Glossary

Agogic accent: an accent created by a relatively long note value.

Antimetrical layer: a pulse layer that groups the fastest pulse in a way that contradicts the sounding meter.

Augmentation: a rhythmic variation in which the duration of each note value is increased by a common factor (usually doubled). As a developmental technique, it creates a sense of deceleration.

Binary regularity: the phenomenon experienced when, given a series of evenly spaced and accented pulses, a listener will naturally group the pulses into pairs or into some factor of two.

Cadential Extension: music that serves to bring a phrase to a more satisfying close after it has already reached a cadence.

Conducting plan: a metrical map that provides a strategy for conducting the sounding meter in a musical work or movement from beginning to end.

Compound meter: a meter that divides each beat into three parts.

Diminution: a rhythmic variation in which the duration of each note value is decreased by a common factor (usually halved). As a developmental technique, it creates a sense of acceleration.

Direct metrical dissonance: a dissonance in which two conflicting layers are presented simultaneously.

Displacement dissonance: a metrical dissonance in which two conflicting (i.e., non-aligned) pulse layers are moving at the same speed, but are out-of-phase.

Dissonance log: a metrical map that summarizes the metrical dissonances in a musical work or movement from beginning to end.

Downshifting: a transformation in which the fastest consistent pulse shifts to a slower pulse layer within the same metrical consonance.

Elision: the point of overlap when the end of one melodic group and the beginning of the next share one or more notes.

Fragmentation: a developmental technique that divides melodic material into smaller segments and then repeats only one segment of the material multiple times. As a developmental technique, it creates a sense of acceleration.

Grouping dissonance: a metrical dissonance in which two conflicting pulse layers are moving at different speeds, and the faster layer is not simply a multiple of the slower layer.

Harmonic rhythm: the rhythm at which harmonies change, commonly considered the strongest factor in metrical perception.

Hemiola: a 3:2 grouping dissonance

Hypermeasure: a hypermetrical group.

Hypermeter: a sounding meter in which the grouping of the tactus spans more music than the grouping of beats indicated by the notated time signature and barlines.

Hypermetrical dissonance: a dissonance that can only be expressed over multiple measures of the notated score.

Hypermetrical reinterpretation: an interpretation that takes what serves as the last beat of one hypermeasure simultaneously to serve as the first beat of the next hypermeasure.

Indirect metrical dissonance: a dissonance in which two conflicting layers are presented in immediate succession.

Link: music that serves as a bridge between two phrases and is thus dependent upon what comes both before and after it for its definition.

Loosening: the process of moving from one displacement dissonance to a loose relative of that dissonance. As a developmental technique, it creates a sense of deceleration.

Loose Relative: Within any given family of displacement dissonances, a member with a lower number of unaligned pulses per segment.

Lyric song: singing that is more melismatic, in which there are fewer repeated notes, and in which the rhythm is regular enough to establish a meter; it is associated with arias in opera and oratorio, and with the chorus in songs from classic Broadway musicals.

Melisma is a group of notes all sung on the same syllable.

Meter: a musical pattern of accentuation created by two coordinated layers of evenly spaced pulses.

Metrical consonance: a metrical state in which all pulse layers are aligned.

Metrical dissonance: a metrical state in which at least two pulse layers are not aligned.

Metrical layer: a pulse layer that groups the fastest pulse in a way that reflects the sounding meter.

Metrical map: a summary of the metrical states in a musical work or movement from beginning to end.

Metric modulation: see **tempo modulation**.

Natural Pace: a tempo of approximately 100 bpm (beats per minute), reflecting the well-documented tendency for listeners and performers to choose the pulse layer moving closest to 100 bpm as the tactus when the fastest three layers of a meter are all moving between 30 and 240 bpm.

Notated meter: the meter a performer sees represented in the score by a time signature and bar lines.

Parallelism: Given two statements of the same melodic segment, our tendency to interpret the second statement as having the same relationship to its metrical context that the first statement did.

Phenomenal accent: An emphasis created by a musical event or through the association of similar melodic groupings (as with parallelism).

Phrase: an independent musical segment approximating what one could sing in a single breath, and encompassing a motion from one harmony to another. Phrases are typically four bars long, but two-bar phrases and eight-bar phrases are also common, and other lengths are also possible.

Phrase prefix: non-thematic material that is presented before a phrase begins, but that is clearly linked to the following phrase in some way, usually through a shared harmony.

Phrase rhythm: the rhythm created by successive phrase lengths.

Polymeter: the simultaneous presentation of two meters. While well established as a phenomenon in musical notation, experimental studies strongly suggest that listeners can only track one meter at a time, so it is only relevant to notated meter, not sounding meters.

Primacy effect: the phenomenon experienced when, given two or more evenly spaced pulses without accents, a listener will naturally hear the first pulse as accented relative to the second pulse.

Pulse: in the context of metrical theory, a note onset.

Pulse layer: a series of evenly (or almost evenly) spaced pulses.

Simple meter: a meter that divides each beat into two parts.

Sounding meter: the meter a listener can perceive without reference to the score.

Speech song: singing that is mainly syllabic, includes many more repeated notes, and is rhythmically less predictable; it is commonly associated with recitatives in opera and oratorio, and with the verse in songs from classic Broadway musicals.

Stretto is the technique of writing overlapping imitative entries, possible in any imitative texture. As a developmental technique, it creates a sense of acceleration.

Subliminal dissonance: a dissonance in which all musical features – harmonic rhythm, melodic groupings, dynamic accents, etc. – establish a meter other than the one notated, while none of the musical features establish or reinforce the notated meter.

Subtactus-level dissonance: a dissonance that can be expressed entirely within one pulse of the tactus.

Syncopation: a rhythm that conflicts with the prevailing meter. Any kind of metrical dissonance includes at least one syncopation.

Tactus: the pulse layer we choose to conduct or count.

Tempo Modulation: a simultaneous change to both the sounding meter and the tactus in which a pulse layer other than the tactus from the old meter remains constant and becomes a layer of the new meter. Though not a requirement, most musicians reserve the term for changes in which the new tactus is not simply a multiple or factor of the old tactus.

Tight Relative: Within any given family of displacement dissonances, a member with a higher number of unaligned pulses per segment.

Tightening: the process of moving from one displacement dissonance to a tight relative of that dissonance. As a developmental technique, it creates a sense of acceleration.

Tonal distance: the distance between the primary key and a secondary key, as measured by the number of accidentals that are different between their key signatures, with the raised leading tone counted as part of the key signature in minor keys for counting purposes.

Upshifting: a transformation in which the fastest consistent pulse shifts to a new, faster pulse layer within the same metrical consonance.