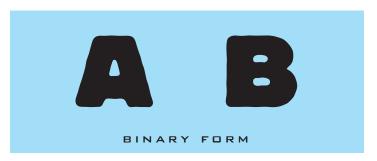
Binary Form



WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE FORM OF A PIECE, WE ARE REFERRING TO THE LARGE-SCALE LAYOUT OF THE PIECE... SPECIFICALLY, THE ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS OF MUSIC, HOW AND WHEN THEY ARE REPEATED, AND WHAT KEYS ARE BEING USED.

ONE OF THE SIMPLEST FORMS IS BINARY FORM, WHICH CONSISTS OF TWO CONTRASTING SECTIONS. WE REFER TO THESE TWO SECTIONS AS A AND B.

THE SECTIONS MIGHT BE CONTRASTING IN MOOD, TEMPO, KEY, OR EVEN IN A COMBINATION OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS.





BINARY FORM IS USED IN BAROQUE DANCE SUITES IN A VERY SPECIFIC WAY. IN THESE PIECES, BOTH SECTIONS ARE REPEATED. THE A SECTION BEGINS IN THE PRIMARY KEY AND MODULATES TO THE KEY OF THE DOMINANT, AND THE B SECTION BEGINS IN THAT KEY AND MODULATES BACK TO THE ORIGINAL KEY. PERFORMERS OF THE TIME WOULD TYPICALLY IMPROVISE ORNAMENTATION WHEN REPEATING EACH SECTION.

BAROQUE DANCE SUITES WERE WRITTEN FOR VARYING INSTRUMENTATION; MANY WERE WRITTEN FOR KEYBOARD (USUALLY HARPSICHORD OR CLAVICHORD), OTHERS WERE WRITTEN FOR CHAMBER GROUPS, AND SOME WERE EVEN WRITTEN FOR FULL ORCHESTRA.

EACH MOVEMENT OF THESE SUITES WOULD BE WRITTEN IN THE STYLE OF A PARTICULAR BAROQUE DANCE: ALLEMANDE, GAVOTTE, BOUREE, COURANTE, SARABANDE, LOUREE, GIGUE, AND OTHERS, EACH OF WHICH HAD A SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

BECAUSE BAROQUE DANCE FORM IS SO COMMON IN BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, WHEN THEORISTS AND MUSICOLOGISTS ARE TALKING ABOUT BAROQUE MUSIC AND SAY "BINARY FORM,"
THEY ARE ACTUALLY REFERRING TO BAROQUE DANCE FORM.

ANOTHER SOMEWHAT RARE VARIATION OF BINARY FORM IS ROUNDED BINARY FORM, WHERE THE A SECTION RETURNS AFTER THE END OF THE B SECTION. THIS REPRISE OF THE A SECTION, HOWEVER, IS SHORTENED, SO WE REFER TO IT AS "A PRIME."

