

FANTASY PIECES

Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann



Harald Krebs

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METRICAL DISSONANCE

♣ IN THE ♣

MUSIC OF

ROBERT SCHUMANN

HARALD KREBS

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For Sharon

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Préambule

In this book I investigate the pathology of musical meter—the manifold disruptive and distortive conditions that affect what we generally call “the meter” of a musical work. I have drawn most of my musical case studies from the works of Robert Schumann, which are particularly rich in “pathological” metrical states. I could just as well have based the book on the music of Beethoven, Brahms, or other composers (and I have included several analyses that demonstrate the occurrence of metrical conflict in works by composers other than Schumann). It seemed to me, however, that Schumann’s music in general and his metrical structures in particular had been neglected in the music theory literature. Furthermore, I have always been fascinated by Schumann’s music and personality, and was eager to spend some years in his company. I have not regretted my decision to do so; I have grown even more fond of his music, and even more intrigued by his personality.

I had begun to write this book as a “normal” academic study when my colleague, pianist Bruce Vogt, suggested that it would be appropriate to include some Schumannesque dialogues. His specific idea was that I should invent a new *Davidbund* consisting of prominent twentieth-century rhythmic theorists, who would scintillatingly discuss issues relating to metrical conflict. Appealing though this idea was, I found myself reluctant to take the liberty of putting words into the mouths of living individuals. I decided instead to write a summary of nineteenth-century theories of metrical conflict in the form of a dialogue between Florestan, Eusebius, and various others, which became the first part of chapter 1. I then found myself unable to keep Florestan and Eusebius out of the later chapters, and the volume became a theoretical manuscript counterpointed by their commentary.

Some of the Florestan and Eusebius material is based on their writings, and some of it on the events of their last two years. The first six chapters “take place” in mid-January of 1854—a time when all of the interlocutors were still or already alive, and when Florestan and Eusebius were still able to walk about freely. The seventh chapter is set in April 1854, after their admission to the asylum in Endenich. The Epilogue, finally, is set shortly before their death in 1856. Many of the words and events are invented; hence the designation of the book as a set of “*Fantasiestücke*.” I have not only put many words into Florestan’s and Eusebius’s mouths, but have frequently ascribed particular compositional intentions to them. I have, of course, no proof of these intentions, but my study of their music and their manuscripts leads me to believe that the intentions I mention *could* have been their actual ones.

I have organized the book as an alternation of theoretical chapters (to which Florestan, Eusebius, and occasionally Meister Raro and Clara contribute comments and musical illustrations), and “*intermezzi*” (in which the same interlocutors address issues peripheral to the theory of metrical conflict but central to an understanding of Schumann’s use of such conflict). In the first chapter, I outline the thoughts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors on metrical conflict (with emphasis on writings that invoke a metaphor that pervades the book—the consonance-dissonance metaphor). I conclude that chapter with a summary of previous writings on Schumann’s metrical anomalies. In the second chapter I describe various categories of “metrical dissonance” and set out a terminology and labeling system for the analysis of metrically dissonant passages. In the third chapter (the first *intermezzo*), Florestan discusses the music that influenced his metrical style. In the fourth chapter I investigate the operation of metrical dissonance within large contexts, particularly successions of metrical states and the types of processes in which they can be involved. In the fifth chapter (the second *intermezzo*), Florestan and Eusebius reminisce about the “metrical revisions” that played such a large role in their compositional process. The sixth chapter broadens the discussion of metrical dissonance by addressing its interactions with pitch structure, form and text, and considers the possible meanings of metrical dissonance in Schumann’s instrumental works. The seventh chapter (the third *intermezzo*), couched in the form of a letter from Clara Schumann to a former piano student, addresses some issues relating to the performance of metrically conflicted passages. The eighth chapter is a collection of analyses of several works and movements by Schumann, alternating with shorter discussions of works by other composers. The volume concludes with an epilogue, which is an analysis of one of Schumann’s very late works, as well as an attempt to suggest, with “dissonant” layers of prose and poetry, Schumann’s mental state in the asylum at Endenich.

The “fantastic” portions of the book are disrupted by footnotes and musical example numbers. I apologize for these intrusive, but necessary elements. (As they form a “dissonant” layer within the imaginary discourse of Schumann’s personae, they are, in a way, appropriate!)

I have included as many musical examples as possible, but readers who wish

to follow each of my analyses in detail will need to consult scores at times. I have, for the most part, used the Clara Schumann-Brahms editions of Schumann's music, but have compared them to the Henle edition and to extant autographs where possible.

The book does not assume a great deal of prior theoretical knowledge. Some familiarity with recent writings about rhythm would be helpful but is not essential, as the relevant ideas are summarized in chapter 1. I assume some knowledge of Schenker's theory during a few of the analyses in chapter 6; most of the volume, however, can be understood without that knowledge.

Florestan and Eusebius have added much pleasure to the writing of this book. It is my hope that their presence will equally enhance the pleasure of readers.

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Reconnaissance

I thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a generous grant that enabled me to travel to Europe to study Schumann autographs and secondary sources not readily available in North America. I am grateful to the librarians and archivists at the following institutions, who graciously and generously assisted me: the Manuscripts Division of the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn; the Schumann-Forschungsstelle at Düsseldorf; the Music Division of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; the Manuscripts Division of the British Library in London; the Schumann-Haus in Zwickau; the Music Divisions of both houses of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv; the archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, and the Music Division of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna; the Music Division of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich; and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. I must thank in particular Brigitte Berenbruch, former director of the Music Division of the Stadtbibliothek in Bonn, Dr. Gerd Nauhaus of the Schumann-Haus in Zwickau, and Dr. Matthias Wendt and Dr. Bernhard Appel of the Schumann-Forschungsstelle at Düsseldorf, all of whom gave me much valuable assistance and advice.

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I thank Richard Cohn, Peter Kaminsky, William Kinderman, Justin London, and John Roeder for their comments on material that I shared with them. John Daverio, William Rothstein, and a third, anonymous reader provided many extremely helpful comments on my manuscript, for which I am very grateful.

I thank Mark Franklin and Ajana, of Media Magic Inc., for conjuring up Florestan's and Eusebius's coffee beans, and Jill Michalski, Linda Sheldon, and Robert Malatest for their help with various technical matters.

I thank my parents and sister for their unfailing moral support. Special thanks, finally, to my wife, Sharon Krebs, for her assistance in innumerable ways—for her help during computer crises; for preventing me, with her infallible sense of direction, from getting lost (and thus wasting precious research time!) in European cities; and for exploring with me the wonderful *Lieder* of Robert Schumann.

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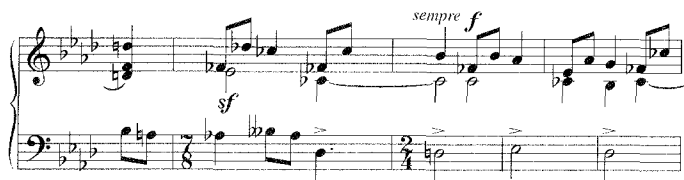
ONE

Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Theories of Metrical Conflict

PROMENADE THROUGH THE TOWN OF EUPHONIA

Having already shown his guests Florestan and Eusebius many of the wonders of Euphonia, Hector led them, with an air of having something particularly amazing up his sleeve, toward an area of that town which, he informed them, was called the Rhythmic Quarter.¹ As they neared this area, their attention was caught by a throbbing and apparently chaotic din, which, however, they soon perceived to be composed of numerous noncongruent series of regular drumbeats. They walked slowly down one of the streets, briefly inclining their heads in a listening attitude before each house. From one of these there issued the simultaneous percussions of groups of three and four pulses, from another groups of four pulses against five, from another five pulses against six, from yet others even more exotic superpositions, such as five against eleven and eight against thirteen. Hector led them after awhile into a second street, from whose houses emanated combinations of equivalent but nonaligned groups of pulses. After sampling the sounds of a number of houses in this street, Florestan walked back to the point of intersection of the two streets and stood there for some time, listening to the intricate rhythms that resulted from the mingling of sounds from the two streets. When Florestan returned to his friends, shaking his head in wonderment, Hector said, "I must show you some of the performers." Together they entered one of the buildings—that from which there issued the sound of a superposition of five pulses upon seven. Inside, Florestan and Eusebius were overwhelmed, not only by the now deafening uproar of the drumbeats, but also by the recognition that the performers of these intricate rhythmic superpositions were very young children, who pounded away at their drums with intense concentration as well as ob-

EXAMPLE 1.1. Excerpt from Michael Bergson's *Vier Mazurken*, op. 1, reproduced in Robert Schumann's review of the work



vious enjoyment. They watched and listened for a time, then stepped back onto the street, where Hector explained, "Most systems of musical education neglect rhythm, or address only the most common and simple rhythmic devices; in Euphonia, however, the children are exposed to highly complex rhythms from an early age. *Within a few years, the children reach the point where the dividing of any beat in the bar, the syncopated forms, the blending of irreconcilable rhythms, and so on, hold no difficulties for them.* They learn to approach rhythmic complexities with excitement and joy rather than trepidation."²

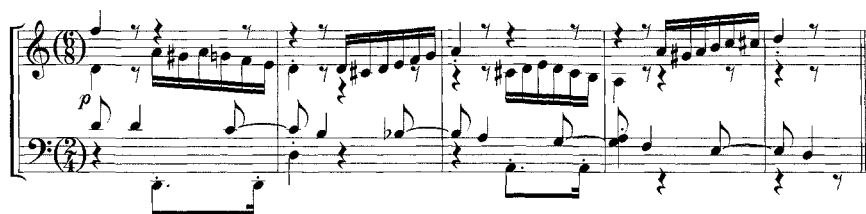
Florestan said, "The Euphonian children are indeed capable of amazing rhythmic feats. Of course, rhythmic complexities and metrical conflicts are not of value in themselves. Look at the following excerpt from Michael Bergson's *Vier Mazurken* op. 1." On a sketchbook that he drew from his pocket, he quickly reproduced the measures shown in Example 1.1.³ "The passage," he remarked, "is conflicted enough with its nonaligned duple groups of quarter notes within a triple meter. But the composer seems to have been carried away by a passion for complexity to notate the passage in a manner that makes it appear much more abstruse than it is. I hope that your young drummers are not similarly intoxicated by rhythmic complexity for its own sake." Hector replied, "It is our concern that every activity in this town be subservient to expression; *those who take pleasure in works that are false as to expression are inexorably banished, unless they consent to descend to some inferior employment, such as the making of catgut or the preparation of skins for kettledrums.* And this would, of course, apply to any who would worship rhythmic complexity for its own sake."⁴ He added with a grim smile, "Michael Bergson, by the way, operates a little rosin factory on the outskirts of Euphonia."

Eusebius remarked, "Serves him right! The inexpressive use of rhythmical and metrical conflicts must result in tiresome compositions, overgrown with needless intricacies, or, as the worthy Moritz Hauptmann has written, in 'mere lawlessness, [in] a diseased rhythm in a healthy metre.'⁵ Some critics, no doubt, feel that your music, dear Florestan, with its frequent usage of syncopation and other metrical conflicts, exemplifies these problems. Those, however, who inspect your music with due care must realize that all of your metrical complexities are subservient to the laws of expression. What comical effects, what breathless excitement you have communicated, for example, by the pages of syncopation in *Carnaval* and the *Davidsbündlertänze*! And at times your metrical incongruities

EXAMPLE 1.2A. *Excerpt from Beethoven's Symphony no. 7, third movt. (mm. 199–200), reproduced in Robert Schumann's essay "Das Komische in der Musik"*



EXAMPLE 1.2B. *Excerpt from Beethoven's Quintet op. 29, finale (mm. 124–28), discussed in "Das Komische in der Musik"*



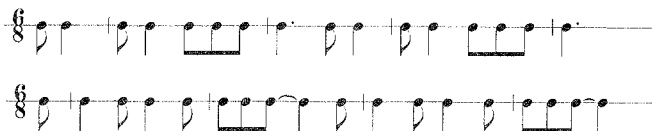
seem to me to reflect the irreconcilable conflicts within your soul." His lips trembled with pain.

Hector, tactfully pretending not to notice Eusebius's emotion, took him and Florestan by the arms and guided them into as yet unexplored streets of the Rhythmic Quarter. As they walked, Florestan said, "It is quite true that I have often attempted to create comical effects and to express emotional conflicts with various rhythmical and metrical devices. And I am by no means the only composer to have done so." Again he took recourse to his sketchbook and notated two excerpts by Beethoven (Examples 1.2a and b), remarking, "The comical, bizarre effect of the first passage stems primarily from the semitone oscillations in the horns, which result in the intrusion of duple meter into the triple context. In the excerpt from the last movement of Beethoven's *Quintet op. 29*, the comedy stems from the struggle between two-four and six-eight meters.⁶ Here is another more dramatic example by Beethoven of the effective employment of rhythmic and metrical conflict (Example 1.3); observe the *weighty pressing on weak beats*,⁷ which produces a sense of duple meter that yields to the notated triple meter as the seventh chord is resolved. What perfect coordination between harmony and meter!"

Florestan and Eusebius had been noticing for some time that the din of the

EXAMPLE 1.3. *Excerpt from Beethoven's Symphony no. 5, first movt. (mm. 128–29), cited in Schumann's review of Christian Gottlieb Müller's Third Symphony*



EXAMPLE 1.4. *Fétis's first mutation type*

children's drums was receding into the distance. Hector told them, "We have now entered that part of the Quarter where the residents, including the children, are encouraged to speculate about rhythm and meter rather than just to perform complex patterns. I must introduce you to one of the masters who oversees their researches and pursues his own in his spare time—a man with whom you as well as I have had our disagreements, but who is nevertheless a fine musician.⁸ I hope that we shall find him at home." He knocked at one of the doors, which was, after some delay, opened by a thoughtful-looking side-whiskered gentleman. "M. Fétis, I am sorry to interrupt your work," said Hector, "but I thought you would like to meet my two friends, Florestan and Eusebius, who are visiting this town for the first time." M. Fétis bowed and said, "Gentlemen, I am enchanted to see you. Please come in." He led them into his study and, by moving stacks of books and musical scores, made room for them on three chairs. Hector said, "We were just discussing rhythmic and metrical conflict—a subject which I know you have researched for some time." M. Fétis responded, "Indeed, I have. Just two years ago, I published a series of articles in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* in which I pondered how future generations of composers might make use of such conflicts."⁹ Eusebius begged, "Pray unveil for us, Monsieur, what the future holds!" M. Fétis smiled and said, "There is much in the domain of rhythm that has not yet been exhausted, nor even broached, by the composers of today. Think, for example, about the possibility of 'mutation' or transformation of a meter that has been established within a piece of music. One type of mutation might take the form of the actual repositioning of the strong beat within the measure." He drew a rhythm on a blackboard that was mounted on his wall, then showed how the rhythm could be 'mutated' by shifting it in relation to the measure (Example 1.4). "This technique," he said, "could be applied within compositions as a form of variation, possibly during restatements of a theme."¹⁰ M. Fétis continued, "In my articles, I also proposed another type of mutation, in which accentuation is modified *so as to create the effect of some new meter, even if the meter does not actually change.*" Again he drew two examples on the blackboard (Example 1.5). "Such mutation," he continued, "*could prepare the actual motion from one rhythm and metrical system to another.*"¹¹ In my example, I take a passage in binary meter and superimpose ternary meter over it ("*frappe de trois en trois sur un rythme binaire*"), then actually change to a ternary meter.¹² The state of ambiguity that lies between the two meters prepares the actual establishment of the new meter. *The listener, still under the influence of the composition's overall meter, will preserve its impression in spite of the new superimposed meter; it is thus that the composer will be able to deceive his ear and actually pass into the*

EXAMPLE 1.5. *Fétis's second mutation type*

Allegro con moto

Allegro con moto

[new] rhythm and meter. The music will have changed character, and the listener will not notice the moment of transition."¹³ Hector nodded in agreement and said, "I, too, have, in a *feuilleton* in the *Journal des Débats* encouraged composers to explore as yet untried rhythmic and metrical effects, such as accentuation of the weak beat instead of the strong, the alternation of duple and triple groupings, the superimposing of phrases *whose subdivisions bear to each other no compatible relation and have no points of contact other than the first beat*, the *episodic introduction of a melody based on a ternary rhythm into one based on four (or vice versa)*, and even the *intermittent use of sounds quite independent of both the main melody and the prevailing rhythm in the accompaniment, sounds which are separated from one another by intervals that lengthen or diminish in proportions not determinable in advance*."¹⁴ There indeed remains much for future generations of composers to explore. But we must keep you no longer from your work." They all thanked M. Fétis and took their leave.

Outside, Florestan said to Hector, "I did not wish to embarrass you and our kind host while we were inside, but now I cannot resist pointing out that the very interesting techniques that M. Fétis and you have mentioned *are* already being used by composers today. In fact, I have frequently employed them myself." Eusebius smilingly interjected, "I remember one occasion on which you applied M. Fétis's first mutation type! Please pass me that sketchbook for a moment." When Florestan handed it to him, he jotted down the theme in Example 1.6a. "This was my idea for a passage near the beginning of the third movement of our Piano Sonata op. 11," he said. "I wrote it down and left it on the table while I went to the coffeehouse. When I returned, Florestan had 'mutated' the idea as follows" (and he wrote Example 1.6b). "Yes," said Florestan, "and since you approved, Eusebius, we used the mutated version in our sonata. Another passage that illustrates this mutation type is found at mm. 26–27 of the 'Préambule' from *Carnaval*, where we shift a motive forward by one beat."¹⁵ The second mutation type," Florestan continued, "plays a very large role in our works. Near the end of my very early Piano Quartet in C Minor, I transform triple meter into duple by first grouping eighth notes into twos, then actually altering the meter (Example 1.7a). There is also an example of such mutation near the end of the 'Préambule' from *Carnaval* (Example 1.7b)." Eusebius, meanwhile, had jotted down the passages that Florestan had mentioned and passed them to Hector. As Hector was study-

EXAMPLE 1.6A. *Sketch for the first Trio from Schumann's Piano Sonata op. 11, third movt., mm. 51–54, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin — Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, Mus. ms. autogr. R. Schumann 35*



EXAMPLE 1.6B. *Later sketch for the same passage, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn (ULB Bonn), Manuscripts Division, R. Schumann 14 (Sketchbook II), p. 5, brace 2*



ing them, Eusebius remarked, “Our young friend Johannes Brahms also seems to be very interested in exploring these mutation techniques. You remember the first movement of his Piano Sonata in F Minor, Florestan? It is in three-four time, but from the outset there are many duple groups of quarter notes. Just before the end of the exposition, there is another such duple passage, the duple grouping being achieved by a sequential pattern of falling fifths in quarter notes. All of these instances of the imposition of duple upon triple meter prepare the common time at the beginning of the development section” (see Examples 8.26 and 8.27).

Hector, having perused Eusebius’s two examples, said, “You are right; these are examples of the procedures that M. Fétis mentions in his articles. The excerpt from *Carnaval* is a particularly effective mutation from what sounds like duple meter to triple meter, with a passage of powerful confrontation of the two meters beginning at the *fortissimo* marking. I find it interesting that while the first two bars sound as if they were in duple meter, you there maintain the notated three-four meter, whereas in the third bar you allow the duple meter to show itself undisguised.” Florestan responded, “Much metrical conflict can be notated within the established metrical framework, but at times that framework must be over-ridden, or rather overwritten.”

At this point, Hector said, “I must introduce you to one of the young residents of Euphonia who has been pondering the appropriate notation of metrical conflicts.” He led them into a house within that same quiet portion of the Rhythmic Quarter in which a group of young people was engaged in a lively discussion about the opening theme of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata op. 27 no. 1. Some of them argued that the theme should be rewritten so that the quarter notes became upbeats and the half notes downbeats, while others objected vociferously to any alteration of Beethoven’s barring. A very young member of the group, apparently

EXAMPLE 1.7A. Robert Schumann, *Piano Quartet in C Minor* (1828), ed. Wolfgang Boetticher, fourth mvmt., mm. 283–98. © 1979 by Heinrichshofen's Verlag, Wilhelmsbaven, Germany. Ed. no. 1494. Used by permission of publisher.

EXAMPLE 1.7B. Robert Schumann, *Carnaval*, “Préambule,” mm. 99–109

no more than five years of age, piped up and said, “Even the greatest composers sometimes fall short of absolute precision of notation, and we should have no qualms about revising their notation in order to clarify the score for the performer. In the opening theme of Beethoven’s Sonata op. 27 no. 1, the half-note chords are the most strongly accented events; they are the longest durations within the context, and some of them, moreover, act as appoggiatura six-four chords resolving to the dominant harmony. For these reasons, I support the renotation of these chords as downbeats.”¹⁶ Hector interrupted in order to introduce the boy, whose name was Hugo Riemann, to Florestan and Eusebius. He then

EXAMPLE 1.8A. *Chopin, Ballade no. 3, op. 47, mm. 69–75*



EXAMPLE 1.8B. *Riemann's renotation of the passage*



asked the young scholar to elaborate on his views on rebarring, particularly with reference to passages of metrical conflict.

Master Riemann complied with alacrity, saying, "I advocate renotation when it clarifies metrical conflicts that otherwise are likely to remain undiscovered by performers. In the Beethoven example, a subtle metrical conflict arises from harmonic ambiguity, that is, from the possibility of hearing the six-four chords either as unaccented continuations of existing tonic chords or as accented initiations of dominant harmony. Beethoven's notation conceals the conflict; performers playing from his notation will simply opt for the first of the two harmonic interpretations, tapering off each measure and deemphasizing the half-note chords. The rebarring brings the potentially accented nature of these chords into focus and forces performers to address the subtle conflict within the passage."

Florestan and Eusebius frowned during these comments, but Riemann continued without noticing their displeasure, "I have become aware of a type of metrical conflict that involves the intrusion of triple groups into duple contexts, the 'large triplet.'¹⁷ Such triplets, easily overlooked by performers, can be rendered visually clearer by rebarring. There is a good example in the third Ballade of Chopin."¹⁸ He shuffled through a sheaf of pages that lay before him—"notes for a book that he plans to write," Hector whispered to his friends—and drew out Example 1.8. "You will notice," Riemann continued, "that the large triplet in my renotation (Example 1.8b) is motivated by harmony; the triplet encompasses the duration of the cadential dominant.

"It would be wrong, however," he admitted, "to modify the composer's barring in all cases of metrical conflict. Imagine, for instance, a syncopated passage like this one." (He showed them Example 1.9a.) "If we were to turn the long durations into metrical downbeats, we would arrive at the following." (He showed them Example 1.9b.)¹⁹ He continued, "This renotation implies that syncopation is nothing but an abrupt displacement (*ruckweise Verschiebung*) at 'NB. 1' followed by a realignment (*Wiedereinrenkung*) at 'NB. 2.' Syncopation is, however, actually a conflict between a basic meter (*Grundrhythmus*) and a simultaneously presented nonaligned meter that endures throughout the syncopated passage, as Herr Moritz Hauptmann has already stated.²⁰ The traditional notation, with its ties across the bar lines, makes that continuing conflict much clearer than the renotation.

EXAMPLE 1.9A. *Reconstruction of a syncopated passage discussed by Riemann*



EXAMPLE 1.9B. *Riemann's (deliberately) incorrect notation of a syncopated passage*



"Some metrical conflict," Riemann observed, "arises from the noncongruence of motivic lengths and metrical groups. Frequently, motives within a triple meter are two beats long; here is an example, Herr Florestan, from one of your own works (Example 1.10). The reverse, three-beat motives within a duple meter, is much less common.²¹ When such conflicts appear in the music, we should by no means renotate the music in accordance with the conflicting elements. The notated meter remains in effect as a significant contender within the conflict, in fact, as the background without which the conflicting quality of other elements would be imperceptible.²² Just as a harmonic sequence at times suspends the logic of harmonic progression on the surface while ultimately remaining subservient to it, so does this type of metrical conflict create a series of *pseudo-measures* that for a time contradict the notated meter but that find their justification and motivation only through their continued subordination to the actual meter."²³

When young Riemann paused, Eusebius said, "I find many of your arguments very convincing, Master Riemann. One of your ideas particularly intrigues me; aside from metrical conflict that occurs on the musical surface, you have also mentioned the possibility of larger-scale conflict—the 'large triplet,' which is actually a disturbance of phrase rhythm. The concept of large-scale metrical conflict is certainly worth exploring further." Florestan interjected, "Such large-scale conflicts, like those of smaller scale, must be used with care. I have reviewed a number of works in which there is at various points something missing or something superfluous in the phrase rhythm—that is, a conflict between the established phrase rhythm and shorter or longer units. In Amadeus Mereaux's *Grande Fantaisie*, for example, in the first part of the third variation, there is, against all

EXAMPLE 1.10. *Robert Schumann, Novellette op. 21 no. 4, mm. 108–14 (with grouping analysis by Riemann)*



*norms of phrase rhythm, one measure too many.*²⁴ Similarly, in Johann Friedrich Kittl's *Sechs Idyllen*, there is frequently a problem at section endings, *for example in no. 2, two measures before the end, the same in no. 3 and in no. 4, etc. The composer simply cannot finish at the right time.*²⁵ The same flaw can be found in this composer's *Drei Scherzi* op. 6, and in Ferdinand Hiller's *Etudes* op. 15.²⁶ Eusebius answered, "It seems to me that when such large-scale irregularities occur in the works of good composers, they are resolved at the appropriate time so that the listener is not left at the end of the work or movement with an unpleasant sense of incompleteness."²⁷ Florestan said, "In other works, the irregularity is so widespread that it becomes the norm and thus, again, has no unpleasant effect upon listeners once they become accustomed to it. I am thinking, Hector, of your works, especially of the *Symphonie fantastique*. The flexibility of large-scale meter seems to me to be *the most distinctive feature of your musical ideas. Your phrase rhythms appear to strive for the reestablishment of a primeval state in which the law of metrical accent (Gesetz der Tactesschwere) did not yet weigh upon music, and for the unfettered discourse (ungebundene Rede) and higher poetic punctuation (höheren poetischen Interpunktion) of Greek choruses, the Bible, and Jean Paul's prose. The novelist [Johann] Ernst Wagner's statement that the composer who completely veils and renders imperceptible the tyranny of meter will (at least apparently) liberate the art of music seems to me to apply to your music.*"²⁸

As Florestan concluded his remarks, the great organ that announces the hour to the Euphonians blared forth, and Florestan and Eusebius realized that it was almost time for them to begin their homeward journey. They bade farewell to young Riemann, and Hector led his friends back into the street. As they walked toward the coach-house, he thanked Florestan for his tribute, then said, "Master Riemann is an interesting youngster, is he not?" Florestan responded, "Yes, very interesting, though somewhat verbose. And I strongly disagree with his analysis of the opening theme from Beethoven's Sonata op. 27 no. 1. I find his hearing of the half-note six-four chords as accented appoggiaturas unconvincing. In m. 1, I hear an implied E $\flat$ below the right-hand chord, and in m. 3, E $\flat$ actually sounds in the bass; as a result, the right-hand chords do not suggest dominant, but tonic function to me, and I hear much less metrical conflict than does Master Riemann. I agree that the durational accents and harmonic changes in the passage are not coordinated, but that is not sufficient reason for a sweeping revision of Beethoven's notation!"

Eusebius, who had hardly been listening to Florestan's remarks, said, "The Rhythmic Quarter of Euphonia is a most fascinating place, and I have very much enjoyed our visits and conversations. I must share with you two ideas that have occurred to me here. First, it seems to me that metrical conflict can be reduced to two types of phenomena: to the association of unequal or noncongruent layers of motion on the one hand, and to the association of congruent but shifted layers on the other." Florestan interposed, "You are right. These two categories are implicit in Hector's description of rhythmic education in Euphonia; he mentions *the blending of irreconcilable rhythms* but also *the syncopated forms* (which, as Master Riemann stated, result from the conflict of simultaneously presented congruent but non-

aligned layers). The two categories are also implicit in Hector's feuilleton. He writes of the alternation of duple and triple groupings, of the superimposing of phrases *whose subdivisions bear to each other no compatible relation and have no points of contact other than the first beat*, and of the *episodic introduction of a melody based on a ternary rhythm into one based on four (or vice versa)*, all of which techniques fit into the first category. He also mentions, however, accentuation of the weak beat instead of the strong, which would result in a conflict of the second type. M. Fétis's mutations also imply these two categories; those that involve the shifting of rhythms in relation to the bar line result in a conflict between two equivalent but non-aligned layers, whereas those in which a new grouping is superimposed onto the existing one result in a conflict between noncongruent layers." Eusebius said, "And young Hugo Riemann discussed conflicts engendered by the noncongruence of motive and meter and by the large-scale superimposing of duple and triple units, but also mentioned conflicts arising from syncopation or displacement.

"Second," Eusebius continued, "I have noticed suggestions of analogies between pitch and rhythm running like a thread through today's discourses on metrical conflict. Master Riemann's sequence analogy, which links the notions of surface and subliminal levels in the areas of pitch and rhythm, is an obvious example. Some of M. Fétis's mutations also imply such an analogy; his reference to motion from one meter to another, using passages of metrical conflict as a sort of pivot, recalls one of the most common techniques of modulation in the domain of pitch. My allusion to 'resolution' of large-scale conflicts hints at an analogy between metrical conflict and dissonance: the metrical conflicts are 'dissonances' that lead the listener to expect subsequent resolution."

Hector interjected, "I must tell you that I explicitly drew an analogy between rhythmic and metrical conflict and pitch dissonance in the feuilleton that I mentioned earlier, where I wrote: [*Combinations of this sort*] *constitute in the domain of rhythm clusters and progressions analogous to the clusters and progressions that make up chords, melodies and modulation. There are such things as rhythmic dissonance; there are rhythmic consonances; there are rhythmic modulations.*"²⁹ "A fascinating analogy," cried Florestan. "Here lies much food for thought for us and for later generations of musicians." They had now reached the coach-house, where Florestan's and Eusebius's conveyance was waiting. Having thanked Hector for acting as their guide and for introducing them to so many interesting people and ideas, they mounted their seats and waved to Hector as the coach moved off into the gathering dusk. Eusebius, fatigued from the promenade through Euphonia, almost immediately fell asleep. Florestan, who remained awake awhile longer, smilingly observed that the horses' hooves and Eusebius's soft, regular snores together produced a metrical dissonance of three pulses against four.

WALDSCENE: IDEAS OF METRICAL CONFLICT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

At dawn, they both awoke to sounds of scrabbling and thumping on the roof of the coach. The coachman apparently had noticed nothing out of the ordinary, for

the vehicle continued to rumble through the snowy forest of the Harz. Florestan wrenched the window open and was about to stick out his head in an attempt to catch a glimpse of the roof when, with much flapping of wings and flying of feathers, a bird fluttered in and settled on Eusebius's shoulder. It was a bird of extraordinarily colorful plumage, but the men's attention was attracted primarily by a sheaf of paper which it carried in its beak and which, with an air of relief, it dropped into Eusebius's lap. They were even more astounded when, having released its burden, it began to speak. "Well met, my friends," it chirruped, "and thank you kindly for opening the window so promptly. It was cold out there, and landing on a moving coach is no simple matter, especially when one is burdened with a heavy theoretical manuscript." Florestan somewhat quaveringly asked the bird, "What manner of bird are you?" Their avian visitor chuckled and answered, "You two, of all people, should know me! I am a Prophet Bird." Eusebius, contorting his neck to catch a glimpse of the bird on his shoulder, exclaimed, "Of course! You look just as I imagined you many years ago." Meanwhile, Florestan had snatched the pages from Eusebius and had begun to leaf through them. "How uncanny!" he burst out. "This manuscript is concerned precisely with the issues that we were discussing in Euphonia." The Prophet Bird said, "Yes, I thought that it would interest you. Not only does the manuscript explore M. Berlioz's analogy between pitch and rhythm, but it makes mention of a large number of your compositions." When Eusebius inquired as to the author, the Prophet Bird said, "It is nobody you know—a music theorist from the late twentieth century." As Florestan and Eusebius gasped in amazement, the bird continued, "I see that you are eager to peruse the manuscript, so I shall leave it with you. I shall return someday to retrieve it. Farewell." The Prophet Bird fluttered out and soon disappeared in the depths of the forest.

The men might well have shrugged the episode off as a dream had the manuscript not remained in Florestan's hand. They stared at it in a daze for some minutes. Then Florestan shook himself and said, "Well, Eusebius, there is now sufficient light to read. Shall we?" Eusebius shut the window and moved to the seat beside his friend. They turned over the first leaf, and read:

Nineteenth-century references to metrical conflict are by no means numerous, and most of them are mere allusions to the topic rather than detailed discussions. In the twentieth century, the subject has been much more frequently addressed; most of the important large-scale studies of rhythm of the second half of the century discuss metrical conflict at least briefly. Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard Meyer, the authors of one of the earliest books of this century devoted entirely to rhythm, present brief analyses of conflicted passages by Brahms, Mozart, Dufay, and Beethoven, referring to the conflicts by a variety of terms, notably "metric crossing" and "rhythmic dissonance" (by which they mean superposition of nonequivalent layers), and "noncongruence" (by which they mean nonaligned statement of equivalent layers).⁵⁰ Conflict is much more central to Wallace Berry's discussion of meter. In his view, meter is "*not* to be

equated with regularity” but is, “by definition, subject to fluctuation.” Several of his analyses show how various determinants of meter move in and out of “accord” with the notation, and thus highlight the fluctuating, processive aspect of meter.³¹ The term “in accord” implies the consonance/dissonance metaphor, and that metaphor is at some points explicitly invoked in Berry’s discussion.³²

Several studies of musical rhythm from the 1980s include interesting, though brief, investigations of metrical conflict. In *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, Lerdahl and Jackendoff, while hypothesizing a set of preference rules that listeners invoke when metrically interpreting tonal music, present some instances of passages where the musical evidence results in conflicting preferences and hence in metrical conflict.³³ In their presentation of preference rules for grouping structure (which they regard as separate from, but affecting meter), they also consider conflict; their designations of particular interpretations of grouping as “preferred” do not negate the possibility that some aspects of the music may conflict with those interpretations.³⁴ Joel Lester refers in *The Rhythms of Tonal Music* to a state of “nesting” of metrical levels, but also to the possibility of metrical levels that do not nest, and gives examples from Mozart, Schumann, and Brahms.³⁵

Carl Schachter’s articles on rhythm contain a considerable amount of discussion of metrical conflict.³⁶ Schachter analyzes excerpts containing “incommensurable levels,” for example, a seven-against-two conflict by Mozart, a two-against-three conflict in a work of Beethoven, and similar conflicts from Schumann’s *Davidstündelertanz* op. 6 no. 1 (which he terms “rhythmic dissonances.”)³⁷ He also gives examples of the nonaligned association of congruent layers; in his analysis of Schumann’s op. 6 no. 1, for example, he shows that the music encourages two ways of parsing the passage into six-quarter-note and twelve-quarter-note groups. Schachter’s discussion of Mendelssohn’s “Song without Words” op. 102 no. 4 draws attention to a similar conflict; he demonstrates that the work is permeated by a struggle for supremacy between two metrical schemes, one (beginning on the notated downbeats) being strongly articulated by the accompaniment, the other (beginning on third beats) articulated by the melody. Schachter’s durational reduction traces this conflict through the entire piece, showing the two layers of motion moving out of and back into phase.³⁸ Schachter’s and Berry’s demonstrations of the large-scale processes involving metrical conflict significantly influence the approach adopted in this volume. 

Florestan sighed, “So far, this manuscript is quite boring.” Eusebius agreed, but said, “Of course it is boring for us; we are not familiar with the writings that the author cites. But let us read on; perhaps it will become more interesting.”

A number of the authors mentioned thus far allude to or actually employ the terms “consonance” and “dissonance” in connection with metrical conflict. These, and other twentieth-century applications of these terms to rhythmic and

metrical structure to be mentioned below, do not seem to descend from those of the nineteenth century; to my knowledge, none of the numerous twentieth-century writers who have employed this metaphor has mentioned its origin in Berlioz's writings.

Not all twentieth-century writers have applied the metaphor in the same manner; three quite different usages can be discerned. One of the earliest, that of Henry Cowell, appears to be unique. Cowell's discussion of rhythm is based on his perception of its close relationship to pitch; he regards pitch as greatly accelerated rhythm.³⁹ Taking his departure from this basic assumption, Cowell develops numerous analogies between pitch and rhythm. He refers to combinations of "times" (essentially, meters) as rhythmic "intervals," and applies the term "in harmony" to rhythmic combinations based on ratios that produce pitch consonances, such as 2/1, 3/2, and 5/4. The wording "in harmony" hints at the consonance-dissonance metaphor. It is noteworthy that Cowell, rigidly following a pitch-rhythm analogy, regards as consonant rhythmic relationships that most other writers would deem "dissonant" (3/2 and 5/4!).⁴⁰

Concurrently with Cowell, Charles Seeger also pursued analogies between pitch and rhythm, and specifically the consonance-dissonance metaphor.⁴¹ Arguing that "rhythmic harmony" should be recognized "as a category on a par with tonal harmony" (p. 26), he proceeds to investigate the nature of "the rhythmic interval and chord" and to "classify the rhythmic consonances and dissonances." Although his terminology is similar to Cowell's, his application of the consonance-dissonance metaphor is quite different. Seeger defines rhythmic relationships such as "two against three" and "three against four" as "rhythmic dissonances," basing the definition of consonance and dissonance not on criteria derived from pitch theory but on the nature of the rhythmic phenomena themselves, namely on the degree of alignment of rhythmic layers. He complains that modern music still favors simple dissonances such as "two against three" and "three against four," and encourages composers to employ more complex "rhythmic intervals" such as 5/6, 5/7, or 6/7. He hints at a categorization of these intervals in terms of intensity of dissonance: "The classification of the rhythmic intervals in their chordal (vertical) sounding may be accorded the terms mild, medium and strong, starting with 2/3 and graduating toward such as 4/7 . . ." (p. 27).

The conception of rhythmic dissonance as an association of nonaligned layers underlies numerous later applications of the consonance-dissonance metaphor. Whereas Joseph Schillinger's theory of rhythm, as set down in his *System of Musical Composition*, does not include the terms "consonance" and "dissonance," the theory is based to a large extent on the notion of interferences of periodicities, which suggests conflict produced by the association of noncongruent layers.⁴² Schillinger indicates how the interference of two or more noncongruent periodicities creates resultant rhythms and demonstrates, in a variety of meters, the resultants of three-against-two and four-against-three dissonance in the form of "vamps" (pp. 30–31). Schillinger's *Encyclopedia of Rhythms* expands upon these pages of the *System*; this book is a catalog of resultant rhythms of