

Art Series 4

RHYTHM

RHYTHM: Any kind of movement characterized by the regular recurrence of strong and weak elements. *Rhythm* denotes the regular patterned flow, the ebb and rise of sounds and movement in speech, music, writing, dance and in other physical activities. *Meter* basically means *measure* and applies to a system or pattern of measured recurrence of length, beat or numbers in poetry or music.

TYPES OF MUSIC

RHYTHM

There are SIX distinct types of rhythm in music. These are:

REGULAR: Meaning the evenly accented (stressed) beat.

SYNCOATED: The placing of upbeats along with downbeats at regular or irregular intervals.

STOPPED: In a stopped rhythm there are regular distinct halts to the flow of melody, but all the beats are there, they are simply regularly halted for an interval. (The term comes from choreography as in tap dancing where the dancer taps fill the stops.)

ACCENTED: Where one or more beats in a measure received a stronger stress (beat) or accent. Accent in a rhythm can be done by volume, duration, pitch or tone quality (timbre).

OMITTED BEAT: The regular omission of one or more beats in measures. Time may have to be counted over two or more measures in order to regularly omit. (Soul, Motown.)

ADDED BEAT: Additional strong or, generally, weak beats are added to the rhythm in a consistent or inconsistent manner. (Bongos, Congas, etc.)

USAGE

Any and all rhythms are made up of the six basics above. One, two or more can be employed in complex patterns.

REPETITION

Rhythm is rhythm because of repetition (recurrence).

RAPPORT

RAPPORT: Relationship, especially, one of mutual trust or affinity.

An audience in rapport is different than an audience of spectators.

An audience in rapport **PARTICIPATES** in small or large ways with the performer or the artist or work of art, often by vocal or body motion.

Such participation is achieved by:

1. Reliance on the even recurrence of the rhythm.
2. Ability to predict it will recur.
3. Formation of agreement by such reliable prediction.
4. Permitting the audience to fill gaps or significances. Regular omission of a beat or step or full explanation causes the audience to fill it for themselves and brings about physical or mental participation.

RHYTHM

All life is a repeating pulse and ebb and surge of motion.

Life becomes difficult when rhythmic prediction cannot occur. Anxiety sets in. It is a relief to participate in predictable rhythm in an art form. It is safe and reassuring. If the rhythm is exciting it is also exciting. Therefore participation in predictable rhythm is pleasure and even joy.

IMPINGEMENT

When one changes rhythm within a single work one “makes wrong” because the person has predicted the rhythm but the prediction is not met. Thus he is wrong. If the rhythm recurs, the person is made right.

A new rhythm attracts attention. If it is agreed with and recurs it gets participation.

ART FORMS

The above materials, while written from the viewpoint of music, apply to any art form.

Even prose has a rhythm.

Not all rhythms are pleasant or acceptable.

Many ways exist to utilize these observations on rhythm—i.e. one can begin an unwanted rhythm, using the audience objection to impinge and then turn it into a wanted rhythm.

As life itself is going through time and as time is recurrence, some rhythms are too dull to attain any attention.

Rhythm, used in art forms, must therefore slow or speed or change the expected rhythms of ordinary life in order to command attention.

Rhythm can sooth, lull, excite, arouse to any point of the emotional tone scale.

A rhythm one half to one tone below the usual rhythm in life will depress or degrade an audience.

A rhythm one half to one tone above the usual rhythm will dominate and interest.

Rhythm and its expression is the basic key to all art forms.