

Understanding Ritornello Form in the Op. 6 Concertos of G. F. Handel

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Example 1. Walter Kolneder's Model for Vivaldi's Ritornello Movements.

In major

Function	R1	S1	R2	S2	R3	S3	R4 (Da Capo)
Key	I	→	V	→	vi	→	I

In minor

Function	R1	S1	R2	S2	R3	S3	R4 (Da Capo)
Key	i	→	III	→	v	→	i

Example 2. Matthew Santa's Model for Ritornello Form.

Opening Ritornello

Ritornello theme presented by full ensemble in the tonic key

Solo Section

sequences and motivic development featuring soloist(s)

(followed by an alternation of Ritornellos and Solo Sections in various closely related keys until the music returns to the tonic key and the movement ends)

Example 3. Generalized Model for Ritornello Form.

Opening Ritornello

Main theme in the tonic key

Episode*

contrasting material, often featuring sequences or motivic development

(followed by an alternation of Ritornellos and Episodes in various closely related keys until the music returns to the tonic key and the movement ends.

*The first episode or subsequent ones may be omitted

Example 4. Four Elements that Signal Sectional Divisions in a Ritornello Form.

- 1) shifts from textures featuring the tutti ensemble to those featuring soloists or vice versa;
- 2) the return of thematic material from the opening ritornello;
- 3) strong caesuras punctuated by authentic or half cadences;
- 4) phrase/phrase group completion (necessary condition).

Example 5. Handel, Op. 6, No. 1, ii, mm. 1-14.

R1
Allegro

Tutti: *f* Solo:

5 Tutti: *p* **R2** *f*

10 Solo: Tutti:

...followed by two more modulations, one to E minor and one back to G major, before the movement concludes. Each modulation is accompanied by a return of the material from mm. 1-2.

23 Solo:

6 6 # 6 6 # 7 6 #

27 Tutti: Solo: Tutti: Solo: E3 E4

6 6 # 5 4 # 6 b7 5 6 4 3

31 Tutti:

6 6 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 3 7 6

35

6 3 4 6 6 5 4 6 4 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 4 3 2 3 4 3 4 4

39 R4

4 3 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 9 6 7 3 5 5 3

43 Adagio tr p

2 6 # 6 7 6 #

Example 7. Handel, Op. 6, No. 1, iii.

Adagio R1

Solo: Tutti:

6 7 # 5 6 6# #

7 Solo: trans. R2

p *f*

6 6# 6 5

14 Tutti: Solo: R3

6 # 6# 6# 6 5 6# # 6 6

21 Tutti:

6 7 6 6 6 7 6 6 6

28 (R4?) Codetta

6 # 6 6 6 6 7 6 6 # 6 PAC Tasto solo

35

p *f* *p*

6# # 7 6 6

Example 8. Handel, Op. 6, No. 2, iv, mm. 1-47.

R1/fugal exposition

Allegro, ma non troppo

Tutti:

Musical notation for measures 1-8. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

Musical notation for measures 9-16. The right hand continues the melodic development with sixteenth-note patterns. The left hand features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Fingering numbers (6) are indicated below the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 17-24. The right hand has a more active melodic line with sixteenth-note runs. The left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment. Fingering numbers (6) are present.

Musical notation for measures 25-37. Measure 25 is marked 'Solo:'. The right hand has a melodic line with dotted rhythms. The left hand features a complex texture of chords and sixteenth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *pp* and *f*. A section marker 'E1' is placed above the staff.

Musical notation for measures 38-47. Measure 38 is marked 'Tutti: R2'. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes. The left hand features a complex texture of chords and sixteenth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *f*. Fingering numbers (6) are present.

Example 9. Handel, Op. 6, No. 4, ii, mm. 1-47.

Allegro **R1/fugal exposition**

Tutti:

7

12

18

24

R2

30

3 4 5 6 6 6# 6 6 7 6 5 b

Detailed description: This system contains measures 30 through 35. The right hand features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, including slurs and ties. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. Fingering numbers are provided below the bass staff.

36

7b 6 5 4 3 9 8 6 6 6 # 6 6 # 7 6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 36 through 41. The right hand continues with intricate melodic patterns, including a trill in measure 39. The left hand accompaniment remains consistent. Fingering numbers are provided below the bass staff.

42 Solo: E1 Tutti: Solo: Tutti: Solo: Tutti:

6 6 # 6 3 4 6 6 5 #

Detailed description: This system contains measures 42 through 47. It features alternating sections of 'Solo' and 'Tutti' performance. The right hand has more melodic activity, while the left hand accompaniment is more sparse. Fingering numbers are provided below the bass staff.

Appendix: The Twenty-Two Movements in Ritornello Form from Handel's Op. 6

1. Op. 6/1, ii: Allegro

	R1(rip) (s)	(rip)	R2 (s)	(rip)	trans.	R3 (s)	R4(rip)			
mm.	1-2	3-4	5-8	9-10	11-12	13-28	29-32	33-34	35-38	39-54
keys:	I			V	pac	→vi	vi	→I	pac	I pac
themes:	M	(echo)		M	M		M			M

2. Op. 6/1, iii: Adagio

	R1(s) (rip)	trans(s)	R2(s) (rip)	R3(s) (rip)	R4?	Codetta			
mm.	1-4	5-9	9-10	11-14	15-18	18-24	24-28	29-34	35-42
keys:	i	pac		v	pac	III→ i		pac	
themes:	M			M	M'			M''	

3. Op. 6/1, iv: Allegro (fugal ritornello form)

	R1(s) (rip)	E1	(s)	R2(rip)	E2	(s)	R3(rip)	E3(s)	(rip)	R4	E4	R5	
mm.	1-8	9-12	13-19	20-27	28-31	32-34	35-38	39-46	47-49	50-54	55-68	69-76	77-81
keys:	I, V	I pac	I→V		V dc	I		I iac		I pac		I pac	M
themes:	M	M		M				M'		M'			

4. Op. 6/2, i: Andante larghetto

	R1(rip)	trans(s)	R2(rip)	E1(s)	(rip)	(s)	R3	E2(s)	(rip)	(s)	E3(s)	(rip)	E4(s)	(rip)	R4		
mm.	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-11	12-14	14-15	16-18	19-20	21-22	23-25	25-26	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-33	33-40	41-42
keys:	I→V	pac	V	V→I			I pac		→vi	hc	pac	IV	pac	→I	I pac		
themes:	M		M				(echo)	M									M

R = ritornello; E = episode, M = main thematic material of the movement; M' = varied repetition of that material; rip = ripieno featured; s = soloist(s) featured

9. Op. 6/4, iv: Allegro

	R1(rip)	R2(s)	(rip)	(s)	(rip)	E1	R3	E2(s)	(rip)	E3	
mm.	1-15	16-19	20-23	24-27	28-41	42-51	60-85	86-99	100-109	110-117	118-end
keys:	i	pac		i → III	pac	→ v	v	pac		pac	pac
themes:	M1/M2	M1	(echo)	M2	(echo)	M2'	M1/M2	M2"			

10. Op. 6/5, ii: Allegro (fugal ritornello form)

	R1(rip)	E1(s)	(rip)	R2	R3	(s)	(rip)	R4	E2	E3(s)	(rip)
mm.	1-14	15-18	19-22	23-30	31-34	35-38	38-40	41-44	45-52	53-56	57-62
keys:	I	hc	→ V	pa	→ ii	h	ii	pac	→ I	hc	pac
themes:	M			M	M	M		M		cf. E1	

11. Op. 6/5, iii: Presto (binary/ritornello form)

	R1(s)	(rip)	R2	E	trans	R3(s)	(rip)	R4
mm.	1-16	17-48*	49-72	73-88	89-96	97-112	113-128	129-144
keys:	I	→ V	pac	V	→ iii	pac	→ ii	pac
themes:	M		M'		cf. 61-72			cf. 73-84

* mm. 1-48 are enclosed by repeat signs; a backward repeat is found in m. 49

12. Op. 6/5, v: Allegro (no solo parts)

	R1(rip)	R2	R3	E	R4
mm.	1-15	15-40	41-57	57-68	68-79
keys:	I	→ V	iac	V	→ vi
themes:	M1-M2	M1-M2	M1-M2	M1	M1

13. Op. 6/6, iv: Allegro

	R1(rip)	E1(s)	(rip)	R2	E2(s)	(rip)	E3(s)	(rip)	(s)	(rip)	trans	E4*
mm.	1-12	13-20	21-35	35-42	43-50	51-53	54-56	57-60	61-64	64-70	71-76	77-80
keys:	i	→ III	pac	i	hc	→ v	pac	→ VII	pac	→ i	iac	hc
themes:	M			M								M

* The first six notes of R1 return, but their immediate development seems to replace a true restatement of R1a

14. Op. 6/7, iii: Andante (no solo parts)

	R1(rip)	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6*
mm.	1-16	17-23	24-29	30-39	40-43	44-58
keys:	I→V pac	V→vi	vi→v pac	VII→IV→	iii pac	I pac
themes:	M	M	M	M	M	M

*R1 is 16 bars and R6 is 15;
10 bars of R6 are based on R1,
so R6 could be considered R1'

15. Op. 6/8, iii: Andante allegro

	R1(rip)	(s)	(rip)	R2(s)	(rip)	(s)	R3*	trans.(s)	R4(rip)	R5	
mm.	1-2	3-7	7-8	9-10	11-13	13-14	15-21	21-22	23-28	29-32	33-42
keys:	i hc		pac	hc	→III	pac	→v iac			→III	i pac
themes:	M1	M2		M1	M2	cf. 7-8	M1		M2		M1

*modulatory and sequential,
like an episode in character

16. Op. 6/8, v: Andante

	R1(s)	(rip)	E1(s)	(rip)	(s)	(rip)	R2(s)	(rip)	R3(s)	(rip)	trans	(s)	R4(rip)		
mm.	1-4	5-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-20	21-22	23-26	27-28	29-30	31-32	33-40	41-44	45-48
keys:	i pac	i pac	→III			pac	→iv	pac	→v	pac		→i hc	hc		pac
themes:	M1/M2	(echo)					M1'/M2'		M1"/M2"				M1	M2	M2

17. Op. 6/9, ii: Allegro

	R1(rip)	(s)	(rip)	(s)	E1(rip)	(s)	(rip)	E2(s)	R2(rip)	(rip)	E3(s)	(rip)	R3	E4	E5(s)	R4(rip)
mm.	1-5	6-7	8-16	17-18	19-24	25-26	27-28	29-36	37-48	49-51	52-61	62-63	64-81	82-95	96-103	104-109
keys:	I pac	pac	I→V pac	pac			pac	→IV	IV→ii	ii	iac	ii→vi	pac	IV→I hc	pac	pac
themes:	M	(echo)		(echo)					M	M			M			M

18. Op. 6/10, v: Allegro

	R1(s)	(rip)	(s)	(rip)	R2(s)	(rip)	(s)	E1	R3(s)	(rip)	E2(s)	R4(rip)				
mm.	1-4	5-32	33-38	38-41	42-44	44-50	50-55	56-61	61-64	64-65	65-74	74-78	78-82	82-95	95-99	99-118
keys:	i	→III hc	iac		pac		→VII hc	pac		pac	→v hc		pac	→i hc		pac
themes:	M1	M2	M2			M1		M2	cf. 38-41	M1		M1			M1	M2

19. Op. 6/11, i: Andante larghetto

	R1(rip)	E1(s)	(rip)	(s)	R2(rip)	(s)	R3(rip)	(rip)	R4	trans(s)	R5(rip)	(s)	(rip)
mm.	1-12	13-14	15-16	17-24	25-28	28-30	30-33	34-36	37-38	39-42	42-44	45-46	49-53
keys:	I	pac	hc	→V	hc	→V	pac	→V	iac	→I	pac		pac
themes:	M1/M2				M2		M1			M2	M1	M2	M2'

20. Op. 6/11, iii: Andante

	R1(rip)	(s)*	(rip)	E1(s)	R2(rip)	(s)	(rip)	(s)	trans(s)	E2(rip)	(s)	(rip)	E3(s)†	R3(rip)	E4(s)
mm.	1-10	10-26	23-26	26-47	47-50	50-59	59-63	63-67	67-69	69-73	73-80	80-93	93-98	98-118	118-124
keys:	I	pac	pac	→V	hc				pac		→ii	hc	pac	→IV	hc
themes:	M	(echo)**	(echo)		M			cf. 4-7	cf. 7-10					cf. 4-10	(M)††

R4(s) (rip) E5(s) R5(rip) *ripieno echos 4-bar segments played by soloists
 136-140 140-146 146-156 156-168 **echo of 1-10 is expanded through internal repetition
 cf. 4-7 (echo) pac pac pac † in 109-112, the ripieno accompanies the soloist with the material from 1-4
 †† 124-126=1-3, but the rest of E4 is new material featuring a soloist

21. Op. 6/11, iv: Allegro

	R1(rip)	(s)	(rip)	trans(s)	E1(rip)	(s)	R2(rip)	E2(s)	R3(rip)	E3(s)	trans(s)	R3(rip)*
mm.	1-4	5-8	9-10	11-16	17-19	20-38	38-44	45-74	75-80	81-91	92-95	75-80bis
keys:	I	pac	pac	hc	hc	→V	pac	→I	hc	→iii	pac	pac
themes:	M	(echo)	(echo)					cf. 38-40	M			M'

*This is the only rit. form with a dal segno marking

22. Op. 6/12, ii: Allegro

	R1(s)	trans.	E1(s)	R2(s)	(rip)	E2	(s)	(rip)	E3(s)	R4(rip)	(s)	(rip)	trans.	R4b
mm.	1-6	7-8	9-15	15-17	18-20	20-22	22-27	28-34	34-39	39-46	47-54	55-66	66-68	69
keys:	i	pac	pac	pac	pac	pac	→III		iac	pac	→i	hc	hc	pac
themes:	M			M					M		M		(echo)*	M

*cadential material in 69 is immediately transposed and echoed in D major before the music quickly returns to B minor

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