

Conception and Performance of Meter in Bulgarian Folk Music

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In this presentation, I bring ethnographic and quantitative methods into productive dialogue to study metric cognition in folk music from Bulgaria. The meter of many Bulgarian folk songs and dance pieces includes beats with two categorically different durations, short and long. Drawing on interviews, instrument lessons, and participation in live performances as a listener and dancer, I discuss how such unequally timed meter is conceived by Bulgarian musicians who play the *tüpan*, a large, double-sided drum. These observations inform the design of statistical comparisons of onset frequency and timing as measured in recorded *tüpan* performances, examining the durations between drum strokes in different rhythmic contexts, different types of dance pieces, and performances by different players. In interpreting these statistics, I argue that the relationships between performers' metric conceptions and patterns of performance timing provide a window into the cognition of Bulgarian meter that neither type of evidence can offer in isolation.