduction, this melodic motive is used repeatedly in its original form, then later in transposition and other variations. The rhythmic pattern of this motive also appears as a motive in the 3rd and 4th movements.

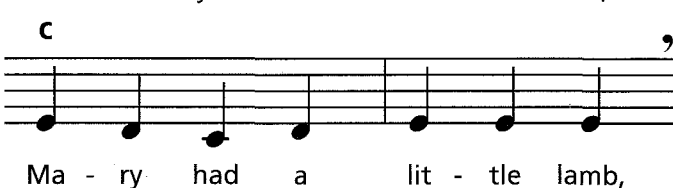
A **PHRASE** is a short section of music that may be either a complete or incomplete musical idea. A phrase may contain one or more motives in their original form(s) or in some variation.

When one is speaking, the end of a phrase occurs when the speaker takes a breath, usually at a comma — there is a moment of pause. The end of a musical phrase provides a “lift” or breath for the instrumentalist or singer.

To demonstrate the way a phrase works, say the words of the following song, taking a breath (☹) or pause at the end of each section.

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Traditional Folk Song



Each breath or pause was the end of a phrase. Now sing the rhyme and notice that the phrases of the music match those of the text.

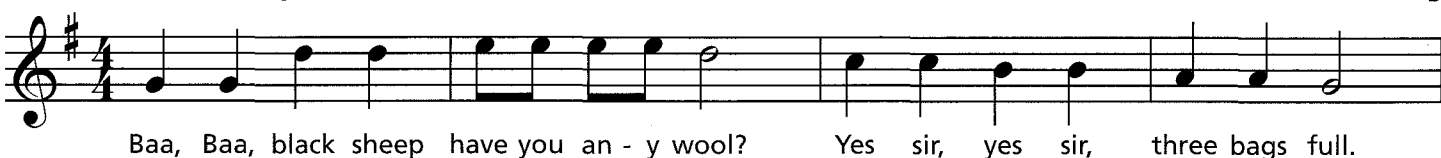
Exercises

1 Which two phrases are similar in “Mary Had a Little Lamb?” # 1, # 3.

2 Circle the number of phrases in the following example: 1 2 3 4

Baa, Baa Black Sheep

American Folk Song



AB (Binary) Form

In music, several phrases can be combined to form a complete section (or part). In TWO-PART FORMS, called AB (or BINARY FORM), the musical material of the first (or A) section contrasts with the second (or B) section. Sometimes the two sections may share a motive or end similarly, but each section is musically distinct from the other.

Variety and contrast is achieved in each section through differences in many *elements* such as melody, rhythm, harmony, time signature and tempo. For instance, in "Go, Tell It On the Mountain," the first measure of the A section features an ascending melody with quarter notes, as compared with measure 1 of the B section which has a descending melody and a rhythm of a half note, dotted 8ths and 16th notes.

The melodic and rhythmic contrasts continue throughout each section. The time signature remains the same for the two sections and the harmony is similar, differing primarily in the final chord of each section.

"Go, Tell It On the Mountain" is an example of AB form.

Go, Tell It On the Mountain

African-American Spiritual

A Verse

F **C7** **F**

1. When I was a seek - er, I sought both night and day.
2. He made me a watch - man, up - on the cit - y wall.

C7

I asked the Lord to help me, And He showed me the way.
And if I serve Him tru - ly, I am the least of all.

B Refrain

F **C7** **F**

Go, tell it on the moun - tain, O - ver the hills and ev' - ry - where..
Go, tell it on the moun - tain, that Je - sus Christ - is born.

A VERSE is a section of a song that tells a story and changes with each repetition, which is followed by the REFRAIN (or CHORUS), a section of a song that is repeated after each verse. The song format of verse and refrain is typical of AB form.

Exercises

- Circle the letter of the refrain section of "Go, Tell It On the Mountain." A **B**
- Circle the letter of the verse section of "Go, Tell It On the Mountain" that ends on a V⁷ chord. **A** B
- Name two elements that make the music of the A section different from the B section:
rhythm melody

ABA (Ternary) Form

THREE-PART FORMS, called ABA (or TERNARY FORM), consist of two musically distinct sections as does AB form. In this form, however, there is **A**, a statement; **B**, a contrasting statement of new material; and **A**, a restatement of the A section. This is one of the most common forms found in all types of music, from folk songs to symphonies.

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

African-American Spiritual

Swing low, sweet char - i - ot, — Com-ing for to car - ry me home,

Swing- low, sweet char - i - ot, — Com-ing for to car - ry me home.

I looked o - ver Jor - dan and what did I see, —

Com - ing for to car - ry me home, A band — of an - gels

com - ing af - ter me, — Com - ing for to car - ry me home.

Swing low, sweet char - i - ot, — Com-ing for to car - ry me home,

Swing- low, sweet char - i - ot, — Com-ing for to car - ry me home.

Exercises

- 1 Which section of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" is the verse? B
- 2 Which section of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" is the refrain? A
- 3 How many phrases are in: the A section? 4 the B section? 4

Rondo Form

A RONDO is a form that consists of an A section alternating with other contrasting sections of musical material. A is the recurring section. The most common types of rondo form are:

A B A B A — A B A C A — A B A C A B A.

"La Raspa" is an example of a rondo.

La Raspa

Mexican Folk Song

The musical score for "La Raspa" is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of 32 measures. The structure is as follows:

- Section A (Measures 1-8):** Marked with a box 'A'. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4, A4, B4, and a quarter rest. This pattern repeats with different intervals.
- Section B (Measures 9-16):** Marked with a box 'B'. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4, A4, B4, and a quarter rest. This pattern repeats with different intervals.
- Section C (Measures 17-24):** Marked with a box 'C'. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4, A4, B4, and a quarter rest. This pattern repeats with different intervals.

The score alternates between A, B, and C sections, ending with a final A section (measures 25-32). Chords G, D7, and C are indicated above the staff.

Exercises

1 What is the form of "La Raspa"? (Circle one) A B A B A A B A C A A B A C A B A

2 Which section prominently features eighth and quarter note rests in its motive? A

3 Which section differs harmonically from the others? C

12

Examples:

1 Play Example 1, right.


118

UNIT 18

EAR TRAINING FOR LESSONS 72-75

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Track 28
1 Listen to a musical motive.

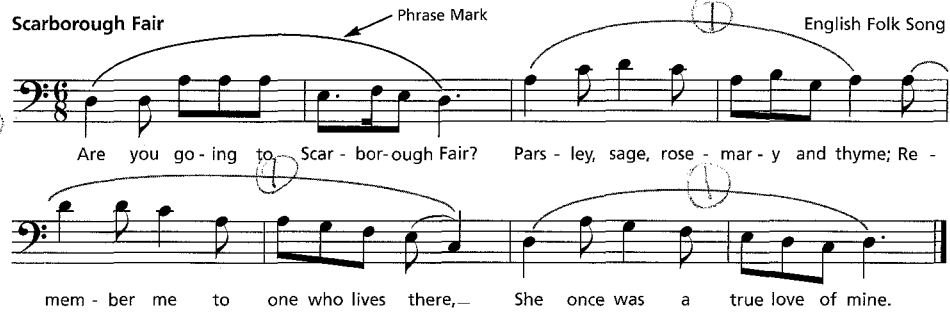


Track 29 (Beethoven, Symphony No. 5)
2 Listen to an excerpt that includes the above motive. How many times does the motive appear? 9 11 13 (Circle correct answer)

Track 30 (Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)
3 Listen to the melody. How many phrases are there? 6 1

Track 31
4 Listen to the melody of the following musical selection. Mark the phrases using curved lines over the entire phrase.

Scarborough Fair English Folk Song



Are you go - ing to Scar - bor - ough Fair? Pars - ley, sage, rose - mar - y and thyme; Re - mem - ber me to one who lives there, — She once was a true love of mine.

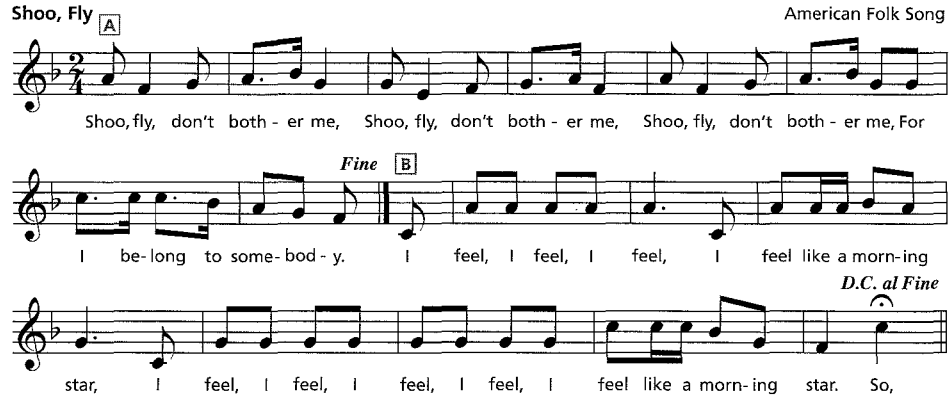
Track 32 (Simple Gifts)
5 Listen to a song in AB form.

Track 33 (Get on Board)
6 Listen to a song in ABA form.

Track 34 (Home on the Range)
7 What is the form of the following song? (Circle one) AB ABA 1

Track 35
8 What is the form of the following song? (Circle one) AB ABA 1
Write the letters above the music at the starting point of each section.

Shoo, Fly American Folk Song



Shoo, fly, don't both - er me, Shoo, fly, don't both - er me, Shoo, fly, don't both - er me, For I be - long to some - bod - y. I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel like a morn - ing star, I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel like a morn - ing star. So,

Track 36
9 In what rondo form is Beethoven's Für Elise? Listen to sections A, B and C. Write the letter for each section as you hear it. A B A C A 1 1 1 1 1

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

French Folk Song

3



4

Play Example 4, *Scarborough Fair*.

Simple Gifts

American Shaker Tune

5



Get On Board

African-American Spiritual

6



Home on the Range

American Folk Song

7



8

Play Example 8, *Shoo, Fly*.

Für Elise

A

Ludwig van Beethoven

Poco moto

pp

1. 2.

mf dim.

pp

B

1. 2.

mp espressivo

Ped. ad lib.

p

1 2 3 4 5

A

dim. *pp*

p *cresc.*

Ped. ad lib.

First system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains chords with fingerings: 5 2 1, 4 2, 5 3 1, 4 2 1, 5 1, 5 1, 3 2 1, and 4 1. The bass clef staff contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *f* and *dim.*

Second system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains chords with fingerings: 5 1, 4 1, 3 1, 4 3 2 1, 5 2 1, and 4 2. The bass clef staff contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *p* and *cresc.*

Third system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains chords with fingerings: 5 3, 4 1, 5 1, 5 2 1, and 4 2 1. The bass clef staff contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *f* and *dim.*

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains chords with fingerings: 3 2 1, 5 1, and a melodic line with fingerings 1 2 1 2 4 5 4. The bass clef staff contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *pp*.

Fifth system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with fingerings: 1 2 1 2 4 5 4, 1 2 1 2 4 5 3, 3 1 3 1 3 2 1 3 1, and 3 2 1 3 1 3 1 3 1. The bass clef staff contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *poco cresc.* and *dim.*

A

A musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written for a piano and voice. The piano part is in G major and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure is marked with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a crescendo hairpin. The melody is played in the right hand, with the left hand providing harmonic support. The voice part is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are written below the voice staff. The score includes a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The piano part ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

A musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written for a piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a simple accompaniment. The score is divided into four measures. The first measure contains a treble staff with a melody starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, and C5, then down to B4, A4, and G4. The bass staff has a whole rest. The second measure contains a treble staff with a melody starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, and C5, then down to B4, A4, and G4. The bass staff has a whole rest. The third measure contains a treble staff with a melody starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, and C5, then down to B4, A4, and G4. The bass staff has a whole rest. The fourth measure contains a treble staff with a melody starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, and C5, then down to B4, A4, and G4. The bass staff has a whole rest. The score is marked with a '4' in the first measure and a '1' in the fourth measure. The title 'The Rose Tree' is written in a decorative font at the top right.

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern. The piece concludes with a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking and a final triplet of notes. Fingering numbers 1, 2, and 3 are indicated for specific notes in both hands.

A musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written for a piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is in the treble staff, and the accompaniment is in the bass staff. The score consists of four measures. The first measure has a treble staff with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter rest. The bass staff has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, followed by a quarter rest. The second measure has a treble staff with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter rest. The bass staff has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, followed by a quarter rest. The third measure has a treble staff with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter rest. The bass staff has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, followed by a quarter rest. The fourth measure has a treble staff with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter rest. The bass staff has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, followed by a quarter rest. The score is marked with a "3" above the first measure and a "4" above the second measure. The title "The Rose Tree" is written in a decorative font at the bottom of the page.

The second system of the musical score for 'The Swan' from 'The Nutcracker'. It continues the melodic line in the treble staff and the accompaniment in the bass staff. The treble staff features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a slur over a group of four notes marked with a '4'. The bass staff has a more rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings include 'dim.' (diminuendo) and 'poco rit.' (poco ritardando). The system concludes with a double bar line.