

## Music 231

### Small Structures: Cadences, Phrases and Periods

#### New Material

- Cadence types and relative strengths
- Phrases and sub-phrases
- Periods and other phrase structures

#### Definitions

##### Cadence

A progression of two chords which, usually in combination with less active rhythmic values, causes a pause in the forward propulsion of music. Cadences appear at the ends of phrases.

##### Phrase

A complete musical sentence\* ending in a cadence.

#### Grammar/Music Analogy

- The idea of "completeness" is tricky; we describe many long and short musical structures as complete. It is often helpful to draw analogies between music and grammatical syntax, where we might find the following correlation:

Music	Language
note	letter
germ	syllable
motive	word
subphrase	clause
cadence	punctuation
phrase	sentence
period	paragraph
part	chapter
movement	unit

##### Period

Two or more related phrases, the last of which has the strongest authentic cadence.

#### Cadence Types

At the heart of musical structural analysis is the drawing of fine distinctions between the various cadences of a composition. It is not enough to merely state that half cadences are "incomplete" and authentic cadences are "complete." The innumerable shades of gray between these two extremes are of fundamental importance; they will be the determining factor in defining phrase grouping, periods, and sometimes even parts of a composition. To the extent that some determinations of cadence strength can be subjective, cadence analysis will be the source of distinctions among varying intelligent and legitimate performance interpretations.

##### 1. Authentic: DOM - I (i) [DOM will mean any V, V7, vii<sup>o</sup>, or vii<sup>o</sup>7]

Because authentic cadences are used to define the ends of phrases, periods, and parts, it is important that we are able to make distinctions among their strengths. There are two main divisions of authentic cadences: the very strong perfect authentic cadence and the weaker imperfect authentic cadence.

##### A. Perfect Authentic Cadence [PAC]

The dominant and tonic chords must be in root position, and the tonic chord must have the root in the soprano.

##### B. Imperfect Authentic Cadence [IAC]: All other variations of DOM - I (i).

These will include having the V or V7 in inversions, using any position of the vii<sup>o</sup> and vii<sup>o</sup>7 in place of V or V7, replacing the root position I with first inversion (using the tonic in second inversion would produce no cadence at all), and having the third or fifth in the soprano on the tonic chord.

### C. Finer distinctions between cadences

These two subclasses of authentic cadences are not always sufficient to determine the relative strength of all possible authentic cadences, and not even sufficient to distinguish among the various degrees of strength of all possible perfect authentic cadences. The ways in which cadences can be subtly varied in strength are too numerous to list. Among the most important are:

	<b>stronger</b>	<b>weaker</b>
<b>beat</b>	<b>Accented Cadences</b> (where the final chord comes on an accented beat)	<b>Unaccented Cadences</b> (where the final chord comes on an unaccented beat). Do not use the archaic terms "masculine" and "feminine" for these cadences.
<b>bass</b>	<b>Falling Bass</b> (5 down to 1)	<b>Rising Bass</b> (5 up to 1)
<b>soprano</b>	<b>Unornamented soprano tonic</b>	<b>Ornamented soprano tonic</b> The ornamentation typically takes the form of a suspension or an appoggiatura.

#### 2. Half: I (i) - DOM, ii (ii°) - DOM, IV (iv) - DOM, and less often vi (VI) - DOM

Since all half cadences are, by definition, weaker than any authentic cadence, and since distinctions of strength among half cadences are not crucial to structural determination,\* we can treat all of the above listed half cadences as structurally equal. (\*Of course such distinctions are clearly relevant in such performance decisions as the length of time and the loss of tension between phrases, the development of intensity within a period, etc.)

#### 3. Other

##### A. Deceptive: DOM - vi (VI)

The deceptive cadence takes on different interpretive functions depending on context, sometimes seeming more like an authentic cadence, sometimes more like a half cadence. But like the half cadence, it is always weaker than any authentic cadence and so will never end a period; we can therefore treat the deceptive cadence as **structurally equal to the half cadence**.

##### B. Plagal: IV (iv) - I (i), rarely ii - I or ii7 - I

**The plagal cadence is rarely used in a structural way.** It almost always is found after the end of a period (usually after the last period of the piece), and acts as an extension to that period or the part which it ends.

C. Phrygian, double leading-tone, and others inherited from pre-common-practice music.

#### Phrases and Sub-Phrases

The word "phrase" here applies to the structural definition. This should not be confused with other uses of the word, like indications of bowing or breathing. In everyday usage, the term is used much more loosely than we will apply it here.

##### Phrases have two necessary qualities:

1. They end with a cadence.
2. They are long enough to express a complete musical thought.

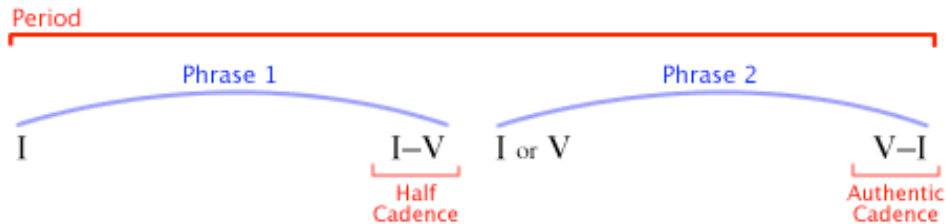
The first requirement is easy enough to understand. All phrases end with some sort of cadence: usually half or authentic. The second, however, brings us again to the idea of completeness, which, in terms of shorter musical structures, is difficult to define. A few generalities:

1. Usually, an average measure or two is too short to be a complete thought: these segments are usually part of a longer phrase.
2. Phrases are usually longer than the motive and contain more than one appearance of the motive or material in addition to the motive. Segments shorter than a phrase, when separated by a rest or a cadence-like harmonic progression, may be called sub-phrases or phrase-parts.

## Periods

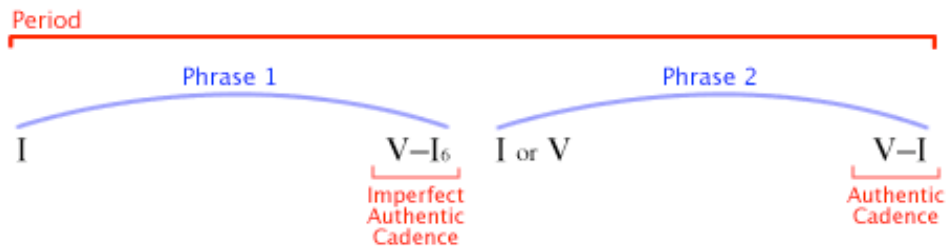
Two or more phrases using the same or related material form a period if the last phrase has the strongest cadence. The most typical period consists of two phrases, the first ending with a half cadence, the second with an authentic cadence.

### Two-Phrase Period, example 1



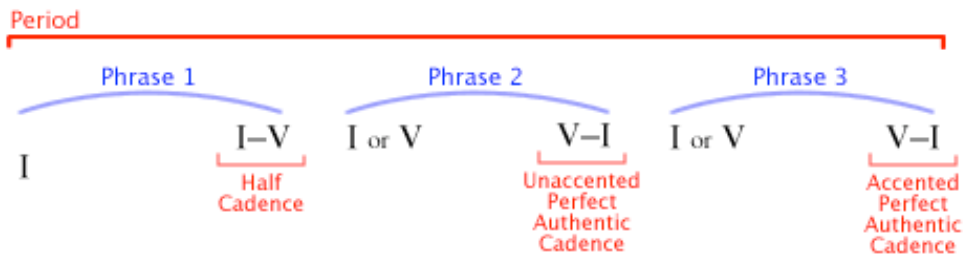
But it is also possible for a two-phrase period to have two authentic cadences, the second stronger than the first.

### Two-Phrase Period, example 2



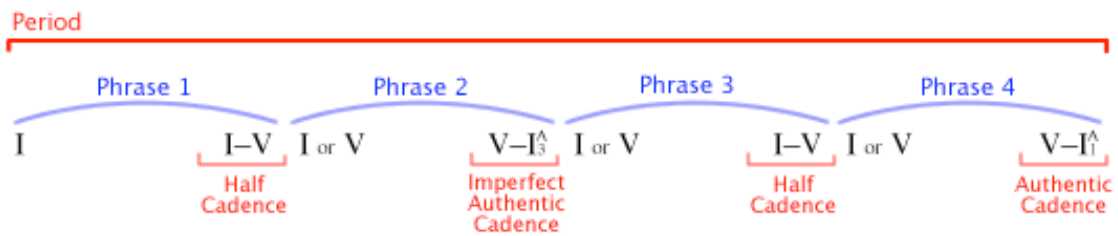
A period may have any number of phrases. Although rare in the Baroque era and infrequent in the Classical era, three-phrase periods become more common in the Romantic era. The first two cadences may be any combination of half or imperfect authentic cadences. The example below shows yet another possibility in which the last two phrases end in perfect authentic cadences; of course the final perfect authentic cadence must be the strongest cadence if a period is to be formed.

### Three-Phrase Period



A four-phrase period is often called a double period. It is similar to the two two-phrase periods, except that the fourth cadence will be stronger than the second cadence. The arrangement of cadences in the example below is typical.

## Double Period



Periods tend to have more phrases as we move through music history. By the nineteenth century, the double period common, and by the end of the nineteenth century, it is not rare to find periods of six or more phrases forming periods.

### What's not a period?

If the cadence structure of a period is present but the phrases have *unrelated melodic material*, we have a **phrase group**.

If a series of related phrases have equally strong authentic cadences, or if a series of related phrases have no authentic cadences, we have a **phrase chain**.

*Please note: the information on this page has been supplied by Dr. Ronald Caltabiano*