The Finer Points of Listening to Music

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Course Outline

1. Musical terms (rhythm)
2. Musical forms and structures (form)
3. Instrument identification (timbre)
4. Production techniques and effects
5. Guided listening
• Active Listening vs. Passive Hearing
  – How do we do this?

• Training your ears (and mind)
Rhythm

• The organization of **time** in music

• **Beat**: An even pulse

• When clapping or tapping your foot to music, you are “keeping the beat.”

• More than one way to do this

Ex: Booker T & the MGs – “Chinese Checkers” (1963)
Rhythm

• **Metre**: Grouping of beats into a measure or bar i.e.: 4/4, 3/4 (explain numbers)

• What is a measure or a bar?

• Most music is in 4/4

• Guitar examples

• **Tip**: Tap foot or hand to help feel the beat
Written Music

Common time

Cut time
Subdividing the Beat

[Beat notation images]
3/4 examples

• Slow 3/4:
  Ex: Aretha Franklin –
  “I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)” (1967)

• Faster 3/4 sometimes called a waltz feel
  Ex: Bob Dylan – “The Times They Are A-Changin’” (1963)
6/8 Time

• Closely related to 3/4 is 6/8
• Often used in slow blues
• Often a very fast 3/4: too fast to count in 3s
  — Count in 2s (each beat is subdivided into 3)

Ex: B.B. King – “Sweet Little Angel (live)” (1965)
Ex: The Animals – “House of the Rising Sun” (1964)
Ex: Louis Armstrong – “What a Wonderful World” (1967)
Other Time Signatures

• 11/8 intro; otherwise, 6/8

• 9/8 (2+2+2+3)
• Based on a folk song rhythm Brubeck heard in Turkey
Ex: Dave Brubeck Quartet – “Blue Rondo A La Turk” (1959)
Ex: Aretha Franklin – “Say A Little Prayer” (1968)
• Chorus is in 11/4
• Verses are 4/4 but with an added 2/4 measure

Ex: The Beatles – “All You Need Is Love” (1967)
• Mostly 7/4

Ex: Joan Jett & The Blackhearts
• One odd measure of 3/4
Ex: The Beatles – “Here Come the Sun” (1969)

- Intro has some sections in 3
- Bridge (1:30) is 11/8 + 4/4 + 7/8
Polymetre

• 2 meters at the same time


• 4/4 Drums
• 3/4 Guitar

• There are several Zeppelin examples like this
• Drummer John Bonham plays a 4/4 rhythm while bassist John Paul Jones and guitarist Jimmy Page play something else (i.e. “Black Dog”)
Tempo

- **Tempo**: the *speed* of the beat.

- Fast songs tend to have quicker tempos, while slow songs have slower tempos. Not always.

- BPM: Beats Per Minute

- Or, Italian terms: andante, allegro, presto, etc.
Double time/Half time

- When the tempo of a song is either doubled or cut in half
  - Ex: a song starts out at 140 BPM and changes to 70 BPM

Ex: Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers – “American Girl” (1976)
Double time/Half time (cont.)

- Technically the **tempo doesn’t change**, we just feel the beat in a different place

Ex: The Police – “Don’t Stand So Close To Me” (1980)

Ex: The Clash – “Should I Stay Or Should I Go” (1982)
Gradual Tempo Changes

• If there is a change, it’s usually imperceptible
  – The human element

• No change in tempo: click tracks/metronomes
  – “Robotic” feel, or precision?

Ex: Otis Redding – “Try A Little Tenderness” (1966)
  – Tempo increases gradually
Gradual Tempo Changes (cont.)

• A drummer’s ability or willingness to keep a steady beat
• With skilled drummers, perceptibly changing the tempo is most certainly a choice

Ex: Janis Joplin – “Me and Bobby McGee” (1973)
Abrupt Tempo Changes

• Usually occurs in songs with (often drastically) distinct sections

Ex: Radiohead – “Paranoid Android” (1997)
(3:34 and 5:36)

Ex: The Isley Brothers – “Shout” (1959)