



# Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter

*Justin London*

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## **Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter** Justin London

Our sense that a waltz is "in three" or a blues song is "in four with a shuffle" comes from our sense of musical meter. Hearing in Time explores musical meter from the point of view of cognitive theories of perception and attention. London explores how our ability to follow musical meter is simply a specific instance of our more general ability to synchronize our attention to regularly recurring events in our environment. As such, musical meter is subject to a number of fundamental perceptual and cognitive constraints, which form the cornerstones of London's account. Because listening to music, like many other rhythmic activities, is something that we often do, London views it as a skilled activity for performers and non-performers alike. Hearing in Time approaches musical meter in the context of music as it is actually performed, rather than as a theoretical ideal. Its approach is not based on any particular musical style or cultural practice, so it uses familiar examples from a broad range of music--Beethoven and Bach to Brubeck and Ghanaian drumming. Taking this broad approach brings out a number of fundamental similarities between a variety of different metric phenomena, such as the difference between so-called simple versus complex or additive meters. Because of its accessible style--only a modest ability to read a musical score is presumed--Hearing in Time is for anyone interested in rhythm and meter, including cognitive psychologists, musicologists, musicians, and music theorists.



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