

# Ternary Form

**TERNARY FORM** IS A THREE-PART FORM. RATHER THAN USING **THREE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SECTIONS**, MOST PIECES IN TERNARY FORM CONSIST OF **TWO SECTIONS**, THE FIRST OF WHICH IS **REPRISED**.



IN TERNARY FORM, THE **A** SECTION APPEARS BOTH AT THE BEGINNING AND AT THE END; LIKE BINARY FORM, THE **B** SECTION IS **CONTRASTING** IN CHARACTER.

THE REPRISED **A** SECTION MAY BE AN EXACT REPEAT OF THE FIRST **A**, OR IT MAY BE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT, BUT THE **LENGTH** OF THE **A** SECTIONS SHOULD BE SIMILAR.

**A B A**

TERNARY FORM

THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM **ROUNDED BINARY**, WHERE THE REPRISED **A** SECTION (WHICH WE CALLED **A PRIME**) IS **SIGNIFICANTLY SHORTER** THAN THE FIRST **A** SECTION.

Fine Da capo  
al Fine

**A** **B**

MINUET TRIO

MINUET & TRIO FORM

THE **MINUET AND TRIO** IS A VARIATION ON TERNARY FORM USED FOR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC. INSTEAD OF WRITING OUT THE REPRISED **A** SECTION, THE SCORE WILL PLACE THE INSTRUCTION "**DA CAPO AL FINE**" AFTER THE **B** SECTION, WHICH MEANS TO RETURN TO THE BEGINNING, PLAY THROUGH THE **A** SECTION, AND END THE PIECE.

THIS SAME FORM IS COMMONLY USED IN BAROQUE AND CLASSICAL OPERA, WHERE IT IS CALLED A **DA CAPO ARIA**. IN BOTH MINUET & TRIO AND DA CAPO ARIA, ANY **REPEATS** ARE **IGNORED** WHEN PLAYING THROUGH THE REPRISED **A** SECTION.

IT'S WORTH MENTIONING THAT THERE IS A COMMON FORM THAT IS DESCENDED FROM **MINUET AND TRIO** FORM: THE **MILITARY MARCH FORM** FAVORED BY JOHN PHILIP SOUSA AND OTHER AMERICAN MARCH COMPOSERS.



FANFARE

**A**

1ST & 2ND STRAINS

I

||:

**B**

TRIO

(DOGFIGHT) :||

IV

MILITARY MARCH FORM

IN THE **MILITARY MARCH FORM**, THE **A** SECTION IS SPLIT INTO TWO SUBSECTIONS, CALLED THE **FIRST STRAIN** AND **SECOND STRAIN**. THE TRIO **ADDS A FLAT** (OR REMOVES A SHARP) FROM THE KEY SIGNATURE, MODULATING TO THE KEY OF THE **SUBDOMINANT**. MOST MARCHES BEGIN WITH A SHORT **FANFARE**, AND REPEAT THE TRIO, PLACING A SHORT, INTENSELY DRAMATIC PASSAGE BETWEEN REPETITIONS CALLED THE **DOGFIGHT** OR **BREAKSTRAIN**.