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Musical analysis, lesson 1: the Cadence and the Phrase

Before beginning the analysis of a composition, we must remember that music is motion, that the motion of music requires a definite amount of time for its completion.

Now the motion of music, that is, its inherent movement including the time duration required for its completion, is, like poetry, punctuated at certain points. These are simply the breathing points in the melody. If the composition before us be played at the piano, we shall be sensible of a pause in the fourth measure; of a still more definite pause in the eighth measure, where the double bar indicates the termination of a distinct portion. Continuing, we feel the sense of rest in the twelfth measure, in the sixteenth, and in the eighteenth or final measure.

Such resting points are called Cadences, and as the cadence is always a determinant factor in musical analysis, let us turn for a moment from the composition before us to the subject of cadences.

The word cadence in English is a derivation of the Latin word Cado, I fall. It refers to the falling of the voice at the close of a statement or sentence. In music, the ’’closing" eflfect of the cadence may take on many colors and convey many impressions, all of which are indicative of the feeling and degree of finality which they bring about.

Hence, the student should thoroughly master the following cadential−formulas. There are four principal kinds of cadence:

1. The Authentic (or direct) Cadence, which proceeds from the chord of V to the chord of I.
2. The Plagal (or indirect) Cadence, which proceeds from the chord of IV to the chord of I.
3. The Half (or semi) Cadence, which proceeds (usually) from the chord of I to the chord of V.
4. The Deceptive (or unexpected) Cadence, which proceeds from the chord of V to the chord of VI.

Each of these cadences has three forms. If the final chord ends with the octave of the bass in the uppermost voice the cadence is said to be Perfect; if it ends with third or fifth of the bass in the upper voice, the cadence is said to be Imperfect.

Here follow all four cadence groups in the Perfect and Imperfect forms (a) in Close harmony, (b) in Open harmony. The student should thoroughly master these and transpose them to all keys, major and minor.

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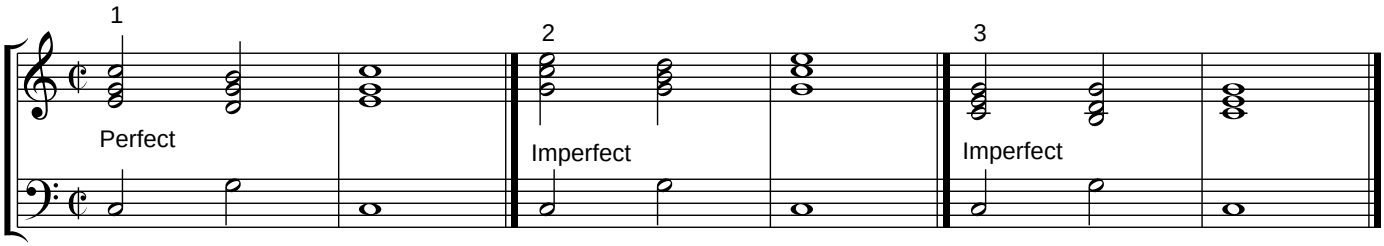
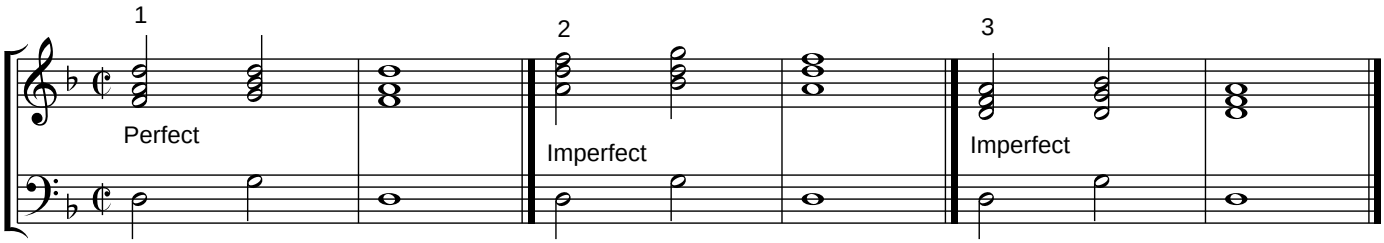
Cadences in close position

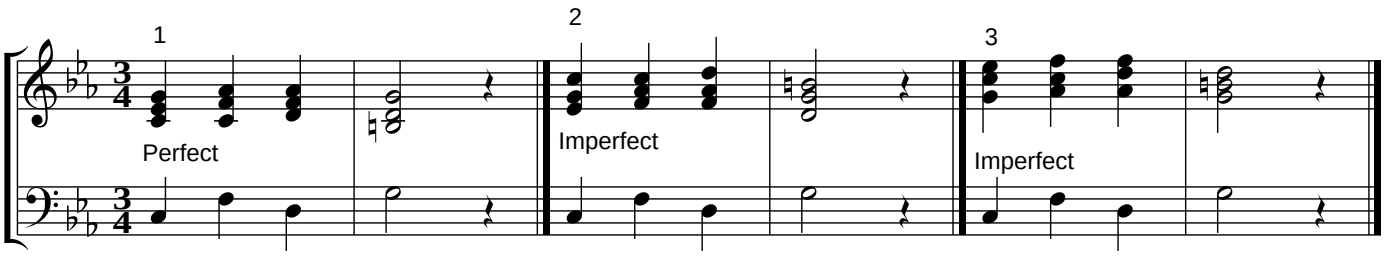
Authentic



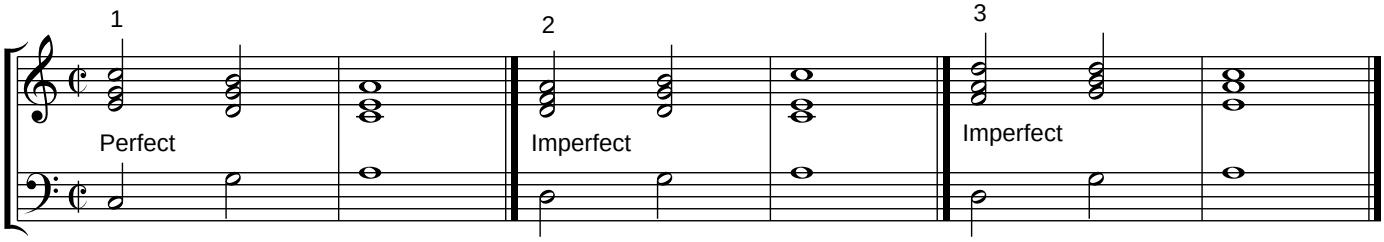
Plagal



Half



Deceptive



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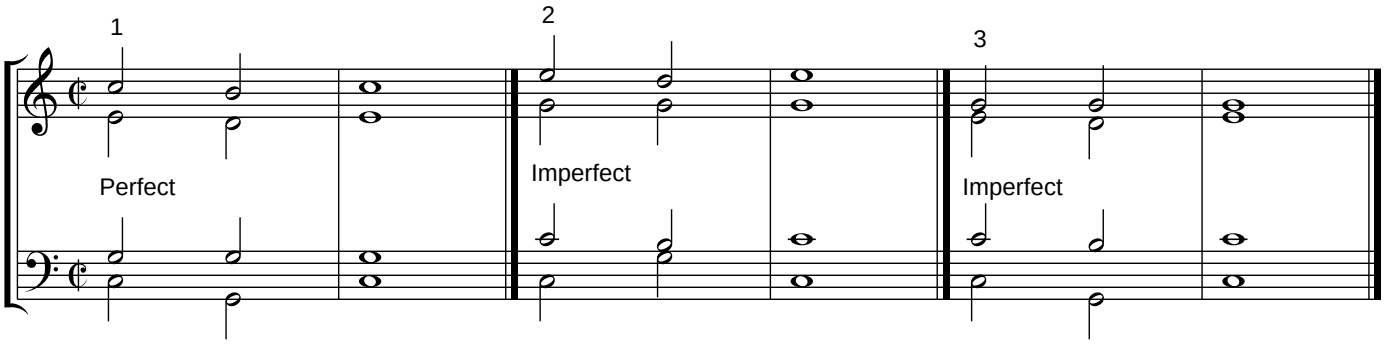
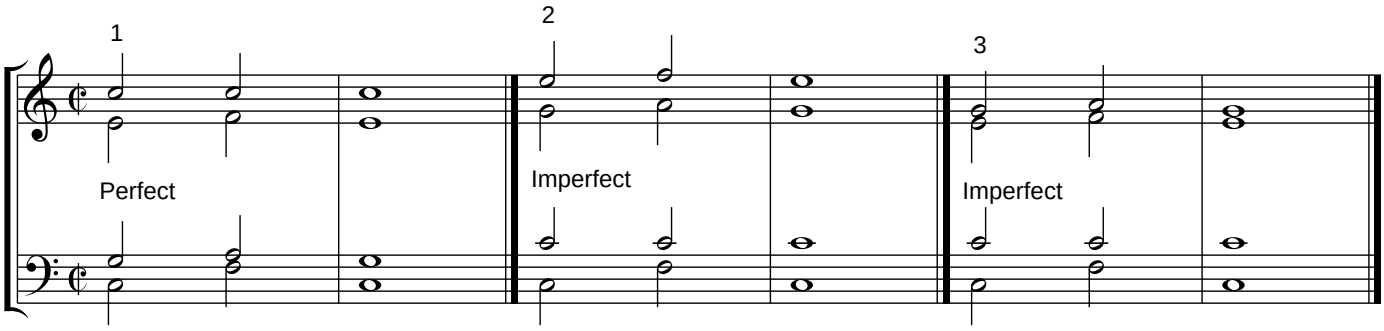
Cadences in open position

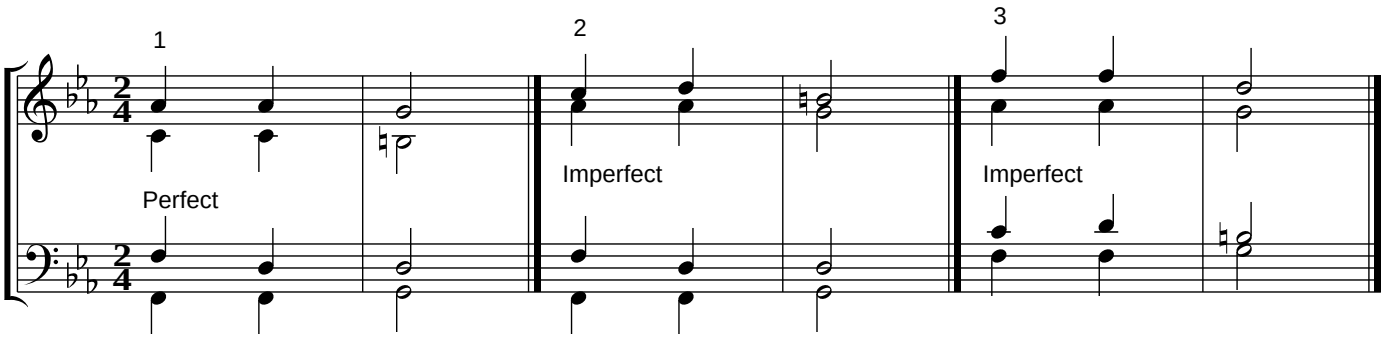
Authentic



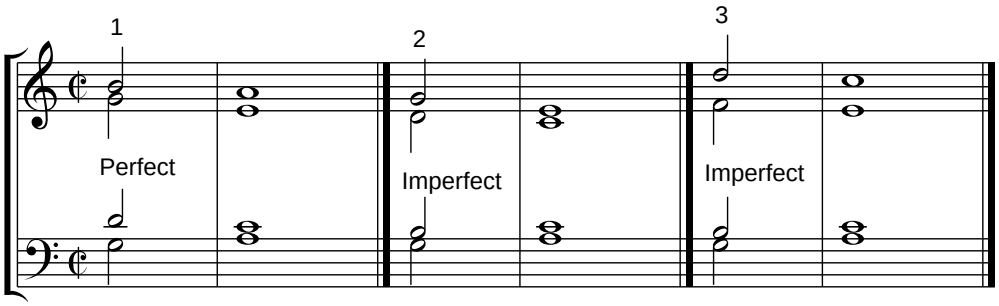
Plagal



Half



Deceptive



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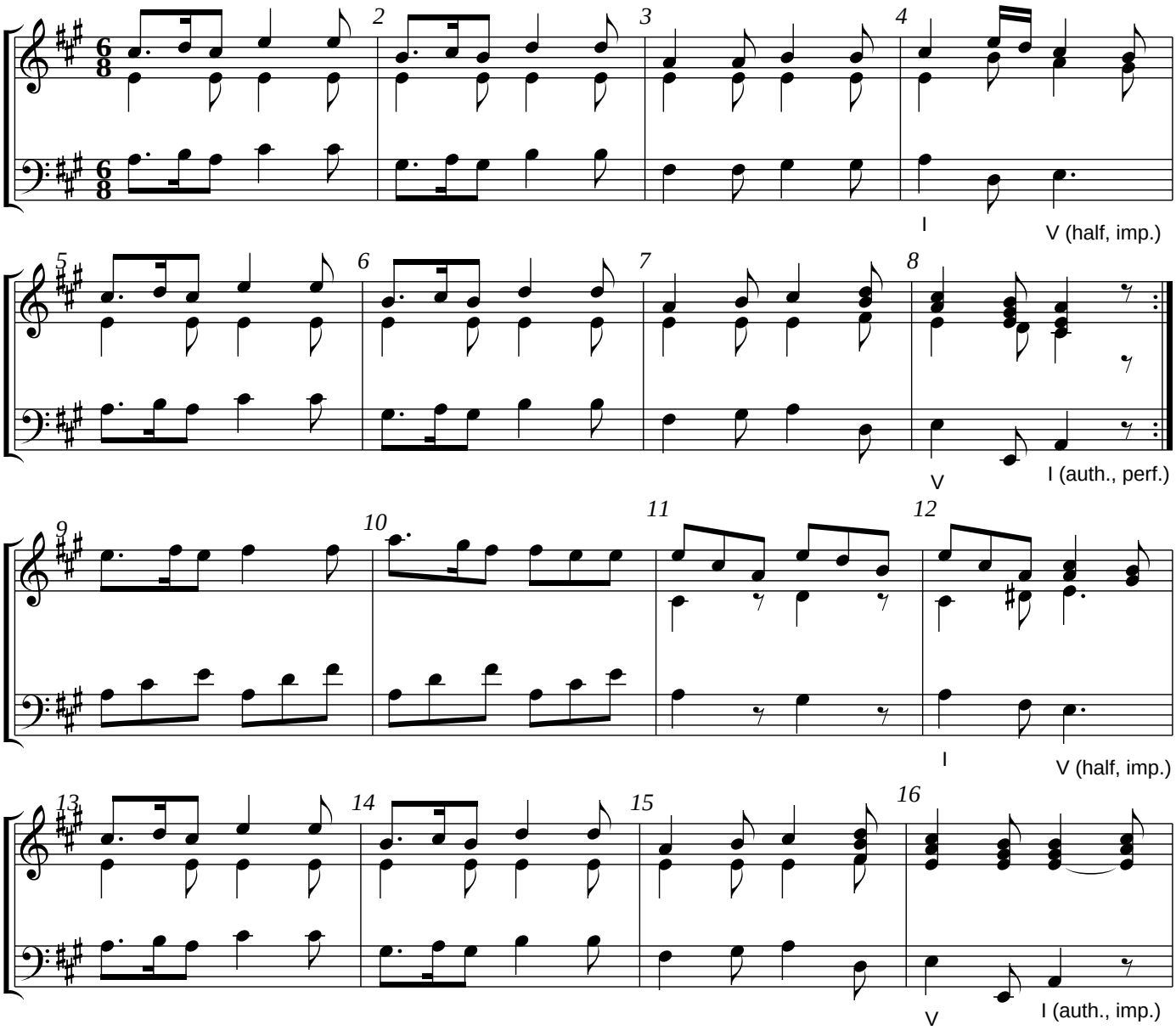
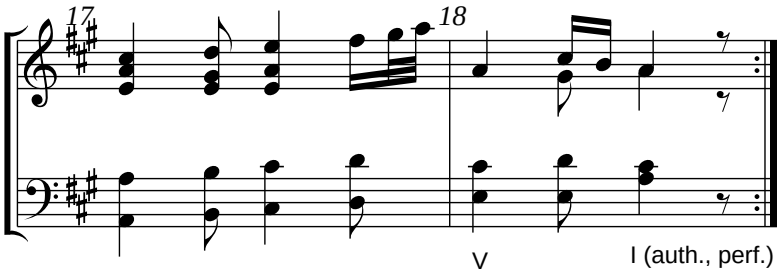
Looking now at the Mozart Theme in A major (KV 331), we can determine whether the resting points in measures four, eight, twelve, sixteen, and eighteen are cadences, or not (The cadence must complete itself on a metrically strong beat. Thus, in on the first or fourth beats, unless delayed by Suspensions)

1. In measure 4, the chord succession is I − V (Half Cadence, Imperfect).
2. In measure 8, the chord succession is V − I (Authentic Cadence, Perfect).
3. In measure 12, the chord succession is I − V (Half Cadence, Imperfect).
4. In measure 16, the chord succession is V − I (Authentic Cadence, Imperfect),
   (leading over without cessation to measure 18)
5. In measure 16, the chord succession is V − I (Authentic Cadence, Perfect).

Mozart, KV 331, theme





The cadences subdivide their total length of theme in five portions (with measures 17 and 18 as a expansion of the measures 13 − 16).

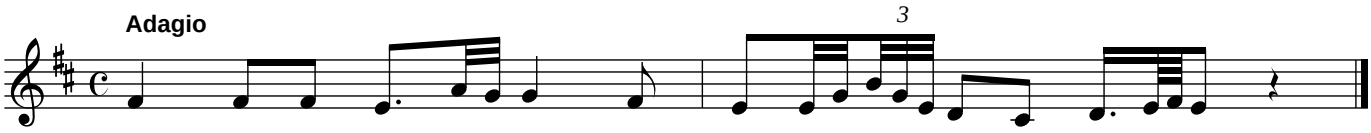
Of these, the second and last end in a manner entirely satisfactory to the ear; while the first, third, and fourth produce the feeling of incompleteness. All music is a swaying or swinging from points of rest to points of unrest. We have now noted that the cadence punctuates the melody, separating its total length into delinite portions.

Definition: a Phrase is a portion of melody ending in a cadence.

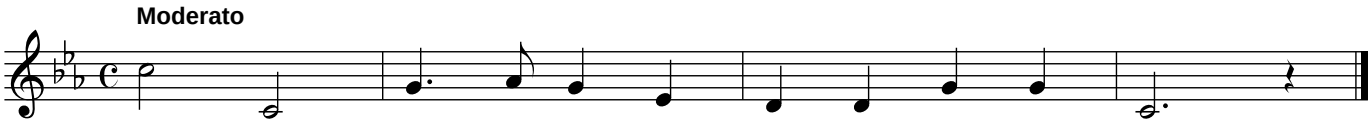
Note:

The phrase is never determined by the number of measures, but by the presence of the cadence. Hence there are phrases of various lengths from two measures to many. The following illustrations will make this clear. It is to be noted that tempo has a direct bearing on phrase length. The quicker the tempo, the longer the phrase may be, and conversely, the slower the tempo, the shorter the phrase. In each of the phrases that follow, observe that the trend or impulse of the rhythm is to reach a resting point.

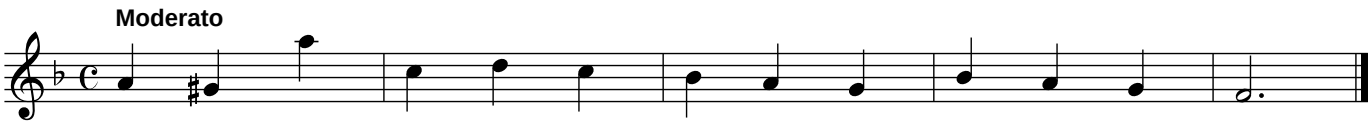
Two measures



Four measures



Five measures



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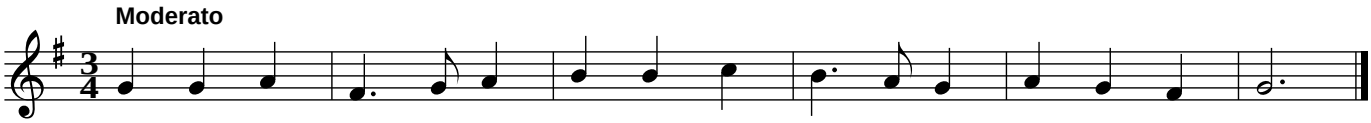
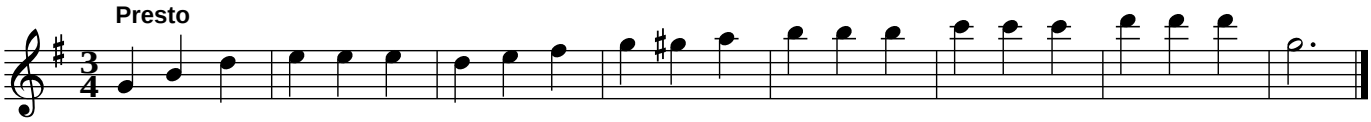
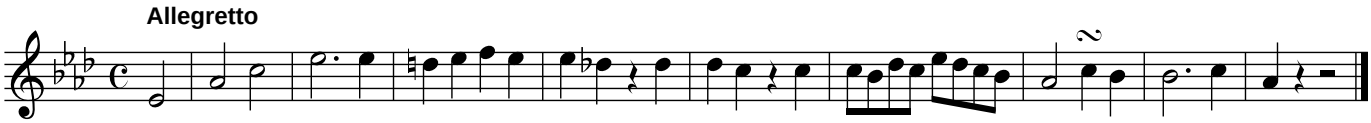
Six measures



Eight measures

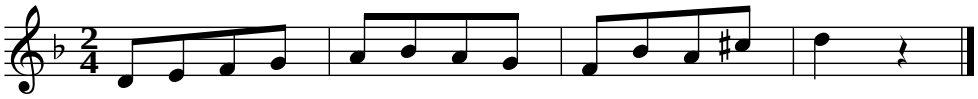


Ten measures

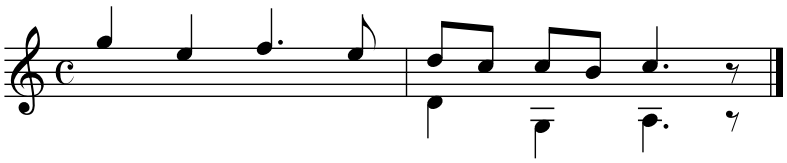


Questions

1. Define the words Theme, Sonata.
2. What are the four forms of Cadence?
3. Give root−meanings of the words Authentic and Plagal.
4. Does length determine the phrase ?
5. Why is the following a phrase?



6. When are cadences perfect ?
7. Compare the perfect with the imperfect form of cadence.
8. What form of cadence is illustrated by this example ?



9. What effect has tempo on phrase length ?
10. What do you understand by the rhythm of music and of poetry ?

This lesson is a more or less modification of Tapper's First Year Analysis −Musical Form− and has been typeset with MC Musiceditor 6.0.7 (www.mcmusiceditor.com − www.bestmusicteacher.com)