

Composition in Theme and Variations Form



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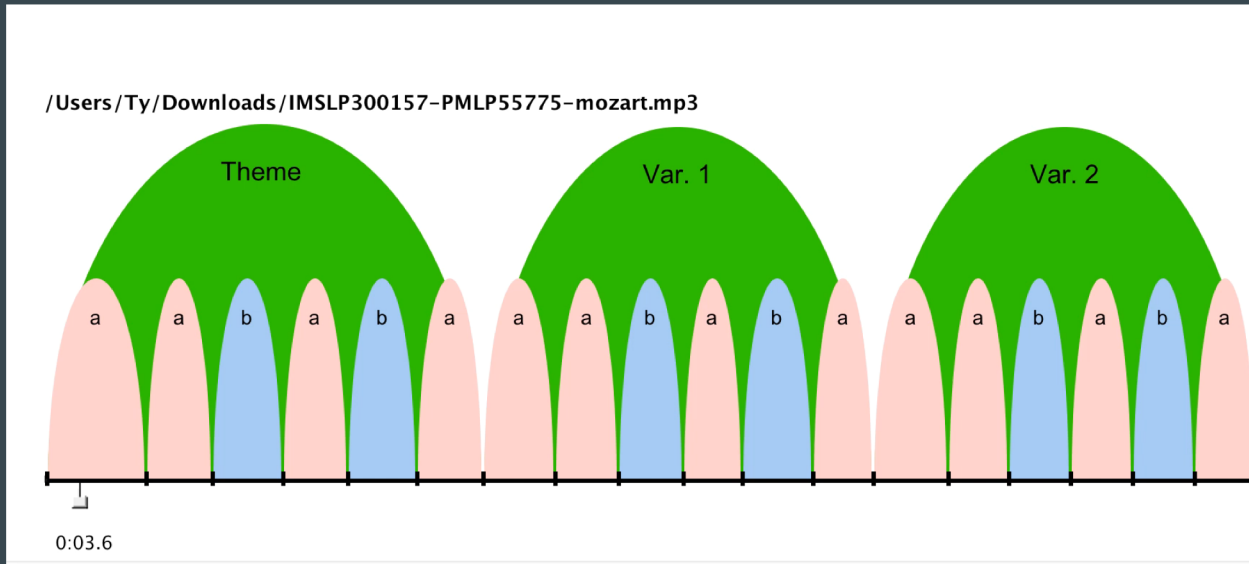
What is Theme and Variations Form?

Theme and Variations form is a standard form of musical composition where a simple, unembellished melody is used as a theme and then repeated several times with melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, or other changes.

Mozart: "Ah, vous dirai-je maman"

Variations on "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"

In variation #1, Mozart used fast, darting sixteenth note passages in the right hand in such a way that you can still hear traces of the melody. He creates the trill-like effect by alternating between two different notes. The right hand plays quick arpeggios. The left hand continues with a countermelody with a slightly more syncopated rhythm than the original theme.



Original Composition based on Mozart's Variatio

Mozart's Main Theme

- The Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star theme is played by the right hand in the upper register of the piano.
- A very simple accompaniment is played by the left hand in the lower register.

Student's Main Theme

- The melody of Row, Row, Row Your Boat is played by the right hand in the upper register of the piano.
- A very simple accompaniment is played by the left hand in the lower register.

Variations on Row, Row, Row, Your Boat

Kaelie Gillespie

Main Theme

4/4

Modeling Mozart's Variation 1

Mozart's Variation 1

- Fast, darting sixteenth note passages in the right hand with a trace of the melody.
- Trill-like effect by alternating between two different notes.
- The right hand plays quick arpeggios.
- The left hand plays a more syncopated countermelody than the original theme.

Student's Variation 1

- Arpeggiating sixteenth notes runs in the right hand.
- Lands on the note of the original melody for the first two measures.
- Trill-like effect by alternating between two adjacent notes.
- The left hand plays a counter-melody starting a third above the original melody.

The image displays two musical staves. The left staff, labeled 'Variation 1' in a box, shows measures 5 through 7. The right hand plays a rapid sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern, while the left hand plays a syncopated counter-melody. The right staff, labeled '8', shows the beginning of the student's variation, featuring a similar sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and a counter-melody in the left hand.

Modeling Mozart's Variation 2

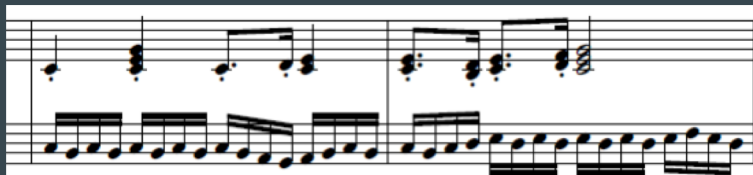
Mozart's Variation 2

- The left hand plays quick sixteenth notes while the right hand plays the main melody with some chords.
- The left hand passages start by fluttering just above and below the main note, then follows the chord progression down to a low register.

Student's Variation 2

- The left hand plays sixteenth note passages that stay close to the notes of the chord.
- The left hand passages are played in a lower register when the chord changes.

Variation 2



Theme and Variations “Formula”

- Chose a theme. It can be a pre-existing or newly composed melody.
- Decide how many variations you will have and which compositional devices will be used in each variation.
- Your variations should sound different than the original theme, but the theme should still be recognizable.

Compositional Devices

- Melody
- Harmony
- Rhythm
- Meter
- Tempo
- Articulations
- Dynamics
- Texture
- Orchestration

“Real World” Application

- In context of music therapy
 - Composition of Theme and Variations provides a template for client creativity in a simple way
 - Versatile
 - Provides a mixture of structure and freedom
 - Is accessible to a variety of populations

Questions?