The Art of Strict Musical Composition

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Introduction and Explanatory Notes by
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THE ART
OF
STRICT MUSICAL COMPOSITION,

derived from reliable principles and
illustrated with clear examples

by
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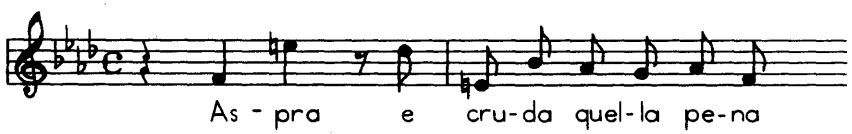
VOLUME II

The *diminished fourth*—melancoly, anxious; the *small*—calm, content; the *large*—very depressed; the *augmented* or the *tritone*—desperately sad.
The *small fifth*—tenderly sad; the *false*—imploring; the *perfect*—content, soothing; the *augmented* (occurs only in the bass)—timid.
[104] The *minor sixth*—depressed; the *major*—rather timid; the *augmented* does not occur in melody.
The *diminished seventh*—lamenting; the *minor*—rather frightful; the *major*—tremendously frightful.
The *octave*—very soothing.

I do not mean to imply that these melodic progressions have only the effects indicated and cannot be changed in any way. Rather, I mean only that these effects seem to me to be most appropriate to them. Much depends here on what precedes and follows and, in general, on the totality of the melodic phrase in which these progressions occur; it also depends on the position of the intermingled minor and major seconds of the scale or mode, and above all on the beat of the measure on which they are used and on the harmony that is placed under them. Every melodic progression can acquire a different shade of expression from the harmony. Nevertheless it is certain that the effect must be all the greater when the melodic progression in itself is well chosen and is supported by a powerful harmony. This good choice of melodic progression is necessary above all in compositions whose greatest expressive power must lie in the melody, and in which no harmonic accompaniment is necessary, as in arias and songs. Great men have always been very careful in this choice. Consider, for example, the first phrase of an aria by the famous Benedetto Marcello in example 3.68.[d] Can one imagine a progression that is more striking and better suited to the words?



EXAMPLE 3.68

[d] Work unidentified.

CHAPTER 4

Tempo, Meter, and Rhythm

[105] A succession of notes that mean nothing by themselves and are differentiated from one another only by pitch can be transformed into a real melody—one that has a definite character and depicts a passion or a particular sentiment—by means of tempo, meter, and rhythm, which give the melody its character and expression. It is immediately apparent to everyone that the most moving melody would be completely stripped of all its power and expression if one note after another were performed without precise regulation of speed, without accents, and without rest points, even if performed with the strictest observance of pitch. Even common speech would become partly incomprehensible and completely disagreeable if a proper measure of speed were not observed in the delivery, if the words were not separated from one another by the accents associated with the length and brevity of the syllables, and finally if the phrases and sentences were not differentiated by rest points. Such a lifeless delivery would make the most beautiful speech sound no better than the letter-by-letter reading of children.

Thus tempo, meter, and rhythm give melody its life and power. *Tempo* defines the rate of speed, which by itself is already important since it designates a lively or quiet character. *Meter* determines the accents in addition to the length and brevity of the notes and the lighter or more emphatic delivery; and it shapes the notes into words, so to speak. But *rhythm* establishes for the ear the individual phrases formed by the words and the periods composed of several phrases. Melody is transformed into a comprehensible and stimulating speech by the proper combination of these three things.

But it must be kept in mind that none of these elements is sufficient by

itself to give the melody a precise character; the true expression of the melody is determined only by their synthesis and their interaction. Two compositions may have the same rate of allegro or largo, yet still have an entirely different effect; according to the type of meter, the motion is more hurried or emphatic, lighter or heavier, even while the speed remains the same. From this it is clear that tempo and meter must combine their forces. [106] The same is also true of rhythm: the components from which a melody is formed can assume an entirely different expression depending on meter and tempo.

Thus, whoever wants to write a melody must pay attention to the combined effect of tempo, meter, and rhythm and must consider none of these without regard to the other two. Nevertheless, it is unavoidable for me to discuss each of them separately here and to tell the aspiring composer what he needs to know about each individual point.

I. TEMPO

The composer must never forget that every melody is supposed to be a natural and faithful illustration or portrayal of a mood or sentiment, insofar as it can be represented by a succession of notes. The term *Gemüthsbewegung*, which we Germans give to passions or affections, already indicates their analogy to tempo.[a] In fact, every passion and every sentiment—in its intrinsic effect as well as in the words by which it is expressed—has its faster or slower, more violent or more passive tempo. This tempo must be correctly captured by the composer to conform with the type of sentiment he has to express.

Thus I must admonish the aspiring composer above all that he study diligently the nature of every passion and sentiment with regard to tempo, so that he does not make the terrible mistake of giving the melody a slow tempo where it should be fast, or a fast tempo where it should be slow. However, this is a field that is not limited to music, and that the composer has in common with the orator and poet.

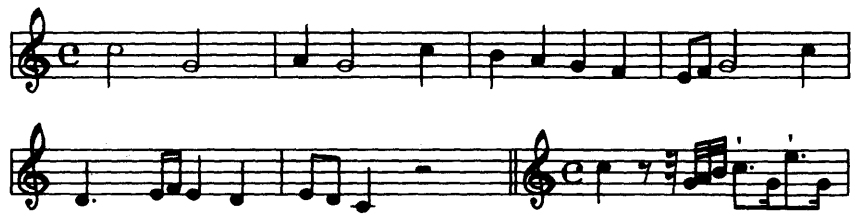
Furthermore, he must have acquired a correct feeling for the natural tempo of every meter, or for what is called *tempo giusto*. This is attained by diligent study of all kinds of dance pieces. Every dance piece has its definite tempo, determined by the meter and the note values that are employed in it.

[a] The German words used by Kirnberger for tempo are *Bewegung* and *Taktbewegung*. The former also has a more general meaning that has been translated throughout as "motion."

Regarding meter, those having larger values, like alla breve, 3/2, and 6/4 meter, have a heavier and slower tempo than those of smaller values, like 2/4, 3/4, and 6/8 meter, and these in turn are less lively than 3/8 or 6/16 meter. Thus, for example, a loure in 3/2 meter has a slower tempo than a minuet in 3/4 meter, and the latter is in turn slower than a passepied in 3/8 meter. [107] Regarding note values, dance pieces involving sixteenth and thirty-second notes have a slower tempo than those that tolerate only eighth and at most sixteenth notes as the fastest note values in the same meter. Thus, for example, a sarabande in 3/4 meter has a slower tempo than a minuet, even though both are written in the same meter.

Thus the *tempo giusto* is determined by the meter and by the longer and shorter note values of a composition. Once the young composer has a feeling for this, he will soon understand to what degree the adjectives *largo*, *adagio*, *andante*, *allegro*, *presto*, and their modifications *larghetto*, *andantino*, *allegretto*, and *prestissimo* add to or take away from the fast or slow motion of the natural tempo. He will soon be able not only to write in every type of tempo, but also in such a way that this tempo is captured quickly and correctly by the performers.

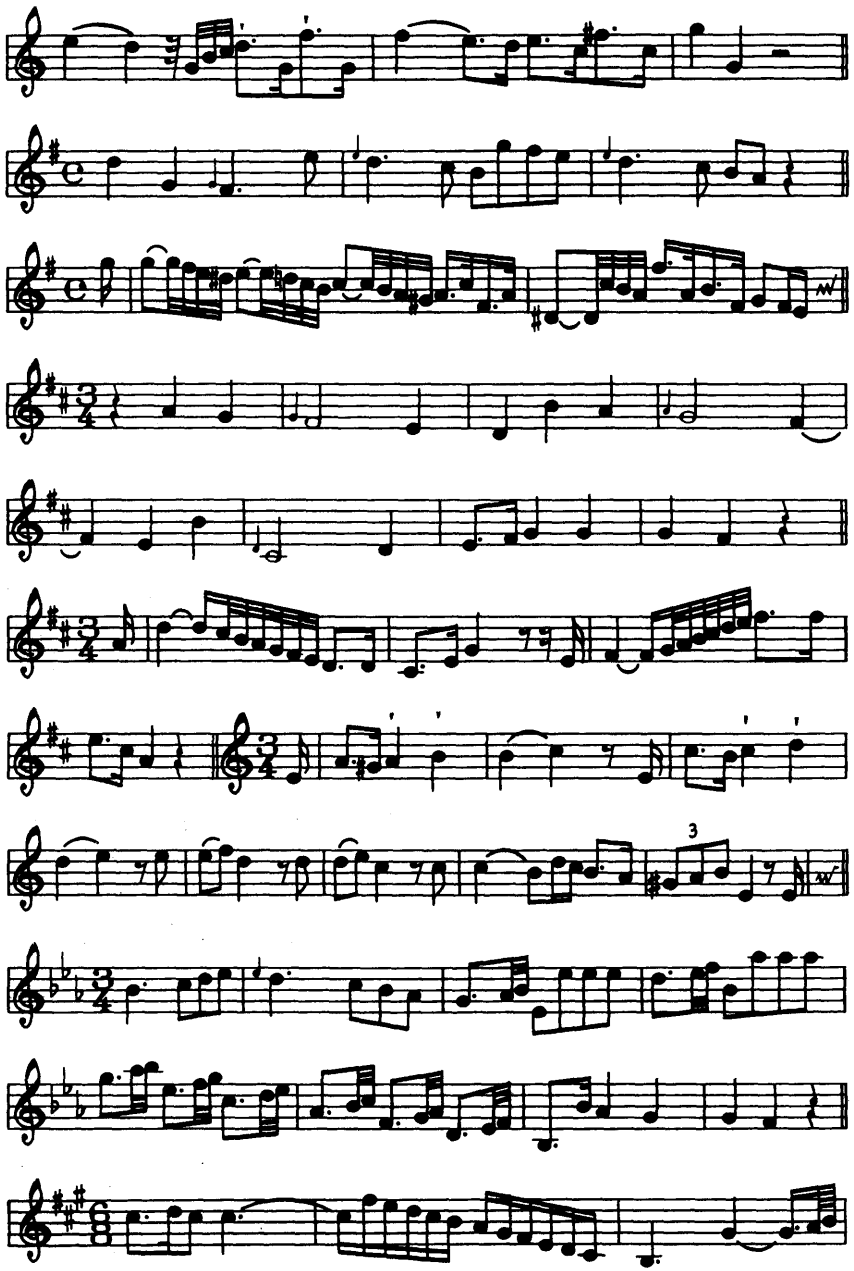
However, tempo in music is not limited just to the different degrees of slow and fast motion. There are passions "in which the images flow monotonously like a gentle brook; others where they flow faster with a moderate stir, but without delay; some in which the succession of images is similar to wild brooks swollen by heavy rains, which rush violently along and sweep with them everything that stands in their way; and again others in which the images are similar to the wild sea, which violently beats against the shore and then recedes to crash again with new force."[6] Similarly, tempo in melody can also be violent or tender, skipping or monotonous, fiery or bland even when the degree of fast or slow motion is the same, depending upon the type of note values chosen for the melody. Consider example 4.1.



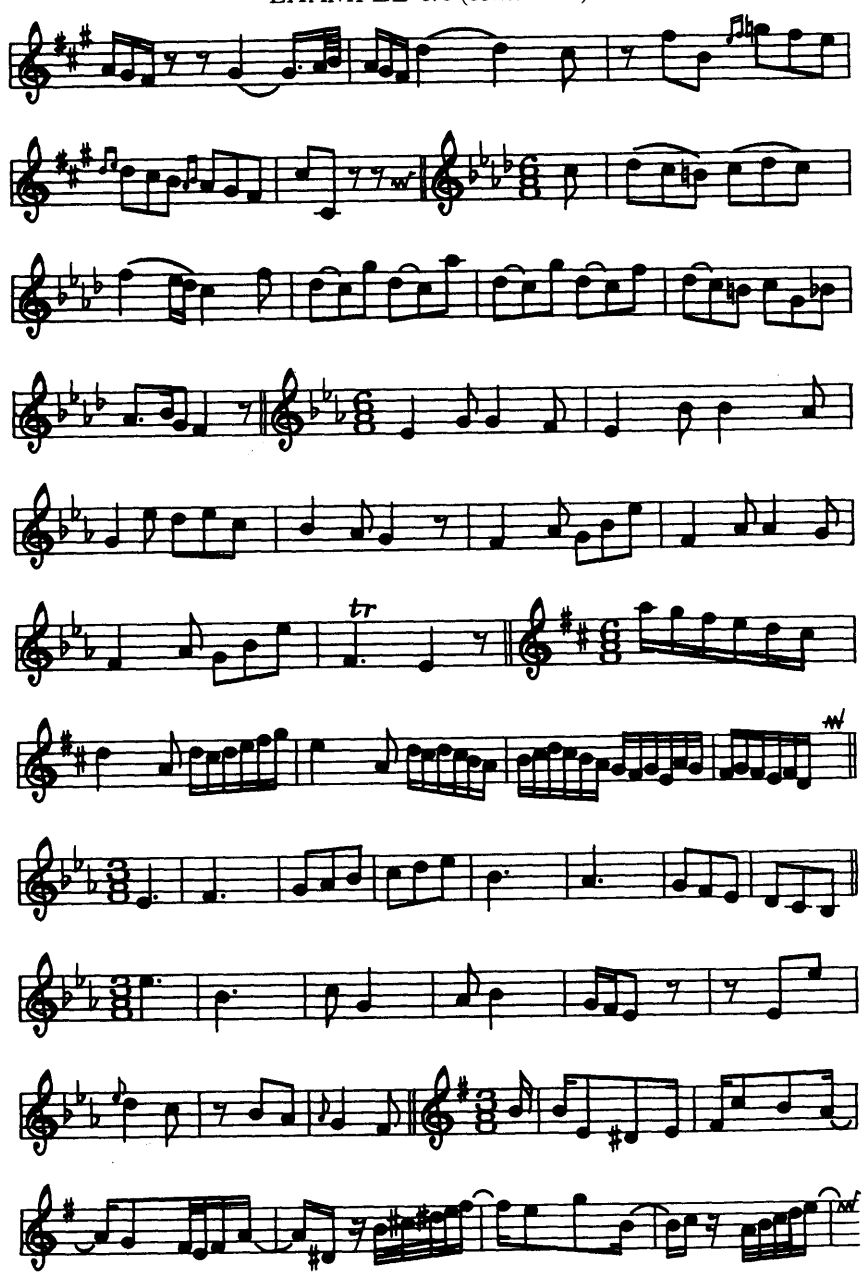
EXAMPLE 4.1 (*to be continued*)

6. See the article "Ausdruck" in Sulzer's [*Allgemeine*] *Theorie der schönen Künste* [Leipzig, 1771–74].

EXAMPLE 4.1 (*continued*)



EXAMPLE 4.1 (*continued*)



[111] Each of these examples is distinguished from the others by a characteristic motion that is felt first of all through the differences of tempo and meter, and in those that have the same tempo and meter through the difference of note values from which the melody is composed. The young composer must pay particular attention to this and must, by diligent study of the works of excellent masters, gain sufficient experience in the particular effect of each type of note value in every meter. Assuming he has a correct feeling for this, he will thereby obtain control over the means by which he incorporates into his melody exactly that type of motion which allows the mood of the chosen passion to be perceived most clearly.

Thus the composer, in constructing a piece, has to consider two things regarding tempo: (1) the slow or fast pace of the tempo; and (2) the characteristic motion of the parts of the measure, or the type of rhythmic changes. Lively sentiments generally require a fast tempo; but the expression can become playful, or flirtatious, or happy, or tender, or pathetic by means of the type of characteristic motion of the parts of the measure, or the rhythmic steps. Likewise, a slower tempo generally is appropriate to the expression of sad sentiments, but through the second type of motion the expression can become more or less agitated, tender or violent, gentle or painful. Of course, it is not the motion alone that has this effect; the remaining good qualities of an expressive melody must be united with it, but then it contributes most forcefully to the expression.

This may be sufficient to draw the prospective composer's attention to the effect of motion in general. In the following two sections of this chapter we will have the opportunity to discuss in greater detail the particular effects of metric and rhythmic motion. [112] Therefore, it may suffice here to add a couple of remarks for the young composer regarding motion in general.

He must be careful in writing a piece not to make it hurry or drag. Although these words are common only in the theory of performance, they can also be applied to composition. It can easily happen that a composer, without noticing it, rushes the tempo in writing a fiery allegro, or lets it drag in a sad largo; or, out of fondness for a phrase, he may unwittingly become lax about the tempo, so that the phrase becomes vague because of its fast rate of rhythmic motion or dull because of its slowness. The composer suffers in the performance of such pieces, but through his own fault.

He must not overstep the limits of fast or slow tempo. What is too fast cannot be performed clearly, and what is too slow cannot be comprehended. This applies mainly to pieces where the composer himself indicates the tempo.

Because of the long period of vibration of low notes, all short note values must be avoided in the low register; but in the high register they are more effective than long sustained notes. The progression of the bass generally relates to that of the highest part like the walk of a mature man to that of a young girl. Where she takes two or three steps, he takes only one, yet both cover the same distance. Not that a young girl could not go slowly and a mature man quickly, but it is not as natural. Similarly, the voices in the middle registers can be considered as gaits of boys and young adults by analogy to the shorter or longer note values of their rhythmic steps.

Finally, the composer must not neglect to designate the tempo of his piece as precisely as possible whenever it cannot be determined from the features given above. He must use the terms *allegro assai*, *allegro moderato*, *poco allegro*, etc., wherever the word *allegro* would indicate a tempo that is too fast or not fast enough. The same is true of slow pieces. The words that refer to characteristic motion, such as *maestoso*, *scherzando*, *vivo*, *mesto*, etc., are often of the greatest significance in expressive pieces, and not meaningless for those who want to perform a piece well. Hasse is so precise in the designation of his tempi that he often makes lengthy descriptions of how the piece is to be performed: *Andantino grazioso, ma non patetico, non languente*; *Allegro vivo, e con spirito*, or *allegro vivo, che arrivi quasi all'allegro intiero*; *un poco lento, e maestoso, ma che non languisca, e abbia il dovuto suo moto.*

II. METER

[113] If one imagines a melody in which all the notes are presented with the same intensity or stress, and in which they have the same length or duration (as if, for example, the melody were to consist only of whole notes), it would be comparable to a monotonously flowing stream. What distinguishes one melody from another is the faster or slower current: one is comparable to a thundering stream, another to a gentle, somewhat faster or slower flowing river, and a third to a gently rippling brook. If a more or less full and consonant harmony is imagined along with such a melody, one has everything that could distinguish one melody from another.

The entire power or expression of such a melody would consist only of a gentle and light or a lively and strong current, which would lull us to sleep or wake us up. If melody is to become similar to speech and adapted to the expression of various emotions and sentiments, individual notes must be turned into meaningful words and several words into comprehensible

phrases. This transformation of a mere stream of notes into a melody resembling speech is accomplished in part by accents that are given to a few notes, and partly by the difference of their durations. It is just the same as with common speech, where we distinguish words and sentences only by means of the accents and durations of syllables.

Meter actually consists of the precise uniformity of accents that are given to a few notes and of the completely regular distribution of long and short syllables. That is, when these heavier or lighter accents recur at regular intervals, the melody acquires a meter or a measure. If these accents were not distributed regularly, so that no precise periodic recurrence occurred, the melody would be similar only to common prosaic speech; but with this periodic return it is comparable to poetic speech, which has its precise meter.

[114] This matter can also be conceived by picturing a simple motion. A melody that just flows along without accents resembles a continuous motion, like that created when a body falls or is thrown through the air; but an accented melody is similar to a motion divided into steps or to walking. Just as walking receives its particular character from the type as well as the speed of the steps, melody receives its character and expression in quite a similar way.

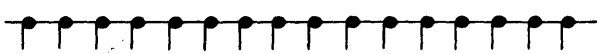
A regular walk has steps of equal length, each of which represents a measure of the melody. However, the steps can consist of more or fewer little movements or *beats*, and these movements or beats, all of which are of the same duration, can have smaller divisions or parts; they can also be distinguished by other modifications—by gradations of heavy and light, flowing or leaping, etc. If a precise uniformity is observed in the steps and small movements, this results in the measured walk which we call dance, and this is precisely analagous to measured melody. In just the same way as dance expresses or portrays various sentiments merely by motion, melody does it merely by notes.

Whoever considers this closely will easily understand how much the character of a melody depends on tempo and meter. The clearest examples of this can be found in the various dance melodies. However, it is not possible to give definite rules that would specify the most suitable tempo and meter for every type of sentiment. For the most part, it depends on a refined and accurate sensitivity.

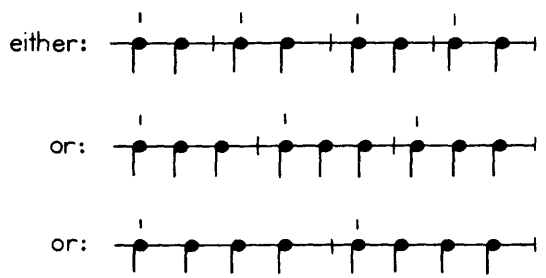
Everything that can be said to a composer about this subject beyond what I have already stated about tempo is contained in the following main

topics: (1) that all types of meters invented and in use up to now be described to him, each according to its true structure and its precise execution; (2) that the spirit or character of each meter be defined as precisely as possible; (3) finally, for the situation where the melody is to be written to a given text, that directions be given how the best or at least a suitable type of meter is to be chosen for it. I will have to discuss these three points here.

1. If one hears a succession of equal pulses that are repeated at the same time interval, as in example 4.2, experience teaches us that we immediately divide them metrically in our minds by arranging them in groups containing an equal number of pulses; and we do this in such a way that we put an accent on the first pulse of each group or imagine hearing it stronger than the others. [115] This division can occur in three ways, as shown in example 4.3.

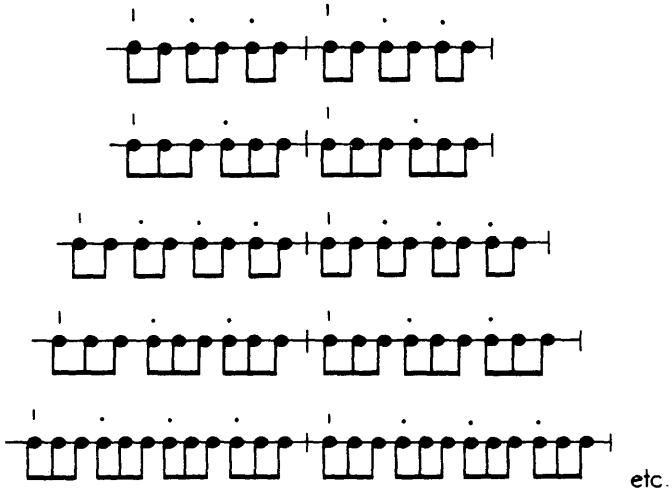


EXAMPLE 4.2



EXAMPLE 4.3

That is, we divide the pulses into groups of two, three, or four. We do not arrive at any other division in a natural way. No one can repeat groups of five and even less of seven equal pulses in succession without wearisome strain. It can be done more easily with six, especially when the pulses go rather quickly; however, one will notice that groups of six or more pulses are not easily comprehended without thinking of a subdivision, in which case they once again resemble the above-mentioned groups of two, three, and four. [See example 4.4.]



EXAMPLE 4.4

[116] Here many kinds of pulses are used in one group. The dots indicate the main pulses to which the others are subordinate, since they are not felt as strongly as the former; thus these groups become similar again to those mentioned above, or rather they are the same. With fast pulses, even many more can be subsumed under one principal pulse, but the arrangement of the groups is always the same.

It is easy to apply this. Instead of the word "pulse," one uses *beat*, and *measure* instead of "group"; in this way one gets an idea of what the measure is and of its many varieties. The measure consists of two, three, or four equal beats; besides these, there is no other natural type of measure.

To all appearances, only three time signatures would be required to indicate these meters, namely, one that indicates a measure of two, another that indicates a measure of three, and a third that indicates a measure of four beats. However, from what we have stated already in the preceding section of this chapter about *tempo giusto* and the natural motion of longer and shorter note values, it becomes clear, for example, that a measure of two quarter notes and another of two half notes, and likewise a measure of three quarter notes and anotther of three eighth notes, indicate a different tempo, even though they have the same number of beats. In addition, longer note values are always performed with more weight and emphasis than shorter ones; consequently, a composition that is to be performed with weight and emphasis can only be notated with long note values, and another that is to be

performed in a light and playful manner can only be notated with short note values.

From this the necessity of different meters with the same number of beats becomes apparent, which we shall now consider in greater detail. In general, meters are divided into even and odd: *even* are those of two and four beats; and *odd*, those of three beats, which are also called triple meters. Furthermore, a distinction is made between simple and compound meters: *simple* meters are constituted in such a way that each measure amounts to only one foot, which cannot be divided in the middle; however, *compound* meters can be divided in the middle of each measure, since they are composed of two simple meters, as will be shown in greater detail below.

[117] Before we list the meters in order, it must still be noted that it is just as easy to divide each beat of a meter into three parts or to triple it as it is to perceive triple meter; this is already obvious from [the existence of] triplets. This gives rise to meters of *triple beats*, where three pulses fall on one beat. We shall indicate these now, along with the meters from which they are derived, and shall note what is necessary regarding their true structure, their usefulness or unusefulness, and their exact execution. [See table 4.1.[b]]

TABLE 4.1.

Simple Even Meters of Two Beats
1. 2/1 meter or ¢: tripled—6/2 meter. 2. 2/2 meter or ¢: tripled—6/4 meter. 3. 2/4 meter: tripled—6/8 meter. 4. 2/8 meter: tripled—6/16 meter.
Simple Even Meters of Four beats
1. 4/2 meter or O: tripled—12/4 meter. 2. 4/4 meter or C: tripled—12/8 meter. 3. 4/8 meter: tripled—12/16 meter.
Simple Odd Meters of Three Beats
1. 3/1 meter or 3: tripled—9/2 meter. 2. 3/2 meter: tripled—9/4 meter. 3. 3/4 meter: tripled—9/8 meter. 4. 3/8 meter: tripled—9/16 meter. 5. 3/16 meter: tripled—9/32 meter.

[b] It is clear from this table that Kirnberger's conception of the distinction between simple and compound meter is not consistent with the commonly accepted definition of these terms.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SIMPLE EVEN METERS OF TWO BEATS

[118] (A) 2/1 meter, which is also called *large alla breve* by some, consists of two whole notes or semibreves [per measure]. However, as is the case with the 6/2 meter of two triple beats that is derived from it, it is no longer used because of the confusion caused by the rests, since the same rest has a value of half a measure at one time and a whole measure at another. In place of these, it is better to use 2/2 and 6/4 with the adjective *grave* to indicate the emphatic and weighty performance required by these meters. I know of only one Credo by the elder Bach in the large alla breve meter of two beats, which he designated, however, with C to show that the rests have the same value as in ordinary alla breve time.[c] Telemann, however, has even written church pieces in 6/1 and other similar meters; one can easily see that these are only eccentricities.

(B) 2/2 meter, or rather *alla breve*, which is always designated by ¢ or 𝅗𝅥, is most often used in church pieces, fugues, and elaborate choruses. It is to be noted about this meter that it is very serious and emphatic, yet is performed twice as fast as its note values indicate, unless a slower tempo is specified by the adjectives *grave*, *adagio*, etc. The same is true of the 6/4 meter of two triple beats that is derived from 2/2 meter, but the *tempo giusto* of this meter is somewhat more moderate. Both meters tolerate no shorter note values than eighths.

(C) 2/4 meter has the same tempo as alla breve but is performed much

(*Footnote b continued*)

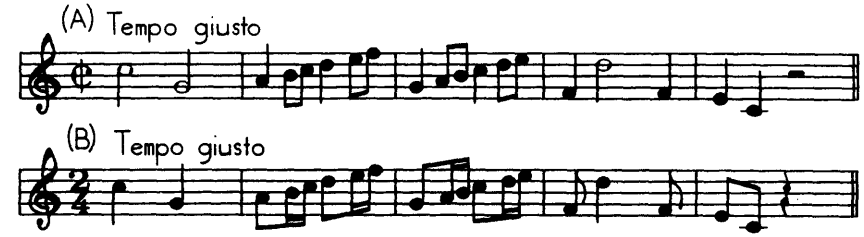
The meters listed in the right column, those that are derived from the simple meters in the left column by multiples of three, are normally considered as compound meters; Kirnberger, however, considers them among the simple meters. According to Kirnberger, compound meters, the most useful of which are listed in table 4.2, are derived from simple meters by multiples of two. This definition leads to certain inconsistencies: no meter of nine (three triple beats), for example, can be considered as compound, since it cannot be divided in the middle. Other meters, like 6/8, can be simple (derived from 3/4) or compound (derived from 3/8); but in both cases, the measure is divided into two triple beats.

Kirnberger's views on meter are reflected in the writings of Heinrich Christoph Koch. See the article "Taktart" in his *Musikalisches Lexikon* (Frankfurt, 1802) or his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, vol. II, part II, chapter 2 (Leipzig, 1782–93). The only significant difference is that Koch lists the meters derived from simple meters by multiples of three, which Kirnberger considers under the heading of simple, as among the "mixed" meters.

A different classification of meters was given by Johann Adolph Scheibe in his treatise, *Über die musikalische Composition*, vol. I, chapter 5 (Leipzig, 1773). Scheibe divides meter into four categories: (1) simple even (duple or quadruple) meters; (2) simple odd (triple) meters; (3) compound even meters; and (4) compound odd meters. This corresponds to the commonly accepted classification of meter today.

[c] The work to which Kirnberger refers is the Credo from the *Mass in B minor* (*BWV* 232).

more lightly. The difference in performance between the two meters is too noticeable for anyone to believe that it makes no difference whether a piece is written in C or in 2/4. Consider, for example, the following melodic phrase in both meters [example 4.5].



EXAMPLE 4.5

[119] If this phrase is performed correctly, everyone will notice that it is much more serious and emphatic in *alla breve* (A) than in 2/4 (B) meter, where it comes close to being playful. This is the difference between meters having the same number of beats, as was noted above.

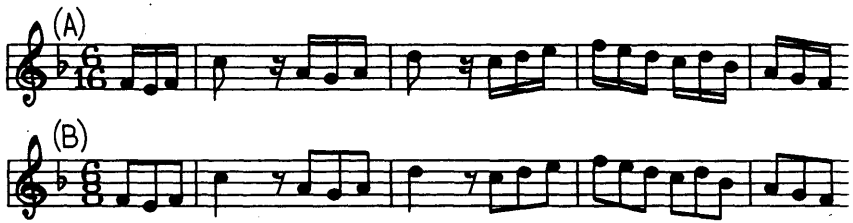
2/4 meter as well as the 6/8 meter that is derived from it are most often used in chamber and theater pieces. In their natural tempi, sixteenth notes and a few thirty-second notes in succession are their shortest note values. But if the tempo is modified by the adjectives *andante*, *largo*, *allegro*, etc., more or none of these note values can be used, depending on the rate of speed.

(D) 2/8 meter would be appropriate only for short amusing dance pieces because of its fast tempo and its all too great lightness of execution. However, it is not in use, and we would not have mentioned it if 6/16 meter —which is derived from it and in which many pieces have been written— did not have to be listed. It differs greatly from 6/8 meter in the hurried nature of its tempo and the lightness of its execution. J. S. Bach and Couperin[7] have written some of their pieces in 6/16 meter, not without good reason. Who does not know the Bach fugue at (A) in example 4.6?[d] [120] If this theme is rewritten as at (B), the tempo is no longer the same, the gait is much more ponderous, and the notes, particularly the passing notes, are

7. Former court organist in Paris. He has published many pieces engraved in copper under the title, *Pièces de Clavecin*, which in all respects are models of good keyboard pieces.

[d] Fugue in F major (*BWV* 880) from *Das wohltemperierte Klavier II*.

emphasized too much; in short, the expression of the piece as a whole suffers and is no longer the one given to it by Bach. If this fugue is to be performed correctly on the keyboard, the notes must be played lightly and without the least pressure in a fast tempo; this is what 6/16 meter requires. On the violin, pieces in this and other similarly light meters are to be played just with the point of the bow; however, weightier meters require a longer stroke and more bow pressure. The fact that these and several other meters that we shall list are considered superfluous and obsolete today indicates either that good and correct execution has been lost or that an aspect of expression which is easy to obtain only in these meters is entirely unknown to us. Both [of these conclusions] do little credit to the art, which supposedly has reached its peak in our time.

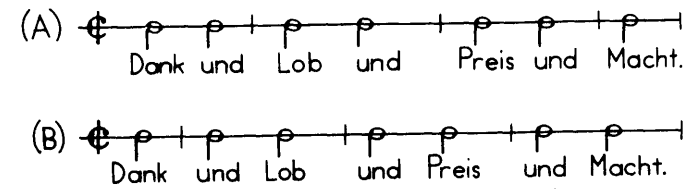


EXAMPLE 4.6

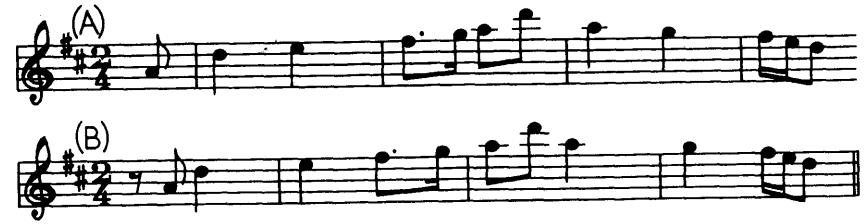
It is now to be noted in particular about these duple meters that each measure amounts to one foot of two parts, the first of which is accented and the second unaccented,[e] and that each main note of a melodic phrase must fall on the first beat of the measure, or, as is said, on the downbeat. To clarify this for the aspiring composer, let us divide the words *Dank und Lob und Preis und Macht* musically and metrically. They cannot be divided naturally other than as at (A) in example 4.7. It would be most clumsy and unnatural if the nouns of this example were to be placed on the unaccented beats, as at (B). The same applies to melody without words. All principal notes must fall on the downbeat, because the first beat of the measure has the greatest weight and is accented. What I mean by the principal notes here are those at which even a crude peasant nods his head or stamps his foot when expressing the feeling of the meter. Therefore the inexperienced composer is advised first to sing or play the melody that he has in his head and wants to

[e]Here Kirnberger uses the adjectives *lang* and *kurz*, which refer to the long and short syllables of poetic feet, to indicate the accented or unaccented parts of the measure. They do not imply a difference of duration, but of stress. He also uses the expressions *gute Zeit* (strong beat) and *schlechte* or *leichte Zeit* (weak or light beat).

write down, and to beat the time with his hand or foot. [121] In this way he will not miss the principal notes that fall on the downbeat, provided that the melody is metric. And he will not write down the idea at (A) in example 4.8 so that the weight of the first beat falls on the second beat, as at (B).



EXAMPLE 4.7



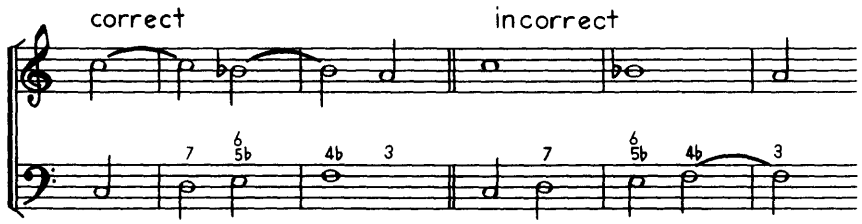
EXAMPLE 4.8

This is the most blatant error that can be committed, although it has been and still is made by composers whom one would at least have credited with a sensitivity to metric stress, since they have written so much. Among other [examples], I know of a long aria in alla breve time by one Perez, who has written many operas. It begins with the words, *Invano il tuo furore*, etc.[f] Shortly after the beginning of the vocal part, a rhythmic error occurs whereby the entire remaining part of the aria is displaced by half a measure. It is unbelievable how difficult it is to perform or to accompany such a confusingly notated piece.

Regarding unaccented or accented beats of the measure, it is to be noted that no nonessential dissonance can be used on the unaccented beat but must be prepared on the accented beat and resolved on the unaccented,[g] as in example 4.9.

[f]Work unidentified.

[g]Here Kirnberger is not very precise in his definition. What he means is that a nonessential dissonance must occur on an accented beat but is prepared and resolved on an unaccented beat.



EXAMPLE 4.9

[122] The unaccented beat may not be treated in passing in these meters, but, like the accented beat, must have a perceptible fundamental harmony.

The concluding note must always fall on the downbeat of the measure. If this does not happen, it indicates that somewhere in the melody there is an extra or missing half measure. The concluding note in music is always accented; therefore, it is a mistake if the poet provides the composer with verses in which the last syllable is feminine, that is, ends with a short syllable.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SIMPLE EVEN METERS OF FOUR BEATS

(A) 4/2 meter, or O, like 2/1 time, is no longer in use; it also is objectionable because of the confusion caused by its rests, as is the 12/3 meter of four triple beats derived from it. They are mentioned here only because one now and then comes across old pieces in these meters. Instead of these, it is better to use 4/4 and 12/8 meter with the adjective *grave* to designate the weighty tempo and emphatic performance appropriate to the former meters. If young composers should come across church pieces in *alla breve* time where there are four half notes between two barlines, they must not let themselves be misled and conclude that the meter is 4/2. This occurs only as a convenience for the composer to avoid an excess of barlines and ties, and he is free to do so. But this does not change the nature of the ¢ measure, which always has the same stress every other half note; and the upbeat and downbeat of the measure is fixed even when four, six, and more measures are joined without barline, as Handel, among others, has frequently done in his oratorios. Furthermore, this does not cause confusion regarding the rests, whose value always remains the same in such situations.

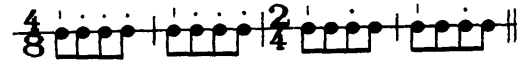
(B) 4/4 meter, which is designated by C, is of two types: either it is used with the adjective *grave* in place of the 4/2 meter just mentioned, in which case it is called large 4/4 time; or it is the so-called common even meter, which is also called small 4/4 time.

[123] Large 4/4 time is of extremely weighty tempo and execution and, because of its emphatic nature, is suited primarily to church piece, choruses, and fugues. Eighth and a few sixteenth notes in succession are its fastest note values. To distinguish it from small 4/4 time, it should be designated by 4/4 instead of C. The two meters have nothing in common except for their signatures.

Small 4/4 time has a more lively tempo and a far lighter execution. It tolerates all note values up to sixteenth notes and is used very often in all styles.

The same is true of 12/8 meter of [four] triple beats that is derived from 4/4 meter. A few older composers who were very sensitive about the manner in which their pieces were performed often designated pieces consisting only of sixteenth notes by 24/16 instead of 12/8 to indicate that the sixteenth notes should be performed lightly, quickly, and without the slightest pressure on the first note of each beat. Composers and performers today seem to know so little about these subtleties that they believe, on the contrary, that such meter designations were only an eccentricity of the older composers.

(C) 4/8 is the lightest of the quadruple meters in execution and tempo. It is distinguished from 2/4 meter by the weight of its beats, all of which are equally stressed; but in 2/4 meter the first and third beats are emphasized. [See example 4.10.] Therefore, it has a somewhat slower tempo than 2/4 meter. Yet, since the liveliness of the tempo makes the stress of the beats less noticeable in both meters, the two are not as different from one another as are 4/4 meter and *alla breve*. Furthermore, today's composers no longer designate pieces with 4/8, but always with 2/4 instead.

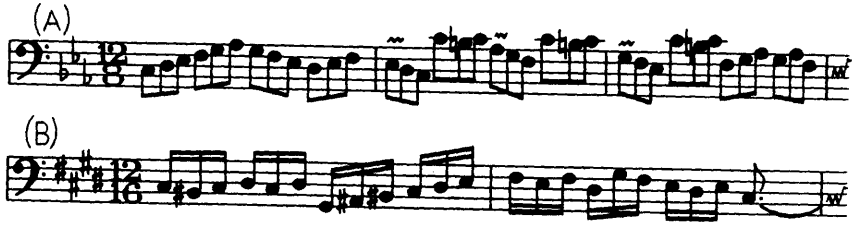


EXAMPLE 4.10

Although 12/16 meter of [four] triple beats, which is derived from 4/8 meter, is presently neglected and 12/8 meter is always written instead, it is completely different from the latter in its greater lightness of execution. The elder Bach has certainly not written the fugue at (A) in example 4.11 in 12/8 and the other at (B) in 12/16 without good reason.[h]

[124] Everyone will easily perceive the distinction between the two meters in these examples. The one at (A) designates a slower tempo and a

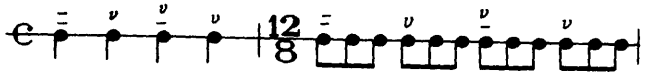
[h]The first is the subject of the Fughetta in c minor (*BWV* 961); the second is the subject of the Fugue in C-sharp minor (*BWV* 873) from *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* II.



EXAMPLE 4.11

more emphatic performance; furthermore, many sixteenth notes can be used in this meter. However, no shorter note values can be used in the one at (B), and the sixteenth notes are performed quickly and plainly, without any emphasis. Handel, Bach, and Couperin have written many pieces in 12/16 meter.

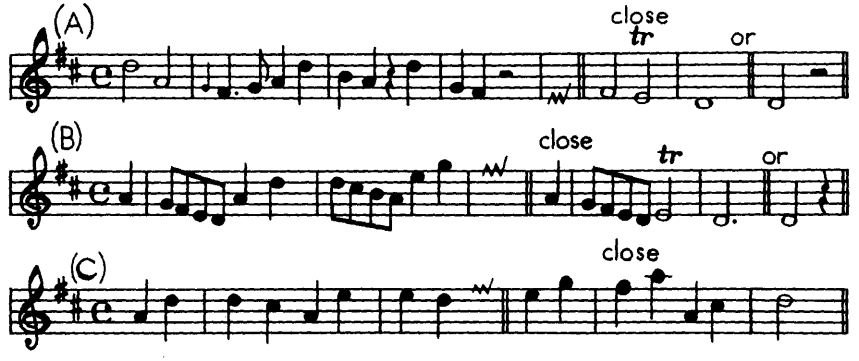
In quadruple meter, the first and third beats are accented, but the second and fourth unaccented. The former are also called strong and the latter weak beats. Of the accented beats, the first is in turn stressed more than the third, as can be seen from example 4.12, where — means accented, and ⌣ unaccented.



EXAMPLE 4.12

Therefore the principal notes of the melody must always fall on the first beat; the other notes receive more or less weight depending on the intrinsic stress of the other beats. In these meters, the closing note always falls on the first beat and must last four beats, except in pieces where the phrase begins on the upbeat, because the cadence is felt only up to the point where a new phrase can begin. [See example 4.13.]

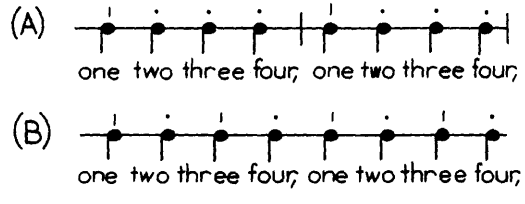
[125] In the melody at (A), the concluding note cannot be shortened, or, if it were to be sounded only briefly for reasons of performance, at least no new phrase can be begun until the four beats of the last measure are over. This applies not only to the last note of a piece, but to all concluding notes of a musical period. In the melody at (B) the concluding note is felt for only three beats because the phrase begins on the upbeat; and in the melody at (C) it is felt for only two beats. The young composer has to pay careful attention to this so that he acquires a proper feeling for meter and learns to write correctly. It is very unpleasant for the listener to hear a new period



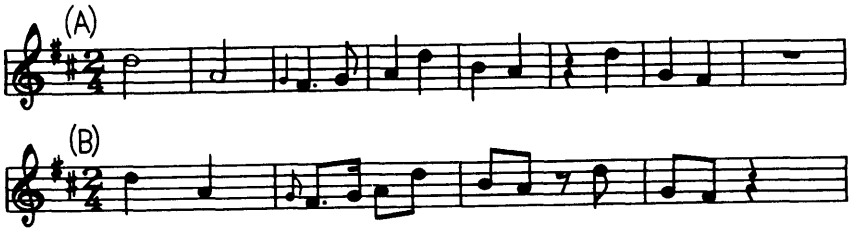
EXAMPLE 4.13

begin before the preceding one has ended, and even more troublesome for the performer of such a piece, particularly if the accents of the melody fall on the incorrect beat through such an error.

[126] It is generally difficult for beginners to feel clearly the difference between quadruple and duple meters, and they often write in duple meter where they should have chosen a quadruple meter, and vice versa. To avoid this error when writing a piece in even meter, they must carefully consider whether four equal pulses can be counted without a break or comma being felt between the second and third beats, as at (A) in example 4.14. In this case, the meter is always quadruple. But in the other case, that is, when a clear break—which has the effect of a comma in speech—is felt between the second and third pulse, that is, so that the first and third pulses are of equal weight, as at (B), then the meter of the piece is duple. Thus, if (A) in example 4.13 were written as at (A) in example 4.15, it would be notated totally contrary to the meter contained in the melody. Here this manner of notating would have the same effect as misplaced commas in speech, which would sever inseparable little phrases by a clumsy break and divide them into two sentences. Of course, this same melody can very well be written in 2/4 if a



EXAMPLE 4.14



EXAMPLE 4.15

more lively and lighter tempo and performance are desired, but only as at (B) in example 4.15.

Here the division of the melody into measures is as correct as above in C. However, here 4/8 meter is really felt; as was mentioned above, it is always notated in 2/4 in contemporary music.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ODD METER OF THREE BEATS

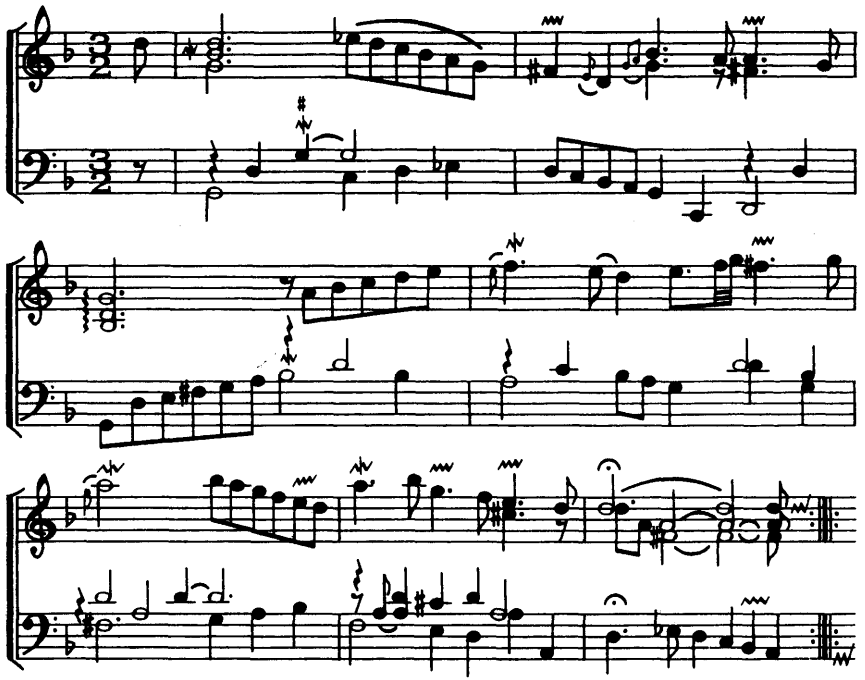
[127] (A) 3/1 meter, which consists of three whole notes [per measure], and the 9/2 meter of three triple beats that is derived from it are of no use whatsoever. The weighty and emphatic performance that would be specified by both is achieved by means of the two following meters, particularly if the adjective *grave* is added; furthermore, [in the latter] the eye is not exhausted by the many large notes and rests that cause only ambiguity and confusion in the former meters.

(B) 3/2 meter is used very often, especially in church pieces, because of the ponderous and slow performance indicated by its note values. In this style, quarter and, at most, eighth notes are its fastest note values. In the chamber style, sixteenth notes can also be used in 3/2 meter; C. P. E. Bach has even begun a symphony in this meter with many thirty-second notes in a row.[i] With such note values, the three beats of this meter must be indicated most clearly in the other voices; otherwise the melody would remain fuzzy and incomprehensible to the listener.

Because of the different weights of their beats, 3/2 meter has no other similarity with 6/4 meter except that both contain six quarter notes. Yet it is to be noted as something special that good composers of old have treated the

[i] Wotquenne lists a symphony in E-flat for two horns, two oboes, two violins, viola, and bass (1757) that begins with continuous sixteenth-note (but not thirty-second-note) motion in 3/2 meter. See Alfred Wotquenne, *C. Ph. Em. Bach: Thematisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke* (Leipzig, 1905), no. 179 (p. 61).

courante, which is generally written in 3/2, in such a way that both meters were often combined in it. Consider, for example, the first part of a courante for keyboard by Couperin in example 4.16.[j]

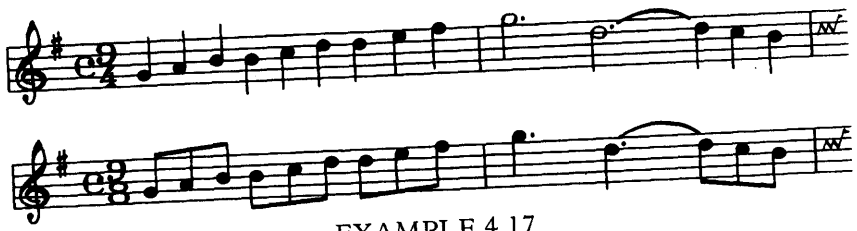


EXAMPLE 4.16

[128] The second and sixth measures and the bass melody of the seventh measure of this courante are in 3/2 meter, but the other measures are written in 6/4. In the works of J. S. Bach there are a number of courantes treated in this same way.

The 9/4 meter of [three] triple beats that is derived from 3/2 occurs rarely, since 9/8 is used instead. But it is easily understood that the two meters are very different with respect to the performance and tempo that they specify. [129] In the church style, where a ponderous and emphatic execution is generally combined with a subdued and slow tempo, 9/4 meter is preferable by far to 9/8, since a melody that assumes a serious expression in the former meter can easily appear playful in the latter. [See example 4.17.]

[j] François Couperin. *Pièces de Clavecin*, Book 1 (Paris, 1713), first order, first courante.



EXAMPLE 4.17

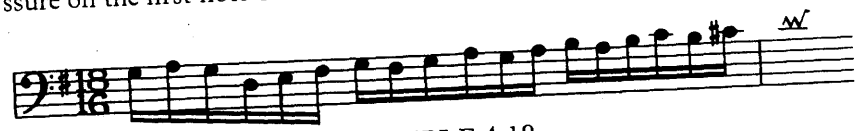
(C) Because of its lighter execution, 3/4 meter is not as common in the church style as 3/2; but it is used very often in the chamber and theatrical styles.

Its natural tempo is that of a minuet, and in this tempo it does not tolerate many sixteenth notes, even less thirty-second notes, in succession. However, since it assumes all degrees of tempo from the adjectives *adagio*, *allegro*, etc., all note values that fit this tempo can be used, depending on the rate of speed.

The 9/8 meter of three triple beats that is derived from 3/4 has the same tempo as 3/4, but the eighth notes are performed more lightly than in 3/4.

It is a mistake to consider this meter as a 3/4 meter whose beats consist of triplets. He who has only a moderate command of performance knows that triplets in 3/4 meter are played differently from eighths in 9/8 meter. The former are played very lightly and without the slightest pressure on the last note, but the latter heavier and with some weight on the last note. The former never or only rarely permit a harmony to be sounded with the last note, but the latter do very often. The former do not permit any arpeggiations in sixteenth notes, but the latter do very easily. If the two meters were not distinguished by special qualities, all gigues in 6/8 could also be written in 2/4; 12/8 would be a C meter, and 6/8 a 2/4 meter. How senseless this is can easily be discovered by anyone who rewrites, for example, a gigue in 12/8 or 6/8 meter in C or 2/4 meter.

[130] 3/4 and 9/8 meter gave the older composers the opportunity to use an 18/16 meter of three sextuplet beats when they wanted to indicate that the piece should be performed lightly, swiftly, and without the slightest pressure on the first note of each beat. [See example 4.18.]



EXAMPLE 4.18

However, since such subtleties of performance have been lost to such a degree that even many who are called virtuosos perform six beamed sixteenths like two compounded triplets, 18/16 meter belongs among the meters that are lost and highly dispensable today.

(D) 3/8 meter has the lively tempo of a passepied; it is performed in a light but not an entirely playful manner and is widely used in chamber and theatrical music.

9/16 meter of three triple beats that is derived from 3/8 was used in many ways by the older composers for gigue-like pieces that are to be performed extremely quickly and lightly. But it no longer occurs in contemporary music; 9/8 meter appears in its place.

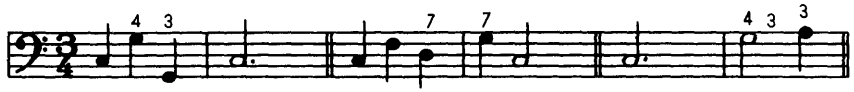
(E) 3/16 meter, which indicates the truly light performance of hasty pieces and dances that are commonly written in 3/8, where only one beat can be heard for each measure because of the very fast tempo, has been used rarely. In Handel's keyboard suites there is a gigue in 3/16 meter that begins as shown in example 4.19. That this is nothing other than 3/16 meter—even though the signature is 12/8 instead of 3/16 in the edition by John Walsh[k]—is evident from the concluding note, which falls on the downbeat and lasts for just three sixteenths. This is not possible in 12/16 meter but is possible in compound 6/16 meter, as will be shown in greater detail when we discuss compound meters.

EXAMPLE 4.19

9/32 meter of three triple beats that is derived from 3/16 is of no use at all and, furthermore, has never been used.

[131] These triple meters have the common element that, in each, three beats are felt per measure, the first of which is always accented, the third unaccented. The second can be accented or unaccented, depending on the nature of the piece. That is, it is usually accented in ponderous meters and in serious pieces, as in chaconnes and many sarabandes; but in light meters this second beat is weak. This two-fold treatment of the second beat in triple meter is clarified by example 4.20.

[k] In the Walsh edition of the second volume of these suites (London, 1736?), the meter signature is given as 12/8 but the piece is notated in 12/16. Kirnberger, however, insists that the meter is really 3/16 but notated in 12/16 to avoid writing so many barlines.



EXAMPLE 4.20

In the first example, a nonessential dissonance, which can only appear on a strong beat, falls on the second quarter. In the second, the cadence falls on the same beat; consequently it is also accented here. But in the third example it is weak.

What I have stated previously about the treatment of even meters with regard to the different weights of the beats can easily be applied to triple meter as well. Suspensions or nonessential dissonances, principal notes, and cadences can fall only on accented beats. However, cadences on the second strong beat of the triple measure are less common than those on the first, or downbeat. Many English and, particularly, Scottish dances deviate from this rule and conclude on the upbeat; but in this way they acquire a somewhat strange flavor, which is noticeable even to an untrained ear.

When eighth notes occur in 3/4 meter and sixteenths in 3/8, the first of these eighths or sixteenths is accented.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT COMPOUND METER

In duple as well as in triple meter, there are melodies in which it is obvious that whole measures are alternately strong and weak, so that a whole measure is heard as only one beat. If the melody is of such a nature that the entire measure is felt as only one beat, two measures must be grouped together to form just one, whose first part is accented and the other unaccented. If this contraction were not to occur, the result would be a melody consisting only of accented beats, because of the necessary weight of the downbeat. This would be as unpleasant as a sentence in speech consisting entirely of one-syllable words, each of which had an accent.

[132] This resulted in compound meters, namely, compound 4/4 from two combined measures of 2/4, compound 6/8 from two combined measures of 3/8, etc.

This combining [of measures] actually occurs only so that the player can arrive at the proper performance and play the second half of such a measure more lightly than the first. These meters—for example, the compound 4/4 and the simple common 4/4—can easily be distinguished, since, in the former, the cadences fall naturally on the second part of the measure and last only half a measure, which would not be possible in simple 4/4 meter. Likewise, in compound 6/4 meter the close can occur on the fourth quarter, which is not possible in simple 6/4 meter.

Otherwise, compound meters are no different from the simple ones with regard to weighty and light performance and tempo. That is, compound 4/4 or 6/4 meter has the same character as simple 4/4 or 6/4 meter in tempo and performance.

The most useful compound meters are given in table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2.

1. Compound 4/4 meter, combined from two 2/4 measures,
2. Compound 12/8 meter, combined from two 6/8 measures,
3. Compound 12/16 meter, combined from two 6/16 measures,
4. Compound 6/4 meter, combined from two 3/4 measures,
5. Compound 6/8 meter, combined from two 3/8 measures,
6. Compound 6/16 meter, combined from two 3/16 measures.

These compound meters are not to be confused with [those found in] pieces where only one barline is written every two measures simply to avoid an excess of barlines, but which in other respects completely retain the nature of simple meters. Most largos in Graun's operas were written in this way; they are actually in true 2/4 meter but always have a barline after four quarters simply for the sake of abbreviation.

Let this now suffice concerning knowledge of the mechanical nature of all common meters. According to the outline presented on p. 383, above, I now have to consider:

2. the spirit or actual character of each of these meters from the standpoint of their power to express sentiments and passions.

[133] Here it is not so much the even or odd number of beats in a measure that matters as the slower or faster tempo and the heavier or lighter gait of the measure. One meter can be used for contrasting passions, depending upon the tempo and other factors. However, since each meter has a treatment that is most suitable and natural to it, or, if one wants, most common, then it also has to this extent a special character that can, of course, be taken away from it by a strange and unusual treatment.

Thus, what I have to say here concerns the special ease with which this or that meter can assume a certain character.

It is to be noted in general that, among the meters which have the same number of beats, the one that has larger or longer beats is naturally a bit more serious than the one of shorter beats. Thus 4/4 meter is less lively than

4/8 meter; 3/2 meter is more ponderous than 3/4, and the latter is not as lively as 3/8.

For solemn and pathetic pieces, *alla breve* is especially appropriate and is therefore used in motets and other solemn church pieces. Large 4/4 meter has a very emphatic and serious motion and is suited to stately choruses, to fugues in church pieces, and generally to pieces where pomp and gravity is required. 3/2 meter is emphatic and very serious as long as not too many short notes are used. 4/4 meter is best suited for a lively and exhilarating expression that is still somewhat emphatic. 2/4 is also lively but certainly combined with more lightness and, for that reason, can be used well to express playfulness. 4/8 meter is definitely totally fleeting, and its liveliness no longer contains any of the emphasis of 4/4 meter. The character of 3/4 appears to be gentle and noble, particularly when it consists only, or at least mostly, of quarter notes. But 3/8 meter has a liveliness that is somewhat frolicsome.

These general characters are defined even more specifically by the particular note value that prevails and by rules that determine progression by larger or smaller intervals. The character of 3/4 meter is entirely different when quarter notes are used almost exclusively throughout than when many eighths and even smaller notes occur, and when it progresses mostly by small intervals than when leaps occur more often. Since many dances receive their peculiar character from such special determining features within the same meter, and since I plan to discuss this matter in a special chapter, I will have the opportunity to speak there about the character of such pieces that are bound to specific rules.

[134] From the few remarks that I have made here about the different characters of the meters, it is evident that this difference of meters is very well suited to express particular nuances of the passions.

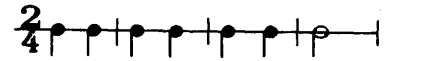
Each passion has its own degrees of strength and, if I may say so, its own deeper or shallower character. Joy, for example, can be solemn and almost exalted; it can be overwhelming, but also leaping and frolicsome. Joy can have these and even more levels and nuances, and such is the case with the other passions as well. Above all, the composer must have a definite impression of the particular passion that he has to portray and then choose a more ponderous or lighter meter depending upon whether the affect in its particular nuance requires one or the other.

3. How is one to approach vocal pieces with regard to meter? First of all, one must pay attention to the sentiment contained in the words, and, depending upon its nature, select one of the more serious or lively types of meter. Everything that is sung in *alla breve* time, for example, can also be

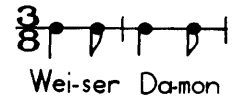
sung in 2/4 meter, but in performance such a piece would sound far more serious in the first meter and far more lively in the second.

Second, one must investigate whether the text requires a meter of two, three, or four beats. That is, each long syllable must fall on an accented beat, and each short syllable on an unaccented beat. The key word of a verse must fall on the first beat. [See example 4.21.]

Weiser Damon, dessen Haupt
Lorbeer um und um belaubt.



EXAMPLE 4.21



EXAMPLE 4.22

Here a weak syllable always follows a long one, and [the verse] could also be set in 3/8, as in example 4.22. [135] But, since the verse has a serious character, 2/4 is preferable to 3/8. However, the following verses have a lively character, although long and short syllables alternate just as above.

Ein kleines Kind mit Flügeln,
Das ich noch nie gesehen etc.

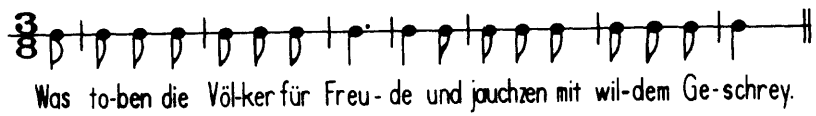
These [words] must be set in 6/8, as in example 4.23, but they must not be written in 3/8, because then the last syllable of the word "Flügeln," which is weak, would fall on the first beat and therefore would be accented. Since the close always falls in the middle during the course of these verses, this is indicative of compound 6/8 meter.

EXAMPLE 4.23

The situation is different in example 4.24, where the meter is simple 6/8 because of the close. If this example were to be written in 3/8, a false phrase

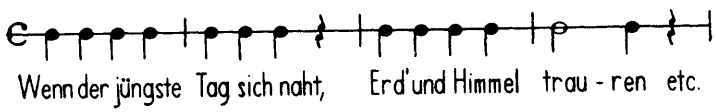
of three measures would result at the end, disregarding the fact that the last syllable of the word "Freude" would be accented. [See example 4.25.]

EXAMPLE 4.24

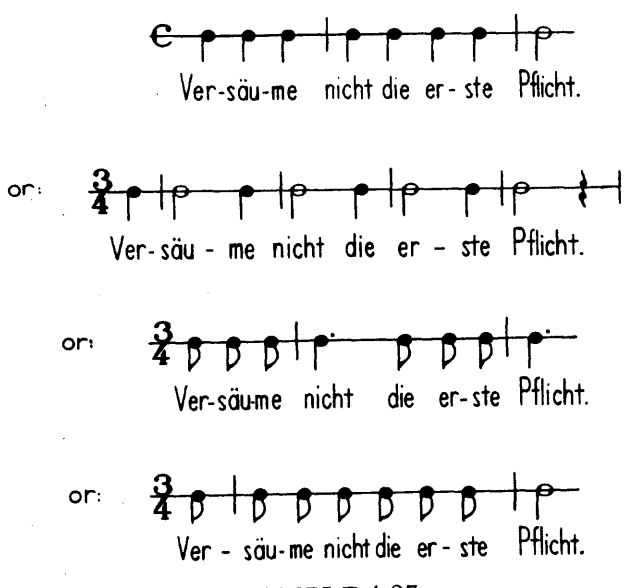


EXAMPLE 4.25

Here follow a few additional examples [examples 4.26 and 4.27] that need no further explanation at this point.

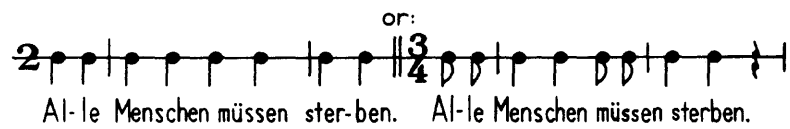


EXAMPLE 4.26



EXAMPLE 4.27

[136] Depending upon the content of the words, one or the other type i suited to the expression. [See example 4.28.]



EXAMPLE 4.28

It can be seen from these few examples that different meters an rhythmic progressions can be chosen for the same words, and yet the lon and short syllables always be treated correctly. Here we are talking onl about those melodies where each syllable is set to one note. However, sinc many notes and even whole passages can be written to one syllable in a embellished melody, it becomes clear that almost all meters can fit the sam words. Therefore, when writing large vocal compositions involving a embellished melody, one must have a feeling for the special effect of eac meter and choose the one that best represents the expression to be por trayed. Graun and Hasse have often set the same arias in very differen meters; however, this certainly does not result from indifference towar meter, but rather because they perceived the affection contained in th words from different points of view. One presents jealousy, for example, in more lamenting way, and the other in a more violent way; both can b correct. Frequently they also had before them words with no trace c sentiment, to which, naturally, every meter that was not contrary to th prosody of the words was suited.

III. RHYTHM[8]

[137] Melody receives its character from tempo and meter, throug which a gentle or violent, a sad or joyful sentiment is expressed. The flow c the melody is divided into larger or smaller phrases by the rhythm, withou which the melody would progress monotonously; each of these phrases ha its special meaning, like phrases in speech. Melody becomes diversified i

8. This word has two meanings: sometimes it means what the ancients calle "rhythmoponie," that is, the rhythmic character of a piece; at other times it means phrase or segment. It has the first meaning when one says, "This piece is incorrec rhythmically, or the rhythm is no good." It is used in its other meaning when on says, "a rhythmic unit (phrase) of four measures."

this way and, with its other amenities, becomes a speech that entertains the ear and senses with numerous phrases, some of which taken together form a complete sentence.

Anyone with an average ear will have noticed that the greatest power of melody comes from rhythm. It unites both the melody and the harmony of several measures into a single phrase that is immediately grasped by the ear; and several small phrases are again combined as a larger unit to form a complete sentence with a rest point at its end, which allows us to comprehend these individual phrases as a unit.

The rhythm of a composition is very similar to the versification of a lyric poem. Individual melodic phrases represent the lines, and larger sections of several phrases are musical strophes. Just as the lyric poem depends greatly on a good versification, rhythm is also a very important ingredient in melody. For that reason, I have resolved to discuss this matter very thoroughly here.

There are melodies whose rhythm is organized precisely throughout according to certain rules that may not be broken. However, other pieces are not bound by such definite rules; rather, the composer is free to select a rhythm or a musical verse form. [138] In the first category belong melodies written for dancing, in the second the other types of muscial compositions. But even in the latter situation certain rules must be observed, so that one does not interfere with the rhythmic euphony.

Since I have resolved to talk in particular about the most common dance melodies in one of the following chapters, I shall say nothing of their rhythmic quality here but shall present only the general rules that have to do with the rhythmic character of all pieces in general.

In speech one comprehends the meaning only at the end of a sentence and is more or less satisfied by it depending on whether this meaning establishes a more or less complete statement. The same is true in music. Not until a succession of connected notes reaches a point of rest at which the ear is somewhat satisfied does it comprehend these notes as a small unit; before this, the ear perceives no meaning and is anxious to understand what this succession of notes really wants to say. However, if a noticeable break does occur after a moderately long succession of connected notes, which provides the ear with a small rest point and concludes the meaning of the phrase, then the ear combines all these notes into a comprehensible unit.

This break or rest point can be achieved either by a complete cadence or simply by a melodic close with a restful harmony, without a close in the bass. In the first case, we have a complete musical statement that is equivalent to a

full sentence in speech, after which a period is placed. But in the other case, we have a phrase that is indeed comprehensible, yet after which another or several more phrases are expected to complete the meaning of the period. The musical statement that is complete and ends with a formal cadence we will call a *section* or *period*; but the incomplete one that ends only with a melodic break or a satisfying harmony we will call a *phrase* or a *rhythmic unit*.[l]

One can easily understand that every good melody must consist of various periods and these in turn of several phrases. I first want to discuss here what is to be observed regarding these periods and phrases so that the ear is never offended or loses interest.

[139] A musical period, then, is a succession of connected notes that concludes with a complete or formal cadence. The effect of this cadence is so satisfying to the ear that it permits it to comprehend the entire succession of notes combined in this period as a unit, without being disturbed in this sensation by the expectation of what might follow. If this close occurs in the principal tonic of the piece, the satisfaction is complete and nothing further is expected, since the entire musical speech has reached its goal. But if it occurs in a key other than the main key, the satisfaction is incomplete,[m] since the ear wants to hear the main key again.

A series of such periods, none of which but the last closes in the main

[l] The following are the terms used by Kirnberger to describe the formal divisions in a musical composition. The composition itself is divided into principal sections (*Hauptheile*) and each of these into several periods or smaller sections (*Perioden* or *Abschnitte*), which end with a formal cadence. The latter, which in speech are equivalent to complete sentences, are also called *Hauptsätze*. Each period is divided into two or more phrases (*Einschnitte* or *Sätze*), which are articulated by less conclusive rest points. The phrase is also called a rhythmic unit (*Rhythmus*), which reflects the eighteenth-century conception of rhythmic organization at that level; the norm is given as the four-measure unit.

Kirnberger's use of terminology is not consistent. The term *Einschnitt*, for example, is most often used to mean phrase; but at other times it is used synonymously with *Glied*, which denotes an articulated segment of the phrase. And at other places in this work it means phrase division and is thus equivalent to *Cäsur* (caesura).

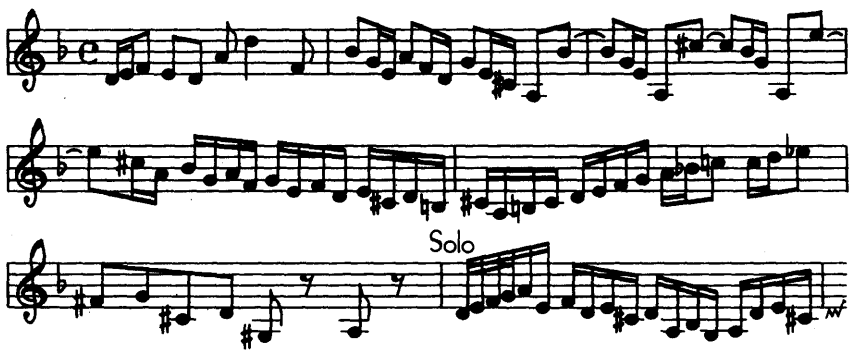
It should also be noted that the terminology used by theorists of the eighteenth century to describe formal divisions in music was not standard. Heinrich Christoph Koch, for example, used more precise terminology than Kirnberger in his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (Leipzig, 1782–93); he was also more consistent than Kirnberger in applying them to music. The main source for Koch's ideas on this subject was Joseph Riepel's *Anfangsgründe zur musikalischen Setzkunst* (Regensburg, 1752–68). Despite the difference in terminology, it would seem likely from the contents of this section that Kirnberger was also strongly influenced by Riepel's ideas.

[m] Although Kirnberger states that the satisfaction would be complete under these circumstances, it is clear that he means the opposite.

key, forms a single composition. However, if one or more periods were to conclude with a cadence in the main key before the end of a composition, one would no longer have a single melody, but a composition that is made up of two or more similar melodies.

Therefore, it should be a principal rule not to conclude any period but the last in an entire piece with the principal tonic. For when this happens, the entire piece really comes to an end. However, this natural rule is often broken. In concerti and arias, the tutti and ritornelli normally close in the main key and are thus complete independent pieces, since the ear is already completely satisfied after such a close and perceives nothing at all that arouses the expectation of a new succession of notes.

However, the style of some composers—who at the very beginning of a piece close again in the principal tonic after two or four measures, and hence stand again exactly where they began—is entirely bad. To avoid this and to connect the ritornello closely with the following material, the solo or vocal part could begin directly at the close of the ritornello, whereby the smoothest connection between the principal sections of the composition would be achieved. The following keyboard concerto [example 4.29] by J. S. Bach can serve as an example of this type of connection.[n]

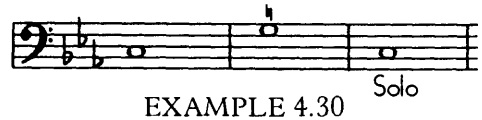


EXAMPLE 4.29

[140] The separation of the first ritornello from the following solo part can also be avoided by closing the ritornello on the dominant of the main key. [See example 4.30.]

Otherwise the unity of the melody requires that all periods begin on the same beat throughout the piece. It would completely disrupt the feeling of

[n]Concerto in d minor (*BWV* 1052).



EXAMPLE 4.30

unity if they were sometimes to begin on the upbeat and at other times on the downbeat.

The length of periods is not bound to any definite rule except in dance melodies, where they always have a definite number of measures. Nevertheless, one cannot be entirely arbitrary in this matter, since periods can be too short and too long. A series of very short periods consisting of a few measures would soon become unpleasant, because the ear would feel points of rest too close in succession. The ear wants to be somewhat satiated by the key of each period and not to be thrown into new suspense at each moment. [141] However, a period can also be too long. If one has been entertained for a long time by one key, he desires to hear another key as well. Moreover, a period can be so long that the ear completely loses track of its beginning before the end is perceived. In this case a period can no longer be comprehended as a single unit.

From this it is clear that certain limits are set for periods, limits that one cannot overstep without detriment to the euphony. The shortest periods are from six to eight measures; the longest extend not much over thirty-two measures. I am referring here only to what is most common and sounds best, because it sometimes happens that shorter periods occur for special reasons, particularly if required by a text; and sometimes they can also be extended beyond the mentioned limits without becoming boring.

One must avoid periods that are too short, particularly at the beginning of pieces. The ear must be so imbued with the main key that it never completely loses its feeling throughout the entire piece. Moreover, the attention is still at its full strength at the beginning of a composition, and the ear can comprehend more at this point than when it has already become somewhat exhausted.

According to the rules of modulation, a period must be all the shorter the more distant is its key from the main key. If one remains for too long in such a key, the feeling for the main key would be completely lost.

It has been noted that periods consisting of a number of measures that can be divided by four are most pleasing. Those that can be divided by three are less pleasing. However, they must always be divisible by two, since a period consisting of an odd number of measures has something disagreeable

about it. However, if the break at the last phrase is made by the dominant chord in such a way that the close to the tonic absolutely requires an additional measure, the final period acquires an odd number of measures—thirty-three instead of thirty-two, forty-nine instead of forty-eight—without offending the ear. This is also the case in the situation I mentioned before, where the end of a ritornello coincides with the beginning of the vocal or solo part.

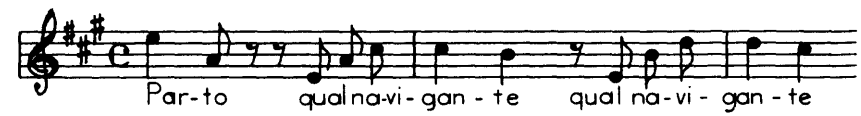
[142] Each period generally consists of a larger or smaller number of phrases that are not completely cut off or separated from one another yet are somewhat detached by smaller rest points than those produced by cadences. These smaller rest points are created in melody either by melodic closes or by rests, but in harmony by restful chords, particularly dominant chords; a new consonant harmony must at least be heard where the small rest point is supposed to be. Cadential chords can also be used for this, but they must be weakened by inversions or dissonances so that the feeling of rest is not too strong and the ear is kept in close anticipation of what follows.

A phrase is articulated most forcefully by the half cadence; its inversions produce weaker breaks. Inversions of full cadences can also be used for this, and even the cadence itself if it falls on a weak beat, as happens most commonly in gavottes. Finally, each new consonant harmony produces a small break or rest point. Thus the break or end of a phrase can be made perceptible in all these different ways.

Such phrases, also called rhythmic units, can be of different lengths; they can be of one to four, five, and even more measures in length, just as there are long and short lines in poetry. But the longer ones, particularly when they are longer than four measures, are usually divided into two or even more smaller segments that are articulated by very small rest points, which are comparable to the caesura in verses and are thus also called *caesuras*.

Just as the ear soon perceives the meter in every composition and wants it to be retained for the entire piece, the ear is also soon influenced by the rhythmic organization and is always inclined to count the same number of measures for each phrase; it is actually somewhat offended if this uniformity is broken. There are, of course, situations where individual phrases of more or fewer measures than the others are very appropriate for the sake of a particular expression. But this must be considered as an exception to the rule. As long as one is concerned only with euphony and a comprehensible, pleasing melody, the best effect is without doubt achieved by having the same length of phrases throughout. [143] An example of a phrase that does

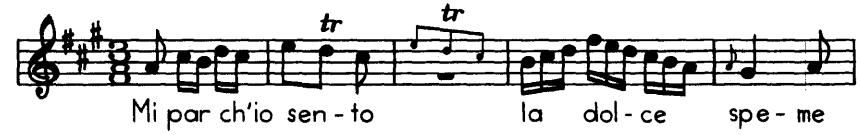
not have the same length as the others and that has a very good effect just because it is so unique can be seen in an aria that begins as in example 4.31.



EXAMPLE 4.31

Here the meter is compound 4/4, where half a measure is already as much as a whole measure. The segments are two measures in length, but the very first is only half a measure, and in this way the important word "Parto," with which the aria begins, is greatly stressed.

There are also cases where a short segment of one measure can even be inserted among longer ones without disrupting the grouping of the remaining units of equal length; it is not counted, since it is heard as something foreign that attracts the attention in a very special way, as in example 4.32.

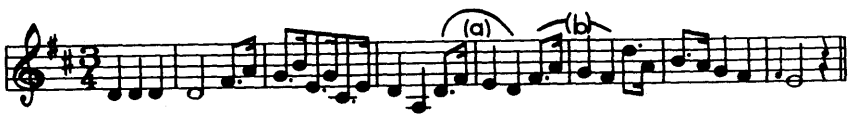


EXAMPLE 4.32

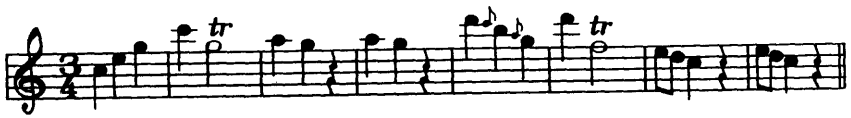
Here the third measure is inserted between the first and second segments and is like an echo of the preceding measure, which, because of the text, is very effective. There are also examples of such repetitions of two measures after rhythmic units of four measures. However, such insertions must be used with careful consideration, and must either be given to a secondary part or especially be distinguished from the preceding by *piano* or *forte*. In addition, one must take good care that the continuation does not fall on the wrong beats as a result of such insertions.

A complete melody consisting of only one-measure segments would amount to a childish song; even segments of two measures in succession become annoying after a while unless something very fleeting or playful is being expressed. The best melodies are always those whose phrases have four measures. A few of two measures may enter in among them, but they must occur in pairs, since they are then heard as phrases of four measures with a caesura in the middle. [144] In the succession of four-measure phrases, two of one measure and then one of two measures can be written in

place of one of four measures. But it is necessary that the two of one measure be similar. See example 4.33. If one tries to omit the small segment indicated by (b), he will soon notice how unnatural and unpleasant the melody becomes. Here the first phrase is four measures long; the second is just as long, but it consists of three segments of which two are one measure long and the third is two measures long. In this way rhythmic variety is given to a succession of equally long phrases. However, a four-measure phrase cannot be formed by two segments of one and three measures [respectively]; but one can repeat the last measure of a three-measure phrase as an echo and thus form from them a rhythmic unit of four measures, as in example 4.34.



EXAMPLE 4.33

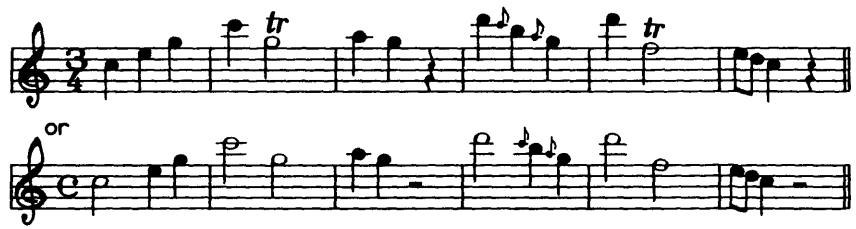


EXAMPLE 4.34

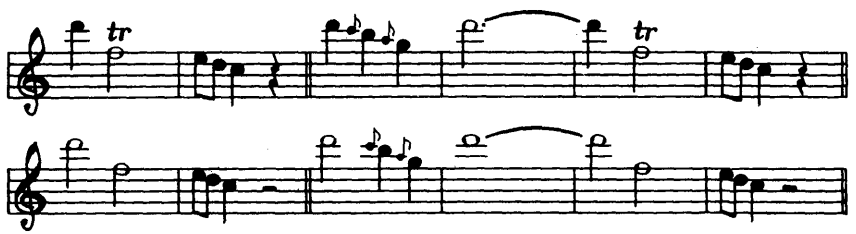
Phrases of three measures cannot be used throughout an entire melody, except in very short pieces that are supposed to have a somewhat burlesque character, like the small dance pieces that are called *Bayerisch*. Thus this three-measure phrase, which is perceived as something foreign and unusual, can only be used at the beginning of a composition, or also here and there in the middle where the intention is to surprise the ear by something strange.

This phrase is more comprehensible in triple meter than in even meter. If it is simple and without caesura, it cannot easily occur by itself but must be written in pairs and, indeed, in such a way that the two are similar, as I have noted about segments of one measure. [145] Example 4.35 can serve as an illustration. If one were to write another phrase of two or four measures after the first phrase in these examples, perhaps in the way shown in example 4.36, the melody would become, if not completely unpleasant, at least very unusual.

Such irregularities could be used in situations where the intention is to surprise the listener by something unusual and irrational.

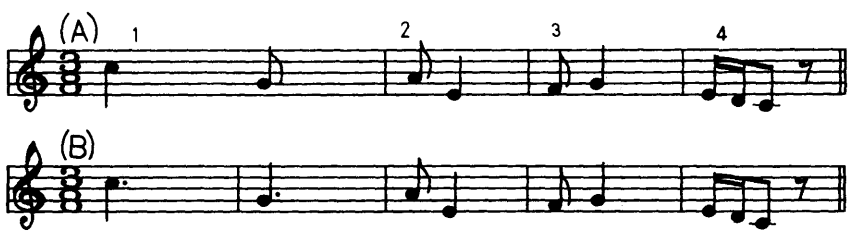


EXAMPLE 4.35



EXAMPLE 4.36

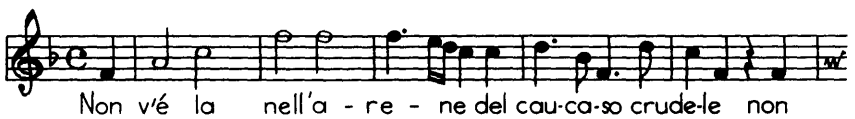
It deserves to be noted here as something special that there are situations where a phrase of four measures can be transformed into rhythmic units of five measures by extension of certain principal notes that are to be given a special emphasis. The ear is not only not offended by it, but the excessive length of such a phrase often has great impact. [146] Thus the four-measure phrase at (A) in example 4.37 can be changed into the five-measure phrase at (B), which is considered only as four measures.



EXAMPLE 4.37

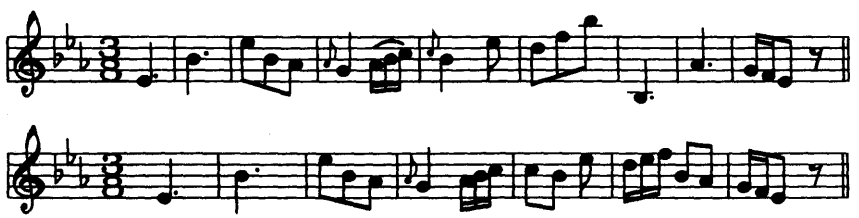
Phrases of five, seven, and nine measures must be divided into smaller segments by appropriate caesuras if they are not to sound unpleasant. However, such long phrases in succession can make the melody somewhat confusing; therefore, they can be used only with great care and particularly in situations where perhaps a violent or very solemn expression is sought.

There is an excellent aria by Graun that consists almost entirely of five-measure phrases, some even without caesuras. But the words require something extraordinary and almost frantic. The beginning of the aria is given in example 4.38.°



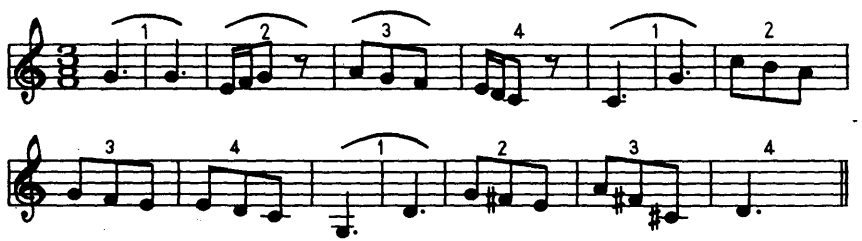
EXAMPLE 4.38

There are also phrases of seven, nine, and more measures that contain nothing unpleasant or unclear; but they must be made comprehensible by caesuras and, besides, can occur only in short meters. Example 4.39 can serve to illustrate this.



EXAMPLE 4.39

[147] If such long phrases of five or seven measures occur in a piece in which units of four measures prevail, these longer phrases usually result from the above-mentioned extension of a few notes and are perceived as units of four measures, as in example 4.40, where the first two measures of the phrase always represent a single measure.



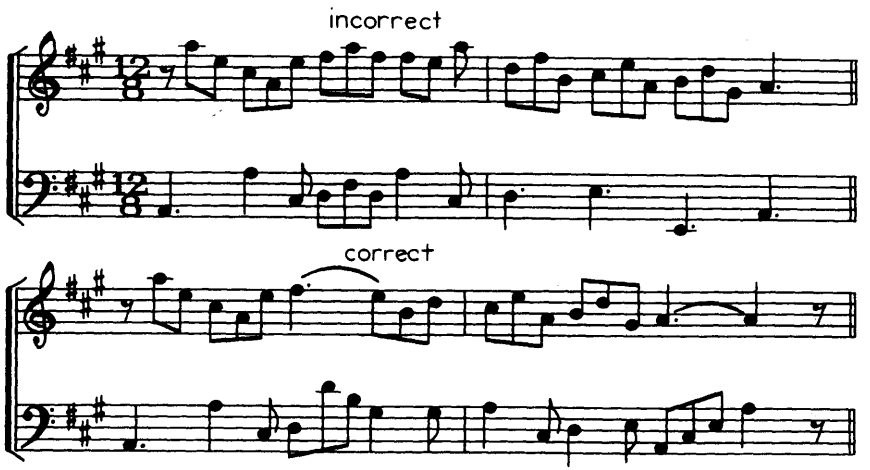
EXAMPLE 4.40

°Work unidentified.

This is as much as I have found necessary to note about the length of phrases.

The beginning of a phrase, and hence its end as well, is not restricted to any point within the measure; not only can they fall on any beat but also on any small part of the beat. However, to compose in the easiest and most comprehensible way, one begins either on the downbeat or upbeat.

However, this restriction must be observed: When the phrase division is articulated by a half cadence or a cadential pattern of some kind, the end, namely, this break, must fall on a strong beat, since by its nature such an ending must be accented. Example 4.41 can serve as clarification of this rule.



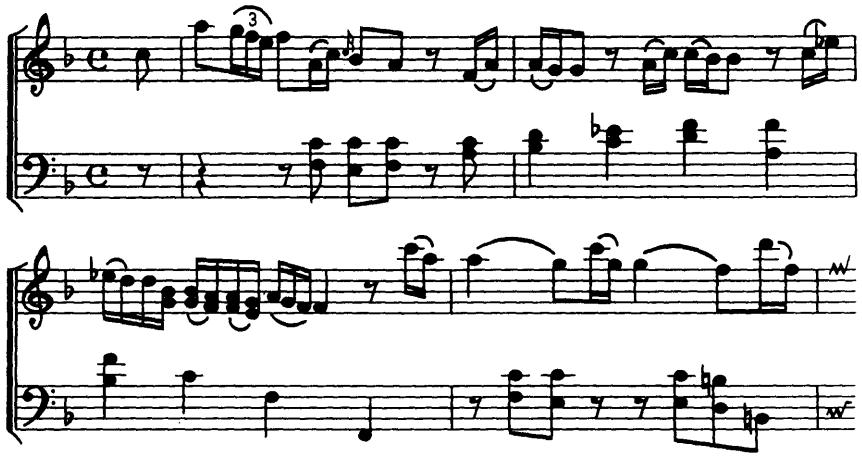
EXAMPLE 4.41

[148] In the first version the end of the phrase falls in the wrong place; this error has been rectified in the second one.

Smaller rest points, however, can fall on any beat, and likewise caesuras can fall anywhere in the measure and on any chord, except those containing nonessential dissonances or suspensions. Consequently, what some teach—that the caesura is restricted to certain beats—is erroneous. Consider the well-known keyboard sonata by Bach, the beginning of which is given in example 4.42.[p] [149] If one plays all the way through it, he will find that caesuras fall on any eighth note of the measure.

When the first phrase begins on the downbeat, the following phrases

[p]C. P. E. Bach, *Sechs Sonaten für Clavier mit veränderten Reprisen* (Berlin, 1760), first sonata (Wotquenne 50, no. 1).

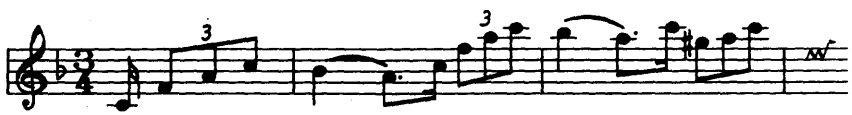


EXAMPLE 4.42

can nevertheless begin on the upbeat. But if the composition begins on the upbeat, the following phrases must also regularly begin on the upbeat, as can be seen in passepieds, gavottes, loures, and the like.

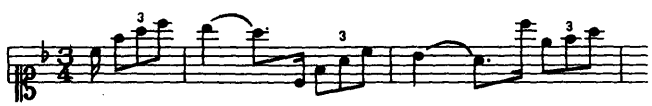
Still, when a composition begins in a somewhat unusual way—for example with the second, third, or fifth eighth in 4/4 meter or the second or third eighth in 3/4 meter—it is not appropriate in short pieces to begin the following rhythmic units in a different way. In longer pieces this is possible, but the rhythmic unit as stated at the beginning must be repeated most often, just as the principal key must frequently be brought to the attention of the ear in modulation. An example and model of such treatment is the keyboard sonata by Bach, the beginning of which is given in example 4.43.[q]

When a segment that begins on the downbeat is followed by another

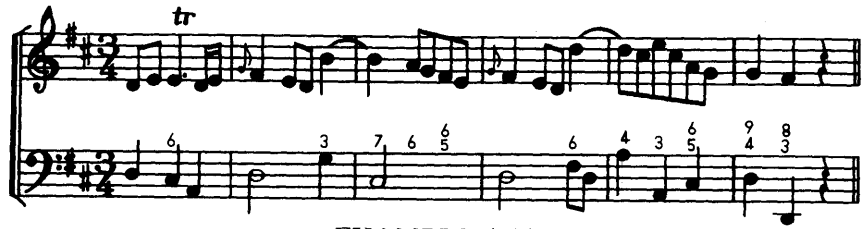


EXAMPLE 4.43

[q]C. P. E. Bach, *Fortsetzung von Sechs Sonaten fürs Clavier* (Berlin, 1761), fifth sonata (Wotquenne 51, no. 5), third movement. There are a number of discrepancies (mostly registral) between Kirnberger's example and the following, which is quoted from the edition of 1761.



that begins on the upbeat, the first must be somewhat shorter than its full length. Consider example 4.44.

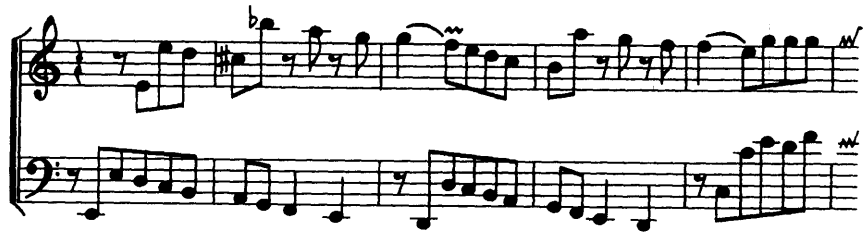


EXAMPLE 4.44

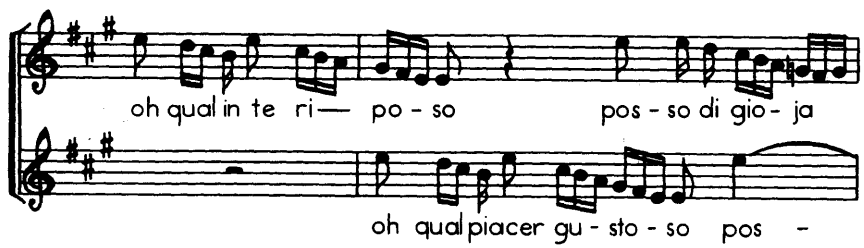
[150] Since the piece begins on the downbeat, the first segment should last throughout the first two measures. However, the second segment begins on the third quarter of the second measure, and consequently the first segment seems to be short by this quarter. Yet this is not only not objectionable but is pleasing, no doubt because the ear perceives the first segment as continuing after the beginning of the second one and thus intertwines the two. Such overlapping segments occur frequently in arias and are often most effective in making the expression more forceful.

In pieces with two and more parts the rhythmic organization may be different in each part. Consider examples 4.45 and 4.46.

[151] In the first, the rhythmic unit in the upper voice begins on the

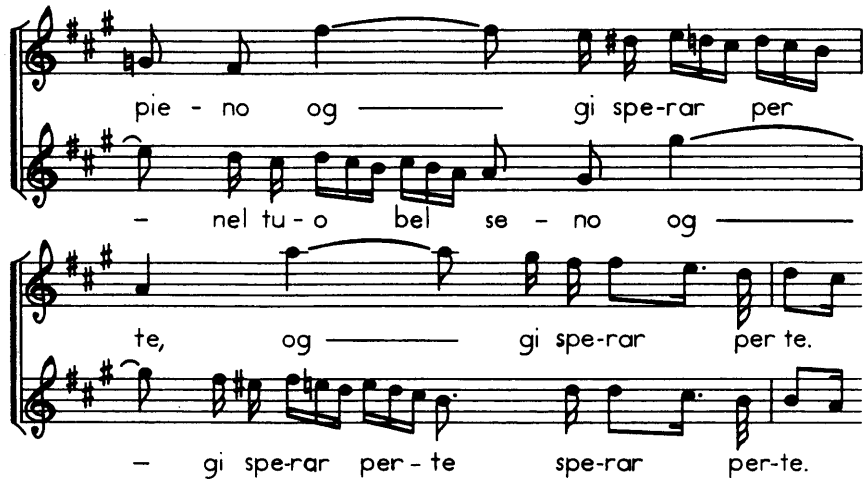


EXAMPLE 4.45



EXAMPLE 4.46 (*to be continued*)

EXAMPLE 4.46 (*continued*)



fourth eighth, but in the bass on the second eighth. In the the other, the phrase endings of one part overlap with the beginning of those of the other part. One would think that such irregularities might confuse the ear. Instead it finds them pleasant, probably because one is aware that it is more perfect to comprehend two different rhythmic patterns simultaneously than just one. But when many parts, each with its own rhythmic pattern, are heard simultaneously, the trained ear of a connoisseur is required if the composition is not to be perceived as a confusing clamour. Perhaps it is awareness of the great difficulty of comprehending everything clearly in such situations that makes great composers take immense pleasure in writing fugues for many voices, which become unpleasant to untrained ears.

Everything that I have said to this point about rhythm concerns its external and somewhat mechanical nature. Now I must also say something about its internal nature.

[152] The invention of a single melodic unit or phrase which is an intelligible statement from the language of sentiments and which produces in the sensitive listener the frame of mind that has generated it is simply a work of genius and cannot be taught by rules. Thus I can say nothing about the invention of rhythmic patterns appropriate for the expression of specific sentiments.

Only this can be noted in general—that short phrases are best suited for gentle, tender, agreeable, and particularly for fleeting, frivolous, and playful pieces. But long phrases are suited for emphatic and very serious sentiments, particularly for the expression of something quite pathetic.

But expression is certainly not determined just be length and brevity; the real spirit of each sentiment must still be drawn into it, to which tempo, meter, note values, intervals, and harmony contribute the most.

The entire spirit of a piece must be contained immediately in its initial period, and all the following periods must have some similarity with the first one so that the unity of sentiment is preserved throughout. Thus, whatever rhythmic patterns occur in the first period, similar ones must be heard in the other periods. I do not mean to imply that they should be the same in another key—that is, transposed higher or lower—but only that they should be in the same spirit and above all that they should not stray too far from the patterns of the first period in their note values or metric division, since this would give an entirely different turn to the expression. If, for example, mostly eighth notes were to be used in the rhythmic patterns of the first period, dotted eighth notes followed by sixteenths (♩. 𝅘𝅥𝅯) cannot be written frequently in the following period without erasing the character of the initial rhythms. One very often hears pieces in the new Italian style these days in which there are places having note values that do not appear anywhere else in the entire piece. This completely disrupts the unity of expression and results in the fact that one does not at all understand what he has heard at the end of a piece.

However, since the entire rhythmic character of a piece is generally more the result of a refined sensitivity than a definite theory, I advise young composers to play diligently through the works of the greatest masters in order to acquire the feeling for this important aspect of composition. [153] He who has listened to many well-chosen and rhythmically perfect pieces for a long time will then notice with fair ease every error that is committed against the correctness and the character of the rhythm.

Melodies that are written to texts must conform to the text in their phrases and caesuras. Nothing is more unpleasant than a melodic phrase division which falls at a place in the text that does not permit a resting point. This frequently occurs in odes and songs, but in such pieces it generally results from mistakes made by the poet. However, in arias and other melodies that are based only on a single strophe of the text, such errors committed by the composer against the meaning of the text are inexcusable. It may not be entirely unnecessary to recommend to young composers that they carefully read the ninth chapter of the second part of Mattheson's *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*.[r]

[r] Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, part 2, chapter 9 ("Von den Ab- und Einschnitten der Klang-Rede") (Hamburg, 1739), pp. 180–95.