Musical Form

Module 2 of *Music: Under the Hood*

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Outline

• Musical forms
• Sonata allegro form
• Example – Mozart C major piano sonata
Musical Forms

• The main point is not the specific form
  – The main point is that the music must be **intelligible**
  – The listener should not get **lost**
Musical Forms

• Some basic forms
  – Binary – AB
    • Common in dances
  – Sonata allegro – AABA with development
    • Best known form in Western music
  – Rondo – ABACA
  – Sonata rondo – ABA-C-ABA
  – Theme and variations
  – Passacaglia/chaconne
    • Variations over repeating bass
    • For example, Richard Rogers’ *Blue Moon*
Musical Forms

• **Most common musical structure**
  – *Exposition*
    • Introduce the main musical ideas
    • Tonic key
  – *Development*
    • Explore implications of main ideas
    • Other keys
  – *Recapitulation*
    • Return to original ideas with sense of closure
    • Tonic key
Musical Forms

- **Block structure** common in “classical” period
  - Haydn, Mozart, etc.
  - Organic development more common in “Baroque” period
    - Blocks correspond to keys
    - Makes for easy listening
      - **Still the standard today**
    - **Sonata Allegro** form is best known
      - 121 of Beatles’ 211 songs have AABA structure
Sonata Allegro Form

• AABA structure
  – AA: Exposition, repeated
    • Main theme in tonic
    • Secondary theme in dominant
  – B: Development
    • Multiple keys, usually minor
  – A: Recapitulation
    • Main theme returns in tonic
    • Secondary theme in dominant
  – Many variations!
Sonata Allegro Form

Diagram of sonata allegro form

I   V   V
Various keys

I   V   I   I
Sonata Allegro Form

• Basic contradiction?
  – Secondary theme in recapitulation is in dominant key.
  – How to return to tonic?
Example

- Mozart’s C major piano sonata (1788)
  - 1st movement (Allegro)
  - Learned by all piano students
  - Unusual solution of basic contradiction
Main theme in tonic key (I - C major)

Exposition
Tonic key, modulating to dominant. Repeated.

Secondary theme in dominant key (V – G major)

Audio file
Development
Beginning in $v - G$ minor

Main theme returns in subdominant! (IV – F major)

Recapitulation
Returning to main theme in IV allows secondary theme (originally in V) to be stated in tonic key I

However, Mozart briefly returns to dominant key of exposition before reverting to tonic.

Secondary theme in tonic key! (I – C major)

Recapitulation and closing section