

for three chords

Here's a sentence showing how it might be made that every second beat is stressed. A steady duple metre very often can be found in normal speech but almost

Perhaps the most common sentences are those that alternate patterns of two beats and patterns of three, maintaining the syncopated nature of everyday speech.

The Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland. e-mail: info@cmc.ie www.cmc.ie

rapidly. Words may be spoken quickly when several short syllables appear together as an insignificant little bit of a sentence or when we encounter a series of short syllables or lesser words back-to-back, like conjunctions and words that are usually abbreviated and such and such et cetera et cetera et cetera. On the other hand, we may take our time in pronouncing seemingly impracticable sequences of syllables so as to ensure perfect precision in that pronunciation.

Changes of tempo aside however, let us presume then that any sentence will find its own pace. This pace presents itself in the aforementioned patterns of two or three when a lowest common denominator, or density referent, provides the basic rhythmic unit for these patterns – let us call it a quaver. I have found that an emphasised word in a sentence tends to take just one extra quaver in its pronunciation than it would otherwise have, and the word that carries this weight will of course determine our understanding of the sentence too. For example, posing the question “Did *they* go to the zoo?” suggests disbelief that the people in question went together to the zoo when it is not something usually expected of them, while if we were to ask, “Did they *go* to the zoo?” we are expressing a wonder that these people managed to get there at all. An emphasised word can alter the meaning of sentence and, by taking longer to pronounce, can also alter its otherwise natural rhythm.

– ½ – ½ ½ |

– ½ ½ – ½ ½ | – ½ ½ – ½ ½ | – ½ ½ –

That was just one example showing how vocal rhythms don't just restrict

½ ½ | – ½ ½ – ½ ½ | – ½ ½ – ½ ½ | – ½ ½

themselves to patterns of two or three. An emphasis, as explained, would alter the

– ½ ½ | – ½ ½ – ½ ½ | – ½ ½ – ½ ½ | – ½ ½

rhythm of our otherwise steady theme. Without one however, we'll return to the