

The Institute of Philosophy, Education and the Study of Religions (IFPR) at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) Proudly Presents:



The Role of Rhythm in Musical Meaning

The 15th National Meeting of NT'SMB

(Network for Cross-Disciplinary Studies of Music and Meaning)

November 19, 2009, SDU-Odense Auditorium 100, 10-18

FEATURING: William Westney (Texas Tech University and SDU), Cynthia M. Grund (SDU), Kristoffer Jensen (Aalborg University, Esbjerg), Fredrik Søgaard (The Academy of Music and Music Communication, Esbjerg), Gilles Quentel (University of Gdansk and SDU) and Søren R. Frimodt-Møller (SDU).

Details at www.soundmusicresearch.org and www.ntsmb.dk



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10:00-10:05

Welcome: Cynthia M. Grund and Søren R. Frimodt-Møller

10:05-11:15

Polyrhythmic and Metric/Melodic Modulations in the Music of J.S. Bach
Fredrik Søegaard, Academy of Music and Music Communication (VMK),
Esbjerg

Modulation based upon functional harmony is a very well-studied area in Western classical music. Lesser known and studied is the related phenomenon in rhythm - it does not even have a name that is commonly agreed upon.

In this presentation we will introduce this topic through the examination of five preludes by J.S. Bach wherein polyrhythmic and metric/melodic modulations are clearly used. Finally, we shall see that these phenomena open up for a completely new meaning of the concept of interpretation in these type of works. Demonstrations will be played on guitar, piano and from various recordings.

11:15-11:30

Brief coffee pause*

11:30-12:45

"It's Such a Nice Melody. Why Jazz it Up?"

William Westney, Texas Tech University and University of Southern Denmark

Cynthia M. Grund, University of Southern Denmark

In a conversational lecture format with live and recorded musical examples, we explore the ways in which the meaning of a melody depends on the rhythm that is employed in its instantiation. When rhythm, meter and/or tempo are altered with regard to a melody, does something get ruined, or do new perceptions and possibilities open up? Classical musicians often express scorn for arrangements that jazz up its elevated melodies, but in some cases this has caused millions more to fall in love with the music simply as great "tunes." One theory we will explore is that jazzing it up *generalizes* the music - puts it into a generic groove as a toe-tapper of some sort: waltz, techno, ballad with a brush-beat, or whatever. So perhaps we lose the emotional nuance that

classical genres deliver so well, but we also gain a new sense of the appeal of the tune in and of itself. The swinging physicality of jazz rhythms, the ways the movements they engender locate themselves in a lower center of gravity in the body, have pedagogical implications for teaching rhythm in general which will also be analyzed. Finally, we reflect upon the habits of Western listeners, whereby we seem to feel the need to ascribe rhythmic structure to any melody we hear.

12:45-13:45

Lunch*

13:45-15:00

The Chunk Model of Rhythm Generation

Kristoffer Jensen, Aalborg University at Esbjerg

The chunk is an important part of music generation, as it carries the importance of melody in the music. The chunk consists of a group of notes in a three to five second time frame. As a chunk of sound it is a unified gestalt, rich on properties that can be interpreted by the human ear as melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamic intensity, etc.

This presentation will investigate models of rhythm generation and how these models are combined with the chunk model in generation of music. An analysis of simple and complex measuring of music with different accent structure, tempo, and loudness gives an idea of the correlation between accent, loudness and timing of the notes, and permits a more musical generation of the rhythm. Sound examples will be played in order to inspire a discussion of these issues.

15:00-15:15

Brief coffee pause*

15:15-16:30

Chasing Time: On the High Priority of Rhythm in Progressive Rock and Metal

Søren Rosenlund Frimodt-Møller, University of Southern Denmark

All music performances, live as well as in the studio, are in some way guided by norms. Some of these norms are inherent in the given tradition of the musicians, the style of music played etc., others stem from the material that is treated in the performance, e.g. a composition. Compositions, not to be confused with the scores in which they are sometimes presented, always entail a number of norms, or, in less value-laden terms, instructions for performances. It is, however, not the case that one must follow all of a fixed set of instructions in order to be playing a given piece. The instructions of a composition are conceived (by both composer, musician and listener) alongside some order of

priority. What this talk will discuss is how the degree of priority attached to different aspects of a composition (e.g. rhythmical structure, harmonic structure, melodies, instrumentation) is something that may differ drastically from piece to piece and, furthermore, from performance tradition to performance tradition. As a case in point, we will compare the precedence of rhythmical structure over virtually every other musical element in the progressive rock and metal genres with the converse priority of melody over everything else exemplified by much popular music.

16:30-16:45

Brief coffee pause*

16:45-18:00

Recurrent Figures and Sound Beacons in Contemporary Classical Music
Gilles Quentel, University of Gdansk and University of Southern Denmark

Music, as well as speech, require what we may call “recurrent figures”: they may be rhythmical, melodic, harmonic, dynamic or of tone. The repetition of such figures characterizes the musical piece, draw attention and distinguish it from complete chaos. In other words, they play the part of sound beacons for the listener navigating complex musical worlds. At the beginning of the XXth century, however, these beacons progressively disappeared, before reappearing again at the end of the century.

This presentation aims at analyzing the importance of these figures and at analyzing under which processes they went out of sight, and came back again. Their manipulation, distortion, dissolution and re-formation occurred in very different ways, depending on the musical trend: several examples will be analyzed, from the complete disruption of the pulsation system in Ives’ *Central Park in the Dark* to the perpetual motivic evolution of John Adams’ *Phrygian Gates*, as well as in the systematic deconstruction of Boulez’ integral serialism, the absolute rhythmical chaos of Elliott Carter’s metrical modulation, etc. It aims also at questioning the reasons for their reappearance, and eventually at considering the necessity of using such figures in music composition.



***PRACTICAL INFORMATION:** Admission to this conference is free and the conference is open to the general public. Coffee pauses and lunch are at the participants’ own expense. There is a cafeteria, *Kantine 4*, open from 8:00-16:00 not far from the conference venue, and *Café Campus*, located right next to Auditorium 100, is open 15:00-20:00. In addition, there are vending machines with coffee, soft drinks and snacks located very near the conference venue.