

The following is a free mix of quotation, paraphrase, and condensation of remarks by Richard Taruskin:

Rite moves conspicuously away from German symphonic musical values. There is no harmonic progression, no thematic or motivic development, no smoothly executed transitions. It is music not of process but of state, deriving its coherence and its momentum from the calculated interplay of "immobile" uniformities and abrupt discontinuities.

The only process is that of accumulation. Each of the two parts begins quietly and slowly and builds to a frenzied climax. Many individual parts also follow this model, most notably the Dance of the Earth. (Note, though, a problem with this kind of process – how do you end it? Look at the ends of both parts.)

In all other ways it is music constructed of static elements that neither develop nor interact responsively with one another.

Pieter van den Toorn has elaborated a similar perspective into a taxonomy of rhythmic structures that movements in *The Rite* can have. The following is taken from his book *Stravinsky and the Rite*.

Features of Type I:

1. Foreground metric irregularity; irregular or shifting meter.
2. Two or more blocks of contrasting material alternate with one another in constant and often rapid juxtaposition. A block may consist of a single measure (corresponding to a single motivic cell) or of several measures (pieced together from several cells).
3. The irregular meter records the diverse lengths of the blocks, their internal "cellular" subdivisions, and subsequent extensions and contractions.
4. Upon successive restatements, blocks and their internal subdivisions remain stable in content. Moreover, within each block the horizontal lines or parts share the same rhythmic-metric periods (cycles or spans) as defined by the shifting meter; they proceed *en masse*, as it were, with no imitative dialogue or exchange. Thus, too, sharing the same periods as defined by the meter, these lines or parts are synchronized unvaryingly in vertical or harmonic coincidence; from one statement or repeat to the next, the vertical disposition is always the same. Blocks thus convey little sense of harmonic progress, such progress being possible only *between* blocks. And even the latter requires qualification, since, within the larger dimensions of a juxtaposition, the same blocks, modified or reordered, are always preceding or succeeding one another.
5. It follows from the above that the invention presupposed by Type I is fundamentally rhythmic in conception. A sense of "development," of progress, change, or movement, derives in large part from the lengthening, shortening, or reshuffling of the blocks and their internal subdivisions upon successive repeats.

Features of Type II:

1. Foreground metric regularity; most often, a steady meter.
2. The construction consists of the superimposition of two or more motives that repeat according to periods, cycles, or spans that are not shared but vary independently of, or separately from, one another. The periods of these reiterating fragments may be stable (a motive whose duration is always four quarter-note beats, for example), or unstable (always changing in duration). (Pauses or rests that follow the repeat of a motive are always counted as part of its period.) As noted, the construction may emerge as one of the several blocks within a larger block structure or, in climactic fashion as the concluding section to an extended movement.
3. The steady meter generally records the stable periods of one of the superimposed, reiterating fragments...Occasionally, a shifting meter is applied to a Type II construction, which will in turn reflect the unstable or "mobile" periods of one of the several reiterating fragments...
4. As with Type I, the reiterating fragments remain fixed registrally and instrumentally, with no imitative or developmental dialogue or exchange. But since, as indicated, these fragments repeat according to periods that vary independently of one another, they produce a vertical or harmonic coincidence that is inconstant, constantly changing. But here, too, there are static implications, since this inconstancy in vertical coincidence is effected by reiterating fragments which, although repeating to independent periods, remain fixed in content.
5. It follows from the above that the invention presupposed by Type II is fundamentally rhythmic in conception. A sense of "development" has in large part to do with the synchronization and non-synchronization of the stable or unstable periods as defined by the reiterating fragments and with the vertical or horizontal implications of these shifts in alignment.

We will look at the following movements as examples; have a look on your own to prepare.

Look at the *Glorification of the Chosen One* as an example of Type I. What are the basic blocks, and how are they manipulated? What elements are fixed and what elements are variable?

Look at the *Dance of the Earth* as an example of Type II. Find a few examples in which the same motives are combined in different ways.