

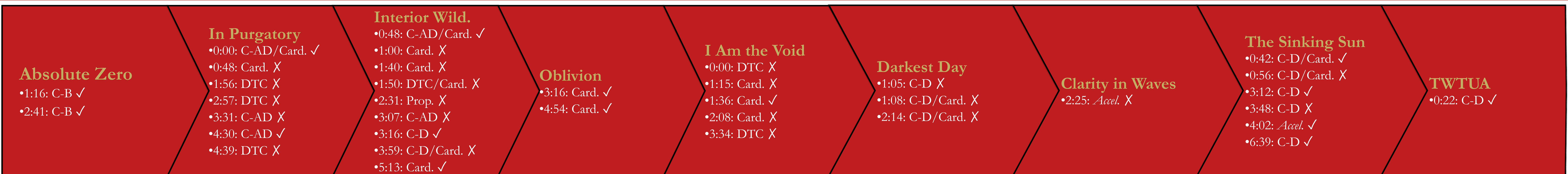


A Formula for Healing: Metric Modulation in Entheos's Time Will Take Us All

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Introduction

While working on the band's third full-length, *Time Will Take Us All*, Entheos vocalist Chaney Crabb experienced an accident that severely injured her face. During recovery, she experienced a range of extreme emotions. These emotions—among them uncertainty, despair/depression, and hope—became the foundation for the album's lyrics. The central message of the album is a “revelation”: because death is inevitable, one should strive to make the most of their time and cherish their loved ones.

TWTUA utilizes six different types of metric modulations. These often correspond with lyrical tonal shifts and thus serve to musically express the album's narrative. Meter types (e.g., simple/compound/asymmetric, triple/quadruple) also play an integral role in generating musical meaning.

Definitions of Metric Modulation

- Kostka/Almén (2024): “[A]n immediate change in tempo created by equating a particular note value to another note value, a proportional note value, usually located in the next bar” (495).
- Hobert (2010): “[C]ompositional devices ... used to move from one pulse and/or duration to another for the purpose of formal division, transition, time control, and/or character designation” (45).
 - Hobert describes different types of modulations, some of which closely resemble the types I independently formulated.

Proposed: A compositional device through which a composer enacts a change in an aspect of meter—including how the beat is divided, how many beats there are per measure, and the tempo—usually by equating the absolute durations of two identical or different note values.

Methodology

As I listened to *TWTUA*, I compiled the following types of data related to metric modulation:

- Type of metric modulation (see right)
- Old meter/new meter
 - S=simple; C=compound; A=asymmetric
 - 2/3/4=duple/triple/quadruple
- Note durations equated
 - Q=quarter; DE=dotted eighth, etc.
- Old tempo/new tempo
- Associated lyrics
- Positive (✓) or negative (X) association

Summary of Data

The only two **common-beat metric modulations**—both in “Absolute Zero”—have positive associations. **Common-absolute duration modulations** appear in only the second and third tracks; their alignments are mixed, though those leading to simple meters are consistently positive, while those leading to compound meters are consistently negative. **Cardinality modulations** are the most common type in the album, with seventeen total uses. Nearly half of these occur in conjunction with other types of modulations. Most of the positively aligned cardinality modulations lead to triple meters, while most of the negatively aligned modulations lead to quadruple or duple meters. The band uses all six **direct tempo changes** alongside negatively aligned lyrics; five of the six involve decreases in beats per minute. Two *accelerandi* in the album support heightening emotions, one accompanying the description of a sudden death and another leading toward a statement of the album's title. A single **proportional modulation** results in a doubled tempo that complements amplified negative emotions. The majority of **common-division modulations** occur in the latter half of the album. These highlight the largely negative emotions in “Darkest Day,” the conflict between positive and negative emotions in “The Sinking Sun,” and the eventual positive narrative resolution in “Time Will Take Us All.”

Common-Beat Modulation (C-B)

The tempo stays the same but the way in which the beat is divided changes. Results in a change to/from simple, compound, and asymmetric meters. (Compare to Hobert's pulse modulation.)

Ex. 1: “Absolute Zero,” 1:13 (S4→C4; Q=DQ; 155→155)

Common-Division Modulation (C-D)

The rate of the division just below the beat level stays the same but the way in which beat divisions are grouped changes. Results in a change to/from simple, compound, and asymmetric meters. (Compare to Hannan's pulse-preserving tactus modulation.)

Ex. 2: “Darkest Day,” 1:00 (S4→C4→A2; E=E; 102→68→68/102)

Common-Absolute Duration Mod. (C-AD)

The absolute durations of two different note values other than the beat or beat division just below the beat are equated. The tempo changes as a result. (Compare to Hobert's duration modulation, which would group this with C-D modulations.)

Ex. 3: “Absolute Zero,” 4:34 (C4→S3; DQ=DE; 155→120)

Proportional Modulation (Prop.)

Two note values related by a proportion of 1 and a power of 2 (2ⁿ) are equated, resulting in a tempo that is most often doubled or halved.

Ex. 4: “The Interior Wilderness,” 2:27 (S4→S4; Q=H; 110→220)

Cardinality Modulation (Card.)

The number of beats per measure changes. This may occur in conjunction with another type of modulation.

Ex. 5: “I Am the Void,” 1:25 (S4→S3; Q=Q; 95→95)

Direct Tempo Change (DTC)

The tempo changes with no clear relationship between note values. (Compare to Hobert's abrupt modulation.) *Accelerandi* in *TWTUA* create a similar effect but through a gradual process. (Compare to Hobert's written *accelerando* modulation.)

Ex. 6: “In Purgatory,” 2:49 (S4→S4; N/A; 125→85)

Narrative Analysis

Following the album's despair-filled opening minute, the common-beat modulations in “Absolute Zero” set the album's narrative in motion through their association with the positively aligned revelation. “In Purgatory” revisits negativity, emphasized by the cardinality modulation from triple to quadruple meter, the former of which ultimately represents the album's revelation. A host of modulations in “The Interior Wilderness” represent the narrator's “growing fear,” only briefly interrupted by an episode of hope prompted by a common-division modulation. “Oblivion” maintains positive associations throughout; its modulations set up the album's first title drop and accompany the narrator's encouraging words to the listener and description of the revelation. Despite this, the direct tempo change at the beginning of “I Am the Void” reintroduces the narrator's despair, also confirmed by other modulations. A cardinality modulation to triple meter attempts but fails to dispel the despair. The common-division modulations in “Darkest Day” further deepen the sense of despondency by expressing the narrator's recollection of a lost loved one's struggle. Barring an *accelerando* at its end, “Clarity in Waves” is devoid of modulation and, consequently, an escape from hopelessness. Common-division modulations portray another struggle between positive and negative emotions in “The Sinking Sun,” with an *accelerando* and two common-division modulations finally providing a way toward positivity via the narrator's acceptance of the revelation, symbolized by the final, simple triple meter.

Conclusion

While the density of metric modulations in *TWTUA* may strike one as unusual, the technique is an obvious match for the album's narrative. The changes achieved through varying levels of subtlety mirror the day-to-day growth Crabb experienced in recovery. Further work on this and related projects may shed light on further connections between meter and musical meaning, as well as how different artists—potentially in different subgenres—utilize metric modulation.