Musical Forms

Or, organizing music into smaller sections
Form/Structure

• Purposeful organization of music
• A song or piece of music can be divided into smaller parts or sections

• We can label these as verse, chorus, bridge, etc.
• Example of the form of a song:
  Verse/Chorus/Verse/Chorus/Bridge/Chorus
• This could also be labeled: ABABCB
Form/Structure (cont.)

• How is music divided into smaller sections?
• How do we know when there is a new section or different musical idea?
  i.e.: Lyrics, melody, specific instruments, overall feel, etc.

• You can structure music around: beats, bars, repeating chord patterns, lyrical patterns, etc.
Form/Structure (cont.)

Examples

• Repetition: AAA
• Contrast: ABAC
• Variation: AA’BABB’
  (‘=prime; almost the same)

• Strophic Form: Repeated musical ideas, AAA
• Binary Form: 2 musical ideas, often contrasting, ABAB
Strophic Form

• The general meaning of “form,” and “strophic form” in particular (AAAA…)
• Anglo-American Folk Ballads, date back to at least the 16th century. Also connected to older forms (explain this meaning of ballad).
• Discuss: the social importance and function of these kinds of songs. Also, what kind of people sang these songs, and under what sorts of circumstances?
• Explain the “folk process”: oral/aural transmission, variants (sometimes without originals), authorship.
Strophic Form (cont.)

Ex: Blind Alfred Reed
   – “The Wreck of the Virginian” (1927)

Ex: James Carter & The Prisoners
   – “Po Lazarus” (1959)

Ex: The Animals
   – “House of the Rising Sun” (1964)
12 Bar Blues Form

• Unclear origins: Post-Civil War, Southern US
• Use in blues, jazz, rock ‘n’ roll, etc.

• *Beats* and *bars* as measures of musical time.
• What is a *chord*?
• What do we mean by *chord changes* (a.k.a. *harmony*)?
• Explain I-IV-V
# 12 Bar Blues Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chords</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>(T)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyrics</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
12 Bar Blues Examples

• Delta Blues:
  Ex: Robert Johnson – “Sweet Home Chicago” (1937)

• Chicago Blues:
  Ex: Muddy Waters – “Honey Bee” (1951)

• Early Rock ‘n’ Roll:
  Ex: Chuck Berry – “Johnny B. Goode” (1957)
  Ex: Link Wray – “Rumble” (1958)
  Ex: Elvis Presley – “Hound Dog” (1956)

Tin Pan Alley

- **Standard Pop Music form** (Jazz “standards”)
- Popularized in the early 1900s by **Tin Pan Alley** songwriters

- By 1900, most popular music publishers had moved their headquarters to the same small neighbourhood in New York City (West 28th St. between Fifth and Sixth Avenues).
Tin Pan Alley (cont.)

• Prior to this, large publishers were located in several U.S. cities (including some unexpected cities like Milwaukee), so the concentration was an important change in the industry.

• This group of New York-based publishers almost completely dominated the U.S. popular music market from around 1900 to the 1940s.
The phrase *Tin Pan Alley* has four interrelated meanings:

1. The **neighbourhood in New York City** where these publishers were located. Although by the 1920s this complete geographical domination weakened as Los Angeles became an important secondary pop music centre (why?)

2. It refers to a **way of working** (explain: professionalization, overt commercialism, segregation of tasks, volume of production).

3. It refers to a certain kind of **mainstream aesthetic** (explain: formula, universal themes, accessibility, professionalism again).

4. A **derogatory term** to describe the sound a whole bunch of cheap pianos playing at the same time: like banging on tin pans.

*Nowadays, people still use the phrase Tin Pan Alley to describe a certain way of working and a certain aesthetic.*
Tin Pan Alley (cont.)

- TPA also gives us another musical form to add to our list (along with strophic, and 12-bar blues). This form is sometimes called Tin Pan Alley Ballad form, or 32-Bar Chorus form.
- Notice, this is the other meaning of “ballad,” referring to a slow, commercial, sentimental song (usually a love song).
- This form can be written: AABA.
- Each section is eight bars long, and the ‘B’ section is often called the ‘middle eight.’
- Ex: Judy Garland – “Over the Rainbow” (1939)
- Ex: Miles Davis – “So What” (1959)
AB Form

• Verse/Chorus song form
• Structure: two or three verses, and a second distinct musical idea, called a chorus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERSE</th>
<th>CHORUS</th>
<th>VERSE</th>
<th>CHORUS</th>
<th>CHORUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
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</table>

• Verses and Choruses can be of varying length, but are usually 4, 8, 12 or 16 bars long.
AB Form (cont.)

Ex: Jimi Hendrix Experience – “Foxy Lady” (1967)

Ex: Creedence Clearwater Revival – “Bad Moon Rising” (1969)

Ex: Bob Marley – “Three Little Birds” (1977)

Ex: Ben E. King – “Stand By Me” (1961)
ABC Song Form

- Verse/Chorus/Bridge song form
- 2-3 verses, a repeated chorus, and a third, distinct section called a bridge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERSE</th>
<th>CHORUS</th>
<th>VERSE</th>
<th>CHORUS</th>
<th>BRIDGE</th>
<th>CHORUS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABC Song Form

Ex: The Beatles – “Girl” (1965)
Ex: The Beatles – “Ticket to Ride” (1965)
Ex: Otis Redding – “(Sittin’ On The) Dock of the Bay” (1968)
Other elements of AB or ABC form

- Intro
- Pre-chorus - function
- Instrumental solos (often over verse chords)
- Outro (with or without vocal ad-libs)
- Others?

- Arrangements (2+ meanings)

Songs with More Complex Forms

Ex: Led Zeppelin – “Stairway to Heaven” (1971)
• Multiple sections, some repetition

Ex: Queen – “Bohemian Rhapsody” (1975)
• Multiple sections, little or no repetition
Four-Chord Song

• I-V-vi-IV chord changes
• The order of these chords can change, sometimes within a single song
• Ex: Axis of Awesome – “Four Chord Song”