

# 11 – Binary Form Dance Movements

In the Baroque era composers frequently arranged a number of short pieces into *suites*. Suites consisted of a number of fairly short movements in binary form in the same key, in the style of dances popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A typical Bach suite would often begin with a Prelude, followed by an Allemande, Courante, Saraband, Bouree and Gigue. All of these dance movements have different meters, tempi, and characteristic rhythmic features, but they are all alike in terms of their basic construction - they are all in *binary form*. Characteristic features of binary form is an opening eight measure passage which cadences in a closely related key to the initial key of the form, and which usually has a repeat sign at the end of the eighth bar. The second half of the form will be at least eight measures long, but in most cases is longer. The minuet below is a straightforward example of binary form.

Ex. 11-1 – Menuet from the “Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach”

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system (measures 1-8) is annotated with "Begins in Dmi" and "IAC in Dmi". The second system (measures 5-12) is annotated with "PAC in F" and includes first and second endings. The third system (measures 9-16) is annotated with "2nd half starts in F" and "HC in Dmi". The fourth system (measures 13-20) is annotated with "PAC in Dmi" and includes first and second endings.

In ex. 11-1 the second section, which starts in bar 9, begins in the closely related key that the first section cadenced in, and often will modulate through other closely related keys until it

cadences back in the original key. Most phrases are four bars long, but some cadences may be obscured by rhythmic motion continuing in one of the voices.

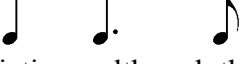
A pair of repeat signs is found in all binary movements, unless the repeats are written out as sometimes occurs to permit the composer to add variations during the repeat. The use of first and second endings is optional.

Example 11-2 is a minuet by Handel in G Major. It is eight measures longer than example 1 and includes figured bass symbols to allow the keyboardist to flesh out the harmonies of the bass line. The added length of this minuet is the result of two extra four bar phrases being added to the second half of the binary form. Since this piece is in a major key the first section modulates to the dominant key in phrase 2 (bars 5-8). The second half begins with a two bar long gesture which is sequenced up a step in bars 11 and 12. The next phrase (13-16) modulates to the closely related key of E minor and ends in a PAC. The following phrase modulates to A minor, another closely related key, before the last four bar phrase which ends back in G Major.

Ex. 11-2 – Handel: *Minuet* from Sonata Op.1, No. 5

The musical score for Handel's Minuet from Sonata Op.1, No. 5 is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes figured bass symbols in the bass line and various musical notations such as trills, repeat signs, and phrasing slurs. The first system (measures 1-4) concludes with an IAC in G. The second system (measures 5-8) features a repeat sign and concludes with an IAC in D. The third system (measures 9-12) also includes a repeat sign and concludes with a PAC in E minor. The final system (measures 13-16) concludes with a PAC in G.

Corelli's *Sarabanda* in ex. 11-3 is an excellent example of the *monothematic* nature of music of this era. The original melody (seen in the middle staff) begins with a rhythmic motive

of  which recurs in every odd numbered measure with only slight rhythmic variations, although the pitches and harmony change at each reappearance. A *saraband* is a Baroque dance in a slow triple meter with a pronounced emphasis on beat two. As in the Handel menuet the second half is extended by two phrases and is twice as long as the first half. The first section of this piece is once again eight bars long, but unlike the Bach example the cadence in bar 8 is a half cadence in the initial key of E minor and not a PAC in a closely related key.

The highest staff in example 3 is a transcription of the highly ornamented variation a performer played on a recent recording<sup>1</sup> of this Corelli sonata. Baroque composers expected performers to embellish their music in a manner similar to this rather than slavishly repeating an intentionally simplistic melody. Notice that the notes of the original melody (the middle staff) are incorporated into the florid variation. Unlike the previous examples this one features a bass voice “walking” in continuous eighth notes. It also includes figured bass symbols to allow the keyboard performer to enrich the music harmonically. Unlike the earlier examples the first four bar phrase modulates to the relative major (G) and the second returns to the original key ending in a half cadence in measure eight.

Ex. 11-3 – Corelli: *Sarabanda* from Sonata op.5, No. 8 for violin and continuo



The progression in bars 6 – 8 is frequently used to lead to a half cadence. The tonic chord in bar 6, beat 2, is followed by a minor v6 (bar 6, beat 3), then a iv6 (bar 7, beats 2 & 3) and then the major V chord in bar 8. This approach to a half cadence is called a *Phrygian half cadence*. The second half of Corelli’s *saraband* (ex. 11-3b) is twice as long as the first section, and cadences weakly in D Major in bar 12, but reaches a strong PAC in B minor in bar 16.

<sup>1</sup> The embellishments are transcribed from a 2003 recording by Andrew Manze of the Corelli Violin Sonatas on Harmonia Mundi

Ex. 11-3b – Corelli: *Sarabanda* (second section)

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). The key signature is E minor (one sharp, F#). The time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 9, 13, 17, and 21 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, sixteenth-note runs, and trills. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below notes. A key signature change to E major (no sharps or flats) is shown in the second system, and it returns to E minor in the fourth system.

The last eight measure passage (bars 17-24) is virtually an exact sequence of bars 9-16 transposed down a perfect fifth so that the final cadence is back in the original key of E minor. Corelli's original melody contains two unusual and prominent augmented fourth leaps in bars 14 and 17. The embellished variation includes some very striking chromatic appoggiaturas in bars 9 and 17 which emphasize the minor ninth of the dominant chords heard in these two measures.