

Introduction to Rhythm, Meter, and Form

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I. A Working Definition of Rhythm

There was no time. Then God hit the gong and there was a before and after. Then He hit the gong again and there was duration.

---Olivier Messiaen

II. Measured and Unmeasured Music

Time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life.

---William Faulkner

Introduction

- A. measured music and meter
- B. metric structures and counting

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Time signatures and bar lines are secrets told to the performer by the composer.

---Antal Dorati

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Introduction

- A. duple metric structure: choosing a beat, its note value, and time signature
- B. triple metric structure: choosing a beat, its note value, and time signature

...triple units almost always come under the tyranny of our biological duple compulsion... a waltz is performed on two legs: left-2-3, right-2-3, left-2-3, right-2-3...in the larger rhythmic sense a waltz is every bit as duple as a march.

---Leonard Bernstein

IX. Beams and Triplet Notation

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- A. structures with two triple streams: the "9/8 type"
- B. structures with a pulse stream containing duple and triple groups

XI. Summary of Metric Organization

You are a musician and know well the nature of measures and rhythms; some are duple, others triple, and these two kinds of time may be divided further into slow, moderate, and quick.

---Thoinot Arbeau

XII. Additional Comments on Meter and Tempo

- A. tempo and the number of levels
- B. the undefined slowest level

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Introduction

- A. hypermeter
- B. the phrase, period, and sentence

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Introduction: Mozart's *Haffner* Symphony

- A. phrase rhythm
- B. interaction of phrase rhythm and hypermeter

In an important sense, the study of rhythm is...the study of all musical elements, the actions of those elements producing the effects of pace, pattern, and grouping which constitute rhythm.

---Wallace Berry