

The Sequence

A sequence is the immediate repetition of a melodic fragment or series of chords at a higher or lower pitch level. A modified sequence is a sequence where one or more intervals or rhythms is mildly altered.

The sequence is a powerful device because it is a combination of both the repetitive and changing forces that make most music "work". We hear something familiar in a sequence, but something that has also changed, moved and transformed.

This familiar example below shows both regular and modified sequences. An audio example is available on the website.

Minuet No. 1

(excerpt)

J.S. Bach

The image displays four staves of musical notation for Minuet No. 1 by J.S. Bach, in G major and 3/4 time. The notation includes various annotations and brackets to illustrate sequences and modified sequences.

- Staff 1 (Measures 1-4):** A bracket above measures 1-2 is labeled "modified sequence of previous two measures". Below measures 3-4, it says "The basic pattern is the same, but some of the intervals have changed".
- Staff 2 (Measures 5-8):** A bracket above measures 5-6 is labeled "sequence of previous measure". Below measures 7-8, it says "The same pattern is restated a step lower".
- Staff 3 (Measures 9-12):** This staff shows a continuation of the sequence from the previous staff.
- Staff 4 (Measures 13-16):** A bracket above measures 13-14 is labeled "sequence of previous measure". Below measures 15-16, it says "The same pattern is restated another step lower". A bracket above measures 15-16 is labeled "a second sequence".

Assignment:

Find an example of a sequence in music you are either studying or listening to for pleasure. If the music is notated, bring in a copy of the example(s) and also a recording. On your score, put brackets above the sequence(s) as in the above example. If you only have a recording (CD or mp3), bring that with a specific cue point.

Also, try to find both examples of regular AND modified sequences.