

Rhythm and Meter

Rhythm - the organization of the time element in music.

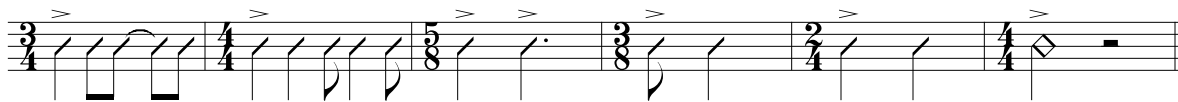
Meter - The groupings of beats into larger units.

The listener perceives the beat type by listening to the manner in which the beat divides. The meter type is determined by the pattern of accents. In much 20th century music, the music is composed in a way that the perception of beat type or meter type is not possible. In some instances, there may be a contradiction between what the listener hears and what is actually notated.

I. **Syncopation** - Accenting a portion of a measure that is not normally accented.



II. **Changing Meters (Mixed Meter)** - May be implied by shifting accents and/or syncopations or may be explicitly notated by the composer.



III. **Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Meter** - A symmetrical meter consists of beats of the same size. For instance, all the beats in 4/4 are of equal size (1 quarter note). In 6/8 meter, the beat sizes are also equal (the dotted quarter note). However, 5/8 has two beat sizes. The first a quarter note, the second a dotted quarter note. 5/8 is therefore said to be asymmetrical because one of its beats is larger than the other.

Symmetrical Meters



Asymmetrical Meters



IV. **Additive Rhythm** - A meter signature where a short rhythmic value remains constant but is used in groups of varying lengths. Some examples appear below:

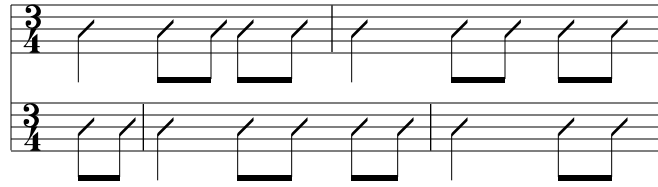


A more traditional meter may be transformed into an additive rhythm meter through use of a nonstandard metric accent. For example, the metric accent for a 9/8 meter (traditionally 3+3+3) may be reorganized to become 3+2+4.

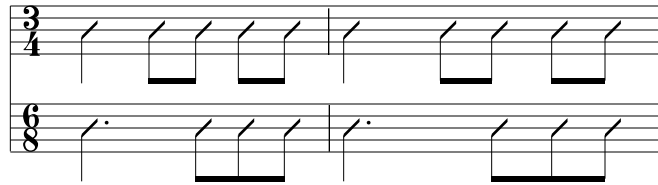


V. **Polymeter** - The simultaneous use of two or more aurally distinguishable time signatures. Three types:

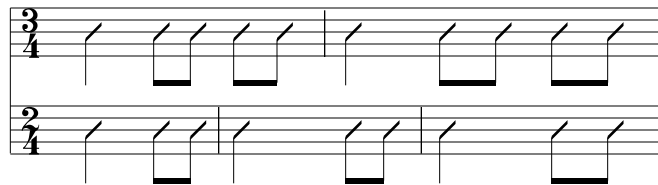
(1) Same time signatures but barlines are displaced.



(2) Different time signatures with barlines coinciding.



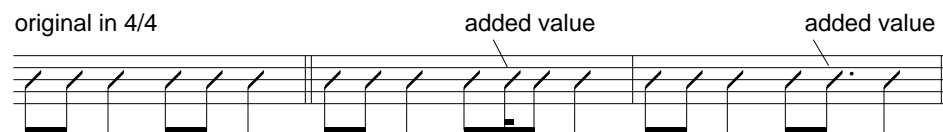
(3) Different time signatures with barlines not coinciding.



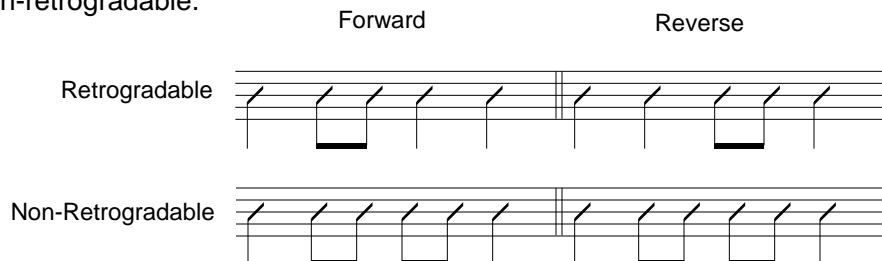
VI. **Polytempo** - The simultaneous use of two or more aurally distinguishable tempos.

VII. **Ametric Meter** - Music that has no perceivable meter. Many times an ametric piece will be void of a time signature and also barlines. However, not all pieces void of a time signature and barlines are ametric.

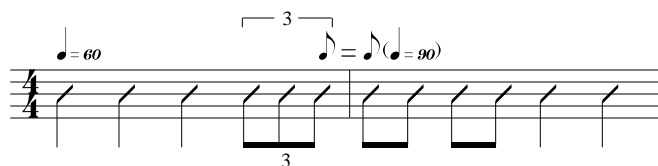
VIII. **Added Values** - A simple rhythm is complicated by the addition of a short rhythmic value, either in the form of a dot, a note, or a rest.



IX. **Retrogradable and Non-Retrogradable Rhythms** - A rhythm is retrogradable only if it is different in retrograde. If the rhythm played in reverse is identical to the rhythm played normally (forward) the rhythm is said to be non-retrogradable.



X. **Tempo Modulation** - A technique which allows precise tempo change by having a rhythmic value in a first tempo equivalent to a rhythmic value in a second.



XI. **Proportional Notation** - The duration of notes is determined only by their placement within a measure. May very well be ametric. In many instances, a timeline is used which indicates the number of seconds in which musical events occur. A timeline may also be useful in coordinating the individual parts in an ensemble.