

CONFLICT, VAGUENESS, DISSOLUTION. CHALLENGES TO METER IN CONTEMPORARY JAZZ

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Abstract

In contemporary jazz a definite beat or a clear metrical framework are sometimes challenged by rhythmic mismatches, perturbations, or ambiguities. In the paper, some of these phenomena are discussed in the light of Justin London's theory of meter. After a short introduction in London's approach, at first, strategies used to extend metric organisation in more conventional modern jazz are presented. Then, several examples of non-isochronous (or »odd«) metric organisation that challenge constraints of meter perception are discussed. Moreover, continuous tempo changes in contemporary jazz as well as strategies employed to dissolve meter, beat, and pulse are outlined. Finally, conclusions concerning the expandability of metric organisation in music are drawn and both limitations to London's theory of meter and perspectives for a general theory of rhythm are discussed.