Rondo Form

Grade(s): 4-8
Lesson length: 40 minutes

Instructional objectives:

Students will:
- Describe rondo form
- Analyze recorded music and identify the form through listening exercises
- Create listening maps to graphically represent the form of a piece of music.

Materials:
- Musical recordings of featured repertoire listed below.
- Sound system for musical excerpts of concert repertoire (e.g.) laptop and speakers, iPhone® dock, Spotify®, etc.
- Paper and writing utensils

Suggested Repertoire*:
- Johann Sebastian Bach E Major Violin Concerto, III. Allegro assai
- Antonín Dvořák Cello Concerto in B minor, III. Finale (Allegro moderato)

*Click on the links above to listen to these examples on Spotify. A free account is required to listen.

In this lesson, students will study the way in which a composer organizes musical ideas within a piece. Students will learn to identify rondo form by listening to specific musical examples.

Assessment Strategies

In this lesson, students should be able to successfully do the following: demonstrate understanding of rondo form through verbal explanation and visual representation and determine whether or not a piece is in rondo form. Learn more about assessment strategies on page 5.

Learning Standards

This lesson uses Common Core and National Core Arts Anchor Standards. You can find more information about the standards featured in this lesson on page 4.
INTRODUCTION

1. Discuss the following terms: **form** and **rondo**.

**Form** refers to the way a composer organizes musical ideas within a piece. It is another tool the composer uses to convey the meaning and ideas that make up his or her music.

**Rondo** is an Italian word that means round. A rondo is an instrumental form with a refrain that keeps coming back. Unlike the verses of a song, though, the music in a rondo changes between each repetition of the refrain.¹

Classical rondo form has at least 3 statements of the refrain (A) and at least 2 contrasting sections (B and C) creating symmetrical patterns such as ABACA, ACACABA, or even ABACADA.

TEACHING STEPS

2. Listen to the suggested repertoire in the sidebar or select your own pieces with a rondo form. For each piece, have students **identify** whether it has a recurring musical idea. For example, does an instrument give a clue to the refrain? A dynamic? A rhythm? Focus only on the main, repetitive theme.

3. After determining how the main theme returns, have students **discuss** whether or not the theme is exactly the same when it returns or if it is modified.

For example, how many beats (or measures, regular groups of beats) make up the main musical idea? Is that always true, or does it vary?

4. Have students **identify** whether there are contrasting sections between repetitions of the theme. How many are there? How are they different from one another, or are they the same? Use musical terms to help describe the differences (e.g., the instrumentation is different, the dynamics are much louder, the tempo is slower, etc.).
PROCEDURE

5. **Create** a listening map to visually represent the form of the piece. Use a color, symbol or descriptive word to identify the “A” section. When a different idea is introduced, use a contrasting color, symbol or descriptive word.

6. **Listen** to the piece again with your map in hand. Does it match the music? Do you need to make any additions or changes so that it is a better reflection of what you hear? **Compare** your map to the definition above of a rondo. Does it match?

Extension

A. **Use the following questions for further discussion:**

1. Why might composers use organizational strategies in their compositions? Why might they choose to repeat something again and again?
2. Can you think of an analogy that helps you understand the difference between rondo form and a theme and variations?
3. Can we assume or infer anything about the composer’s political, personal or musical intentions based on the form of the music?

B. **Revisit this lesson approximately one week later.** Choose additional pieces of music to analyze. They do not all have to be in rondo form. Follow the teaching steps above and have students identify whether selected pieces are in rondo form. Have them explain their reasoning (e.g., “This piece is not in rondo form because the original theme does not repeat.”)
VOCABULARY

**Form**: The way in which a composer organizes musical ideas within a piece.

**Rondo**: An instrumental form with a refrain that keeps coming back. Unlike the verses of a song, the music in a rondo changes between each repetition of the refrain.

LEARNING STANDARDS

**Common Core Anchor Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2**
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4**
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5**
Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

**National Core Arts Anchor Standards**

**Anchor Standard 7** Perceive and analyze artistic work.

**Anchor Standard 9** Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
ASSESSMENT

- Examine students’ Listening Map for accuracy and understanding of rondo form.
- Through a guided discussion comparing and contrasting each piece, observe students’ understanding of musical elements.
- Extension: observe students’ continued understanding of rondo form by determining if a new piece of music is in rondo form or if it is different.