

Complementary Metres on the Rhythmic Grid

Maxwell Sterling

https://admin.thecontemporaryjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Time_Etudes_MaxwellSterling.mp3

‘In 2020, I found myself investigating cyclical structures of time. I began thinking about how to approach melody and harmony in new rhythmic ways and found that an underlying pulse at a fixed tempo of 160 beats per minute could be a point of departure. I then found the following relationships between parent and sibling tempi:

180bpm	9/8	Prestissimo
170bpm	17/8	Presto
160bpm	4/4	Allegrissimo
150 bpm	15/8	Allegrissimo
140bpm	7/8	Vivacissimo
130 bpm	13/8	Vivace
120bpm	3/4	Molto allegro
110bpm	11/8	Allegro
100bpm	5/8	Allegretto
90bpm	9/4	Moderato
80bpm	4/2	Andante

Tempo allows us to make sense of our own perception of time – our clocks’ individual and collective push and pull. Styles of music and genres around the globe are built from certain tempo-rhythm, which allows us to form our musical memories. What looks like an

academic list of metres, tempo and BPM above has allowed me to find more fluid and freer forms of composition. By structuring ideas at fixed and repeated intervals, I found myself returning time and again to build upon or to change them in some way. That which feet predictable in 4/4 metre could be skewed and opposed in the complementary metres of the rhythmic grid. A sort of audio palimpsest – returning to the top of a figure only to blur the previous one.’

Credits

Composer: Maxwell Sterling

Double bassist: Maxwell Sterling

Additional percussion and horns:
Kenichi Iwasa

Audio Mixing: Maxwell Sterling

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[\[https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/sonic-continuum/time-etudes\]](https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/sonic-continuum/time-etudes).