Martin Clayton, Byron Dueck, and Laura Leante, eds.
Experience and Meaning in Music Performance
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Experience and Meaning in Music Performance tackles deep questions about embodied experience and meaning construction, culturally mediated, in music performance. Though the collection is loosely knit, themes of embodiment and entrainment run through its essays. The book explores musics in cultures not well represented in the music-theoretical literature—North Indian, Afro-Brazilian, and Manitoban aboriginal—and investigates practices in alternative rock and jazz. Its interdisciplinary perspectives are illuminating. Ethnography grounds all of the book's essays, joining with approaches from the fields of cognition, ecological psychology, gesture studies, philosophy, sociology, and music theory, and including empirical methods.

After an introduction, the book's eight chapters nest in pairs (Example 1)—a structure not mentioned by the editors. My review follows this structure, moving from the outermost pair toward the inner chapters. It is largely descriptive, with a critical focus on chapters 4 and 7.

The framing chapters, chapter 2 by Martin Clayton and chapter 9 by Clayton and Laura Leante, survey literature on entrainment and embodied cognition and explore these topics' interaction with musical ethnography. Chapter 2 argues for a synthesis of dynamical systems theory and ethnomusicological perspectives. It construes performers, with regard to entrainment, as both volitional and subject to the principles of dynamical systems. "In the terms of this . . . interdisciplinary view, musical performance is seen as being neither purely intentional nor purely deterministic" (38).

The ninth chapter traverses the embodied cognition literature, treating themes relevant to musical experience. These themes include mind-body dualism (and associated dichotomies), phenomenological and biological (or, roughly, conscious and unconscious) embodied processes, gesture, motor mimesis, social dimensions of embodiment, and joint action. This brief and selective literature review unfortunately provides neither enough detail to

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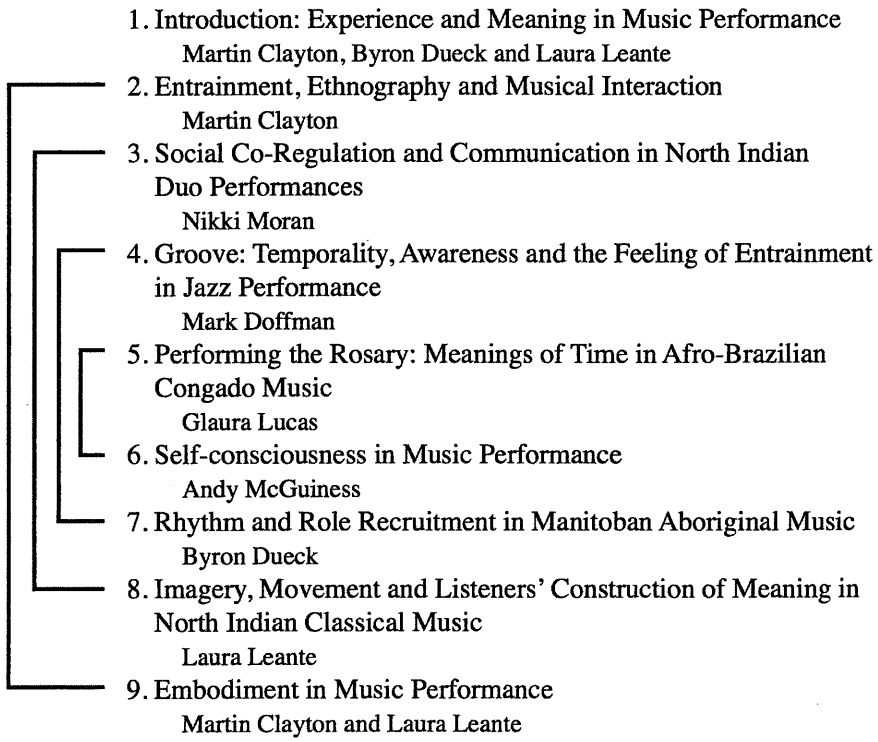


Example 1. Table of contents: nested pairs

adequately explain the studies discussed nor a broad enough sweep to clarify the issues at stake.

Two short case studies viscerally illustrate embodied musical understanding. The studies are taken from interviews with two North Indian singers. In the first, Veena Sahasrabuddhe talks about performing Raga Marwa. This raga lingers on the flat second scale degree (Re), resolving it only rarely to the tonic (Sa), droned underneath. For Sahasrabuddhe the musical tension of the unresolved Re creates an intense physical tension: "When I am singing Marwa I just get headache" (200). In the second, Manjiri Asanare-Kelkar demonstrates how to sing a certain phrase from Raga Jaunpuri, accompanying her singing with a double circular gesture. The gesture reflects not only the melodic movement but, fascinatingly (though not explicitly discussed by Clayton and Leante), also the nuances of her vocal expression in its changing timing and dynamics.[1] This ninth chapter is one of three whose musical illustrations draw from North Indian music (an area of expertise of two of the book's editors, Clayton and Leante); the other two are chapter 8, by Leante, and chapter 3, by Nikki Moran.

1 Readers interested in these examples may wish to consult Fatone et al. 2011 for a more extended study.

In her chapter Leante examines North Indian listeners' responses to performances of the *alap* sections of two ragas. She asked participants to describe thoughts, images, or emotions that occurred to them while listening, and further suggested that they "might think—for instance—of where and how they would imagine themselves listening to that music" (166). Her qualitative study analyzes recurrent themes in participants' responses. An upward gesture frequently accompanied listeners' verbal responses to Raga Shree and corresponded to the images they described. Comparing these responses with her earlier study of performers of Shree, Leante concludes that the upward gesture associates with the raga's characteristic Re-Pa upward (tritone) slide. Images of flickering or scattered light, small shiny objects, quick irregular movements, and sounds of chattering women characterized responses to Raga Jhinjhoti. These images seemed to be evoked by such features as the timbre of the sitar, fluctuations in melodic movement, and irregular rhythms. Leante proposes that listeners understand and represent sonic features cross-modally. Such cross-modal experience both influences meaning construction and accompanies verbal articulation of that meaning. It also inextricably embeds cultural associations.

This study is distinguished in the audience response literature by the qualitative richness of its inquiry. It involved more than one hundred participants in eleven sessions with written open responses, discussion groups, audio recording, and verbal transcription. The study also stands out for investigating non-Western audience response, here cultural insiders' reactions to North Indian classical music. In the case of Raga Shree, the study cross-references listener and performer studies and thus provides information on differences and similarities between the two ways of understanding the raga. The cultural associations embedded in listeners' descriptions evoke fascinating images. Finally, chapter 8, like many of the others, provides sound and video files on the book's accompanying website—invaluable for acquainting the reader with unfamiliar musics and practices and for demonstrating details of performance.

In chapter 3 Nikki Moran investigates nonverbal communication in North Indian duo performance. Videos of sitar or sarod and tabla duos in rehearsal and performance are analyzed in relation to five "social-musical variables": role (soloist vs. tabla accompanist), familiarity (musicians that had or had not played together previously), context (rehearsal or performance), tempo (slow, fast, or unmetered), and set (formal location and structural function in the music). Moran finds that looking behaviors (direction of face and gaze) associate with tempo and set and are influenced by role, familiarity, and context. Mutual eye contact, for instance, occurred most frequently at the first beat of the *tal* rhythmic cycle. Moran also finds correlations between duos' looking behaviors and upper-body expressive gestures. When the soloist looked out toward the audience, the tabla player tended to gesture within three seconds (the time window examined). When the soloist looked

at the tabla player's face, the tabla player also tended to gesture within three seconds. These findings are explained in terms of players' roles as soloist or accompanist.

Moran uses her results to argue for the influence of the immediate or "micro-" social context upon embodied communication, for the emergence of musical meaning through social interaction, and for musical performance as an instance of more general human interaction. Her study contributes to a growing literature on physical gesture in ensemble performance but differs from much of that literature in treating non-Western music and performers. Like some of these other studies, Moran's project draws upon nonverbal communication research and uses statistical techniques of analysis. (Since the chapter occurs within a book oriented to an ethnomusicological audience, Moran takes pains to explain her statistical techniques. Her informal presentation of findings occasionally obscures specifics.)

Chapters 4 and 7 address culturally defined aspects of rhythm and meter. Mark Doffman seeks "the factors involved in the feeling of groove" (65) in jazz performance by examining timing data from a live performance and by interviewing the musicians. The data, from the piano solo in a jazz trio's performance of "There Is No Greater Love," are analyzed by measuring relative phase. This measurement shows the degree of alignment between the concurrent rhythmic cycles of any pair of instruments in the group, and the strength of that coupling. Doffman demonstrates that the members of the rhythm section (drummer and bass player) are consistently close, while the soloist (pianist) tends to lag approximately 8 percent behind. He also shows that the tightness of the couplings, particularly between the soloist and each member of the rhythm section, fluctuates according to the metricality of the rhythmic patterns (Doffman's "temporal models"): tighter couplings associate with metrically simple patterns, and looser couplings accompany patterns that conflict with the basic meter. Doffman thus defines groove as "an organic coupling between players, inflected by the temporal models that players utilize" (81) and influenced by players' roles (soloist, rhythm section) within the ensemble. He suggests that players establish "equilibrium within an entrained relationship" and that this entrainment serves as a norm against which fluctuating tightness or looseness behaves expressively (78).

From his interviews with his informants, Doffman finds that neither isochrony nor tight synchrony are requirements for groove; groove is felt, rather, as a "'breathing' quality" involving "change and elasticity" (80–81). Groove is desirable but cannot be forced; in the words of the bass player, "You have to let it happen" (83). Doffman understands groove as "an active social construction," created within and impacting an interpersonal context. It "is in essence the bodily experience of *shared* timing" (62), and "it seems entirely plausible that well-coordinated body moves have some effect on sociality and vice versa" (80). Finally, Doffman relates groove to notions of "flow," entailing "diminishing self-consciousness" and "absorption." He conjectures that it cre-

ates redundancies of temporal information that lessen the need for conscious control.

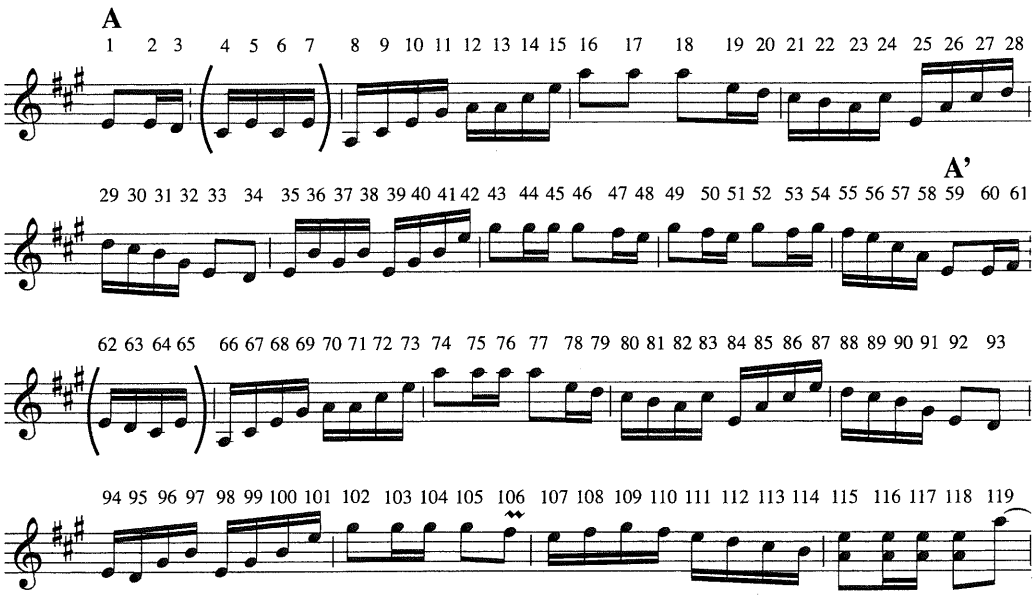
While a great deal of literature on expressive timing focuses on departures from isochrony, more recent work (e.g., Polak and London 2014, 107) establishes flexible and sophisticated nonisochronous patterns as norms. Such work proposes that temporal expressiveness consists in departures from "metric expectation" (Polak 2010, 149). Doffman goes one step further to posit that, in the case of groove in jazz, the norm involves an entrained *coordination* among players, and that expression is found within the groove itself as its tightness and looseness respond to circumstances (temporal models, players' roles, musical context). It would have been helpful had Doffman set his conceptualization against Matthew Butterfield's (2010) position, though perhaps the two essays crossed in their timing. (Butterfield views the regularity and tightness of the rhythm section's mutual pulse as creating anticipatory attending, against which the soloist plays for expressive purposes.) Reference to earlier music-theoretical work such as Butterfield 2006, which addresses the role of syntax, important to Doffman's chapter, or to related work such as Friberg and Sundström 2002 that addresses the temporal relationship between soloist and rhythm section would also be useful. By focusing on *coordinated* entrainment as the ground against which expressive timing flexes, Doffman provides a new perspective on groove and, more generally, temporal expressivity.

Byron Dueck grounds his study of "rhythm and role recruitment in Manitoban aboriginal music" on ethnomusicological methodologies and social theories. Dueck construes meter as "a socially constitutive act," one that calls listeners to particular cultural roles. Listeners' responses enact membership in differentiated social groups (136).

Dueck's main claim is that Manitoban aboriginal performances of "maximally metrical" contemporary Western vernacular music tend toward the "minimally metrical" (135). Dueck uses "metre" to refer to what music theorists would call meter and lower-level hypermeter (139–40). He uses "minimally metrical" to refer to music "that does not ask the listener to mobilise any metrical structure deeper than that which governs the relationships between the tactus and its subdivisions" (144).

Dueck presents three case studies, from fiddling, hymn singing, and popular music. He describes each of these as tending toward the "minimally metrical," but I find it more productive to view them through the lens of metric transformations. Then we see that each of these musical renditions, rather than lacking metrical structure, transforms a highly metrical structure in predictable ways.[2]

2 The recordings that Dueck discusses are commercially available; I have relied upon his transcriptions for this examination.

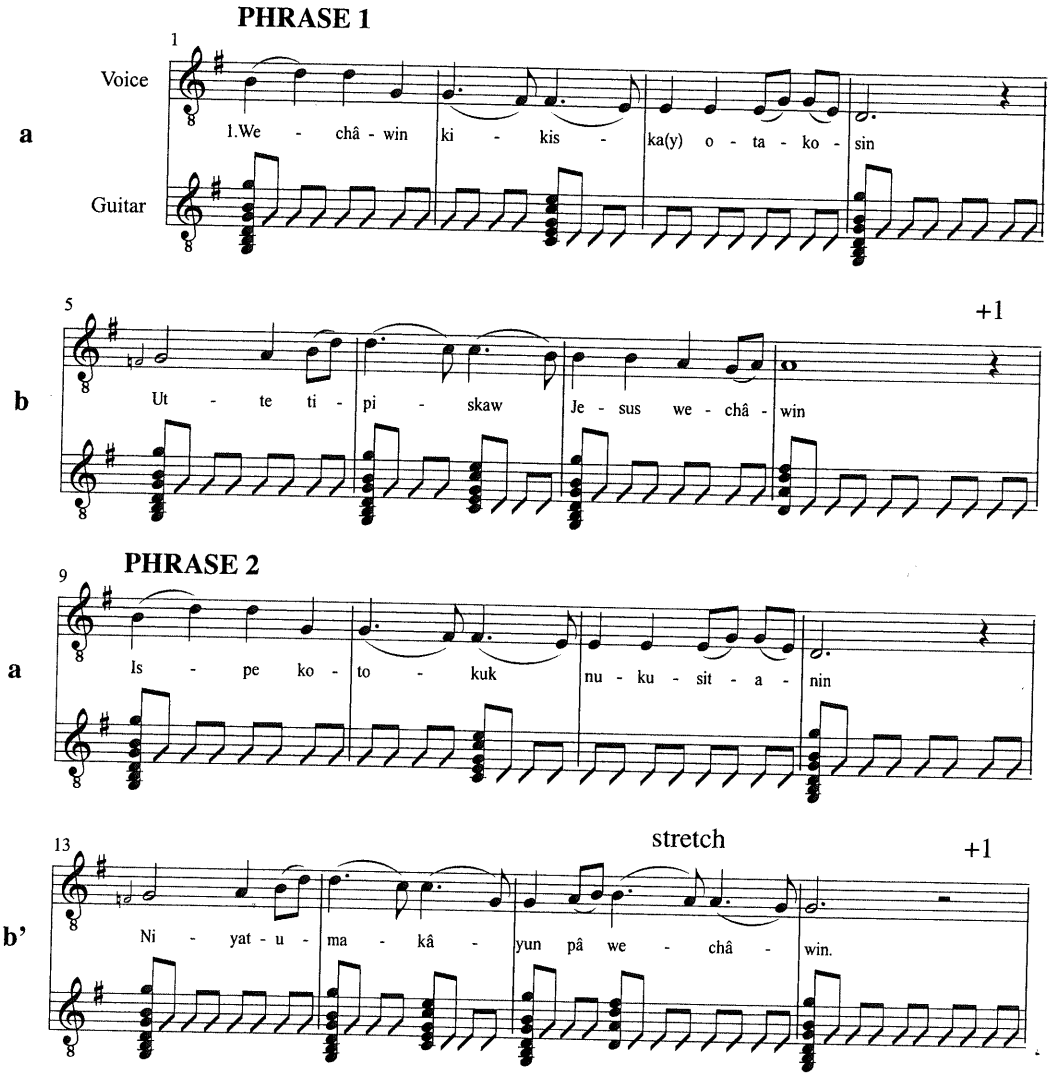


Example 2. Ross's 2002 version of "Clarinet Polka," beginning (Dueck figure 7.6, annotations added by Leong) (*Experience and Meaning in Music Performance* edited by Clayton, Dueck, and Leante (2013), by permission of Oxford University Press, USA)

For his first example, Dueck compares Nichol Ross's recording of the "Clarinet Polka" to Monsieur Pointu's version (Dueck's figure 7.5). Pointu's version exhibits duple relationships at all metric levels from the sixteenth note to the 2/4 measure to the two-, four-, eight-, and sixteen-measure hypermeter. Ross creates a metrical twist by inserting an extra beat. (See Example 2, which reproduces Dueck's transcription; I have added the bar lines, dotted bar lines, parentheses, and formal indications.)[3] Instead of notes 1–3 being followed directly by note 8, which would parallel Pointu's performance, Ross inserts notes 4–7. Without this insertion, notes 1–3 form a clear anacrusis to a 2/4 meter with a downbeat on note 8. With the insertion, the tendency to hear strong beats early[4] implies a downbeat on note 4. Dueck's figure 7.7 shows that the accompanying instruments support this interpretation. However, the tune's harmonic changes, duration and contour accents, and parallelism support the meter I have notated. The repeat of the tune at note 59 (marked A′), with the insertion of notes 62–65, creates a similar difficulty. In effect, Ross expands the tune's upbeat with a fake downbeat. It is not so much that the performance is minimally metrical, that is, lacking meter, but that Ross's insertion creates conflicting signals for the *arsis* and *thesis* of the 2/4 meter.

3 In Examples 2–4, the incompleteness of my bar lines (not touching the top or bottom lines of the staff) is meant to indicate their interpretive nature.

4 Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1996, 76, metrical preference rule 2. I follow Dueck in citing Lerdahl and Jackendoff preference rules for metric structure.



Example 3. Thomas's version of "Abide with Me" (Dueck figure 7.8, annotations added by Leong) (*Experience and Meaning in Music Performance* edited by Clayton, Dueck, and Leante (2013), by permission of Oxford University Press, USA)

Dueck's second example presents Hubert Thomas's version of the hymn "Abide with Me." Example 3 shows Dueck's transcription; I have added bar lines, measure numbers, and annotations. Thomas's performance articulates a clear a b a b′ subphrase structure. The subphrases group in pairs, so that each pair forms a phrase and the whole a parallel interrupted period whose first phrase ends on a half cadence and whose second phrase ends on a perfect authentic cadence. The performance exhibits a clear 4/4 meter and a structure of 4 + 4, 4 + 4 measures. Thomas transforms this metric prototype

by lengthening phrase ends; the amount of lengthening corresponds to the relative weight of the cadence. (In Example 3, +1 indicates lengthening of the measure by one quarter-note beat.) At m. 8, Thomas lengthens the phrase's final measure to five beats. At m. 15, he draws out the cadence by stretching what would normally have been ♩♫ ♩♫ to ♩. ♪♩. ♪ (echoing the rhythmic pattern of m. 14), and by again adding a beat in the final measure, m. 16. From a music theorist's point of view, such transformations do not override the meter but simply alter it in quite predictable ways.[5]

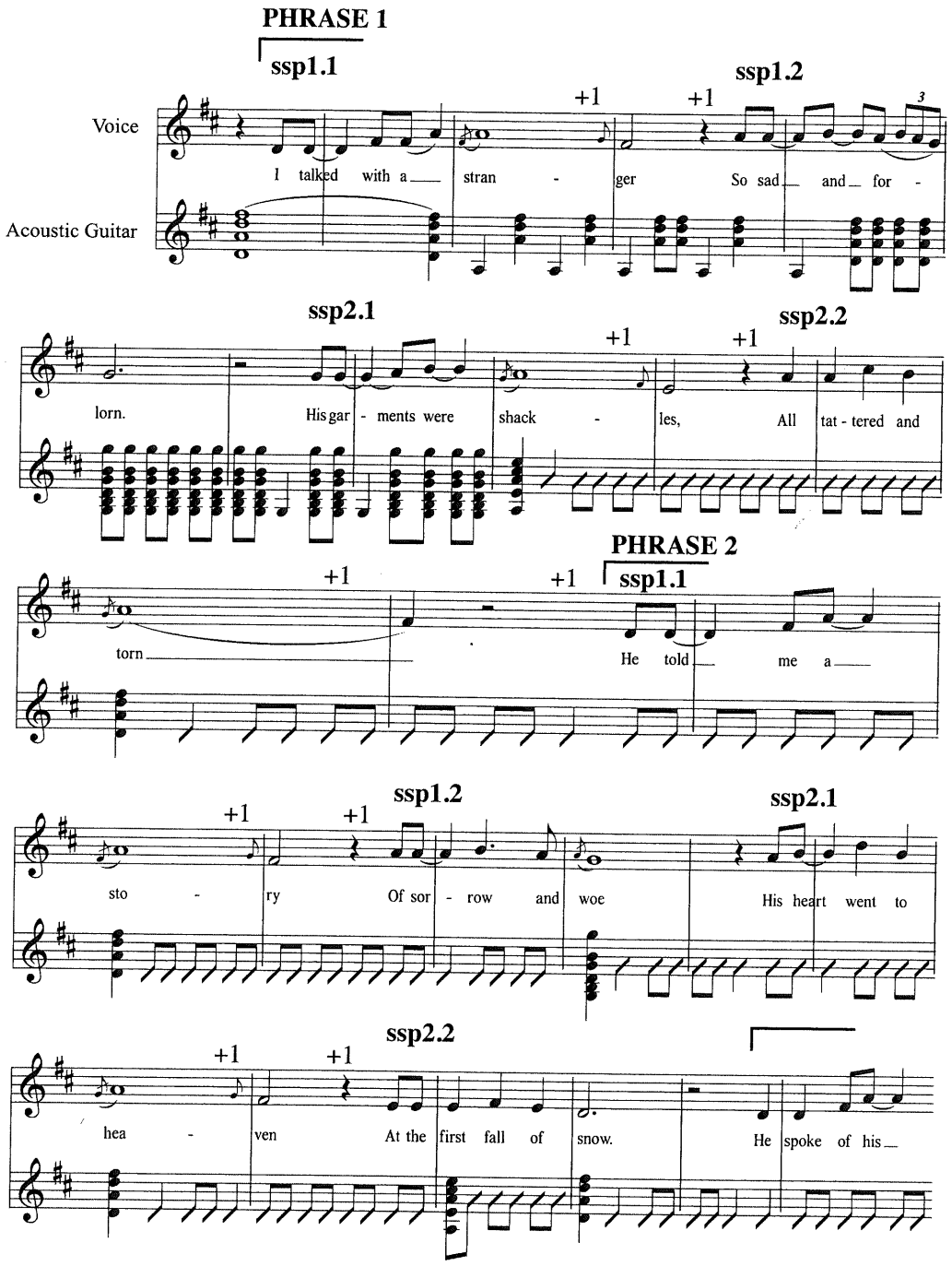
Béla Bartók describes similar transformations in his discussion of Romanian folk music. For "isometric" *parlando* vocal melodies he presents a prototype of ♩♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩♩ ‖ for the "eight-syllable melodic sections" corresponding to text lines, "that is, eight eighth notes, of course, not in rigid equality but in an elastic *parlando* rhythm. These equal values may undergo various changes, the most common of which is the prolongation of the final eighth note in the last melodic section to a duration many times longer than its original value. Therefore, . . . the last bar of the melody will end almost invariably in a rhythmical pattern of this kind: 𝅗𝅥. ‖. Rather frequent is a similar though less extended prolongation at the main caesura [at the end of the second of four text lines]; moreover, it occurs, but less often, at the secondary caesurae [at the end of the first and third of four text lines]." About Romanian instrumental music, Bartók writes that in the last bar of Bihor-type melodies, the standard $\frac{2}{4}$ ♩♩♩♩ pattern often expands to $\frac{3}{4}$ ♩♫ ♩ ♩.[6]

Dueck's final example, "At the First Fall of Snow," compares Hank Williams's and Ernest Monias's renditions of the song, the latter from an album titled *A Tribute to Hank Williams*. Williams's performance (Dueck's figure 7.9) articulates consistent triple meter, triple hypermeter, and higher-level duple hypermeters. Monias's version systematically transforms Williams's at the level of the 3/4 meter.[7] (Example 4 displays Dueck's transcription of Monias's performance; I have added bar lines and annotations.) The strophe articulates two large phrases forming a parallel sectional period; the first phrase concludes with an imperfect authentic cadence, and the second, with a perfect authentic cadence. Each phrase divides into two subphrases, each of which further subdivides into two subsubphrases (henceforth ssp's). Monias treats the two large phrases in almost parallel metrical fashion. For the first phrase, he elongates the second and third full measures of ssp's 1.1, 2.1, and 2.2 by one beat; for the second phrase, he elongates ssp's 1.1 and 2.1 in this way. Unlike Thomas, who lengthened measures at weightier formal boundar-

5 See Rothstein 1989 on the manipulation of meter (41–43) and on composed-out fermatas (81). "We can . . . conceive of rhythmic phenomena that disrupt a metric pattern without destroying it. In a sense, such phenomena amount to a kind of composed *rubato*" (43). (Although Rothstein focuses on hypermeter, he draws upon general metric principles.)

6 Bartók 1967b, 12–13; 1967a, 42. See also Frigyesi 1982 on Bartók and "hardened rubato."

7 This example is rhythmically more sophisticated than the preceding two; Williams himself (and Monias after him) transforms a straightforward anacrusic "I talked with a" (and all parallel constructions) with anticipations.



Example 4. Monias's 2002 version of "First Fall of Snow," beginning (Dueck figure 7.10, annotations added by Leong) (*Experience and Meaning in Music Performance* edited by Clayton, Dueck, and Leante (2013), by permission of Oxford University Press, USA)

ies, Monias does the opposite. He seems to expand 3/4 measures into 4/4 measures at lesser structural boundaries to create a sense of connection; straight 3/4 meter occurs at more significant boundaries. For example, within the first phrase, the main structural division occurs after ssp 1.2—precisely the ssp that Monias does not lengthen. The one exception to this principle is the elongated ssp 2.2 at the end of phrase 1; Monias may have wanted to contrast the less and more conclusive cadences ending phrases 1 and 2 by lengthening the first and not the second.

My observations on these examples do not contradict Dueck's claim that certain aboriginal treatments of Western vernacular music counter their models' regular metricality and hypermetricality. They show instead that, rather than tending toward "minimal metricality," these examples transform their models' metrical structures in fairly systematic ways, ways that preserve and even mark aspects of their hypermetric structures.[8]

Dueck found that aboriginal musicians spoke about the "de-metricalisation" of this repertoire in one of three ways: (1) they considered it incompetent or old-fashioned, (2) they described it as a traditional "crooked" approach to playing, or (3) they seemed unconcerned with metricality and did not speak about it explicitly (149). The formal logic of the examples I have discussed here argue against the "incompetence" interpretation of such metric treatment. The performers' maintenance and transformation of their models' metric and hypermetric structures do indeed seem to be "crooked"—that is, alterations of regular metric prototypes. Dueck's study suggests that such transformations constitute a style in themselves, one that is intuitively created by cultural insiders.

The book's two inner chapters focus on interpreting processes of performance. Andy McGuiness studies British alternative rock bands whose music is built on the hypnotic repetition of short riffs. McGuiness takes these bands' performative processes as representative of what he calls "felicitous and creative performance." This is performance free of conscious control, in these cases, grounded upon overlearned motor patterns interacting with sensory perception.[9] It forms and displays the self in the moment without predetermination or censorship. Drawing upon the phenomenology of shame and studies of human development, McGuiness constructs a model for performers' self-consciousness. He posits the concurrent streaming of prereflective bodily awareness and reflective observational consciousness in creative performance. "What defines 'creative performance' (as described here) is the

8 Dueck hedges his bets in his identification of "minimal metricality"; he uses descriptions such as "tends towards minimal metricality" (147) and "a freer, more fluid and more minimal metricality" (156). He finds Monias's performance to be less minimally metrical than his other examples: "The performance is not entirely devoid of elements with metrical implications, and it would be difficult to assert that it is an instance of minimally metrical music. Nevertheless, it is certainly less rigorously metricalised than Williams's performance" (153). Later he states that Monias "effects an aesthetic translation of the song, imbuing it with a more fluid and minimal metricality" (155).

9 Band members' discourse about their playing emphasizes overlearning physical patterns and avoiding explicit knowledge or deliberate control.

continuous attention of the reflective self to actions of the prereflective self in the preceding moment, but without attempting to control present or future actions" (132). McGuiness suggests that a special balance between the prereflective and reflective characterizes performative activity and that such balance applies widely to genres beyond those of alternative rock.[10]

Glaura Lucas's study of Afro-Brazilian Congado music explains musical time in terms of its ritual functions. Congado is "an Afro-Brazilian religious tradition whose ritual acts are mainly conducted by means of the continuous production of music" (86), concentrated in a weeklong festival featuring roughly ten to twenty musical groups. Music is seen as an interface between the visible and spiritual worlds. The three types of Congado performance groups—Congo, Moçambique, and Candombe—progress from fast, active elaborations of the basic rhythmic patterns (for driving out evil energies and creating a sonorous protective shield) to more straightforward performance of the rhythmic patterns (for weightier tasks such as ushering royalty) to the use of a single unvaried rhythmic pattern (for the most sacred ceremony). A group's unity is manifest in the temporal synchronization of its participants. When different groups meet, each group endeavors to keep its tempo unaffected by that of the other.

Central to the Congado tradition is the rosary, symbolic of unity and closure. In the temporal domain it is invoked as a metaphor for circumscribed periods of time on various scales—the six-month span of Congado activities, for example, or the minimum structural length of a song. It may be appropriate, then, that this chapter and the chapter on dual streams of awareness in performance form the inner core of this book's nested pairings. Ethnography, basic to the book as a whole, plays the most central role in these two chapters' methodologies. Perhaps the rosary's circles of meaning and the duality of performance awareness could be taken as similes for the nesting of chapter pairs within the book.

Experience and Meaning in Music Performance tackles topics now being explored in the discipline of music theory: entrainment, groove, temporal expressivity, and the cultural meanings of metrical structures. The book addresses issues of embodied cognition as displayed through gesture in ensemble performance, performers' discourse, listeners' representations, and pedagogical methods. It delves into mysteries of awareness, conscious thought, and volition, in the context of processes of entrainment. It places all of these investigations squarely in social contexts and distinct cultural environments. For both its differences from music-theoretical approaches and its connections to new developments in the field, *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance* is recommended reading for music theorists.

10 *The Inner Game of Tennis*, a book known to many classical-music performers, describes this balance as the optimal relationship between "Self 1" and "Self 2": Self 1, the "teller," observes Self 2, the "doer," with "detached interest" (Gallwey 1974, 25, 52–53). McGuiness's theorizing of consciousness relates also to Doffman's comments (chapter 4) about groove, control, and awareness in jazz.

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