



A level Notes: The Symphony


Symphony usually refers to a musical work written in a certain form. The symphony as a musical form has existed for more than 2000 years. It is a piece of music for a large body of instruments, and it usually consists of four different sections.

First Movement: Brisk and lively

Usually in Sonata Form. A movement in Sonata form has two musical themes. The first is loud and forceful: the second is quiet and lyrical.

 At the very beginning of the movement, you hear the strong first theme, then, after a brief bit of interesting activity in the harmony department, the softer second theme comes in. This whole section's purpose in life is to introduce, or expose, the two melodies; therefore, musicians call this part of the first movement of the *exposition*.

 Then comes a new section. In this section, the composer develops the two themes, varying them and making them more interesting musical associations. Logically enough, this section is called the *development* section.

 Finally, the main ideas are reintroduced in the same order as at the beginning: first the strong powerful theme and then the quieter, more lyrical one. The composer restates these themes in a slightly different form, but they're very recognizable for what they are. This section is called the *recapitulation*.

EXPOSITION – DEVELOPMENT – RECAPITULATION

Second movement: Slow and Lyrical

After the lively and energetic first movement of a symphony comes a time to relax. The second movement is usually slow and lyrical, with a lilting, songlike theme (giving the composer a chance to show off their melodic ability).

Third movement: Dancy

The third movement is dance like – either a minuet or a scherzo. It is usually written in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The third movement consists of three sections. First you hear the minuet or scherzo itself. Then you have a contrasting section called a trio. Finally the minuet or scherzo comes back again.

**MINUET – TRIO – MINUET
OR
SCHERZO – TRIO – SCHERZO**

Finale: Rollicking

© 2000, L. Shannon www.MusicatSchool.co.uk

The finale is usually fast and furious, showing off the virtuosic prowess of the orchestra. This finale is also usually quite light in character – that is, it doesn't usually go into a great deal of emotional depth. The finale's much more concerned with having a good time. Also, very often it is in rondo form.

In a rondo form you hear a delightful theme over and over again, alternating with something contrasting. Here is an example of rondo form in written form;

Studying analysis is fun.
Studying analysis makes our brains tired.
Studying analysis is fun.
Studying analysis is good when giving presentations.
Studying analysis is fun.
Studying analysis is excellent when we play silly games.
Studying analysis is fun.

A – B – A – C – A – D – A

| The Symphony |
|--------------|
| Movement 1 |
| Movement 2 |
| Movement 3 |
| Movement 4 |