



A JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR MUSIC THEORY

MTO 32.3 Examples: Jones, Woody Guthrie's Hypermeter and Phrase Rhythm

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.26.32.3/mto.26.32.3.jones.html>

Example 1. "The Sinking of the Reuben James" (AR), verse 1 and chorus 1

(a) Verse 1

Verse 1 musical score in B-flat major, 2/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: "Have you heard of a ship called the good Reu-ben James? Manned by hard - fight - ing men both of hon - or and fame. She flew the stars and stripes of this land of the free. To night she's in her grave on the bot - tom of the sea." The score includes a common time signature '8' at the beginning of each line. Chords are indicated above the staff: Bb, F, Bb, F, Bb, Eb, Bb, F, Bb.

Have you heard of a ship called the good Reu-ben James? Manned by
hard - fight - ing men both of hon - or and fame. She
flew the stars and stripes of this land of the free. To
night she's in her grave on the bot - tom of the sea.

(b) Chorus 1

Chorus 1 musical score in B-flat major, 2/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: "Tell me: what was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did you have a friend — on that good Reu - ben James? What was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did you have a friend on that good Reu - ben James? Well, a". The score includes a common time signature '8' at the beginning of each line. Chords are indicated above the staff: Bb, Eb, F, Bb, Eb, F, Bb.

Tell me: what was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did
you have a friend — on that good Reu - ben James?
What was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did
you have a friend on that good Reu - ben James? Well, a

Example 2. "Reuben James" (*AR*), chorus 1, phrases 3 and 4: three hypermetrical interpretations

(a)

What was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did

you have a friend on that good Reu - ben James? Well, a

(b)

What was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did

you have a friend on that good Reu - ben James? Well, a

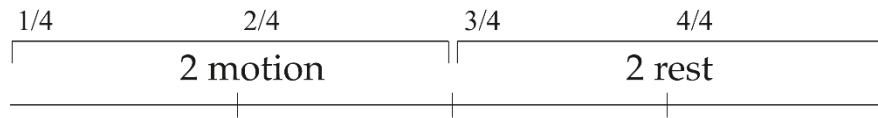
(c)

What was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did

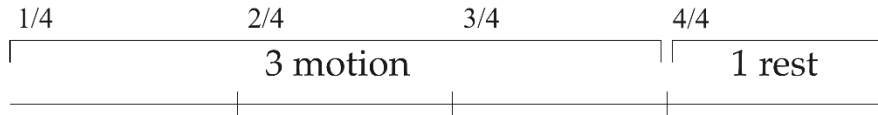
you have a friend on that good Reu - ben James? Well, a

Example 3. Abstract representation of the three phrase rhythm schemas

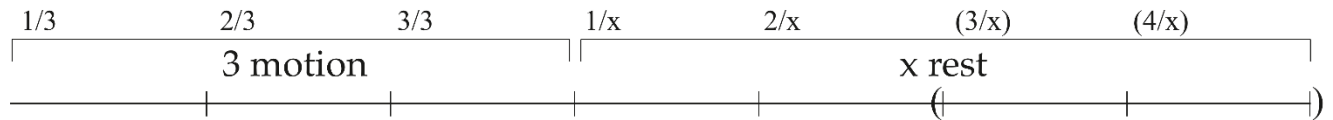
(a) 2+2 schema



(b) 3+1 schema



(c) 3+x schema



Example 4. "Blowin' Down This Road (I Ain't Going to Be Treated This Way)" (*DBB*), verse 1, phrases 1 and 2: 2+2 schema

Phrase 1: *I'm blow-in' down this old dust - y road, I'm a -*

Phrase 2: *blow - in' down this old dust - y road, I'm a -*

Example 5. "Blowin' Down This Road (I Ain't Going to Be Treated This Way)" (*DBB*), phrase rhythm of verse 1, phrases 1 and 2

1	2	1	2
blow-	old	road	
1	2	1	2
blow-	old	road	

Example 6. "Reuben James" (*AR*), chorus 1, phrases 1 and 2: 3+1 schema

1/4

2/4

3/4

4/4

B♭

3 motion

E♭

1 rest

8 Tell me: what was their names? Tell me: what was their names? Did

1/4

2/4

3/4

4/4

F

3 motion

B♭

1 rest

8 you have a friend on that good Reu - ben James?

Example 7. "Reuben James" (AR), verse 1, phrases 1, 2, and 4: 3+x schema

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of four staves, each representing a phrase. Above the staves, brackets indicate the 3+x schema for each phrase. The first three phrases (1, 2, and 4) are marked with '3 motion' and '3 rest', while the fourth phrase is marked with '3 motion' and '2 rest'. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Phrase 1: Have you heard of a ship called the good Reu-ben James? Manned by

Phrase 2: hard - fight - ing men both of hon - or and fame. She

Phrase 3: flew the stars and stripes of this land of the free. To

Phrase 4: night she's in her grave on the bot - tom of the sea. Tell me:

Example 8. "Reuben James" (*AR*), phrase rhythm of verses 1 and 4

(a) Verse 1

1	2	3	1	2	3
heard	ship	good	James		
1	2	3	1	2	3
hard-	men	hon-	fame		
1	2	3	1		
flew	stripes	land	free		
1	2	3	1	2	
night	grave	bot-	sea		

(b) Verse 4

1	2	3	1	2	
-night	lights	coun-	bright		
1	2	3	1	2	
farms	cit-	tell-	fight		
1	2	3	1		
now	bat-	steam	main		
1	2	3	1	2	3
-mem-	name	good	James		

Example 9. "Lindbergh" (AR), verse 1: two 3+1 phrases followed by an end-accented 2+2 refrain

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

3 motion 1 rest

D

Mis - ter Char - lie Lind - bergh, he flew to old Ber - lin,

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

3 motion 1 rest

G D

Got him a big Iron Cross, and he flew right back a-gain To Wash-ing -

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

2 motion 2 rest

A7 D

ton, Wash - ing - ton.

Example 10. "Stackolee" (AR), verse 2: two 3+1 phrases followed by an end-accented expanded phrase

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

D 3 motion 1 rest

8 Stack-o - lee load - ed cot-ton weighed five hund - red pounds,

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

G 3 motion D 1 rest 3

8 Car-ried a - long in a Gat - ling gun that drug him to the ground, He was a

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4 1/4

A7 4 motion D 4 rest

8 bad man, _____ that mean old Stack - o - lee.

Example 11. "Blowin' Down This Road (I Ain't Going to Be Treated This Way)" (*DBB*), verse 1: 2+2 phrases with a penultimate 3+1

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

D 2 motion 2 rest

8 I'm blow-in' down this old dust-y road, I'm a-

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

G 2 motion D 2 rest

8 blow-in' down this old dust-y road, I'm a-

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

G 3 motion D 1 rest

8 blow-in' down this old dust-y road, Lord, Lord, An' I ain't

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

A7 2 motion D 2 rest

8 a - gon - na be treat-ed this way. I'm

Example 12. "This World is Not My Home," arr. Albert E. Brumley (adapted from Winsett 1947)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. Each staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the notes. Above the staves, there are annotations for '3 motion' and '1 rest' with corresponding time signatures (1/4, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4) indicating the duration of each motion or rest.

Staff 1: This world is not my home, I'm just a pas-sing through, My
Staff 2: trea-sures are laid up some-where be-yond the blue; The
Staff 3: an-gels beck-on me from heav-en's op-en door, And I
Staff 4: can't feel at home in this world an-y more.

Example 13. Phrase rhythm of Brumley, arr. “This World is Not my Home” (Winsett 1947) and The Carter Family (1931), “Can’t Feel at Home”

(a) Brumley, arr. “This World is Not my Home” (Winsett 1947)

1	2	3	1
world	home	just	through
1	2	3	1
trea-	up	-where	blue
1	2	3	1
an-	me	heav-	door
1	2	3	1
can’t	home	world	-more

(b) The Carter Family (1931), “Can’t Feel at Home”

1	2	3	1	
world	home	just	through	
1	2	3	1	
trea-	hopes	all	blue	
1	2	3	1	
man-	kin-	gone	-fore	
1	2	3	1	2
can’t	home	world	-more	

Example 14. "I Ain't Got No Home" (LOC), phrase rhythm of verse 1

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

3 motion 1 rest

8 I ain't got no home I'm just a - ram - blin' round, I

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4 (ext.)

3 motion 2 rest

8 work when I can get it, I go from town to town.

1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4

3 motion 1 rest

8 Can't feel at home no mat - ter where I go, 'Cause I

1/3 2/3 3/3 1/x 2/x 3/x

3 motion 3 rest

8 ain't got no home in this world a - ny - more. I was a -

Example 15. Phrase rhythm of "I Ain't Got No Home" and its precedents

<u>Version</u>	<u>Phrase rhythm</u>			
	Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4
The Carter Family (1931)	3+1	3+1	3+1	3+2
Brumley, arr. (1937)	3+1	3+1	3+1	3+1
Guthrie (LOC, 1988 [rec. 22 March 1940])	3+1	3+1 (ext.)	3+1	3+x
Guthrie (DBB, 1964 [rec. 26 April 1940])	3+1	3+1 (ext.)	3+1	3+x

Example 16. The Carter Family (1929), “Wildwood Flower,” phrase rhythm of verse 1

1	2	3	1	2
twine	ming-	wav-	hair	
1	2	3	1	2
ros-	red	lil-	fair	
1	2	3	1	
myr-	bright	em-	dew	
1	2	3	1	2
pale	lead-	eyes	blue	

Example 17. Phrase rhythm of various recordings of “Wildwood Flower” (asterisks indicate phrases that are performed as 3+1 in instrumental interludes)

<u>Recording</u>	<u>Phrase rhythm</u>			
	Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4
The Carter Family (1929 [rec. 1928])	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
The Carter Family (2000 [rec. 1935])	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
The Carter Family (2008 [rec. 1956])	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
Joan Baez (1960)	3+2	3+2	3+2*	3+2
Ramblin’ Jack Elliott (2000 [rec. 1964])	3+x	3+x	3+1	3+x
Johnny Cash (1965)	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
Bob Dylan and the Band (2014 [rec. 1967])	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
Nitty Gritty Dirt Band (1972), with Mother Maybelle Carter	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
Randy Scruggs (1998), with Emmylou Harris and Iris DeMent	3+2	3+2	3+2*	3+2
June Carter Cash (2003)	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2

Example 18. Various notated renderings of "Wildwood Flower," phrase 1

(a) Webster's manuscript (1860)

I'll twine 'mid the ring - lets of my ra - ven black hair, The

This musical notation is in 2/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a final half note. The lyrics are written below the staff.

(b) Transcribed 1928 recording (Schinhan 1962)

I'll twine with these locks of — rav - en black hair, The

This musical notation is in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody includes a long note with a fermata over the word 'locks'. The lyrics are written below the staff.

(c) Carter Family Folio (The Carter Family 1934)

Oh I'll twine with the min - gles and wav - ing black hair, With the

This musical notation is in 2/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is written in a more complex, multi-measure style. The lyrics are written below the staff.

(d) Transcribed 1941 recording (Randolph 1950)

I'll twine 'mid the ring - lets of my rav - en black hair, The

This musical notation is in 2/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is similar to the 1860 manuscript. The lyrics are written below the staff.

(e) Songbook arrangement (Agay 1975)

I will twine and will min - gle my ra - ven black hair, With the

This musical notation is in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in a more complex, multi-measure style. The lyrics are written below the staff.

(f) Songbook tablature arrangement (Wernick 1976)

Oh I'll twine 'mid the ring lets of my ra ven black hair * — the

This musical notation is in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in a more complex, multi-measure style. The lyrics are written below the staff.

Example 19. Phrase rhythm of various recordings of “Reuben James” (asterisks indicate that one verse differs from the noted phrase rhythm)

<u>Recording</u>	<u>Phrase rhythm</u>			
	Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrase 3	Phrase 4
The Almanac Singers (1942)	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
W. Guthrie (<i>AR</i> , 1997a [rec. 25 April 1944])	3+x	3+x	3+1*	3+x
W. Guthrie (<i>MDR</i> , 2009 [rec. April 1944])	3+3	3+3	3+1	3+3
W. Guthrie (<i>W100</i> , 2012 [rec. 16 October 1945])	3+x	3+x	3+1	3+x
Pete Seeger (1958)	3+2	3+2*	3+1	3+2
Cisco Houston (1960)	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
The Kingston Trio (1961)	3+1	3+1	3+1	3+1
The Highwaymen (1964)	3+1	3+1	3+1	3+1
Pete Seeger (1967a)	3+2*	3+2*	3+1	3+2
Pete Seeger (1967b)	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2
Arlo Guthrie and the Dillards (2008)	3+2	3+2	3+1	3+2

Example 20. "Pastures of Plenty" (CRC), verse 1

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2 1/x 2/x

3 motion 3 rest

It's a might - y hard row that my poor hand has hoed. My

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2 1/x 2/x 3/x

3 motion 4 rest

poor feet has trav - eled a hot dust - y road.

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2

3 motion 1 rest

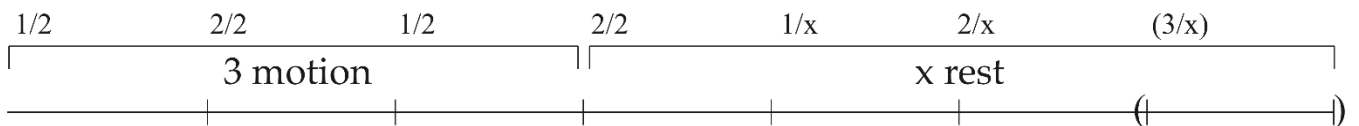
Out of your Dust Bowl and West - ward we rolled And your

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2 1/x 2/x 3/x

3 motion 4 rest

Des - ert was hot and your moun - tains was cold. harm.

Example 21. Abstract representation of the 3+1-3+x hybrid



Example 22. "Pastures of Plenty" (CRC), phrase rhythm of verses 1, 3, and 4

(a) Verse 1

1	2	3	1	2	3	
might-	road	poor	hoed			
1	2	3	1	2	3	4
poor	trav-	hot	road			
1	2	3	1			
out	Dust	West-	rolled			
1	2	3	1	2	3	4
des-	hot	moun-	cold			

(b) Verse 3

1	2	3	1	2		
-for-	-zo-	make	crops			
1	2	3	1	2		
North	Or-	gath-	hops			
1	2	3	1			
beets	ground	grapes	vine			
1	2	3	1	2	3	4
set	tab-	light	wine			

(c) Verse 4

1	2	3	1		
pas-	plen-	dry	ground		
1	2	3	1	2	
Grand	Dam	wat-	down		
1	2	3	1		
state	Un-	mig-	been		
1	2	3	1	2	3
work	fight	fight	win		

Example 23. Phrase-rhythmic becoming in "Pastures of Plenty" (CRC)

	<u>Verses 1–2</u>		<u>Verse 3</u>		<u>Verses 4–5</u>	
Phrase 1	3+1–3+x hybrid Weak cadence	⇒	3+x Strong cadence	⇒	3+1 Weak cadence	couplet
Phrase 2	3+1–3+x hybrid Weak cadence	⇒	3+x Strong cadence		3+x Strong cadence	
Phrase 3	3+1 Weak cadence		3+1 Weak cadence		3+1 Weak cadence	couplet
Phrase 4	3+1–3+x hybrid Weak cadence	⇒	3+x Strong cadence		3+x (w/ V–I) Strong cadence	

Example 24. "1913 Massacre" (AR), verse 1: melody and guitar bass-string downbeats

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2 1/x 2/x

B 3 motion 3 rest

Take a trip with me in nine - teen - thir - teen, To

Detailed description: This system shows the first six measures of the melody. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is written in treble clef with an octave 8. The guitar bass-string downbeats are in the bass clef. Above the staff, a bracket groups measures 2-4 as '3 motion' and measures 5-6 as '3 rest'. The lyrics are: 'Take a trip with me in nine - teen - thir - teen, To'.

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2 1/x 2/x

3 motion 3 rest

Cal - u - met, Mich-i - gan, in the cop - per coun - try. I'll

Detailed description: This system shows measures 7-12. The melody continues in treble clef. A bracket groups measures 8-10 as '3 motion' and measures 11-12 as '3 rest'. The lyrics are: 'Cal - u - met, Mich-i - gan, in the cop - per coun - try. I'll'.

1/2 2/2 1/2 2/2 1/x 2/x 3/x

3 motion 4 rest

take you to a place called I - tal - i - an Hall, Where the

Detailed description: This system shows measures 13-19. The melody continues in treble clef. A bracket groups measures 14-16 as '3 motion' and measures 17-19 as '4 rest'. The lyrics are: 'take you to a place called I - tal - i - an Hall, Where the'.

1/2(?) 2/2(?) 1/2(?) 2/2(?) 1/2 2/2 1/2

6 motion F# B 4 rest

min - ers are hav - ing their big Christ - mas ball.

Detailed description: This system shows measures 20-26. The melody continues in treble clef. A bracket groups measures 21-26 as '6 motion'. There is an F# accidental above measure 23. Above measure 26, there is a 'B' and '4 rest'. The lyrics are: 'min - ers are hav - ing their big Christ - mas ball.'

Example 25. "1913 Massacre" (AR), phrase rhythm of verses 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8 (yellow indicates the guitar's hypermetrical cues)

(a) Verse 1

1	2	3	1	2	3	
trip	me	nine-	-teen			
1	2	3	1	2	3	
Cal-	Mich-	cop-	-try			
1	2	3	1	2	3	4
take	place	-tal-	Hall			
1	2	3	4	5	6	1
min-				hav-	big	ball

(b) Verse 2

1	2	3	1	2		
take	door	up	stairs			
1	2	3	1	2	3	
sing-	danc-	there	-where			
1	2	3	1	2	3	4
let	hands	peo-	see			
1	2	3	4	5	6	1
watch				dance	big	tree

(c) Verse 5

1	2	3	1			
lit-	down	Christ-	lights			
1	2	3	1			
play	-an-	got-	quiet			
1	2	3	1	2	3	
hear	fun	not	-lize			
1	2	3	4	5	1	
cop-			thug	mill-	-side	

(d) Verse 7

1	2	3	1			
few	rushed	on-	few			
1	2	3	1	2	3	
just	thugs	scabs	you			
1	2	3	1	2		
man	daugh-	car-	down			
1	2	3	4	5	6	1
thugs				door	could	out

(e) Verse 8

1	2	3	1			
then	fol-	hun-	more			
1	2	3	1	2		
most	-bod-	-mained	floor			
1	2	3	1	2		
gun	laughed	mur-	joke			
1	2	3	4	5	1	
child-			smoth-	stairs	door	

Example 26. "1913 Massacre" (AR): textual narrative and hypermetrical/phrase-rhythmic trajectory

	<u>Verses 1–4</u>	<u>Verses 5–8</u>	<u>Verses 9–10</u>
Lyrics	No foreknowledge of the impending tragedy: • "There's talking and laughing and songs in the air / And the spirit of Christmas is there everywhere"	Events of the tragedy: • "He screamed, 'There's a fire'" • "The thugs held the door" • "The children were smothered on the stairs by the door"	Remembrance and broader lesson: • "The piano played a slow funeral tune" • "'See what your greed for money has done'"
Music	The tragedy is <u>foreshadowed</u> by: • Irregular 3+1–3+x hybrid phrases • Inconsistent hypermetrical alignment with the melody	The <u>intensity</u> is depicted by: • Shortened melodic rest • Hypermetrical dissonance (enabled by 3+1 phrases)	<u>Distance</u> from the tragedy is <u>reflected</u> by: • Lengthening melodic rest • Receding hypermetrical dissonance