

## Perception as an Act of Rhythmisation

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### *Theoretical approach*

American music theorist and composer Christopher Hasty describes rhythm ‘[...] as a form of constant attention [...]’ in his thought collection *Rhythm Experiments* ‘in which holding on and moving come together – holding on of present and happening events and the movement between them’.<sup>1</sup> Hasty understands rhythm as a continuous form of attentiveness, as a, like he calls it, “sensed” act of feeling change. For Hasty, sensing is not passive. Rhythm is considered ‘a continuous creation of newly sensed events’ (ibid.,158). These experience-events, one could also call them experience-Gestalten, occur through repetition and comparison.

An example: Whilst seeing a dance composition and listening to the accompanying music, a certain movement motif becomes distinct and connected with the corresponding gesture in the music. Next time the musical gesture occurs, one expects the same movement motif but it is conducted by another body part, thus only fulfilling the expectation partly. Seeing the movement might trigger an association that leads the thoughts away from the current happenings. The awareness reconnects at a later point with the original performance, maybe with a changed perception due to the mental wandering in between.

These shifts in the focus of the attention are all part of the rhythmic process. Hasty considers the constant creation of references on different levels as a characteristic of “continuity” in making connections between multiple experiences. Hence, articulation and flow are not opposites but reinforce each other to create a complex and subtle mix of different qualities of connectedness. In Hasty’s opinion ‘complex experiences have to have a mix of being connected and being unconnected and this mix is fluid, especially in those experiences we call “rhythmic”’ (ibid.,167).

### *Practical approach*

Perception as a source for movement improvisation: Focus on one sensory channel at a time for 5 minutes. Which movements trigger the perceptions? Or do you move to perceive something?

Suggestion for the order:

- Tactile/haptic sensing (e.g. clothes, floor, air, other bodies)

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hasty, *Rhythmusexperimente – Halt und Bewegung* in: Christian Grüny, Matteo Nanni (ed.), *Rhythmus – Balance – Metrum*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2014 (p. 155-167)

- Body perception (e.g. tension, need for movement, inner sensations)
- Listening
- Seeing

Then switch between the different modes of perception and create your own rhythm of perception as a source of movement.

Listen to the piece 'mehr oder weniger' - III. tempo rubato from Carola Bauckholt. Do you see anything? Do you sense something? Create a movement sequence by following the memory of your perceptions. If you are working in a group, take a partner, show your sequence, look to the sequence of your partner and combine the two. Then decide whether you want to show your movement sequence with or without the piece of music. If with music: When should the music sound? Before, at the beginning or after your movement?

Have an exchange in the group about the relationship between the rhythm of perception and movement.



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