Music 1 – Aural skills
Structure and texture transcript

(Duration 13 minutes 10 seconds)

When we talk about form in music, we're talking about the structure. If you're into architecture or design, it's the floor plan of a piece of music. So you might decide to have one bedroom here, another bedroom in the middle of the house, and another bedroom at the far end of the house. And that could be your A section. And in between those A sections or in between those bedrooms, you might have a bathroom and a living room. The bathroom would be your B section and the living room would be your C section.

So, if you have bedroom, bathroom, bedroom, living room, bedroom, the form or the structure of the piece of music or the house would be A, B, A, C, A. You can arrange your house or your piece of music anywhere you'd like, but most music will have repetition. And that's really what we're talking about when we're talking about the form or the structure of a piece of music, the use of repetition or the changes of section and changes of mood.

 [Slide reads: Binary Form

Think of binary computers. They only use two numbers 0 and 1. Binary music has two sections]

(vocalizing melody)

So binary. Binary just means there's two sections. We usually call it an A section and a B section. And binary refers to computer coding when computers program everything into zeros and ones. That's two different sections. So in binary music, there'll be one section and it might be five seconds long, it might be five minutes long, and then there'll be a contrasting section. If you add an extra section to binary, you might end up with ternary form.

 [Slide reads: Ternary Form
The word ‘ternary’ is similar to the word ‘three’. Ternary music has three sections. The first section is very similar to the third section

(vocalizing melody)

Ternary form says you've got your first section or mood. Second section or mood, and then the first section comes back again. Now that first section may be altered a little bit. It's still what we call ternary form A, B, A section. Other structures that are common. There's something called through-composed, and through-composed just means there's no real structure. It's kind of evolved organically. Romantic composers in the 1900s might tell a story and tell that story with whatever music, whatever mood, whatever key changes, as many different melodies as they need to tell that story, and it would be through-composed. And there may not actually be much repetition in it at all. Through-composed

 [Slide reads: Rondo form

Music in rondo form is like a club sandwich. It contains layers of bread (the A section) with different filings (musical ideas) in between.

First idea – a new idea – first idea returns – another new idea – first idea again]

(vocalizing melody)

Rondo form. Rondo is a little bit like a club sandwich, one of the sandwiches that has bread and then cheese, and then bread, and then ham, and then bread, and then vegetables, and then bread again. Except instead of the bread, we have the A section. So a piece will start with a section of music and then has something quite different, a contrasting section. Once again, it might be 10 seconds long, or it might be 30 seconds long, two minutes long. First section, new bit. The first section comes back again. And yet again, another new bit. First section comes back again. Yet again, another super new bit. First section comes back again. And this can keep happening for as long as you like, really. So the common rondo form is A, B, A, C, A where the A section is the piece of bread, but it could keep going. A, B, A, C, A, D, A, E, A, F, and then finished with A. The characteristic of rondo form is that a familiar section keeps repeating. A, A, A, A, A. But with unfamiliar material in between each repetition of the familiar.

[Slide reads: Strophic form

Sometimes called AAA song form. Often heard in folk songs that tell a long story.]

When we look at songs, sometimes it's the same melody over and over and over and over and over, but with different lyrics. I know Paul Kelly loves to use that to tell a story. Same melody. So a verse, and another verse, and another verse, and another verse, all with different lyrics. That's one way to plot out, or to plan a story. That form is called strophic form.

[Slide reads: Verse chorus form

A very common structure in pop songs
First verse, catchy chorus,second verse, catchy chorus, bridge,catchy chorus]

Then you get chorus and verse form. Pretty common in a lot of pop songs over the last 70 years, since the 50s. So there might be a little bit of an instrumental introduction, then verse one. And then a different bit of music for the chorus. Verse two uses the same music as first one, but with different lyrics, different words, different content. And then the chorus again. Sometimes there'll be a third verse. And then the chorus again. And by this point, we're probably getting a little bit over the chorus. So often comprises will throw in a little bridge section, maybe even a key change, modulation, and then the chorus one or two last times. Very, very common form or structure for a pop song.

[Slide reads: Sonata form.

Very popular during the Classical period

Another type of form is sonata form. Sonata form was very, very popular in the Classical era. And it has three general sections. The first section has two ideas often presented in a different key. So the first one might be in the tonic and the second and the dominant or the five key. So two ideas in the first section, it's called the exposition. Those ideas get developed in the middle section, they'll mess around with them. Cut them up, extend them, shrink them, mix them together, change keys. They evolve kind of organically. They mix them up in the development section. And then the third section, the first section comes back again, but this time both the melodic ideas heard in the first section are in the same key. And that's called the recapitulation. To recap is to go over old material. Exposition. Development. Recapitulation. That's sonata form. Now the word sonata's a little confusing because in Classical and romantic times, we often had sonatas, which meant a piece for solo instrument and piano. And often the first movement of a three movement sonata was in sonata form. Or the last movement of the four movement sonata was in sonata form. So a little bit of confusion there about what sonata means. Sonata form: three sections. Exposition. Development. Recapitulation.

[Slide reads: Test yourself

Practicing structure recognition.
Use your Apple music, Spotify or YouTube to find short pieces of music. Decide on the structures for each piece. In two sentences, justify your choice

Common structures that feature repetition include:

* Stropic form (AAAA)
* Binary form (AB)
* Ternary form (ABA)
* Rondo form (ABACA)
* Verse-chorus form (ABAB)]

You can see sunlight through this texture This texture is quite thin.(Music plays) Whereas this texture is very dense. Thick in texture. (upbeat acoustic music and vocalizing) Texture. There are three main words to familiarize yourself when it comes to texture. Monophonic. Homophonic. Polyphonic. Let's start with monophonic.

[Slide reads: Monophony

Monophony contains only one melody line and no chords or accompaniment.
It may involve multiple instruments playing the same melody in unison
Monophony: “mono” meaning one plus “phono” meaning sounds”

Monophonic simply means one melody line. (vocalizing melody) One melody line, one instrument, one part. It could be fifty people singing the same melody, but no harmonies, just one part, monophonic. And mono means one. For instance, a mono on a bike is one wheel. Other mono words. Monocle is when you've got one glass. Not a pair of glasses, a mono means one.

[Slide reads: Homophony

Homophony has a main melody but it also contains harmony.
The accompanying chords are often very simple.]

Next, homophonic. Homophonic has harmony. So it'll still have that one melody, but underneath it'll have chords as well. So homophonic is one melody plus chords. Now those chords are probably pretty simple, not particularly interesting. I sometimes refer to it as melody plus a boring part is homophony or homophonic music.

[Slide reads: Polyphony

Polyphony involves two or more competing melodies
Fugues are an example of polyphonic music
A canon or a round is another example of polyphonic music

Third is polyphony. Polyphony has lots of different melodies going on, competing for the audience attention. It's like jumbles of layers. It might be two, three, four or five. Bach loved to write fugues, which would take one melody, and after it had played for a little while, another part would come in with the same melody, maybe a bit higher, maybe a bit lower. And another part would come in with the same melody, but a little bit later. If it was in a fugue, that melody might have to change a little bit so that the harmony still worked.

Another type of polyphony is the canon or the round. Now, you've probably sung some of these in primary school. And it simply means that everyone sings the same song, but they start at the beginning at slightly different times. So the first part will be singing along. And when they finish the first line, the second part will start at the beginning. So the first part over here is on the second line, whilst the second part is on the first line. When they get to a certain spot, another group will start back at the beginning. So now we've got one group at the beginning, one group on the second line, one group on the third line. And so it goes. Polyphony. Many different layers of interesting material competing for your attention

. ♪ Monophonic and monophonic ♪ ♪ And just a lonely tune ♪ ♪ Add some chords and I'm homophonic ♪ ♪ Melody with some chords ♪ ♪ Polyphony, polyphony, polyphony, polyphony ♪ ♪ Polyphony, polyphony ♪ ♪ Polyphony, polyphony, polyphony, polyphony ♪ ♪ Polyphony ♪

All the very best with your exams. Stay strong. Expect the unexpected and be sure to have a good time.

(soft music)

End of Transcript