

This diagram speaks for itself. It shows objectively how, from elementary rhythm simple rhythm is reached, and how one rises from simple to composite rhythm. The higher rhythms are so many syntheses of the lower ones. Without absorbing them, the higher rhythms draw together and compress the lower ones into one rhythmical entity.

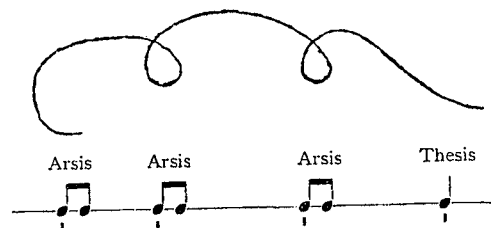
The details thus make up the whole, and it is from the arrangement of the details that the beauty of the whole results; or, to speak more truly, this arrangement is the rhythm itself according to the definition we have given of it. Thus we see the importance of details in the study of rhythm. They are not taken into account in order to give equal importance to each one, treated in isolation and apart, but to make us know better how to blend them into the unity of the whole.

Composite rhythm is made in one of two ways: *a*) by the regular alternation of arsis and thesis, or *b*) by the repetition of several consecutive arses or theses.

The first method is the one we have just expounded. It is composite rhythm by *juxtaposition*. Although closely knit together, the simple rhythms remain distinct, each thesis marking the end of one and each arsis the beginning of another.

The second method is composite rhythm by *contraction*. No term could be more precise. The regular rhythmical order being that after an arsis comes a thesis, each time that several arses or several theses succeed one another, one of them is the blending point of two linked rhythms. The thesis of the preceding rhythm becomes an arsis when considered in relation to the following rhythm. The phenomenon which we noticed in speaking of the ictus occurs again in regard to the whole group, which thus becomes the contraction of two rhythms in compound time, just as the ictus is the contraction of two rhythms in simple time.

If the alternation of arses and theses is broken, it will transform the above example into composite rhythm by contraction. Make the first thesis into an arsis and immediately our three groups represent a new rhythm:



Instead of two rhythms in juxtaposition, we have now only one single rhythm with three arses. The contraction is made on the second group, which, although theoretically a thesis — since it follows an arsis — has in practice become an arsis.

However accurate this explanation of contraction may be, it is possible to elucidate this second form of composite rhythm in a simpler way still. Why have not the arsis and thesis in compound time the same faculty for development as the arsis and thesis in simple time? Just as the repetition of the simple beat makes arses and theses in compound time, so the repetition of these same arses and theses in compound time makes larger arses and ampler theses of several phases or ictic pulsations. We thus get a single arsic uprush or a single thetic movement comprising several consecutive arses or theses. On every ictus where two arses or two theses meet each other, the élan of the greater arsis is renewed and the movement of the wide thesis continues to diminish. Looked at in this way composite rhythm in its second form is to simple rhythm in compound time what the latter is to elementary rhythm.

It will not be beyond the scope of our subject in this chapter on rhythm in itself if we apply composite rhythm to a melodic fragment:



Here the groups have departed from that rhythmical neutrality in which we first found them. The contours of the melody assign its own special part to each. The rising groups are the arses, the descending ones the theses, since arsis spells uprising as well as spring, and thesis means down-drooping no less than rest.

In these examples this alternation of arses and theses is composite rhythm in its first form (by juxtaposition).

*Theses: Masculine and Feminine.*

One remark remains to be made. In example *B* we have purposely changed the second compound beat of example *A* into