

Rhythm and Meter

Meter

- ▶ In the twentieth century, composers began to experiment with different kinds of meters
 - ▶ Asymmetric meters use groupings of 2s and 3s to create consistent irregularity
 - ▶ $\frac{8}{8}$ = 2+3 or 3+2
 - ▶ $\frac{8}{8}$ = 2+2+3 or 2+3+2 or 3+2+2
 - ▶ Composite meter spells out the smaller groupings
 - ▶ Example: $3+2+3$
 $\frac{8}{8}$
 - ▶ Changing meter (mixed meter) uses rapidly changing meters
 - ▶ In alternating meter, two time signatures alternate
 - ▶ $\frac{3}{4}\frac{3}{4}$ = a measure of $\frac{3}{4}$ followed by a measure of $\frac{3}{4}$
 - ▶ Fractional meter includes partial beats: $2\frac{1}{2}$ OR $3\frac{5}{8}$

Metric dissonance

- ▶ A few techniques can be used to create *metric dissonance*, in which there are two conflicting metric patterns
 - ▶ Consistent *displaced accents* can be used to suggest a potential secondary meter (sometimes called a "shadow meter")
 - ▶ *Polymeter* (or polyrhythm) communicates the existence of two concurrently operating meters
 - ▶ Polymeter is used when two meters are written out separately
 - ▶ Polyrrhythm is used when the secondary meter can be heard, but is not written out with a separate time signature
 - ▶ *Metric modulation* is a method of changing the tempo (altering the duration of the beat) by equating a particular note value with a different note value in the previous bar

Rhythm

- ▶ Twentieth century composers have also tried interesting things with rhythm
 - ▶ Oliver Messiaen often used *non-retrogradable rhythms*, which sound the same whether played forwards or backwards
 - ▶ Messiaen and other composers make use of *additive and subtractive rhythmic* processes, taking a rhythmic pattern and systematically adding or subtracting durations to it