

IRREGULAR PHRASE STRUCTURE IN THE MINUET AND  
TRIOS FROM TWO HAYDN SYMPHONIES

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CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE MINUET AND TRIO FORM . . . . .	4
III. THE MINUET AND TRIO FROM THE <u>OXFORD SYMPHONY</u> . . . . .	6
IV. THE MINUET AND TRIO FROM THE <u>SURPRISE SYMPHONY</u> . . . . .	21
V. A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE MATERIAL DISCUSSED . . . . .	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	41

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

If one scans the phrase-forms of a number of classic minuet and trio forms, one is impressed by the irregularity of phrase lengths within what is generally considered a regular "four-square" dance form. This irregularity occurs especially in the minuet and trio forms of a number of the late Haydn symphonies. The purpose of this study is to gain an insight on how this phrase irregularity is obtained.

Though irregular phrases occur in Mozartian minuet and trio forms, it was decided to limit the study of this feature to these forms as developed by Haydn. Since it was necessary to limit the scope of the study, representative movements were chosen from the Oxford Symphony, No. 92, and the Surprise Symphony, No. 94. The reasons for choosing these two representative movements are twofold:

1. Each is a late work.
2. Each shows a different aspect of treatment; the movement from the Oxford is highly irregular and the movement from the Surprise is generally more regular.

The procedure used for this study was as follows: retaining the measure bars, the bass and treble lines between important cadences were extracted from the complete texture and placed on a chart. The extent of each phrase was indicated and the number of measure bars in each counted. In order that the general contour of the lineal structure be further emphasized, both bass

and treble lines were reduced to their most fundamental forms. The phrase-forms were then studied according to how they float upon these basic lineal designs. (The hypothesis was that if a line is long, the phrase will necessarily be long enough to cover a particular phase of such a line.) The line, then, was being regarded as the basic form rather than the phrases it supports. Since length of line is the essential factor, and since the character of lines is largely determined by underlying chord progressions ending in cadences, harmonic rhythm is of the utmost importance, and the span of the phrase was supposed to be controlled accordingly.

Therefore, much of this phrase irregularity seems to be innate to the length and melodic contours of the musical lines between the important cadences. This is in contrast to a contrived phrase irregularity carried out through the recognized principles of phrase extension. It is true that instances of such contrived extension do occur in the minuet movements, but their study will not be emphasized.

For purposes of definition, the following symbols were devised for the plates to describe the character of the cadences:

↓-represents a perfect authentic cadence in the home key,

↯-represents a perfect authentic cadence in a key other than the home key,

↻-represents an important imperfect authentic cadence,

→-represents a semicadence or any form of continuing harmonic activity.

In addition to these, PAC refers to perfect authentic cadence within the written material.

When specific notes are referred to the following symbols are used:

Great octave      C-B

Small octave      c-b

First octave       $c^1-b^1$

Second octave     $c^2-b^2$

Third octave       $c^3-b^3$

## CHAPTER II

### THE MINUET AND TRIO FORM

The minuet and trio form, derived from a dance form, retains an overall pattern of regularity. It is essentially a da capo type of composition; i.e., a ternary form, ABA, in which each part is complete within itself. "This design was used so frequently in the writing of minuets during the eighteenth century that it came to be known as the 'minuet-and-trio form.'"<sup>1</sup> This term will be used throughout the study with 'minuet' referring to A and the 'trio' to B.

Of course, the minuet and trio form had long lost its function as a dance form; it was being treated as a form with an aesthetic purpose. The rigidity of the functional form was loosened even to the point of a later development into the scherzo.

The typical minuet is in itself a small ternary form. Part I ends in a perfect authentic cadence in the key of the dominant, or if in minor, in the key of the relative major. Part II, often containing contrasting thematic material, is a transitive section ending in a half-cadence in the home key. Part III, a thematic restatement of Part I, pursues a harmonic course leading into a perfect authentic cadence in the home key. Occasionally a short coda follows. In general, the form can be diagrammed in this way:

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Fontaine, Basic Formal Structures in Music, p. 69.

$\parallel : I$     Part I     $\forall : \parallel :$     Part II     $\forall | I$     Part III     $: \parallel$  Coda

It will be noticed that the repeat plan of its prototype, the old binary form, is retained.

The trio has the same formal plan as the minuet.

## CHAPTER III

THE MINUET AND TRIO FROM THE OXFORD SYMPHONY

Albert E. Wier, in the preface to his anthology, The Symphonies of Haydn, Schubert and Mozart in Score gives the following account of the composition of the Oxford Symphony.<sup>2</sup>

In the period from 1787 to 1790 Haydn composed some of his greatest works, including the six "Russian" string quartets, fifteen piano trios and twelve symphonies for which he received a commission from the "Concert Spirituel," an institution founded in 1725 by Philidor. These symphonies were divided into two sets of six each; one in the second set became known as the "Oxford" Symphony because it was performed in the Sheldonian Theatre on July 8, 1791, when Haydn was awarded the degree of Doctor of Music by Oxford University.

The analysis of the phrase structure is shown on Plates I through VII.

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<sup>2</sup>Albert E. Wier, The Symphonies of Haydn, Schubert and Mozart in Score, p. 6.