

In this session we started by going through the quiz two study guide. Then I gave a little advice on how to practice your meter, wrapped up some leftover odds and ends with The Well-Tempered Clavier, and we looked at a new kind of piece, a Baroque Dance Suite.

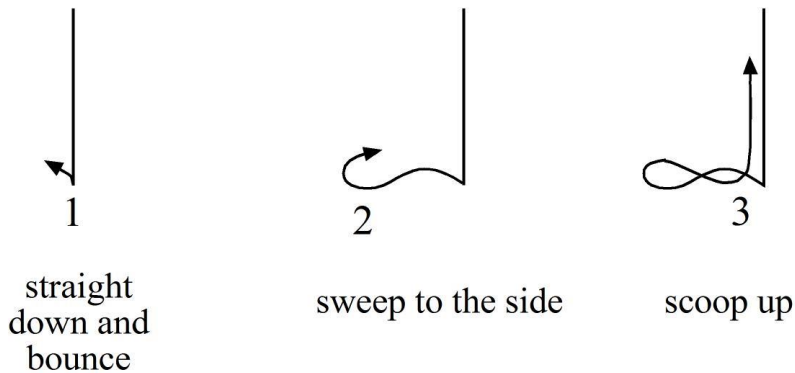
II. Meter Stuff

Here I just suggested that if you want to get more comfortable with our metric patterns the thing to do might be to go back to our meter exercises and, after you already know the answer, play the track again. Spend some time “grooving” and conducting along with the track. You can use the simple patterns I originally suggested in class (“windshield wipers” and “triangle”) or you could do the more fluid conducting patterns that most musicians do.

Since I’ve never documented the conducting patterns in the notes, let me put them here.

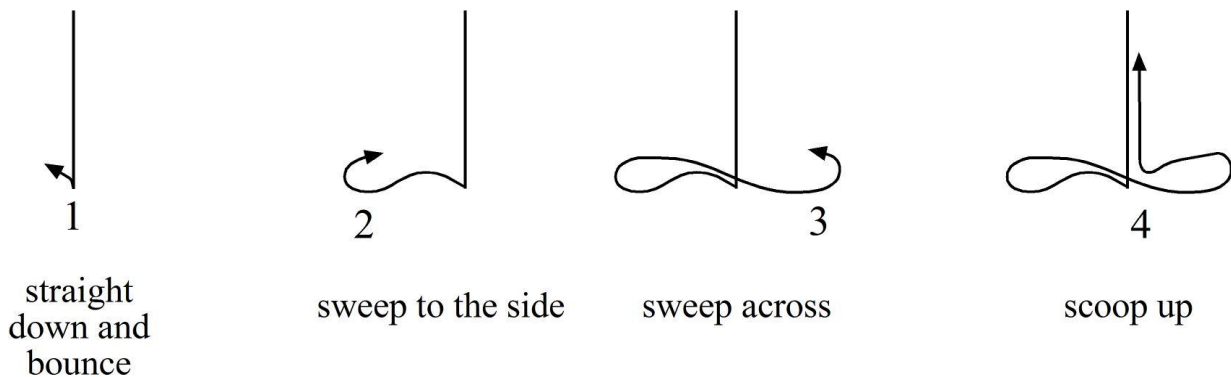
TRIPLE PATTERN

This is close to a triangle. I am drawing the right-handed pattern, you would probably do the opposite if you use your left.



FOUR-BEAT PATTERN

An upside-down T. You are really just adding one more motion to the triple.



It takes a little while to get comfortable with this – I think it’s worth it!

III. The Well-Tempered Clavier, Part II

Next we went back to J.S. Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. I have info on this in the Class 10 notes as well. This time we focused on the meaning of the title. You could say that it means “Well-Tuned Keyboard Instrument.”

The term “Clavier” in the title is just a generic term meaning “keyboard instrument.” We looked at the main keyboard options Bach would have had in his lifetime – the harpsichord and a little box-shaped instrument called the clavichord. The piano was not invented yet, but these days it is considered perfectly appropriate to play the Well-Tempered Clavier on a modern piano.

The “Well-Tempered” part of the title refers to a surprising problem in music – the various scales do not mesh together perfectly. If we take an instrument and tune it so that a single scale (like, say, C major) sounds as good as it possibly can sound, this will cause other scales (like, say, A-flat major) to sound out of tune. The art of tuning the keyboard so that all scales are in a compromise that sounds reasonably good was called “finding the temperament,” and it took several centuries to perfect this practice. (Now that we have electronic tuners and know how to do logarithms it is easy to break an octave into 12 perfectly equal parts, but they didn’t have that technology back then!)

Thus, if you can play all the way through Bach’s volumes and every piece sounds good, you know that your keyboard instrument is “well-tempered.”

On the quiz...

You want to know about how the WTC is an anthology of 48 Preludes and Fugues in every possible key and also this business about the meaning of “well-tempered clavier.”

IV. The Baroque Dance Suite

Our exploration of Baroque Period pieces has mostly been organized according to their **form**, the way they are organized and the musical story that they tell. Up to now we've looked at some pieces that are built in "loops," and some that I claim are built in "blocks" or "chunks." It's time to look at one last kind of form, which has a slightly different feeling than our somewhat serious and complicated violin concerto and fugue.

This is the Baroque Dance Suite, which is simply a short collection of different dance-type movements. We think that these are "stylized" dances, meaning that they were intended more for listening and not for social dancing.

We listened to a set of Bourrées from Bach's Suite No. 3 in C major for Solo Cello, BWV 1009. The suite has six movements overall, and we are picking the fifth one. Each one of these would have its own distinctive style and "groove."

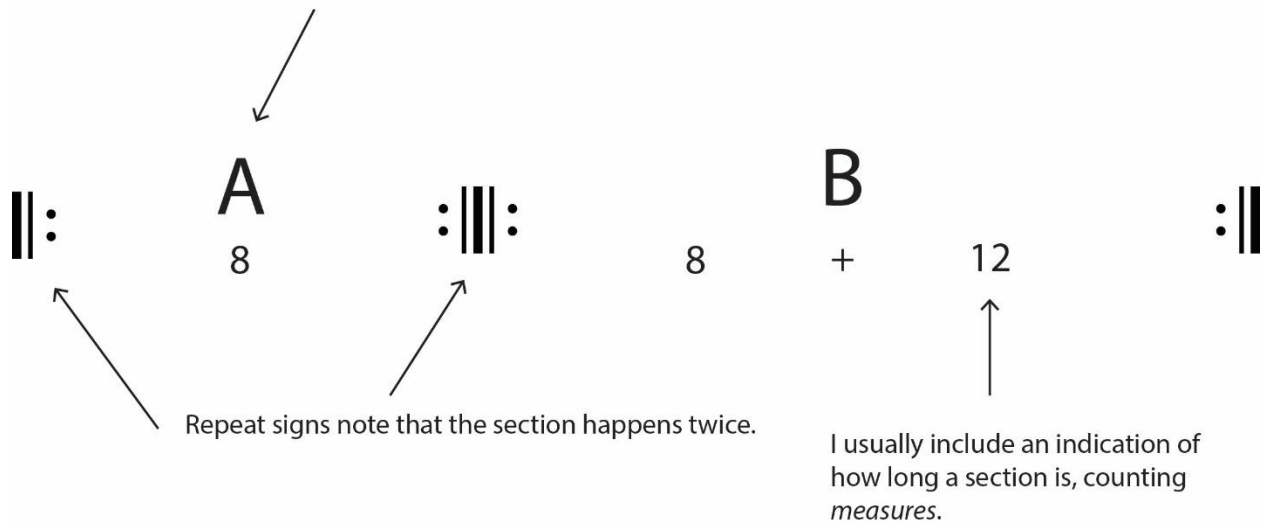
- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrées I & II
- VI. Gigue

These dance movements seem a little more organized and compact than the other kinds of pieces we've looked at in this unit. Our loop-based compositions as well as our ritornello forms and fugues all seem to flow out rather loosely – they are made of a lot of little parts strung together. A composer could easily insert even more material into the middle of these works and it wouldn't really mess up the form in any way.

Baroque dance movements, on the other hand, tend to have a fixed plan – they are divided into two sections that repeat.

In order to follow this structure I we will use a new kind of formal map for this piece, with a new vocabulary that we are going to see more in the future. It just has a few different elements.

Letters and other symbols keep track of the different sections.



So, here we've got two sections, each of which are repeated. The first one is usually pretty short and straightforward, and the second part tends to be a little longer and wilder. (My sample diagram above is our Bourrée I, where the first part is 8 measures long but the second part is a total of 20 measures.)

In general there are two versions of this basic structure which are called **Binary Form** and **Ternary Form**. The only difference between the two, really, is whether the "A" material makes a return appearance at the end. If it does, it is a Ternary form (because the A-B-A makes three parts). If it does not, and the second half of the piece is completely different, it is Binary (= A-B, two parts).

Here are sample Binary and Ternary Forms.

Binary Form



Ternary Form



So, our Bourrées are in binary form. In addition, there's one more complication. There are two of them, and they alternate in their own A B A pattern.

Bourrée I



Bourrée II



Bourrée I



I've made [a video of this movement](#), which is hosted on our website. It features an animated version of our form diagram which you can follow, as well as more fun choreography from the Mark Morris Dance Group.

In general, you want to remember:

- These Bourrées are in *binary form*. Two parts A + B, first one is short, second one longer, both sections get repeated.
- They are part of a Baroque Dance Suite, a set of *stylized dances*
- The middle dance (Bourrée II) is more "flowing" and in a minor key. On the quiz I may play Bourrée II by itself.