

RHYTHM AND METER COMPOSITIONAL TOOLS IN A CHOPIN'S WALTZ

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INTRODUCTION

MANY MUSICIANS (WHETHER COMPOSERS, performers, or writers) see rhythm as the most fundamental and indispensable element of music. But paradoxically, the general recognition of the paramount importance of the durational parameters of music (rhythm and meter), ended up working against them: the 'naturalness' of rhythm and meter made theorists feel too confident that their own aesthetic preferences reflected the essence of these parameters. The result is the subordinate position attributed to rhythm and meter by traditional music theory, which seeks to understand them in relation to pitch structure. *Just in Time: Towards a Theory of Rhythm and Metre*¹ instead proposes a purely durational approach which assesses the operation and qualities (mainly salience and kinesis) of rhythm and meter, and their interaction with other music parameters.

Considering that a sound event can be basically characterised by its duration and frequency, Maury Yeston² schematises two basic theoretical approaches to music — the *pitch-to-rhythm* methodology and the *rhythm-to-pitch* methodology. If traditional theory represents the pitch-to-rhythm approach, assuming that rhythmic structure is significant only to the extent that pitch structure makes it so, then a more adequate theory of rhythm and meter, inspired by the rhythm-to-pitch approach, should be able to address and ultimately model perceptual qualities arising entirely from the durational parameters of music. Some indications of this can be seen in the empirical work

¹. LOPES, Eduardo. *Just in Time: Towards a Theory Rhythm and Metre*, unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Southampton (UK), Southampton University, 2003.

². YESTON, Maury. *The Stratification of Musical Rhythm*, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 4-5.