



Form and Design

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When composing piece of music, we must plan our work as carefully as an architecture would design a building. In each case, the finished work must have continuity, balance, and shape - or form. But whereas architecture is concerned with a balance in space, music is a balance in time. In music, we use the word **FORM** to describe the way in which a composer achieves this balance by arranging and setting in order the musical ideas - the way in which we design and build our music.

Repetition and contrast

Even in a fairly short piece, a composer rarely finds that one musical idea is enough. But too many ideas, following each other in a random fashion, would make the music appear to wander aimlessly and without purpose - to lack shape or form. So we must aim to have a careful balance between the two main ingredients of all musical forms and designs: repetition and contrast.

Some repetition of musical ideas is necessary in order to bind the music together - to bring unity to the piece. Some tunes may be heard twice, or even more during the piece. Think of these as musical landmarks to help you find your way around.

It is also very important for the composer to introduce contrasting ideas so that the music has more variety and interest. This can be achieved in several ways. The most likely is that a new tune, or phrase, will be introduced. But there are other ways of making musical contrast, including:

- Change of key/mode (the contrast of major to minor)
- rhythm
- pace
- dynamics
- mood
- texture and timbre

A composer may use one of these at a time, or several at a time, depending upon how striking a contrast the composer wishes to make.

Questions

1. Why must a composer plan their music very carefully.
2. What is form in music?
3. If a composer used too many ideas all at once what would the effect be?
4. Name two basic ingredients of all musical forms and designs.
5. List as many ways as you can to achieve variety and contrast in a composition.