

Baroque Binary Forms

some definitions

A **movement** in classical music means a complete musical object, potentially performable on its own (though usually grouped with others to make an entire “work”). Classical instrumental music is descended chiefly from dance forms, hence the term *movement*. Don’t call classical instrumental movements “songs,” even if iTunes does!

Binary form describes a movement in two clearly distinguished sections.

In **Baroque binary forms** (what Roig-Francoli calls “**two-reprise form**”) both sections are always repeated.

In **sectional binary form** (what Roig-Francoli calls “**tonic type**”; you should learn both terms) the A section ends in the tonic key, **and on** the tonic chord.

In **continuous binary form** the A section ends on V, III, minor v, or (rarely) another non-tonic chord. (“Continuous” binary movements still have a double bar between sections, and both repeats!) R-F calls continuous binary “**dominant type**” or “**relative major type**” as the case may be. Learn all these variant terms.

In a **rounded binary form** the return to the tonic key partway through the B section is marked by the restatement of the *opening* material of the A section.

In a **balanced binary form** the *end* of the B section uses the same material as the *end* of the A section, though it may be transposed (so that in a continuous binary form, the B section final cadence will be in the tonic).

Note that the properties **rounded** and **balanced** are independent: a movement can be both, either, or neither.

The **Baroque binary forms** are also important as the precursors of Classical **sonata-allegro** form, to be studied in more detail in MU 209 and in music literature and history classes.