

Chapter 15

Shaping Beat Patterns to Musical Expectation

A compelling conductor best serves the music by creating contour and contrast through trace forms and not through the repetition of an unchanging beat pattern. Having learned basic beat patterns, there might be a strong obligation to “perform” by emphasizing each beat in time, resulting in navigational conducting. But, implementing a pattern reflecting characteristics of either song or dance with angles or arches is only the first necessary decision. To communicate the specific detail of each phrase, additional decisions are required that increase the use of the expressive variables.

Shape in Flow

In conversation, we adjust our speech to communicate our emphasis. We slow down or speed up the pace, we elongate or compress the length of individual words, we change volume, and we vary the degree of clarity in our diction. All of these intuitive choices create shape through contour and contrast and are made in order to communicate our intended emphasis.

The exploration that follows provides an example of how emphasis in conversation can be linked to communicating the specific shape of a musical phrase.

Exploration 15-1: “I went to the store”

1. Hear the following possibilities in your imagination before verbalizing them aloud:
 - I went to the store. (*Who* went to the store?)
 - I **WENT** to the store. (*When* did you go?)
 - I went **TO** the store. (*What* did you do?)
 - I went to the **STORE**. (*Where* did you go?)
2. Explore how you can physically express the stressed sound by adjusting the expressive variables of speed, space, and weight.
3. Engage a partner to respond as you conduct each of the four variations on “I went to the store.” Consider how to prepare the points of emphasis in order to elicit the desired response. Place all words at a single action point using only the right hand.
4. Notice how your speech patterns fall into rhythmic and metrical hierarchies. By nature of their emphasis, some words are stronger, with our speech (and gesture) leading to and away from those words.

Similar shaping choices should be part of the interpretation prepared through score study and expressed through gestural intent using the strategy of beat hierarchy.

Hierarchy of Beats Creates Shape

Similar to the varied speech patterns within a sentence, successive beats should have varied expressive qualities. The gestures to describe them are either active when sounding or passive when silent as discussed in Chapter 12. Communicating a specific hierarchy of beats through each pattern using trace forms that illustrate the specific contour of the musical line is an important next step in building one's expressive capacity.

Time signatures imply a general ordering of strong and weak beats. In $\frac{4}{4}$, beat one is typically perceived as receiving primary emphasis, with beat three as secondary, and beats two and four having comparatively weaker emphasis. These common perceptions can be altered by the composer's specific changes to the inherent characteristics of the meter. For example, if the final beat serves to prepare the next downbeat, it might receive greater emphasis in the hierarchy. The time signatures of $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$ have similar qualities to $\frac{4}{4}$, but without the secondary emphasis.

The markings below are adapted from the teaching of Frederick Prausnitz as discussed in the book *Score and Podium*. Conductors sometimes find it helpful to mark each beat with an indication of their musical hierarchy such as:

- ! → primary emphasis
- # → secondary emphasis
- → weak emphasis

In a score, the markings could be applied in this manner to reflect the standard hierarchy:



Reshaping Patterns to Show Contrast and Contour

Use the following exploration as a guide to practice reshaping common patterns utilizing the hierarchy of beat concept. Emphasize active beats considering hierarchy while de-emphasizing the rests using passive gestures. Each active beat needs a specific preparation and should reflect the aural expectation and metric emphasis for each sound. The overall shape can highlight the contour and contrast between active and passive beats, adding two new possibilities for marking the score:

- + → preparation
- ✓ → dead beat

Contour and contrast can also be explored by repeating each measure four times in order to create longer-term emphasis goals through phrase shape. Some examples include:

- Shape to an arrival point (Build to the 4th measure)
- Shape away from an initial emphasis (Fade away from the 1st measure)
- Shape that describes emphasis and resolution (Arrive in the 2nd or 3rd measure).

To develop further specificity, practice varying musical emphasis over time by changing articulation, dynamics, timbre, or their combinations.

Exploration 15-2: Active and Passive Beats with Contrast and Contour

Repeat each measure four times.

ONE Action Point per measure

TWO Action Points per measure

THREE Action Points per measure

Applying Interpretation to Movement

The discussion that follows is intended to explore how score study guides the conductor to make expressive choices. It offers a guide to how a score might be heard and physically expressed, with the flexibility to meet the needs of an ensemble.

Review the score of “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” below. Analyze the phrase structure, the hierarchy of each beat, and the variables of inflection necessary to convey your interpretation. Consider the possible effects of using either the angles or arches pattern to reflect your musical expectation through gestural intent.

Go Tell Aunt Rhody

Go tell Aunt Rhody, go tell Aunt Rhody.

5
Go tell Aunt Rhody, the old gray goose is dead!

A thorough examination of “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” reveals several characteristics beyond the meter that serve as better vehicles than the time signature to express the music. Consider how the melody can be divided into three sub-phrases (2+2+4), although other phrasing options are possible:

Go tell Aunt Rhody, go tell Aunt Rhody.

5
Go tell Aunt Rhody, the old gray goose is dead!

Within each of these sub-phrases, melodic contour is varied, the rhythms begin the same way but end differently, and the text repeats three times before changing. A trace form should be able to illustrate both the consistent similarities and the evolving differences. Explore the interpretive possibilities by singing each sub-phrase using the elements of conversation as explored in “I went to the store” as a guide.

Consider how you might alter the inflection of the text within each sub-phrase to establish the desired syllabic emphasis.

- Does the desired inflection alter the priority of the beats or does the inflection enhance the natural beat priorities?
- In the sub-phrase below, which word or syllable is most important?
- How do the melodic contour and text combine to answer this question?
- What happens to the line of text if both “Go” and “Rho-” are equal, since they fall in the same metric position on beat 1?

- If “Rho-” should receive greater priority and emphasis, based upon the descending melodic line, and because “Rhody” is the subject of the sentence, how might it be conveyed gesturally?

While exploring Exercise 15-1, consider this possible hierarchy of beats for the first sub-phrase of the tune.



▶ Exercise 15-1: Contour and Contrast in Reshaping Patterns

Experiment with each option presented in the video. Then review the entire melody and apply the concepts to best express your interpretation.

Consider the following steps in the process of transforming score study into gestural intent:

1. Follow the decision-making process outlined above to reach interpretive conclusions about each sub-phrase.
2. Sing and move while feeling how the gestures merge with your aural image.
3. Where the merger feels uncomfortable, explore other possible motions until your intent is confirmed by how the body responds with fluid quality motion.

When the merger is secure, conduct for a partner:

1. Listen for how your partner’s audible response confirms or conflicts with your interpretation.
2. Engage the cycle of stimulus and response in order to bring your partner’s response closer to your expectation.
3. Refrain from verbal instruction or repeating the same gestures as you attempt to make corrective adjustments.

The process of working with a partner and adjusting gestures to better communicate intent demonstrates the importance of the cycle of stimulus and response that takes place in rehearsal.

Additional contour and contrast can be realized by melding gestures to indicate single sounds that sustain for durations greater than one beat. As discussed in Chapter 13, melded gestures create more specific communication because they avoid an unexpected activation of the beat when the expectation is for sustain. Melded gestures allow us to continue meaningful shape in flow by using

the adhesion developed through the “figure eights” exercise in Chapter 14. Observe how these principles are applied in the video for Exercise 15-2 with “Go Tell Aunt Rhody.”

Consider this additional score marking for melded gesture, which allows us to continue the compelling shape in flow:

(-) → melded



▶ Exercise 15-2: Melded Gesture Increases Specificity

“In Search of 1”

The concept of “In Search of 1” is another alternative to the basic shape of any beat pattern. This concept emerges from the interpretive “search” for the musical point of resolution or arrival, where the true “downbeat” of the phrase is delivered. Combining the concepts of melded gesture with alternative contour shapes provides even greater flexibility in order to clearly define the musical expectation. If the shape of the pattern is truly flexible, and the musical intent shown between the beats is clear, the location of the beat placement can still be followed by the ensemble.

▶ Exercise 15-3: “In Search of 1” Increases Specificity

After reviewing Exercise 15-3, practice each sub-phrase of “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” while exploring how to enhance your expressive capacity by implementing the strategies outlined above. The trained body’s initial response to a vivid aural image informed through score study should lead to alternative shaping of beat patterns that create contour and contrast. The ability to adjust freely while implementing these techniques is a secondary response that will be employed as necessary while engaging the ensemble within the larger cycle of stimulus and response.

From Analysis to Application

Study the versions of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” that follow. Analyze the musical expectation indicated for each example and use the hierarchy of beat and melded gesture markings as a guide to expressing the contour and contrast of the musical line.

Establish a vivid aural image of the purpose of each beat prior to conducting each example as marked using the angles patterns. Select a tempo appropriate to an expressive style suggested by these musical expectations. Explore adjustments to the contour of the pattern in order to better

represent the hierarchy of beats. Repeat the examples at a slower tempo while using the arches patterns and follow a similar adjustment process to emphasize the new expressive elements.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

! - # - ! - # (-) ! - # - ! - # (-)

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, How I won - der what you are.

5 ! - # - ! - # (-) ! - # - ! - # (-)

Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia - mond in the sky.

9 ! - # - ! - # (-) ! - # - ! - # (-)

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, How I won - der what you are.

The following versions of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” further develop an understanding of the hierarchy of beats in the compositional process, a sense of their importance in the interpretive process, and the process of communicating these decisions to an ensemble. Practice them as marked with either the angles or arches patterns and melded gestures, adjusting the tempo to the rhythmic or expansive expectation. Engage a partner to observe the degree to which your gesture matches the expectation marked in the score.

! (-) # (-) ! (-) # (-) ! (-) # (-) ! (-) ✓ +

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star. How I won - der

7 what you are. Up a - bove the world so high,

13 like a dia - mond in the sky. Twin - kle, twin - kle,

19 lit - tle star. How I won - der what you are.

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! (- -) - ! (- -) - ! (- -) - ! (- -) +

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star. How I won - der

7

what you are. Up a - bove the world so high,

13

Like a dia - mond in the sky. Twin - kle, twin - kle,

19

lit - tle star. How I won - der what you are

! (- -) ! (- -)

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star. How I won -

11

der what you are. Up a - bove the world so

21

high, like a dia - mond in the sky. Twin - kle, twin -

32

kle, lit - tle star. How I won - der what you are.

! (-) - ! (-) - ! (-) - ! (-) +

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star. How I won - der

7

what you are. Up a - bove the world so high,

13

like a dia - mond in the sky. Twin - kle, twin - kle,

19

lit - tle star. How I won - der what you are.

! - ! - ! - ! +

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star. How I won - der

7
what you are. Up a - bove the world so high,

13
like a dia - mond in the sky. Twin - kle, twin - kle,

19
lit - tle star. How I won - der what you are.

! (-) ! (-)

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star. How I won -

11
der what you are. Up a - bove the world so

21
high. Like a dia - mond in the sky. Twin - kle, twin -

32
kle, lit - tle star, how I won - der what you are.

Arranging Simple Songs with Changing Meter and Expressive Patterns

To help synthesize the concepts introduced in Chapters 14 and 15, apply them to an arrangement of a simple song. Using the melody chosen at the end of Chapter 14, create a new version that includes your own expressive ideas for articulation, duration, dynamics and changing meters. Maintain the structure so that the syllables and pitches continue to move together. After you compose your arrangement, consider the implications of beat emphasis, melded gestures, and dead beats, and add those markings to your score. Sample arrangements are provided on the next page to serve as models. Compare these to the original melody as you consider what is possible in your own arrangement.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, how I won-der what you are. Up a-bove the world so high,

7
like a dia-mond in the sky. Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, how I won-der what you are.

The process of crafting and conducting your arrangement will continue to deepen your understanding of how the prepared mind fuels the merger with the trained body.

Sample Arrangements

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

$\text{♩} = 72$

(-) ! (-) ! (-) # + # - ! (-) ! (-) ! (-) ! - ! ✓ + ! ! (-)

Twin - kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are.

p *pp* *f* *fp*

10
Up a - bove the world so high. Like a dia - mond in the sky.

pp *ff* *pp*

17
Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, how I won-der what you are.

p *mf* *f*

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

$\text{♩} = 72$

The musical score consists of three systems of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The first system (measures 1-7) has lyrics: "Twin-kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are." Above the notes are rhythmic symbols: "!" (quarter), "-" (quarter), "! (-) -" (quarter), "!" (quarter), "!" (quarter), "- #" (quarter), "# (-) !" (quarter), and "! (-)" (quarter). Dynamic markings are *p* (measures 1-3), *f* (measure 4), *subito p* (measures 5-6), and *mp* (measure 7). The second system (measures 8-14) has lyrics: "Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia-mond in the sky." Dynamic markings are *ff* (measures 8-9), *pp* (measures 10-11), *mp* (measures 12-13), and *pp* (measure 14). The third system (measures 15-21) has lyrics: "Twin-kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are." Dynamic markings are *pp* (measures 15-19) and *ff subito p* (measures 20-21). The score includes various time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 3/4.

Twin-kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are.
p *f* *subito p* *mp*

8
 Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia-mond in the sky.
ff *pp* *mp* *pp*

15
 Twin-kle, twin - kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are.
pp *ff* *subito p*

Points for Discussion and Reflection

1. When you crafted your arrangement, what musical expectation was created by the elements you included? How did these musical and editorial decisions impact your practice in gesture?
2. Discuss the ways in which you, as an interpreter, are able to discover and bring the composer's intention to life.
3. Consider how your physical awareness and availability is growing in order to express each nuance of your established priority of beats. How do the concepts in this chapter support that development?

Simple Songs in Appendix 1

Are You Sleeping?

Go Tell Aunt Rhody

Mary Had a Little Lamb

My Country 'Tis of Thee

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Four-Part Scores in Appendix 2

- 15.1 Antonín Dvořák – Symphony no. 8 in G Major, mvt. 1
- 15.2 Franz Schubert – Symphony no. 5 in B-flat Major, mvt. 4
- 15.3 Edward Elgar – “Theme” from *Enigma Variations* (complete)
- 15.4 Franz Schubert – Symphony no. 8 in B Minor, mvt. 1 (excerpt 1)
- 15.5 Franz Schubert – Symphony no. 8 in B Minor, mvt. 1 (excerpt 2)