

# *Revealing the Music of Pentameter: Putting Shakespeare Through His Paces*

*An In-Depth Exploration Which Might Well-Resolve  
John Barton's 'Haunting' Sense of Failure*

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## **Posted Separately:**

*Companion Documents – Four Excerpts From Shakespeare*



In my writing for my fellow members of the Eurythmy Association of North America (EANA), I have mentioned several times the poetic-metrical structure of pentameter in Shakespeare's sonnets and in the works of other poets, such as John Keats and Geoffrey Chaucer. The complex and subtle musicality of this poetic meter is truly amazing. If we really experience and understand the dynamics of this structure and its shaping forces, it will reveal to us how to speak lines of pentameter such that we bring their full poetic-musical quality to life. And this applies, of course, not only to the speaking of works in pentameter, but also to their expression in eurythmy – this art in which poems and music are to be expressed in movement as an objective reflection of the elements within the pieces themselves. Shakespeare not only wrote his sonnets in pentameter: he also wrote the substance of his plays in it – the unrhymed pentameter known as **blank verse**. And the power of this poetic structure will guide us in unfolding these lines, too, with remarkable diversity, power, nuance, color and clarity.

## **Some Definitions to Set the Stage**

For the success of this exploration, I want to begin by being clear about what the subject is. What follows are the basics, but my approach is intended to open the way

newly even for those who already know a good bit about poetic phenomena.

'**Penta-meter**' means that each line of verse has *five poetic units of some sort*. When looking at examples of poetry on the page, the first thing one might notice is that the lines of words do not fill the page margin-to-margin like prose does. It appears that there is some kind of organization of the words. In some cases, this organization might be more so spatial – words and ideas are grouped or separated on the page. But in other cases, the organization might have to do with the *sounding* of the words. And it is this kind of organization that we are concerned with in pentameter (I prefer to call the spatial poems '**prosms**.')

When verse is said to be composed in pentameter, we will then **scan** the lines for their structure (scanning is also called **scansion**). The nature of this structure that we are scanning for is intimately connected with the fact that when a word has more than one syllable, we usually speak one syllable heavier than the other: we stress it, we accentuate it, make it louder. For example in the two-syllable word, 'puppy,' we make 'pup-' heavier than '-py'. The second syllable is by comparison unstressed, lighter, quieter. The phenomenon of **stressed vs. unstressed**, heavy vs. light syllables in words is the reason that the pronunciation guide in dictionary entries shows the relative weights of the syllables. *And our varied weighting of syllables is one of the primary ways that the vitality of **rhythm** enters our speech.* Rhythm refers to changes between contrasting conditions or qualities that tend to repeat, such as in the beating of the heart, the alternation of day and night, rise and fall, dry and wet, happy and sad, fast and slow, etc. And in poetry and in speech we can experience rhythm when the weights of the syllables alternate or vary between lightness and heaviness.

Detecting the stressed and unstressed syllables in words and sensing the rhythms they create can be new and challenging if we have not been aware of this feature of our speech. But this is so important for what follows here, that I want to reference the help that Renée LaTulippe gives in her very practical Lyrical Language Lab YouTube video: "Top 5 Tips: How to Identify Stressed Syllables in English Words...."<sup>1</sup> Though she includes length as a possible sign that a syllable is stressed, in this exploration into pentameter we will be finding that in poetry, weight and duration are separate factors.

In poetic forms whose organizing principle has to do with the sounding of the words, the starting place is always with the stressed syllables in each line. When scanning the line, we look for these stressed syllables, the 'heavies.' And it is for good reason that these are primary: these do the walking through each line. When we want to say something emphatic it is the heavies we press on, with more volume, accent, weight. The heavy syllables do the

walking in prose, too. *But in prose the walking of the heavies is not organized in a particular rhythmic fashion; they mostly walk in accord with which words are needed to convey the meaning.*

So, taking a line of pentameter we can begin by reading it, scanning for the stresses in it. From Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene ii, here is Romeo's first line under Juliet's balcony. Suggestion: along with your eyes, please do exercise your voice by working on the examples out loud as they come throughout this article:

But **soft!** What **light** through **yonder window breaks?**

Ah! We can feel five heavies (in bold) walking through the line. These are its basic units of stress. The *number-count* of such units of syllabic stress in a line determines its **meter**; hence Romeo's line is in **pentameter**. Lines of verse can even have only one unit per line. This produces poems in **monometer**, and there are such poems! Two units would be **dimeter**; three, **trimeter**; etc.

Next, we can notice that a single unstressed, light syllable sounds between each of the heavy ones, and that the line begins with a light syllable. When we read the line, we can perceive that these syllables give a sense of *leading to* each of the heavy syllables. This pattern of light and heavy syllables in pairs that repeats throughout the line is the crucial thing: *the words of the line establish a specific rhythm. Prose does not do this.* And each light-heavy unit such as we can sense here is called an **iamb**; hence Shakespeare's verse is often called *iambic pentameter*. Here is Romeo's line again, but now with hyphens to link together the pairs of light-heavy syllables that form the five units of light-heavy iambs, to bring this rhythm out more clearly:

But-soft! What-light through-yon der-win dow-breaks?

But the light-heavy iambic unit is not the only possible rhythmic unit in poetry. A number of different patterns can be created when unstressed syllables are added to the heavy syllable, either before or after it, or both before and after it. (Fret not. Examples of these will come below.)

I would like to bring to our consciousness something about this rhythmical circumstance that usually passes by quite unrecognized. As in all lines of verse, these poetic units in Romeo's line, which we feel as a series of light-heavy syllables in iambic pentameter, come to our awareness *independently* of the rhythmic contours of the individual words. What I mean is that by themselves the words, "yonder" and "window," both have the rhythm of heavy-light. This is the **trochee** rhythm, the opposite of the light-heavy iamb. And *by themselves*, there would be little in the single-syllable words in the rest of Romeo's line to require that any of them be light or heavy syllables. *Something else must enter in*; and this 'something else' is

**the poetic**: while the line presents *audible* sounds and rhythms through the defined contours of the audible words, at the same time for the duration of this line *a second rhythm*, a poetic rhythm, can be grasped by us which does not coincide with the contours of the audible words, which is not dictated by them. This higher phenomenon of poetic rhythm is *inaudible* to the ear, and on the page it is *invisible* to the eye.<sup>2</sup> All poetic experiences are like this. Even our perception of a sequence of audible speech sounds – vowels and consonants – as being a discrete **word** is a matter of grasping an inaudible element; hence, we might consider calling it 'super'-sensible.

In poetic phenomena we meet an interplay between the audible and the inaudible. In its most basic expression, in iambic pentameter an iambic rhythm manifests inaudibly along with the sounding of the words. But I have now realized that something even more complex and formative than this fairly simple poetic structure is also holding sway: *while each line sounds five metrical units of stress, each line regularly paces in four beats per line: five stresses, but four beats as in 4/4 time in music. And the dynamic relationship between these five stresses and these four beats continually gives rise to a surprising poetic beauty and diversity.*

The following unveiling of this structure will be fairly comprehensive. My aim is not only to elaborate on what it is, but to give you the means to be successful in bringing it alive yourself when preparing a text in pentameter. Most members of EANA are eurythmists, but the association includes speech artists and actors. This article is an offering to everyone who works with the spoken word. I hope that through it, pentameter can earn an even more precious and enduring place in our hearts and minds.

### Context and Background for the Exploration

Between 1979 and 1984, John Barton, co-founder and Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in England at that time, together with actors in the company, filmed nine programs called "RSC Playing Shakespeare." Although this was nearly forty years ago, in the ninth program, "Poetry and Hidden Poetry" (9 of 9, at 3 minutes in – a list of programs and links is in the References section below), he brought to expression our continuing sense of struggle with Shakespeare's pentameter. Speaking as a beloved and revered actor, director and teacher he said:

...[W]e learn so much of what goes on in [the] text, but ... when we do it I always feel a bit of a sense of failure, because we can't put into the work more than a fraction of the things that we talk about and dig for.

And a bit later he came to what I believe is the heart of the continuing need:

And I suppose I feel a particular sense of failure when I talk about Shakespeare's poetry. It's a problem that's haunted me over the years, and which I've never really solved. When I read a Shakespeare text, I'm moved and stirred by the power and the resonance of individual lines. ... Yet nothing I've said so far about marrying our two traditions, Elizabethans and moderns, necessarily helps to bring about what I can both hear and can feel in the lines as I read them. ... Yet I feel I'm missing something and in rehearsal I often don't know what to say or how to help the actor.

In the second program, "Using the Verse" (2 of 9, at 46 seconds in), Barton had said that "the heightened language has to be found by the actor and not taken for granted, and ... a right balance has to be found between naturalistic and heightened elements in the text." He also said that "blank verse is probably the very center of Elizabethan tradition, and perhaps the most important thing in Shakespeare that an actor has to come to terms with, or rather ... needs to get help from." Yet he then went on to say that Shakespeare's blank verse "doesn't necessarily always have something to do with poetry, though it often does. But at the beginning we can forget that."

I have wondered why Barton would say that we can forget about the poetic in blank verse (unrhymed pentameter) at the beginning of our work with it; and I think that he explained his reason fairly well when he answered the question, "What is verse?," by saying that "all it means is the rhythm that goes dee-dum dee-dum dee-dum dee-dum dee-dum." In other words, the poetic in blank verse only consists of a simple string of ten syllables that present five iambs; this is its entire poetic structure. If this is so, then actors would only look in the lines for deviations from this simple structure and for elements that are independent of it, which as Barton said, are "little hints from Shakespeare about how to act a given speech or scene, a stage direction in shorthand." In the nine programs, the hints that he and the actors discuss involve aspects such as: two stresses in a row or lines beginning with a stress rather than an unstress (deviations from the iambic rhythm, to add emphasis), action words vs. description, the appearance of a verb in the same place two lines in a row, lines that are divided between characters, punctuation, lines that deviate by falling short of ten syllables, and on occasion certain words or sounds that repeat. These elements can be worked with as suggestions for changes of mood or delivery, as clues to the action or to the mental condition of the character. Sometimes a group of words will sound a rhythmic pattern other than iambic, and if the same pattern is repeated in that line or the next (such as 'dum-dee-dum,' heavy-light-heavy – a poetic unit called an **amphimacer**, pronounced 'amphimacer'), this might help guide what the actor does.

Barton and the others gave many examples of how they understand Shakespeare to depart from the five-stress pentameter structure for effect and to approach natural speech. The norm is established so that it can be broken. Barton said that Shakespeare's blank verse "sometimes" keeps the five-iamb 'dee-dum, deed-dum' structure, "but perhaps more often it doesn't" (2 of 9, at 6 min.:15 sec.). Stresses can be dropped from or added to the structure and the company demonstrated this with various lines from the plays.

In the ninth program, as they continued their exploration of blank verse and their search for what would answer Barton's expressed sense of failure, actor Ian McKellen cited the advice: "Look after the sense and the sounds will look after themselves." The group readily agreed that this is not enough. To the aspect of comprehending the meaning-sense of the lines, actor Alan Howard brought in "the other aspect, as the sounds or the textures, the rhythms." He summed up this aspect in the noun, **apprehension** – a word "that we don't quite understand so well today." This is not 'apprehension' in the narrow sense of fearful foreboding – not at all. With this word, Alan was pointing to what it means to 'apprehend' something – simply put, *to seize, capture or lay hold of* something. "Apprehension, as opposed to comprehension."<sup>3</sup> And he explained what he meant by this in the context of their work:

*I think that apprehension to the Elizabethans was a very palpable form of being sensually highly aware ... of ... rhythm, sound, texture as a way of combining with comprehension to bring about ... a factor which goes beyond just the sense ... a kind of extra quality.*

McKellen added, "... something like music which would accompany wonderful lyrics."

And so it needs to be. So, why does this elude us?

My own disappointments echo those of Barton. My first degree was in English Literature with a focus on dramatic works, with a minor in Drama. While in high school I went to England for a summer program in English Drama and I saw lots of plays. But upon seeing Shakespeare's plays enacted, I have frequently felt shut out of much that goes on in them; and scene by scene I am left further and further behind. I exit the theater with disjointed impressions, gaps in my experience and a load of frustration. The actors deliver their lines with emotion and certainty; *they* know what they are saying and feeling; but much of it runs right past me. At last I begin to understand why: as Alan Howard pointed out, I cannot *comprehend* the lines because I have not been able to 'apprehend' them; therefore many of them remain merely audible phenomena for me.

And I also felt that something was missing when in classes on Chaucer and on Shakespeare's plays, the verse

was not brought to life. We noted where the five stresses might be and understood that this is what ‘pentameter’ meant; but we gained no skill in speaking the verse we studied. Those of us who were in the English and Drama departments met to read Shakespeare’s plays aloud before taking them up in class with a special Shakespeare scholar, a Fellow of the Ford Foundation. But in our reading we grappled with the blank verse the same as with the prose; it just looked different on the page. In these classes and in poetry classes the text was not read out loud much at all. The poetic meter and rhythms were things we knew about but did not experience.

Today, I believe that setting aside the poetic in Shakespeare’s lines of pentameter at the outset has a great deal to do with the sense of inadequacy that Barton felt in the resulting work. *But insight into this structure of pentameter can be gained. And once we have begun to experience the treasure in it, we will always want to make the poetic in the lines our starting point. And quite possibly we will then find it hard to bear doing otherwise!* To achieve this insight we can firstly ask: what is it that really informs the shaping of a work that is composed in pentameter? – in other words, composed in poetry rather than prose. And we can begin to answer this in significant measure.

In the introductions<sup>4</sup> that Rudolf Steiner gave for presentations of eurythmy, he explained the work of a real poet. The beginnings of a poem are found in the sensing of a “rhythmic motion,” an “inner flow,” which is only afterward “embodied in a literal content.”<sup>4a</sup> “The meter, rhythm and structure are really the things that matter.”<sup>4b</sup> It is the poet’s “shaping and forming” of this flow<sup>4c</sup> that leads to the creation of a sonnet, for instance. And although the blank verse in Shakespeare’s plays differs from the verse in the sonnets as regards form and rhyming, I believe that these lines of pentameter arise out of this same poetic impulse, which Steiner further described as the poet’s “pursuit” of “an elusive melody, or some harmonious musical element,” that is then embodied in the structures, sentence forms, meter, and “all the artistic elements of language;” endowed with “the melodic quality, the imaginative, pictorial element, ... the sculptural, colorful elements.”<sup>4d</sup> I now find all of this richly evident in all of Shakespeare’s pentameter.

*The task, then, is to unlock our perceptions of the pentameter of Shakespeare in order to find our way back, through his lines of verse, to the point where we may join him in his experience of the “inner flow” that was the source of his musical-poetic inspiration.* I believe I can serve as a worthy first guide in this. I regret that John Barton is no longer living and not able to share in the work directly now; for so far as I know, the resolution he sought has not really come about in the intervening years since his fine work with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

But may he listen in now and encourage us as we bring resolution to his disappointment, as we work to ‘apprehend’ with heightened awareness the elements that live and move in Shakespeare’s verse that go “beyond just the sense.” In both the speaker and hearer – and of course, in eurythmy, in the eurythmist and onlooker as well – we *can* foster this palpably-living quality that Alan Howard pointed to.

### **The Beautifully Rich and Lawful Structure Emerges**

Whenever I begin work on a passage of poetic verse or a formal poem, my first task is to discover how the lines want to move, how they walk, which syllables are the stresses and what the rhythms are. Since Shakespeare’s sonnets were my first substantial training ground for working with pentameter in recitation or eurythmy, my goal with any given sonnet was to determine the five stresses and feel the movement of each line and of the poem as a whole.

In my first attempts most lines unfolded similarly: the syllables ran along one after the other and a short silence, a **caesura**, concluded each line, during which I naturally took a breath. I also tried taking the ten syllables and five iambs as a single metrical measure without need of a caesura; so I spoke the lines as best I could in a 5/4 time, as in music, with one beat for each stress. This meant that I did not pause between the last iamb of one line and the first iamb of the next. But with or without the end-pause, for most of the lines the result was a disappointingly-unpoetic monotony. And not all lines cooperated. It was very disconcerting to find that some of them were utterly resistant to being read this way. I did not know why. *The presence of these rebels in Shakespeare’s verse seemed to suggest that something more than or other than this simple unfolding of syllables was at work in his poetic inspiration.* For instance, here are the opening lines of Sonnet 30. Unfolded in simple iambic rhythm (stresses in bold), the flow is awkward. Note that the third line has eleven syllables in it, not the usual ten. It is typical to claim poetic license from Shakespeare to delete or slur over a vowel or syllable, to **elide** it, to make an **elision**. So I suggest one and indicate it with a little arc,  $\frown$  :

When **to** the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I **summon up** remembrance of things past,  
I **sigh** the lack of many<sup>a</sup> thing I sought,  
And **with** old **woe** new **wail** my dear time’s waste

*Even amongst the lines here and elsewhere that did cooperate with or without a pause, I noticed that they seemed to hold together rather tepidly, half-heartedly. I felt that a kind of poetic ‘glue’ was missing, that really ought to be there to carry the lines, facilitate natural transitions between them, and confer significance upon the whole.*

I was already aware that an important form of glue in poetic meters is the pacing, the **beat**, just as in music. This is so crucial as a feature of some meters, that pauses can have a set place in their structure. **Hexameter** has six ('hexa') units, six syllabic stresses; but it paces in eight beats and has a caesura on two of the beats. These usually occur as a silent fourth and eighth beat, i.e., in the middle and at the end of each line. There is a strong sense of the two halves, which are each four beats long, with one breath for each half. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem, *Evangeline*, is an example of this meter. In it, the basic poetic unit is not the light-heavy iamb as in Shakespeare's pentameter, but the heavy-light-light unit, the **dactyl**. (The opposite of the dactyl is the **anapest**: light-light-heavy, as in the line, "'Twas the **night** before **Christmas**...'"<sup>5</sup>) Here are two lines from *Evangeline*. The mid-line caesura interrupts the third dactyl unit, but this unit is completed just before the fourth dactyl unit, so everything feels balanced. This meter is difficult to sustain in English, so you will notice that the dactyl rhythm is not kept strictly – trochee units often substitute for the dactyls:

**Where** is the **thatched**-roofed **village**, [caesura]  
           the **home** of **Acadian farmers**, [caesura]  
**Men** whose **lives** glided **on**, [caesura]  
           like **rivers** that **water** the **woodlands** [caesura]

The hexameter structure is the poetic glue that carries this epic poem along – just as it did in Homer's epic, *The Iliad*. When working with this meter in the English of Longfellow, one encounters a bit of a surprise: there is a strong sense of not only weight, but also *duration* at work in the dactylic units: the stressed syllables are actually both heavy *and sounded for longer*, and the unstresses are both light *and shorter, sounded more quickly*. In *The Iliad*, it is this aspect of duration that really informs the dactyl rhythm, not so much the weight aspect. This difference between the Greek and English can help us realize just how much our language bears the northern, Germanic dynamic of weight vs. lightness in its rhythms!

**Tetrameter**, which paces in four beats per line, often includes caesuras. In Emily Dickinson's poem in iambic, "Dawn," stresses fall on all four beats in the first and third lines, but on only three of the beats in lines two and four. Again, pacing is the glue in the flow of this poetic meter. To keep the iambic rhythm an elision is needed in line 2:

Not **knowing when** the **dawn** will **come**,  
 I open **evêry door**, [caesura]  
 Or **has** it **feathers like** a **bird**,  
 Or **billows like** a **shore**? [caesura]

So I wondered, what is pentameter's poetic glue? What is really going on in this meter? I puzzled over what to do about the awkward lines, the lack-luster character of the flow, and the erratic movement from line to line. I felt that

there must be a structure that I was missing, an *invisible* and *inaudible* structure that the written lines and audible words were not providing, a structure that if recognized would let these sonnets speak.

Knowing that a 5/4 time is unworkable, I paid closer attention to the lines, feeling for a musical pacing in them of some other kind, perhaps a 3/4 or 4/4 time. Since certain groups of lines in some of the sonnets or blank verse that I was working with suggested a slow 3/4 time, I tried dividing the five stresses of the lines in three for all of the lines: two stresses during beat 1, two stresses during beat 2, one stress and the caesura during beat 3. Taking Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 as an example, with the beats of 3/4 time numbered, it could begin:

Shall **I** **compare** thee **to** a **summer's day**?  
           1                          2                          3  
 Thou **art** more **lovely and** more **temperate**:  
           1                          2                          3

Many lines in the sonnet can seem to move fairly well this way, even rather musically at times. (The whole sonnet is on p. 6.) But the slow 3/4 pulse seems to instill a monotony that resembles the monotony of my first attempts with the lines. It is good that the pace is more relaxed; but now the movement feels unyielding. And when this pulse is applied to Sonnet 19, "Devouring time," it is positively obstructive. In the first line, "blunt" is surely the important word, not "thou;" but "blunt" cannot come to the fore. This cannot be what Shakespeare intended. And there is no way that line 3 can work in 3/4 time: "pluck" must be the first stress, but then the rest of the line falls apart and refuses scanning:

**Devouring time**, blunt **thou** the **lion's paws**,  
           1                          2                          3  
 And **make** the **earth devour** her **own sweet brood**;  
           1                          2                          3  
**Pluck** the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,  
  
 And **burn** the **long-liv'd phoenix**, in her **blood**;  
           1                          2                          3

Earlier on, I had applied a 5/4 time to Portia's speech, "The quality of mercy..." in *The Merchant of Venice* (Act IV:i, line 182ff) and it was simply wrong. Right away, it rushed line 1 directly into line 2. But now, trying it in a slow 3/4 pulse, I found that it is at first remarkably good; and the mood even gains a worthy, measured character. But the fit begins to break when the pulse ushers in the words, "It is twice blest," just a bit too soon and then presses on to line 4 somewhat rigidly. It felt rather unaccommodating in the following lines:

The **quality** of **mercy** is not **strained**;  
           1                          2                          3  
 It **droppeth** as the **gentle rain** from **heavên**  
           1                          2                          3

Upon the **place** beneath. It is **twice** blest:

1                      2                      3

It **blesseth** **him** that **gives** and **him** that **takes**.

1                      2                      3

I abandoned the three-beat pulse.

Then I tried a 4/4 time. With a sense of wonderment, I found that the five stresses will readily divide themselves between the two halves of the 4/4 time, so that one stress falls on each of the four beats, and the remaining stress falls somewhere between the beats; i.e., on one of the half-beats of the pulse. Hence there are varied divisions and arrangements of the stresses in relation to the two halves of the 4/4 time, depending upon where this in-between stress falls. *And this makes all the difference in the rhythmic character of each line!*

Here are the basic possibilities, and I will explain them. I place a vertical line at the start of the 4/4 measure and a broken vertical line at the half measure. These markers may at first seem unnecessary; but this is a **musical-metrical structure** and anything that will help us grasp it will be a boon when it comes to approaching the varied structuring of the stresses within the lines of pentameter. Where the five stresses land is indicated by the *beat numbers*, and when a stress lands between the beats, i.e., on the *half-beat*, this is indicated by + :

1	2	3	+	4		
1	2	3		4	+	
<hr/>						
1	+	2	3	4		
1	2	+	3	4		
<hr/>						
1	+	2	+	3	(4 is empty)	
1		(2 is empty)	3	+	4	+

The first thing to notice is that there are always more stresses in one half of the measure than in the other. The next thing to notice is that one or more of the stresses falls on a half-beat. And what does this mean? *It means that in every instance, a significant musical differentiation arises naturally, organically, within the 'measure' of the pentameter line: the stresses in one half come at a faster or slower rate than those in the other. And wherever a stress comes between the beats, those stresses will come the fastest, will crowd that part of the measure, the line. This means that syllables will lengthen and shorten, and create rhythmic complexity accordingly. And the weights of the five syllables will be differentiated, too, adding to this complexity.* This novel relationship between the rhythmic iambic units and the beat structure is why I do not use the usual term, **feet**, when referring to the iambic units in pentameter. *In pentameter, these units do not walk on the beats in a one-to-one correspondence the way the units of*

*other meters do, such as in tetrameter and hexameter (with its two caesuras).*

In the first pair possibilities within the **5-stress-4-beat pentameter structure** (as shown above), two stresses fall on the two beats of the first half, two stresses fall on the two beats of the second half, and the fifth stress falls *either* between beat 3 and beat 4, or after beat 4. Both present a 2 | 3 division of the five stresses, but with a different 'packing' of the second half. *And a poetical blessing arises accordingly; because when the fifth stress comes after beat 4, the movement of the line will be especially ready to carry on to the next line, and ready to do so harmoniously.*

In the second pair of possibilities for the pentameter structure, four stresses fall on the four beats, but the fifth stress falls *either* between beat 1 and beat 2, or between beat 2 and beat 3. Both arrangements present a 3 | 2 division of the five stresses; but one eagerly packs the beginning of the measure or line, and the other packs more of the middle.

And in the third pair of possibilities, stresses fall on only three of the beats and two stresses fall on the half-beats between them. One beat is left empty. This makes either a 4 | 1 division or a 1 | 4 division of the five stresses.

Here is Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 (with three elisions):

- Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
4 And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
8 By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:  
But thy eternal Summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,  
12 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Working with these lines, I find that many of them move in the 2 | 3 arrangement with the extra stress falling between beat 3 and beat 4. The last line is one of these:

So | **long** lives **this** and | **this** gives **life** to **thee**

1                      2                      3                      +                      4

To my feeling, the 3 | 2 arrangement appears only in line 8:

By | **chance** or **nature's** **changing** | **course** untrimm'd

1                      2                      +                      3                      4

And the sonnet presents many examples of the 4 | 1 arrangement. The first of them is line 4. Two stresses fall on a half-beat. The empty beat 4 is shown as 4 ◡ :

And | **Summer's** **lease** hath **all** too **short** a | **date**

1                      +                      2                      +                      3                      4 ◡

The 1 | 4 arrangement does not appear in Sonnet 18; but I'll be bringing in an example of it further along here.

Lest these structures appear to be seeming formulaic and apt to invite rigidity, please endure these preliminary stages of exploration; there will be plenty of examples ahead which demonstrate how natural and beautiful the pentameter structures are in practice.

Perhaps we could take a moment to reflect on the fact that the **ratio of 2-to-3** involves two numbers that are members of what is called the **Fibonacci sequence**, which corresponds to mathematical relationships that are present in nature and used in art: 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34.... Adding any two neighbor-pairs of numbers in the sequence gives the next higher number in the sequence. And when the larger of two neighbors is divided by the smaller, this yields a similar numerical result no matter which neighbor-pair is taken.

And the **ratio of 3-to-2** also involves members of the Fibonacci sequence. But this ratio belongs in particular to the musical relationship of the **perfect fifth** – as for example, between the pitch G and the D above it, or between E-flat and the B-flat above it. The mathematical frequency of vibrations per second of the higher tone in relation to the lower is 3-to-2: if the frequency of the lower tone were 100, that of the higher would be 150. And going the other way, if the higher were 300, the lower would be 200, and it would sound a perfect fifth lower.

And in music, the **ratio of 4-to-1** is the difference in the frequency of vibrations between a given pitch and a pitch that sounds an interval of two **octaves** below it – the higher tone is vibrating four times as fast as the lower tone. So here again, the relationship between the halves of the pentameter line is a harmonious one; and likewise for the **ratio of 1-to-4** – the difference between a lower pitch and a pitch two octaves above it.

These proportions of 2-to-3, 3-to-2, 4-to-1 and 1-to-4 are appearing in Shakespeare's pentameter. Was his highly-musical and poetically-sensitive wielding of these ratios within this meter incidental and unknowing? I think not.<sup>6</sup>

Many lines in the sonnets suggest at first the packed 4 | 1 arrangement of the stresses, with beat 4 empty. My first attempts at speaking the lines yielded packed lines (which is the way that blank verse and sonnet lines are often read). But in my work, not only did I find that this 4 | 1 arrangement of the 5-stress-4-beat structure can cause arbitrary rushing through the words of the line; I also began to feel the need for an artistic-musical justification for the caesura during beat 4. Yet I often felt that the relationships between the lines gave no justification for it: a different arrangement of the stresses was being asked for by the lines. Gradually, I learned that by delving into the nature of the poem – into the images, the way the speech sounds repeat, the rhythms, which parts of speech are

active, etc. – through these considerations I am always led to a distribution of the five stresses that greatly transcends this rote rendering of the lines. In some instances more than one arrangement might serve equally well, poetically, in which case it is our choice. *When the elements of the sonnet are explored and accounted for ever more deeply, and when the five stresses are allowed to arrange themselves newly in relation to the four beats, I find that what I call the **sounding-meaning** of the poem becomes transparent and resonant. And an ever-new diversity arises as a result of how the rhythms, the pulsing-structure within and between lines, and the speech sounds interact with each other: no monotony or rigidity here!*

### Blank Verse, Too! Plus Other Considerations

Delighted by this, turning to Shakespeare's blank verse I realized that it wants its five stresses likewise accounted for – not spoken as though it were just a more expressive form of prose, but instead with deft attention to this structure of stresses in each line. *These lines of pentameter then sound in refreshing contrast to the other texts in Shakespeare's plays – the portions of dialogue that are written in prose and the songs that are in other meters. It was becoming clear that the only difference between Shakespeare's blank verse and the pentameter in his sonnets is that his blank verse lacks rhyming and the sonnet form.*

I was discovering that carrying the five stresses on a pulse of four beats per line already feels natural in many blank verse lines. And finding this to be the case, *I dared to take the view that what feels so natural for many lines informs all of them that rest there in sets of ten syllables on the page. Though I have not yet gone so very far into the plays, the fourteen well-known passages of blank verse<sup>7</sup> that I have worked with in light of this have confirmed to me that the expression of the 5-stress-4-beat structure of the pentameter is transformative. A comprehensive poetic strength is freed and set into motion that is lamed and hidden otherwise.* And not only is each line a 5-stress-4-beat structure: it happens that each has the duration of an average human breath; and the pulse of four beats running through the line then mirrors the average 1-to-4 relationship between the breath and the heartbeat, one breath for every four heartbeats.<sup>8</sup> Because of how coherent my experiences have been with Shakespeare's verse, I cannot help but feel that he was thoroughly imbued with this 5-stress-4-beat-1-breath poetic structure, that this was simply the nature of his poetic inspiration. And so, I also want to feel imbued with this poetic structure in my expression of his work.

Nevertheless of the harmonious perfection of this structure, I have found (not surprisingly) that not all lines appear to be perfectly wrought. In his Sonnet 32, "If thou

survive my well-contented day,” Shakespeare himself seems to admit to this. And faced with irregularities, seeming flaws, it is tempting to go ahead and drop or add stresses or change the number of beats in the lines. But I feel and now believe that such alterations are unacceptable disturbances. When the pulse remains – and I find it must remain – the poetic rhythms of the words that *ride* on this pulse can change. And when this **upper rhythm** of the verse strays from iambic – as it often does in Shakespeare – it is a welcome variation for us as speakers and listeners, or in eurythmy, as beholders. *But the feature of the verse that allows this upper rhythm to vary as beautifully as it does is the fact that it has an intrinsic underlayment: the 5-stress-4-beat structure secures the verse so that everything else in it can move.*

In eurythmy we begin to learn about the ‘body’ of life forces that cause physical, material substances to assume and hold an organic form, whether it be that of a plant, animal or human being. This can be called the **etheric body**,<sup>9</sup> (‘Etheric’ does not refer to ether gas or to indefinite concepts bearing the same name.) The **formative** action of these life-bearing etheric forces is by nature rhythmic; and whatever is organic involves rhythms. Hence, that which is life in us is disturbed when whatever should be rhythmic is not; and the same applies to the phenomena of music and speech. If we drop stresses or beats, this disturbs the rhythmic in us. As a eurythmist, I have cultivated a sensitivity for rhythmic phenomena; and this has aided me in my work with Shakespeare’s verse. I am able to honor the musical-metrical requirements of its pentameter structure. This is satisfying in many ways – as I hope to show in the remainder of this article. But one of the chief satisfactions is that *when I honor this structure, it guards me against straying, against imposing my own meaning and interpretations on the verse.* Therefore, what lies dormant in the verse has a better chance to reveal itself and speak; and this is what I cherish most. For instance, it was difficult at first to fathom the movement of Portia’s speech, “The quality of mercy...;” but discovering how its five stresses move to the four pulses in each line has brought her words to life in my speaking. (Here’s a hint: why hurry “It droppeth as...?”) And likewise, I have discovered the sustained grace that is embodied in Keats’ poem, “To Autumn.” It is composed in three eleven-line stanzas of pentameter. Here is line 1:

Season of **mists** and | **mellow fruitfulness**

1            2            3            +            4

And the rhymed pentameter of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* moves beautifully this way. From the General Prologue, here are lines 9-11. The first ‘e’ in “foweles” is elided:

And **smale fowēles** | **maken melodye**, [fowl, birds]

1            2            3            +            4

That **slepen al** the **nyght** | with **open ye** [open eye]

1            2            +            3            4

(So **priketh hem** nature in **hir cor-|ages**) [their hearts]

1            +            2            +            3            4

It was Chaucer who first wrote in this five-stress meter (in rhymed couplets), which is much more varied and graceful than the 4-stress-4-beat verse of Old English, such as in *Beowulf*. Lines 102-3 introduce Grendel, the murderous spirit, stalker of the moor and wasteland. The repetition of **gr** and then **M** is strong. The repetition of a consonant in poetry is called **alliteration**, and this is the primary feature of Old English (Anglo-Saxon) verse, together with the four-beat structure of the lines, firmly divided into two halves:

Wæs sē **grimma gæst** | **Grendel hāten** [hāten – named]

1            2            3            4

**māre mearc-stapa**, sē the | **moras hēold**,

1            2            3            4

English has been influenced by many other languages – hence its large accumulation of words even before Shakespeare took hold of it. Prior to Chaucer, the French language had infused English, and this gave it the softer quality that Chaucer’s verse is endowed with. Working with Shakespeare’s sonnets has been very good preparation for entering into Chaucer’s verse and all verse written in pentameter.

### Necessities For Success in Exploring and Expressing the Complexities of the Pentameter Structure

When divining the movement of the pentameter structure and bringing it clearly to consciousness, there are two huge helps: **musical sensitivity and fluency** and **sensitivity to the soundscape of consonants and vowels, the architecture of words.**

It is essential to consider all possibilities when fathoming the lines; and for this I have found that everything that can be gained through playing instruments and singing is hugely helpful when working with pentameter; a poetic rendering of the lines requires this know-how. Beyond the elements of stress and unstress are the **long and short durations; dotted rhythms** (e.g., the jumpy rhythm in the “Ring around the Rosie” song); the **upbeat** (one or more short notes just before the beat that lead to it); the **hemiola** (three notes of equal value unfold over the same duration that two notes normally would), the **beat pattern** of heavier and lighter beats within each measure; and **syncopation** (a normally lighter value or beat is given the weight; rock music and rap have this – the regular **back-beat** on beat 2 and 4).

I have found ways to mark all of these above-mentioned rhythmic phenomena, to help myself in rehearsal as I discover them and settle on them. I shared some of the marks that I use in my Spring 2018 article, “Finding



Unison in the Vowels....” Here are the key marks and methods for rhythms, with examples:

- use superscript before the word:  $\sim$  for light,  $\times$  for heavy.
- place all rhythmic markings at the start of the word:  
 $\times$ puppy,  $\sim$ compare
- add a dash for longer syllabic values:  $\sim$ —abound
- add a dot to suggest the added length of a syllable that creates a skipping rhythm with a short syllable following, just as is done in musical notation:  $\times\sim$   
**acclimate**.

And the second help is: **sensitivity to the sound-scape** of the lines. *This aspect has contributed greatly to my success in working with this marvelous poetic-metrical structure.* The vowels and consonants that sound in Shakespeare’s lines are trusty guides to me as I sense which words receive the stress and where these stresses fall in relation to the four beats.

To demonstrate this engaging process, we can take up Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 in detail (see on p. 6; p. 10 will show the results). Here is how I went about working with some of the lines in this sonnet as *phenomena in sound* in relation to the 5-stress-4-beat structure: When determining whether “thou” or “art” bears the stress at the opening of line 2, of course I considered the fact that the sonnet is all about “thou.” But it is the stream of voiced **th** that will sound in the following lines that really pointed to “thou” as the stress in this line, which then tunes the ear to what is coming: thy, that, thou, thou, breathe, this, this, thee – and even the word ‘the.’ I only discovered the real resonance of the **voiced th** – which is made while vibrating the larynx – when I began to recite the **poetic miniature etude** that I had composed as a study for this sound. Here is that etude (‘thar’ is a dialectic variant of ‘there’):

**th** Though they are there for thee, go thou thusly  
 the way thereunto them thyself, thisaway; thence to  
 those that are therein; therefore, then ‘n there. Thar!

It soon becomes clear how very different voiced **th** is from the **unvoiced th**, as in ‘theater.’ This etude belongs to the whole set of etudes I composed for all of the vowels and consonants we speak in English (published under the title, *The Speech Sound Etudes*<sup>10</sup>). These etudes are both a joy to speak and a rich training for my voice as a speech artist.

In lines 4 and 5, **T** makes quite a presence and it guided me to the 2 | 3 arrangement of the five stresses that I indicate for line 5. Unlike a 4 | 1 arrangement that would pack the first half of the line with four stresses, having only two stresses there gives time for an emphatic delivery of the first **T** of the line – “ $\sim$ —Sometime  $\sim$ too  $\times$ hot....” followed by two repetitions of **T**. And since three stresses fill the end of this line there is no caesura, so line 6 opens immediately, as it wants to do! In line 7 – “And every fair...” – the 2 | 3 allows the **V** of “every” its

weight; and the double sounding of the word, “fair,” comes out boldly. And then there’s the outright alliterative repetition of **ch** in line 8, where it sounds four times in a row. When “By chance” stands alone on beat 1, and three stresses pack the middle of the line, the abruptness of the two images and the pointedness of the **ch** are all the sharper. With no pause after this line, lines 9 and 10 can unfurl an impulsive swell of feeling-conviction, expressed so well by the crowding of four stresses into the beginning of each of these two lines. In line 11, “Nor shall death brag...,” it feels clear that “shall” is the first of the five stresses, not “death,” as might be preferred. No problem: vocal pitch and attention to the sounds in the word, “death,” can point it up while preserving this word as unstressed. The second stress resting on “brag” feels right.

And revisiting line 1... Am I sure “I” should be the first stress? I can ask, what is the intent? Now that “thee” and “thou” are so prominent in the sonnet, do I want to juxtapose “I” and “thee” and therefore ask, shall I compare *thee*? Or is it just a to-do-or-not-to-do question: shall I *choose* to do this thing in regard to thee? Or is it, shall I be the one to do it, as opposed to somebody else? Or am I asking permission to proceed with what I do propose to do: *shall* I do it? Or shall it be to *a summer’s day* that I compare thee, or to something else? Our sense of the intent will guide our choice of “shall” or “I” as the first stress.

Since these patterns of the sounding of the consonants are so important, I either underline them or make them bold in my rehearsal text, as reminders. I draw lines from place to place between lines to call my awareness to recurring soundings. When a written letter can sound either voiced or unvoiced – such as in the case of ‘s’ when it sounds as **Z**, or when ‘g’ sounds as **J**, or ‘f’ sounds as **V** (as in ‘of’) – I often point up the voiced condition by putting a forward slash before and after the letter, italicizing it; e.g., /s/, /g/. When **th** is unvoiced, breathy, I might put straight slashes before and after it, e.g., |th|. Likewise I remind myself that **wh** is unvoiced, a breath sound: |wh|. And where **W** sounds at the opening of ‘one’, I place a superscript w just before the **o**. The plosive consonants, **B P D T G K**, might *yield* to other consonants rather than releasing like normal. I call them **stopped** when they do this; e.g., the **D** in ‘tidbit.’ **M** and **N** can be held and then simply stop. There are many nuances to consider, such as **lip**, **teeth**, or **palate** placements, or **B D** and **G** sounding as **P T** and **K**, respectively.

Why bother with all of this? I do it because I know that the hearer – and in eurythmy, the viewer – will be able to apprehend through my expression only that which I have grasped as real experience moment to moment. If the artistic facts are not secure in my experience, they have very little chance of reaching anyone in performance; so I need to work however I can to secure these experiences in myself.

Repetition of a vowel sound also plays its part. This is called **assonance**. The repetition of a vowel is part and parcel of rhyming, but it can also sound anywhere in lines and from line to line, living on in our experience as the lines unfold. Any repeated vowel gives its color to the lines; e.g., in line 5, *ai* (as in ‘eye’) sounds three times. Then when a different vowel sounds we are taken by it. In my text, I mark vowels that repeat by placing diacritic marks or the actual vowel sound above the written vowel, such as I have done here for the softer open vowel, *ə* or *ũ* (‘love,’ ‘bud’), which has a sweet, personal quality as compared to the open vowel, *ah*. My vowel markings are listed in the endnotes.<sup>11</sup>

Here below is Sonnet 18, now marked with many of these findings according to how I sense the 5-stress-4-beat structure so far. However, the rhymes are not marked unless their sounds are also echoed in the lines. Note that the *M* sounds often here, though unmarked. It is also too much to show my usual marking of the lengthening and shortening of words that gives expression to the **legato** (sustained) and **staccato** (detached) qualities. These create even more rhythmic drama in recitation, while not at all disturbing the underlying pulse. I often draw angled, horizontal and wavy lines above certain words to indicate my intonation, my variance of pitch – lower to higher or the reverse, staying even, or wobbling! This makes a big difference. And important words or ideas get circled.

### Sonnet 18

Shall <sup>1</sup> I cōm<sup>2</sup>pare <sup>3</sup> *thee* | xto <sup>4</sup> a <sup>+</sup> xSūmmer's x<sup>1</sup>dáy?  
<sup>1</sup> *Thōu* art <sup>2</sup> mōre <sup>3</sup> xlovely | xand <sup>4</sup> mōre xtemper<sup>+</sup>ate:  
 Rough xwinds do xshāke <sup>1</sup> *the* | x<sup>2</sup>darling x<sup>3</sup>buds <sup>+</sup> of xMáy,  
 4 And xSūmmer's xlease hath xall <sup>1</sup> too xshort a | x<sup>2</sup>date:  
<sup>3</sup> Some<sup>+</sup>x<sup>4</sup>time too xhot <sup>1</sup> *the* | x<sup>2</sup>eye of x<sup>3</sup>heaven x<sup>4</sup>shīnes,  
 And xōften xīs hīs xgold cōm<sup>+</sup>plexion | x<sup>3</sup>dīmm' d;  
 And xēvēry x<sup>1</sup>fáir from | x<sup>2</sup>fáir some<sup>+</sup>x<sup>3</sup>time <sup>4</sup> de<sup>+</sup>xclīnes,  
 8 Bÿ x<sup>1</sup>chance or x<sup>2</sup>náture's x<sup>3</sup>chānging | x<sup>4</sup>course un<sup>ch</sup>xtrimm' d:  
 But x<sup>1</sup>thÿ e<sup>+</sup>xternal x<sup>2</sup>Sūmmer xshall not | x<sup>3</sup>fáde  
 Nor xlose pōs<sup>+</sup>xsession xof that x<sup>2</sup>fáir <sup>+</sup> *thōu* | x<sup>3</sup>ōwēst;  
 Nor xshall Death xbrag *thōu* | x<sup>2</sup>wandērest x<sup>3</sup>in his x<sup>4</sup>shade,  
 12 When x<sup>1</sup>in e<sup>+</sup>xternal x<sup>2</sup>līnes to x<sup>3</sup>time <sup>+</sup> *thōu* | x<sup>4</sup>grōwēst:

So x<sup>1</sup>lōng as x<sup>2</sup>men can x<sup>3</sup>brēathe, or x<sup>4</sup>eyes can | x<sup>5</sup>sēe,  
 So x<sup>1</sup>lōng līves x<sup>2</sup>thīs, and | x<sup>3</sup>thīs gīves x<sup>4</sup>līfe to x<sup>5</sup>thēe.

### Really Living and Moving in Pentameter

After becoming familiar with the lines, speaking them, studying the sounds and tentatively identifying which syllables might be the five stresses in relation to the four beats, the best way to enter deeply into the movement of the 5-stress-4-beat structure, to fathom the pattern of stresses for sure, is to actually *walk* the lines while speaking them. But although it would seem expedient to simply take a step for each beat – right, left, right, left – it turns out that this makes a mess of the structure. Our walking needs help us track the *differentiated* metrical structure of the lines and assist our feeling-perceptions by really entering into it. Then when Shakespeare punctuates in the middle of a line, for instance in line 2 of Sonnet 116, “Let me not to the marriage” – and not infrequently in his blank verse – we will sense it distinctly and thus begin to fathom how to handle it, to bring what is happening into our expression. (Actually, both lines at the opening of Sonnet 116 are *very* irregular. However, I have found their characteristics to be lawful – they just have a unique relationship with the metrical structure.)

To avoid the above-mentioned mess (made by taking a step for every beat), I have developed a method of walking the four beats that keeps both the beats and the two halves of each line clear. The first half is felt with the body weight on the right side, the second half with the weight on the left:

Beat 1 – take a step with the right foot;

Beat 2 – while keeping the weight on the right foot, press the toes of the left foot lightly on the floor to mark beat 2 with a feeling of preparing for beat 3;

Beat 3 – take a step with the left foot;

Beat 4 – while keeping the weight on the left foot, press the toes of the right foot lightly on the floor to mark beat 4 with a feeling of anticipating the new beat 1.

This manner of marking the beats needs to be practiced well, so that the *differentiated weights* of the four beats in 4/4 time become second nature: the first beat is the initiation of a new set of four beats; the third beat is second heaviest and should be felt as secondary to the first; the second beat is even less heavy and leads to the third; and the fourth beat is the least heavy of the four, and it gives a sense of preparing for the new first beat, before which a new impulse is grasped and then acted on.

Once the weighting-and-pacing of the beats through walking them this way becomes engrained enough, begin to speak the lines while pacing this way. Begin to track where you are placing the stresses in the lines. I have

taken to using fingers of the right hand to track the stresses in the first half, and fingers of the left hand to track those in the second half. During this process it is good to emphasize each of the five stresses well, for it is very easy to fall into tracking syllables rather than stresses while pacing. When this happens in my pacing, it is because my differentiation between heavy syllables versus light syllables is not yet clear. And there is a significant reason for this fuzziness. As I mentioned in relation to the dactylic hexameter in Longfellow's *Evangeline*, English syllables are not only heavier and lighter; they also vary in duration, being longer and shorter. And long syllables can easily be mistaken for stressed syllables. Watch out! The focus here is on the weight: five weighted syllables per line, no matter how long or short they are when spoken in the pentameter.

When the pattern in each line is felt clearly and speaking the lines becomes fluent, you can work on reinforcing your awareness of the first stress of each line, marking it with a gesture, making it louder just as an exercise. You will then learn to keep conscious hold of the integrity of each line unit as you proceed line to line, no matter how you ultimately speak the lines, when you can allow yourself to deliver the lines more freely, naturally and with more nuance in the subdivisions of the beats and the durations and tempo. A wonderful dance of light-heavy along with the natural long-short of the syllables can begin to be expressed. Indeed, there are layers of rhythms working in combination to create this **rhythmic sound-structure**.

With all of the above awarenesses, practices and strategies, I have been able to master this pentameter structure more and more. Time after time, I find that the lines sound with a new potency once this structure is right, when it then feels natural as a flow of speech, even though it is artistic, heightened speech. *And time after time, meanings are revealed precisely as a result of my devotion to the 5-stress-4-beat poetic structure and to this process of discovery – meanings that I would not have found otherwise (many examples will come further on here). Each time this happens, I feel that I am gaining in my ability to find the way back, through the text, to something of the inspired poetic flow that was its source.*

When it comes to Shakespeare's blank verse, there is yet more to be considered in order that the musical-poetic nature of the pentameter structure in this unrhymed verse can also be perceived and consciously expressed. A number of obstacles need to be identified and cleared, to free the verse to move in this new way.

### **Why We Miss the Structure: Weight vs. Duration, Prepositions and Conjunctions, Punctuation, Run-ons, Pauses and Shared Lines**

I believe that the aspect of **weight vs. duration** in syllables – which can so easily throw us off the tracking of the stresses while walking the beats (as above) – is one of the major reasons why pieces that are written in pentameter can so easily lose the integrity of their five-stress structure when they are spoken. Without having knowledge of this underlying structure and the musical-metrical necessity of the five stresses in relation to a four-beat pulse, one might just as well dismiss stressed syllables that happen to be short in duration and add to the number of stresses by including syllables that happen to be long. In some of the examples presented by the RSC company that showed variations to the number of stresses in Shakespeare's blank verse lines, I believe that this is what was happening (see program 2 of 9, beginning at 7:08 min.). These examples are therefore very helpful to study.

With normal iambic scansion, line 6 of Act III:i in *Henry V* unfolds five stresses. King Henry is speaking:

Then **imitate** the **action** of the **tiger**.

But it was then read emphatically with only four stresses:

Then **imitate** the **action** of the **tiger**.

This was said to be one of the ways in which Shakespeare breaks the norm of five stresses in his verse. King Henry's first line in this speech was likewise said to break the norm. It was first scanned as five stresses, all recited equally heavy and without expression. And, as was mentioned, the line sounds utterly unnatural this way:

Once **more** unto the **breach**, dear **friends**, once **more**!

Then to show how Shakespeare is understood to have added stresses for greater effect, "once," "dear," and "once" were now given greater length and weight, and the stress on the second syllable of "unto" was dropped. With seven stresses in the line, it is certainly more dramatic:

**Once more** unto the **breach**, dear **friends**, **once more**!

But quite curiously, and quite unexpectedly, with attentive listening to the line while it is spoken this way, one can hear that the seven designated stresses *were not equally heavy*; and in fact, the five fundamental stresses were still exerting their formative power, it is just that their structural impulse was not being perceived and recognized. And included in the five was a subtle stress on the first syllable of the preposition, "**unto**." The voice of the actor *does* respond to – and the ear of the hearer *does* pick up – the subtle differentiation between the five actual stresses of the pentameter structure and the other syllables that are now being given more weight and length for effect.

*I would say that we seek differentiation and organization.* The ear tracks “un-” as one of the five stresses; it accepts two stresses in a row, but does not accept three; and so it calls forth “un-” as a stress. In relation to the 4/4 time, “un-” is a lesser member of the five and it falls naturally and becomingly between beats 1 and 2 – i.e., on a half-beat, as many prepositions do in pentameter. *This is how it works!* And with the preposition allowed to be sounded as this lesser stress, King Henry’s men will know exactly *where* they are to go. When the 5-stress-4-beat rhythmic structure is allowed full sway and expression, the line comes alive; and to my feeling *out of its own nature this line becomes a true battle cry.* What more could be needed? The repetitions of *W* in the next line, following on the *W* that is sounded twice with the word “once” in the first line – albeit not as stresses – makes it especially strong; and this makes it easy for “with” to take its role as the lesser stress. It must sound. (I feel that it could even fall on beat 3, rather than on the half-beat.) The assonance of *o* is also informing the sounding of these lines. (Note: some speakers might prefer the stress to rest on the second syllable of “unto,” instead of the first):

°Once mōre unto the breach, dear |friends, °once mōre!  
 1 + 2 3 4

Ōr clōse the wall up with our |English dead!  
 1 2 + 3 4

Shakespeare varied the ‘upper,’ syllabic rhythm of the iambic pentameter. He often departed from it by presenting two stressed syllables in a row, and frequently did so with two unstressed syllables in a row. But to my feeling, it goes very much against the grain to attempt to increase this poetic variation by construing three light syllables in a row. Inevitably this means making a syllable renounce its role as one of the five stressed syllables, as was done in King Henry’s line 1, when “unto the” became light-light-light, °°. And my feeling of resistance to this attempt to drop the preposition out of the stress structure is good guidance. I have found that lines always resolve into a five-stress pattern, provided that I apply myself with enough diligence to the task of finding out how each line moves. And as further confirmation of the rightness of my resolve, I am well-rewarded by what the pattern reveals to me concerning the real import of the line. In addition, in poetry there is no name for a set poetic unit that runs light-light-light-heavy, °°x, as “unto the breach” would run when scanned this way. (A unit involving three lights in fluid relation to a heavy only occurs in the **Paeon**, which is not much used.) Hence, it seems safe to assume two unstresses between stresses as the limit for Shakespeare – in which case it becomes clear that there are not three stresses in a row in l. 6, above, either; and so the preposition, “of,” is one of two lesser stresses in the line. And when I compare the line with and without it, I now

perceive that dropping the preposition actually weakens the line! When it takes the stress it gives power to the movement toward the word, “tiger.” Perfect!:

Then **imitate** the **action of** the |tiger.  
 1 + 2 + 3 4

So it is important to differentiate between syllabic weight and syllabic duration, lest we be pulled off track in divining the 5-stress-4-beat pentameter structure.

In contrast to weight, I find that duration serves greatly in bringing musicality into the lines by introducing variations in the lengths of the syllables. For instance, at the opening of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, I find it especially expressive when Duke Orsino dwells a bit on the first syllable of the word, “music,” as a long stress, while following it with “be,” “food” and “love” as short stresses:

If x—music xbe the |xfood of xlove, play xon.  
 1 (2) + 3 + 4

In this case nothing falls on beat 2. Lines 2, 4, 5 and 8 all open with a stress; and each resulting trochee – heavy-light, x°, the opposite of the iamb rhythm – deepens his ‘falling’ mood. His lines also have quite a number of words not only in the trochee rhythm, but in the amphimacer rhythm – heavy-light-heavy, x°x – and they feed his mood: “**music** ... **excess** ... **surfeiting** ... **appetite** ... **sicken** ... **violets** ... **stealing** ... **giving** odor.” Here are those lines, with the falling word-rhythms in italics. As a help with the structure, some markings are included. The word, “violets,” has three syllables and sounds a primary and secondary stress. The last line has eleven syllables, so I suggest an elision:

If x—music be the |food of love, play on,  
**Give** me *excess* of it, | that *surfeiting*,  
 The *appetite* may *sicken*, |and so die.  
**That** strain again. It |had a *dying* fall:  
 x—**O**, it came o’er my ear |like the °sweet sound  
 That x—breathes upon a |bank of *violets*,  
*Stealing* and *giving* odor. |Enough, no more.

A well-known example of this trochee mood is Edgar Allen Poe’s poem, “The Raven.” In the first line, two of the words are already in the down-falling character. I have linked the syllables of the first two trochees with hyphens:

**Once-up on-a midnight dreary**

In the Duke’s opening line, “If music be the food of love play on,” the conjunction “if” and the preposition “of” are unstresses. The pentameter structure of the line point to this. But whether or not these little parts of speech take a role as a stressed syllable, they are crucially-important. They indicate who is doing what to whom, where and why. As in King Henry’s line, “unto” tells his army where they – and we along with them – are going. In the art

of eurythmy, the **conjunctions and prepositions** are recognized as establishing *relationships*: between phrases, between nouns and between nouns and verbs. Hence, as a eurythmist I have had a head-start in working with these elements in lines of pentameter. The prepositions can indicate three kinds of relationship: position (**dativ**), e.g., ‘on,’ ‘in;’ movement (**accusativ**), e.g., ‘to,’ ‘toward;’ and possession (**genitiv**), e.g., ‘of.’ ‘from.’ Some languages (such as German) give visual and spoken expression to these three qualities. *In English, the qualities are not signaled by changes in word-forms, endings and so on; but they are there, just not audible or visible.* Because of my sense for these qualities, I am able to welcome both prepositions and conjunctions into the pentameter stress-structure; and it seems clear to me that Shakespeare welcomed them, too. Yet to my perception, in dramatic practice there seems to be an unspoken rule that whenever possible, one should pass through prepositional structures quickly and lightly – ‘of the,’ ‘with a,’ ‘to the.’ *And my conviction is that the habitual slighting of these structures of relationship is one of the reasons why the audience cannot easily apprehend what is presented in plays: the critical relational aspect has been muted.*

And not only are these small words able to take the stress in pentameter: I have found that another small word can, too: ‘the’ can bear the stress in a line, and can do so with ease! In Keats’ “To Autumn,” lines 2 and 3 present unusual structures. After I accepted “the” as the half-beat stress in line 2, the pulse-structure settled easily. The result? The voicing of the ‘f’ that sounds as *V* in “of” and the voiced *th* in “the” then augment the other resonators in the line which bespeak the season so well, **Z, M, N, ng, N**:

Season of mists and |mellow fruitfulness,  
1            2            3            +            4

Close ~bosom-friend o/f/ **the** ma-|turing sun,  
1            2            +            3            4

Conspi- ring with him ~how ~to |load and bless  
1            +            2            3            4

With fruit the vines that round the |thatch-eaves run  
1            2            +            3            4

The handling of **punctuation** that occurs within the lines unfolds naturally with this approach, and so does the handling of the transition from one line to the next and the important question of **run-ons** between lines. The rhythmic interval of one breath per line is consciously observed. And in fact, my experience in reciting poetry in general has been that the work benefits greatly when I breathe – however discretely – whenever possible between the end of one line and the beginning of another. Even short lines are their own complete poetic unit, as in Matthew Arnold’s poem, “Dover Beach” (which I discussed in my article, “Ethereic Bodies are Moving to the Speech Sound Etudes” – see the list at the end here). In

this poem, many of the opening lines are split by mid-line punctuation. In recitation it is then my consciousness that provides the bridge between the end of one line and the beginning of the next; *and this works beautifully.*

During my process of working out the stresses and pulse patterns in Shakespeare, I deliberately breathe between the lines so that each unit is clear to my feeling. At the same time, I am keenly aware that the movement within each line is tied to the lines before and after it; and these rhythmic relationships between the lines do a lot to govern which words are the stresses and how quickly or slowly they come in the pacing of the line. Once the lines and their structures become clear, the delicate matter of whether a line really must run-on to the next without breathing can be approached. I find that most line transitions for which Shakespeare gave no punctuation do not need to be impulsively run-on, because the situation and the character of the speaker do not demand this. Even in normal speech we can breathe mid-thought without breaking the thread. Likewise here. And when the 5-stress-4-beat structure is clear and right, without effort the preceding line will be *setting up* the necessary sense of inevitability in the speaking; and so the transition to the next line comes naturally and without undue pause or haste. In King Leontes’, “go play boy, play,” passage in Act I:ii (l. 185ff) in *The Winter’s Tale*, I find it stronger *not* to run the line that ends in the word, “clamor,” on to the next line. I let “clamor” be a strong, quick heavy-light rhythm, <sup>x</sup>, after the reverse rhythm in “contempt,” <sup>x</sup>:

Will hiss me to my grave. |<sup>x</sup>Contempt and <sup>x</sup>clamor  
1            +            2            3            4

Will be my knell. Go play, boy, |play. There have been,  
1            +            2            3            4

With the breath between lines, Leontes’ unfounded imaginings intensify. And when lines begin with “and,” “whiles,” “that,” “with,” as many do in his speech, there is little to compel running on. Lines can keep their metrical boundaries. And if it seems that a character is *breathing* abnormally – not just thinking abnormally – to my feeling the conscious acknowledgment of the line-end nevertheless needs to be there.

Further on in Leontes’ lines we find a place where it would seem that a full-tilt run-on must ensue; but not so fast! It is worth a careful exploration. Here are the two lines. When they are scanned as iambic stresses, one can feel how unacceptable it would be *not* to roll right on to the second line as though the line division was rather a mistake:

And **his** pond **fished** by **his** next **neighbor**, by  
Sir **Smile**, his **neighbor**. **Nay**, there’s **comfort in’t**

Here are the lines again, with the 5-stress-4-beat structure marked. With “by” dangling at the end of the line on the

half-beat of beat 4, and with “Sir” on the upbeat to beat 1 of the next line, *the pull toward a run-on is still very strong*:

And | **his** pond **fished** by | **his** next **neighbor**, **by**  
 1            2            3            4            +  
 Sir | **Smile**, his **neigh**- bor. | **Nay**, there’s **com**fort **in**’t  
 1            2            3            4            +

Yet, the lines feel awfully tame and predictable when spoken this way. They are not as I would anticipate on account of the unusual placement of the comma before the word, “by.”

This oddity would seem to be pointing to something other than a mere run-on. *But in order to fathom what it is that might be going on, it will be necessary to reckon clearly with the subdivisions of beat 4.* Both “by” and “Sir” are in fact subdivisions of beat 4; and as such we feel how they *lead to* beat 1, pulling us to the next line. But we need a way to grasp clearly what they are doing; and thankfully, the means for this is ready-at-hand in the practice of music. Musicians actively train themselves to feel the subdivisions of the beat; and we can, too. We can count the divisions out loud using syllables as follows. For this, “and” is the half-beat which I have already been marking + in the verse. It comes precisely in the middle of the beat. Laying out the counting in the manner used for notating music, in which the *space* between notes roughly reflects their *duration*, here are the divisions:

Beats divided into two parts of equal duration:

1    and    2    and    3    and    4    and

Beats divided into four parts of equal duration:

1 ee and uh 2 ee and uh 3 ee and uh 4 ee and uh

Beats divided into three parts of equal duration as triplets.

Note that “and” comes in advance of the exact middle:

1    and    uh    2    and    uh    3    and    uh    4    and    uh

With Leontes’ words now arranged to reflect their *durations*, and with the counting-syllables under them, here is how the two lines would go. Do try to work toward getting a feel for this counting. Superscript <sup>x</sup> marks the five stresses. The “and” of each half-beat stress is in bold:

And | <sup>x</sup>his pond <sup>x</sup>fished by | <sup>x</sup>his next <sup>x</sup>neighbor, <sup>x</sup>by  
 and    1    and    2    and    3    and    4 ee    and  
 Sir | <sup>x</sup>Smile, his <sup>x</sup>neigh- bor. | <sup>x</sup>Nay, there’s <sup>x</sup>com-  
 uh 1    and    2    and    3    and    4 ee    and

If seeing the line-end and line-beginning running together would help, here is the transition between these lines:

... neigh- bor, by / Sir | Smile, his    neigh- bor.  
 4 ee    and    uh 1    and    2    and

But as I said, spoken this way the lines feel awfully tame and regular.; and both have the same structure. The run-on makes Leontes’ naming of “Sir Smile, his neighbor” (the offender doing the ‘fishing’) feel utterly premeditated. Fortunately, there is another possibility for this line-end: *I find that I actually want to breathe quickly there at the end of the first line, after “by;” then I want to skip the impulse of beat 1 of the next line – do a quick caesura pause there – and come in instantly after it with the first word of that line, thus executing a syncopation on the halfbeats of beats 4 and 1!* I know that this is tricky, but the reward is tremendous. Here is this arrangement with the counting-syllables below:

And | <sup>x</sup>his pond <sup>x</sup>fished by | <sup>x</sup>his next <sup>x</sup>neighbor, <sup>x</sup>by  
 and    1    and    2    uh 3    and    4 ee    and  
 | Sir <sup>x</sup>Smile, his <sup>x</sup>neigh- bor. | <sup>x</sup>Nay, there’s <sup>x</sup>com-  
 (1) ee    and    uh 2    and    3    and    4 ee    and

Again, here are the line-end and line-beginning together, showing the syncopated transition between these lines:

... neighbor, by / | Sir Smile, his neigh- bor.  
 4 ee    and    (1) ee    and    uh 2    and

I feel relief. The syncopation conveys the distinct feeling that the image of “Sir Smile” comes to him in a flash between the lines – that he did not know what he would say until that flash. We know that his mind is in ‘modus-interruptus’ during this entire passage, with his thoughts breaking in upon him at both mid-line and line-end, as he tries unsuccessfully to normalize his fears (in light of other men’s wives and the striking of a “bawdy planet”). Rushing past these break-ins mars the character of his expression. And so beautifully, a sensitive cooperation with the pulse deters this. (We can find the syncopation at the line 2 to line 3 transition here, too – see the companion document.)

In the RSC’s discussions concerning **pauses**, punctuation is certainly regarded as an important shaping element; but it is not necessarily regarded as license to pause. Barton and others pointed out that pausing a lot can be a habit that comes with training in Method acting, a habit which actors have to unlearn for Shakespeare. Barton said that pauses, caesuras, must in some way be “earned” in the blank verse, though I am not yet sure what he meant by this. Even a short blank verse line (less than ten syllables) does not mandate a pause. However, since it can indicate something transpiring non-verbally, he said that a pause is a possibility either before or after the line. An example was Viola’s six-syllable response to the Duke in *Twelfth Night*, Act II:iv, line 27 (see “Rehearsing a Text,” 7 of 9, at 10 min.). Viola – in men’s clothing under the name “Cesario” – says to the Duke that the age of her love object is “about your years, my lord”:

D What kind of woman is 't?

V    Of | your complexion

1                          2                          +                          3                          4

D She is not worth thee then. | What years, i' faith?

1                          2                          +                          3                          4

V About your years, my lord.

1                          2                          +                          3 ~                          4 ~

D Too old by heaven. | Let still the woman take

In fact, at this point in their exchanges, the Duke could be ever-so-slightly aware of being puzzled by Viola's odd answers; but he is fixated on Olivia. Yet, nevertheless of his fixation, he might easily show a touch of befuddlement before responding to Viola with, "Too old, by heaven." Here, the RSC actors did not negotiate a pause before or after this short line. Two more short lines occur in the remainder of this dialogue, both of which could also be full of unspoken content if time for actual pauses were granted in accord with the missing syllables – as I believe was Shakespeare's inspiration for these lines.

I am intrigued by the short lines that appear in Shakespeare's dialogues; and before ever considering cancelling the beats that these lines leave empty, I have to try to divine what seems to be coming to pass between the characters. In *Measure for Measure*, there are quite a few short lines, for example in the encounters between Isabella and the Duke's deputy, Angelo (who in the Duke's absence has sentenced Isabella's brother to death and now propositions her on threat of torturing and executing her brother). Here and in other scenes, there is awkwardness between characters. I do not believe that run-ons are the answer; the musical structure suggests otherwise. If the pentameter is secure in its service as underlayment, then these short lines will catch us up short, and be 'cause for pause.' But maybe I should ask, is what arises between Angelo and Isabella *so* jarring that the underlayment *is* repeatedly broken and its meter-pulse overrun? If so, these crises in the structure would be all the more potent if the fundamental meter is clear, then clearly broken, then clearly restored; broken and restored.... Run-ons will not do.

Putting these particular scenes aside, the pentameter structure itself clearly gives rise to many pauses that are timely and poetically-legitimate. Like Leontes' beat 1 pause, they arise out of the text itself. Another example is this one from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I:iv (l. 53ff), Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech. Some lines can be difficult to sleuth out both within the line and in relation to the preceding and following lines. This line took some work. Mercutio has been giving a complete description of this fairy queen, Mab; and he now speaks of the "wagoner," the driver of her fairy coach. Here is that line in normal iambic scansion, in context with the line before and the line after. The stresses are in bold and the numbers show the beats. It scans as a 4 | 1 arrangement. I have included

the counting of the subdivisions of the beats, with the words spaced accordingly:

Her whip, of cricket's bone; | the lash, of film;

Her **wa-gon-er**, a **small grey-coat-ed** | **gnat**,

1                          +                          2                          +                          3                          4 ~

1 ee **and** uh 2 ee **and** uh 3                          4 ~

Not half so big as a | round little worm ...

This 4 | 1 arrangement, however, causes trouble because of the empty beat 4 and the gap and delay it creates in getting to the next line. This feels wrong. The next line needs to come promptly. How about a 2 | 3 arrangement? Beat 4 would then be filled:

Her <sup>x~</sup> **wa - gon-er**, a | **small grey-coated gnat**,

1                          2                          3                          +                          4

1                          2                          uh 3 ee **and** uh 4

Better, though "wagoner" had to lengthen in duration, as I have shown rhythmically, and I am not sure that feels right. Still, the line can move to the next line now. But something feels rushed and encumbered when I speak, "a small grey-coated gnat," just as it did before. I cannot shape the sounds of the three adjectives so well in quick succession like this; and the word "small" sits a bit uneasily on beat 3 – frankly, it does not feel "small" there. It should not have the beat 3 stress. Could "grey" have the beat 3 stress instead? – Shakespeare sometimes placed two stresses in a row. And could the word, "coated," be a pair of unstresses? Yes:

Her <sup>x~</sup> **wa - gon-er**, a **small** | **grey- coated gnat**,

1                          2                          +                          3                          4

1                          2                          **and** 3                          and uh 4

The second half of the line is much better! As a stress on the half-beat, "small" feels 'smaller' and now leads to "grey," just as it should rather than overshadowing it. But I am still unhappy with the first syllable of "wagoner;" it nearly takes up the whole first beat. This feels excessive and unnatural, and the word, "wagoner," ends up crowding the comma. Is there any way to let the word be shorter? Yes! The line could still be a 2 | 3 arrangement, but beat 2 could be empty:

Her **wagoner**, a **small** | **grey- coated gnat**,

1                          +                          (2)                          +                          3                          4

1 ee **and**                          2 ee **and**                          3                          and uh 4

*Voilà! The comma comes to life! The proper, needed pause emerges.* And to express it, the break made with the voice need not be more than a delicate silence, if at all. I am satisfied. I allow "wagoner" a short dotted rhythm, and I now see the picture of the driver alighting here and there with the Queen in the wagon. The line melds with the lines before and after, and the rhythmic variation is very engaging. Here are all three lines with the beats numbered and musical counting given:

Her whip, of cricket's bone; | the lash, of film;  
 1 2 + 3 4  
 uh 1 uh 2 ee and uh 3 uh 4

Her <sup>x</sup>wagoner, a small | grey-<sup>~</sup>coated gnat,  
 1 + (2) + 3 4  
 uh 1 ee and (2) ee and 3 and uh 4

Not half so big <sup>˘</sup>as <sup>˘</sup>a | round little worm ...  
 1 2 3 + 4  
 and 1 uh 2 and uh 3 and uh 4

As in music, when the rhythms are learned and the delivery is fluent, it sings! The whole of Mercutio's speech is full of rhythmic complexity – it matches his mind! All kinds of inventions. For three lines in a row (lines 72-74), he rearranges the words, “dream” and “straight,” and the arrangement of the stresses within the line, too, so that these words dance around for the ear. This is Mercutio – never dull in his play of images and words. The nature of the text tells us his character.

The rhythmic texture can be so beautiful when it is worked with together with the sounds. In *Hamlet*, Act IV:vii (l. 162ff), Queen Gertrude comes to report the drowning of her would-be daughter-in-law. The weight of the double *W* in “one woe” initiates such a heavy pace that the quickness of “so fast they follow” is like a painful exhale of the breath. The empty beat 2 allows her declaration of Ophelia's death to be set forth cleanly. Laertes' utterance of astonishment is but three syllables long, and a stunned silence fills the rest of his line. With the heaviness of the *W*, the *a*, *o*, and voiced *th*, Gertrude begins to describe the newest tragedy. Sensitivity and readiness to follow pulse and the sounds, to shape the rhythms, makes all the difference. I have placed some of the sounds in bold. The repetition of “drowned,” is of course hugely-speaking; and it repeats three more times after her lament. The soft, voiced *N* of “in” as a stress in the last line here keeps the mood. Its *N* does not release to a vowel as it does in the word “another.” I call voiced consonants that do not release, **resonators**. The sounds, *W*, *th*, ‘s’ sounding as *Z*, *V*, and *M* in these lines are also resonators:

Q <sup>ˆ</sup>One <sup>ˆ</sup>wōe <sup>ˆ</sup>dōth tread up | on <sup>ˆ</sup>another's hēel  
 1 2 3 + 4

Sō fast **th**ey follōw. Yōur sister's | **drown**ed Láiértēs.  
 1 + (2) + 3 4  
 1 ee and uh (2) ee and uh 3 uh 4 ee

L **Drown**ed! Ō, whérē?  
 1 2 3 4

Q **Th**ere is a willōw, | grōws askant **th**e brook,  
 1 2 3 + 4

**Th**at shōws his hōar lēaves | **in th**e glassy strēam.  
 1 2 3 + 4

Just as musicians become masterful in bringing musical phrases alive without feeling encumbered by the beats

and divisions, so too have I been able to bring lines alive with this structure. I believe that this has everything to do with the fact that *the 5-stress-4-beat underlayment gives the means to this freedom in the expression by providing a vessel for it*. And when there is dialogue between characters in which **shared lines** appear between them, this poetic structure holds the exchanges together, no matter that caesuras may interrupt.

*One of the things that troubled John Barton was how the lines lose something when they are acted. Indeed, the lines on the page have their individuality and their discrete poetic-musical-metrical boundaries; but routinely when they are acted, these boundaries and the character of the lines as grasped on the page are not in evidence. They have fallen away or been cast off, being taken as a means to the speaking and acting, but not really essential to the verse itself. But the magic of the poetic structure and its nature can be divined and brought to life off the page. Success is assured!*

I am very moved by how powerfully-speaking these metrical boundaries can be, for instance, between Paulina and King Leontes in Act II:iii (l. 57ff) of *The Winter's Tale*. He wants nothing to do with his queen, Hermione, nor with Paulina, who has beseeched him to hear her as the loyal servant she is. (Note: the words overlap here only to accommodate the column width. There are no overlaps in the speaking – do keep the pulse). Paulina sums it up with an utterly direct, six-syllable, 5-stress-4-beat line:

P Than <sup>x</sup>such as <sup>x</sup>must seem <sup>x</sup>yours. I | <sup>x</sup>say I <sup>x</sup>come  
 1 + 2 3 4

From <sup>x</sup>your good <sup>x</sup>queen.  
 1 2

L Good | <sup>x</sup>queen?  
 3

P Good <sup>x</sup>queen my <sup>x</sup>lord  
 4 +

<sup>x</sup>Good <sup>x</sup>queen. I <sup>x</sup>say | <sup>x</sup>good <sup>x</sup>queen,  
 1 2 + 3 + 4

There would be no punch to this exchange between Paulina and King Leontes if there were no underlying pulse beating through the lines and binding them together. As in music, this pulse structure also permits further development of the ‘good queen’ motif when a few lines later, Paulina continues the theme. And the quality of the lines that Shakespeare wrote for her reveal the solidity of her character to us, making guesswork about who she is and how to deliver her lines unnecessary:

P But first I'll do my errand. | The <sup>˘</sup>good <sup>x</sup>queen,  
 1 + 2 (3) + 4

For <sup>x</sup>she is <sup>x</sup>good, hath | brought you forth a daughter  
 1 2 3 + 4



Once such structuring of lines is experienced, as here between Paulina and King Leontes, then one can understand that lines that are split between characters are livingly held together by the pulse. Then there is much more certainty concerning how they basically mean to speak. With the shared line, Shakespeare clearly excluded pauses from the verse in the exchange between Paulina and the King here, just as he built pauses into the verse by presenting shortened lines between Viola and the Duke (p. 14 above).

But how Paulina's six-syllable line settled surprised me. In this case, five of the six syllables are the five stresses of the pentameter structure! The pulse is complete. In this line, it seems to me that the reason her words are so very strong is because the power of what would normally be *audible* as the syllables between the stresses is there palpably as *unsounded* presences. This might be a key to how some of the other short lines in the plays are asking to be spoken.

### Confirmation: Signs of the Structure Breaking Through

As confirmation of this marvelous pulse structure, one can perceive it emerging when listening certain of the passages and sonnets that were presented in the nine programs filmed by the RSC. This poetic, 5-stress-4-beat pulse was not discussed; but in these particular passages or sonnets the structure proved to be evident, accessible and ready to inform the tongue and breath. Unfortunately, it went unrecognized and was obscured at most other times. My findings are that whether Shakespeare's verse is rhymed or not, in sonnet form or not, it always presents this 5-stress-4-beat structure. Not only the sonnets, but (for instance) the whole of Act II:iii of *Romeo and Juliet* is rhymed blank verse in couplets, spoken by both Friar Lawrence and Romeo! Seeing this, I have to ask, why should these lines be handled any differently from those in the sonnets? They only lack the fourteen-line limit and rhyme pattern of the sonnet form. I can find no reason at all to treat any of the verse that appears in Shakespeare's plays as merely a heightened form of prose. And if the lines are regularly run-on like prose would be, how will the audience ever receive the complete wealth of sounding in a scene such as this one between the Friar and Romeo? I am not suggesting that the rhymes be belabored, only that they be granted their place in the poetic sounding rather than run over by a prose treatment. Devotion to the approach that I am presenting assures that they will not be neglected.

Upon knowing the underlying structure of pentameter, there is now every reason to go ahead and handle blank verse as the poetic form that it is! Why should the audience not know that they are, after all, hearing *verse*?

Actors are already charged with the task of transcending the verse structure of ten syllables per line, to bring it toward the domain of natural speech. They will simply do the same with the poetic structure of stresses, beats and subdivisions of the beat discussed here – to endow it with that same balance between heightened and natural speech that they always seek in their presentation of the blank verse.

Some of the pieces that the RSC actors presented are very good to work with at the outset because the structure is easier to detect and clarify in them. One of these is the choric prologue to Act IV in *Henry V*, “Now entertain conjecture of a time” (see 3 of 9, at 7:30 min.). The single speaker is setting the scene at Agincourt in northern France, where the English army is greatly-outnumbered by the French army. The dawn is approaching, and with it, the battle. Actor David Suchet came very close to completely capturing and sustaining the pulse within each line, and in the movement line to line. The sense of being drawn in is very fine! But then, after Barton asked him to bring out the change of mood – of the neighing steeds and the armorers hammering – he dropped the pulse and began to skip ahead at the line-ends. Despite the richness of his awareness, which is so evident here, it seems that the blank verse pulse-structure which he had at first given expression to quite effectively had not really entered his consciousness as a fundamental feature of the verse, so he let go of it. And in his other presentations, he did not capture and sustain the structure as he had at first done here.

So, is it necessary to rush line-endings in order to heighten drama? I say, no. A lot else can be done. At the point where action enters this choric prologue, there are other elements in the text that can be laid hold of. For instance, the **sound architectures** – the alliterations, assonance and word-shapes – can be sculpted and well-defined. And integral to these lines are some very compelling composite rhythms: first is the driving rhythm of heavy-light-light-heavy,  $x^{\sim}x$ , which opens four lines in a row here. In addition to this, at the end of the fourth line of the set, the rhythm light-heavy-light-heavy,  $x^{\sim}x$ , sounds – “and from the tents” – and it repeats twice in the next line. And in the line following, heavy-light-heavy-light,  $x^{\sim}x^{\sim}$ , comes twice. There is a lot here! In my text I draw arched lines over rhythmic groups of words such as these, as for phrasing in music; but here I am using straight lines above the groups. In the last set, the **B**, “busy,” and the **cl**, “closing,” can be sounded strongly, giving definition to each phrase of  $x^{\sim}x^{\sim}$  :

$\overset{\sim}{x}$ Fire  $\sim$ answers  $\overset{\sim}{x}$ fire, and | through their pály flámes  
1 2 3 + 4

$\overset{\sim}{x}$ Each  $\sim$ battle  $\overset{\sim}{x}$ sees **thē** |  $\overset{\sim}{o}$ ther's  $\overset{\sim}{u}$ umbered fáce. [each army]  
1 2 3 + 4

<sup>1</sup>Stēēd ~threatens <sup>2</sup>stēēd, in | <sup>3</sup>hīgh and <sup>+</sup>boastful <sup>4</sup>nēighs,  
<sup>1</sup>Pīercing ~the <sup>2</sup>nīght's dull | <sup>3</sup>ēār; ~and <sup>+</sup>frōm ~the <sup>4</sup>tents  
<sup>1</sup>Thē <sup>+</sup>x<sup>(2)</sup>armorērs, <sup>3</sup>ac| <sup>+</sup>complīshīng the <sup>4</sup>knīghts,  
<sup>1</sup>With <sup>+</sup>x<sup>1</sup>būsy <sup>+</sup>x<sup>2</sup>hammērs | <sup>2</sup>x<sup>+</sup>clōsīng <sup>+</sup>x<sup>3</sup>rīvets <sup>4</sup>up,  
<sup>1</sup>Gīve <sup>2</sup>drēadful <sup>3</sup>nōte <sup>+</sup>ō/f/ | <sup>4</sup>prēparatiōn.

In the last line here, the buildup of sensory description suddenly gives way to the element of emotion; and I find this shift especially striking after the empty beat 4 of the line before it. With all this wealth to be found right in the text, the speaker has everything needful for its dramatic expression. The fundamental poetic pulse-structure can be sustained unimpaired all the while. And I believe that when it is allowed to function unimpaired, the whole is stronger and even more dynamic. This does not confer stiffness upon the lines. *The pulse can give, can stretch, shrink, relax or quicken, just as it can in music – but it must not break.*

The remainder of this prologue might seem ungainly at first (it did to me); but be assured that the resonant 5-stress-4-beat structure is present throughout the lines as they move through several more shifts in mood. The speech sounds help a great deal. The description of King Henry, “Harry,” making his pre-dawn rounds, touches deeply. *Finding our way back through Shakespeare’s text, seeking to unite with his inspired flow, is not always so easy. Allowing familiarity and the interval of sleep each night to work upon the lines within us also opens the way.* It can take days for the rhythmic shapes to clarify and settle. There is no need to force the lines to do anything.

The musical elasticity in the quality of the poetic pulse was very vivid in actor Sinéad Cusack’s rendering of a passage in blank verse in *Julius Caesar*, Act II:ii (l. 8ff). It was very compelling, wonderfully done (3 of 9, at 37 min.). She nearly laid secure hold of the pulse in many of the lines. If one listens with feeling for the pulse more distinctly, one can perceive how she allowed the pulse to stretch and shrink here and there without breaking it until the run-on she made in the last two lines. Cusack was Caesar’s wife, Calphurnia, expressing her fears about this day upon which he is in fact murdered. Since how she did this run-on was so musically complex, below are the last three lines as she did them (as I perceived her to do them, of course!). She spoke the first of these three lines fairly much in the pulse. Then in the other two, she emphasized “things,” “use,” and “fear,” creating a beautiful every-other-beat stress-structure by dropping the number of

stresses to four, adding a fifth beat and joining the two lines as one. Caesar is to pick up the remainder of her last line (to begin to tell her that the gods’ purposes cannot be avoided); but now the pulse has been disrupted, and it is not clear how many beats the line should have – five or four?:

And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.

1 2 3 + 4

O Caesar, these things are beyond all use,

1 (2) 3 4 5 [extra beat]

And I do fear them. [Caesar: What can be avoided...]

1 2

But does the pentameter structure suggest an equally or even more compelling delivery? I say, yes! Beginning by scanning the second line here in normal iambic it runs:

O Caesar, **these things are beyond all use**

Can the line unfold in the pulse structure? Yes! It did not seem likely at first, but here it is with numbering for the pentameter; and as a help, the rhythmic divisions of the beats are provided below them:

O <sup>1</sup>Cae - <sup>2</sup>sar, <sup>+</sup><sup>3</sup>these things <sup>4</sup>are be-|<sup>+</sup><sup>3</sup>yond all <sup>4</sup>use

and 1 and 2 ee **and** uh 3 and 4

The most striking aspect is how, after the comma, the three syllables, “things are be-,” absolutely take hold of the subdivisions and drive the line from beat 2 to beat 3, from “these” to “-yond.” Is there anything in the text that would support this rendering? Yes! The sounds point to it and support it. In the line before, *i* (ee) sounds three times: “shriek ... squeal ... streets.” The *i* sounds strongly twice more with “Caesar” and “these;” and then as a climax of this sound it repeats emphatically with “fear.” The *i* in “things” (allowed to tend toward *i*) and the unstressed *i* in “beyond” can back up this striking **sound-mood**, so full of fear. *Y* repeats in “beyond” and “use” (the *Y* shown by superscript y), giving its energy to it, too:

And ghosts did shriek and | squeal about the streets.

1 2 3 + 4

O <sup>1</sup>Caesar, <sup>2</sup>**thēse** <sup>+</sup><sup>3</sup>things <sup>4</sup>are bē-|<sup>+</sup><sup>3</sup>yond all <sup>4</sup>yūse,

1 2 + 3 4

And I do <sup>1</sup>fēar <sup>2</sup>**thē**m.

1 2

*The pulse structure has opened a door into the text through which we have laid hold of what is needed in order to find and convey the mood.* The speech sounds have pointed to “these” as the word that must carry the stress, not “things.” And indeed, in the context it is precisely *these* things which Calphurnia has dreamed of that are absolutely *beyond* the usual, that compel her to speak; for as she had just said, she is not one to heed portents. This march of the subdivisions of the beat that

lead so dramatically to the word “beyond” then conveys just how very beyond they are in her experience. We know her character by her verse: she is not a dreamer.

By adhering to the pulse and allowing ourselves to be guided to the structure through elements in the text itself, we are also led to a sound understanding of the text. *And there is really no mystery in this when we consider that the structure and the text emerged out of one and the same poetic inspiration in the moment Shakespeare wrote these lines.* I hope that you have begun to feel roused and, like me, excited by what is to be found in this poetic structure!

Another helpful example from the RSC presentations is Sonnet 29, “When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes.” Actor Sheila Hancock recited the sonnet in a very lovely manner in program 2 of 9 (at 21:26 min.). In many lines she came near to the pulse I have been discussing here, and she gave a wonderful beat 4 pause at the end of line 8. But like Suchet, Hancock did not seem to be entirely conscious of the structure; for when she came to line 11, she gave one beat each to the five stresses in it, making it a five-beat line, and did a run-on from line 11 directly into line 12 which did not settle well: “Like to the lark at break of day arising / From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven’s gate....” After expanding line 13 to six stresses and six beats, she came near again to the pulse structure in line 14 and re-settled into a 4 | 1 arrangement (empty beat 4).

The crux of the difficulties arose with line 11. Hancock herself was perceptive regarding this line and not entirely satisfied with the way the line-end went; and she sought Barton’s advice on this transition, “where I don’t quite know what you should do” – should you run on or not? In answer, Barton only said that in such situations we decide which we feel is better, and do it whichever way “helps” us most.

However, maybe now we can begin to see that we do not need to feel at all stuck in a quandary at junctures like this one at the end of line 11. The answer lies in the 5-stress-4-beat structure. It is the primary source of help in these cases. I believe that when Hancock altered the pulse of her poetic flow to unfold a *five*-beat structure rather than a four-beat structure for line 11, of course it threw her off. And regarding the run-on she made into line 12, this line would actually come much more gracefully if the pulse is kept. Although Barton always stressed that pauses have to be somehow ‘earned,’ I would say that *for the sake of the poetic flow, run-ons are what have to be earned; they have to be justified out of the text.* In this specific case, while there is no punctuation at the end of line 11, there is still no justification for rushing a run-on there when line 12 has a prepositional opening, “From sullen earth....” Line 11 can easily unfold in such a way that line 12 follows gently, without haste, with or without a breath at the end of line 11. Here again, the resonator

sounds carry the line. (The first line is eleven syllables long, so an elision is suggested):

Like to <sup>1</sup>the lark at | <sup>2</sup>break o/f/ <sup>3</sup>day arising <sup>4</sup>

From <sup>1</sup>x<sup>2</sup>sullen earth, sings | <sup>3</sup>hymns at heaven’s gate <sup>4</sup>

And yet another good example to study, to observe how the pulse structure would really come through if we would sense and acknowledge it, and work with it rather than against it, is Sonnet 19, “Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion’s paw” (see 9 of 9, at 23:20 min.). At times actor Peggy Ashcroft was almost one with the poetic flow; but then she fell out of it, quickened the pace to the next line, or spoke the syllables as one would speak prose. She almost achieved union with the structure in the last seven lines, but the fullness of it that can come with knowing participation in it did not seem to be there. There was almost a sense in her delivery (and she is not alone in this) that the emergence of a poetic-musical pulse is something that needs to be resisted rather than worked with.

Looking beyond Shakespeare’s verse, now that I am well-acquainted with the pentameter pulse, I realize how much more ‘body’ and poetic resonance Chaucer’s verse has in it, far beyond prose story-telling in an intriguing earlier form of our language. It just needs knowing attention to the musical-poetic 5-stress-4-beat structure in order for this richness to come forth. In recitations the opening of the “General Prologue” to his book, *The Canterbury Tales*, one can often hear the structure and pulse emerging; but again, it is not sustained. J. B. Bessinger, Jr., offered a fine and even enthusiastic delivery of the opening of the Prologue – see the YouTube video, “Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales Prologue in Middle English (Not Complete);” it includes a visual of the text.<sup>12</sup> If one listens for the four-beat pulse, it is almost there at times.

But sometimes the pulse in Chaucer’s pentameter is even less present and only the iambic patter of the syllables is really clear. An example is Colin Gibbins’ recitation of the Prologue in the YouTube video, “General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales (Premiere).”<sup>13</sup> His gestures are lively and his skill is absolutely exceptional. He knows his meaning well. Yet the flow of syllables is very fast, and the running of the lines is nearly breathless. Unfortunately, this approach is exactly what makes it impossible for me as an audience member to grasp what is being said. And it is all the more impossible when the text is not modern English!

I recall again, that in my first efforts at working with Shakespeare’s sonnets I sensed that an *inaudible* glue must be holding the audible ingredients of the pentameter verse together, a glue that I was not perceiving, that I needed to discover. What I realize now after these many explorations, is that without that *poetic* glue that belongs

to the verse itself, one of the few things with which we can make the syllables and words hold together – aside from their conceptual content – is audible proximity. I believe that this is part of what fuels the practice of running quickly on from line to line and past punctuation within the lines, too.

*But the pentameter structure really possesses the necessary inaudible glue; and my consciousness of the workings of this poetic form is what holds the verse together and allows the words to flow from line to line in the right way, without regard to sounded proximity. This makes all the difference. Within the inspired nature of the pentameter itself are the keys to the rhythmic, breathing and apprehensible shaping of the text.* However, I have noticed that even with awareness of this formative force within the verse, if conscious devotion to the *diversity* of possibilities in the structure is lacking, the most ready-to-the-voice reading of many of the lines and their five stresses will be the 4 | 1 arrangement. Hence, this 4 | 1 structure is likely to predominate: the five stresses pour out one after the other with the unstressed syllables between them, with no greater rhythmic form than this. My experience is that this arrangement breeds the haste and perpetual motion of the syllables that is so poetically unseemly (and boring). It is crucial that all of the possibilities in pentameter be explored in speaking; and this 4 | 1 arrangement should be adopted only after being poetically-proven as the most fitting for a given line!

The tendency toward a-rhythmical or rhythm-resistant speaking of poetic texts is not limited to works written in pentameter. For example, the medieval Christmas plays that have come down to us – such as *The Paradise Play*, *The Shepherd's Play* and *The Kings Play* from Oberufer in Austria<sup>14</sup> – are written in rhymed tetrameter, four stresses and four beats per line, as are other plays of that time. But in performances, the players may not have known to identify the words that carry the four stresses, and so the structure becomes erratic. At times the lines are poetic and invite entering into the pulse; but then the lines fall out of it. Some of the text is in trimeter, three stresses and three beats per line, as are some of the songs (in 3/4 time); and the pulse needs to be clear in these lines, too. But the tetrameter can pose a special poetic challenge. The structured regularity of its pulse can induce a somewhat stiff quality or even begin to feel more like the heavy, alliterative four-pulse verse of Old English. In tetrameter, finding the rhythms and **sound-architectures** that ride on the pulse is what will relieve the sense (to modern ears at least) of too much form and lift the lines into the musical. All of the other elements as discussed here can come in to support this, too: intonation, staccato and legato, dotted rhythms, tempo, and so on, as with pentameter.

### Does Anything Need to Hold Us Back? No!

Seeing how common these difficulties in speaking verse are, I am spurred to wonder whether our culture has become rather hardened against rhythm and musicality. If so, certainly the remedy is to introduce rhythm, pulse and musicality back into the work as much as possible! The meanings of the words should not have a separate existence from from the sounding of the words, as they often do in our time. And indeed in Shakespeare's writing of verse, the meanings did not stand alone: they were borne – as Rudolf Steiner described in reference to the ideal for human speech – “on the wings of the words”<sup>15</sup> The words are not just dried-out “husks” in relation to the concepts. The origin of the soundings and rhythms of many of our words was and is integral to their conceptual meaning; we have simply lost perception and feeling for this. And the soundings and rhythms are actually integral to grasping the meaning they convey in the highest sense; and so this sense of “unison” between sounding and meaning in the spoken word needs to be restored. This is something which the art of eurythmy in particular has the power to work toward by merit of its attention to the sounds of speech as *gesture*.

The examples included in this exploration of pentameter show that there are signs of the poetic breaking through in the speaking of lines of verse in modern times. The present need is to grasp with conscious, knowing participation the laws that are in fact being sensitively perceived but naively followed. Doing so would raise the artistic work to the level of ‘critical’ art as compared to ‘naive’ art. Rudolf Steiner is one who discussed the difference between these levels and pointed to the ideal of working consciously with the laws that inform the various realms of artistic work.<sup>16</sup> In my article, “Eurythmy as a Critical Art: What This Means For Its Future” (EANA, Autumn 2016), I discussed how important the undertaking of this shift is for the art of eurythmy.

With pentameter (and other meters), once the ear and the voice become attuned to its musical sound-architecture, it gets easier and easier to discover how the lines want to be rhythmically arranged as lawful spoken phenomena. And although it might at first seem a challenge to carry off this truly heightened speech as something that is nevertheless natural speech, it can be done. I have been told that I achieve this in my recitation of the sonnets. In relation to this performance goal, one of the RSC actors remarked on the fine sensibility they acquire for the ten-syllable line: if they forget lines while on stage they ad lib in lines of ten syllables. I am certain that the same can happen here with this poetic structure of stresses and beats.

It could seem that dwelling within this 5-stress-4-beat pentameter structure is limiting for the actor or speech

artist. Yet, to my experience (and as I have been suggesting along the way here), with the lawfulness of the five stresses and the 4/4 time that pulses as the poetic-metrical underlayment, one's work can blossom *all the more* through the other elements of the text – its rhythmic sound-scapes, the shaping of the lines and the movement line-to-line, the forming of the larger sound-images to convey ideas with transparency, and of course, gesture and movement. With familiarity, the pentameter pulse-structure becomes unobtrusive while holding these rich and complex elements in harmony. And the result? *It is truly Shakespearean and forward-looking.*

Still, in my energetic focus on speech sounds in relation to the pulse, perhaps it seems that I am tending toward pointing out *too many* of the vowels and consonants in Sonnet 18 and in the choric prologue to Act IV of *Henry V*. If so, I want to explain that I find that the more deeply I enter the experiences of the sounds themselves, the more awake I become to repetitions in proximity to each other, line to line. And I am sure that these soundings were vitally present in Shakespeare's inspired awareness while writing the lines, too. Therefore, I am grateful for the wealth of my perceptions and my capacity to bear them in my awareness, when I rehearse and recite his verse. Patrick Stewart said that as a young actor, he first encountered the intensity of content in the lines during master classes with John Barton: after just an hour, *"almost every other word in my script was now underlined or circled.* And in the next master class, *"Every line that hadn't been underlined or circled now was. ... Not a word is insignificant. ... and it's all linked to all of the other significant moments."* (See in "John Barton The Shakespeare Sessions 2003," brought about by actor Kevin Kline; begin at 15:10 min.)

Barton himself revealed this intensity at the end of the RSC's third program (3 of 9, at 46 min.). As he prepared to recite a speech from *Henry V*, Act III:v (l. 36ff), given by the King of France, he said he would be trying "to pronounce every single sound within a word;" and he said that he thought that "the Elizabethans may have done that more than we do – overstress the sounds." As Alan Howard would later point out (as above here, p. 3), the Elizabethans seem to have lived in all of the soundings, rhythms and textures as incredibly-rich experiences through which they apprehended with pleasure the meaning of what was said and done.

And here it was abundantly obvious that it is not just the Elizabethans that appreciated this wealth: after Barton recited this speech by the King of France – which was addressed to the luminaries that headed up his troops that would now go up against the English – it was mostly a list of names! – the RSC company responded with excitement. He asked them if how he spoke was going too far, and they said, no! Actor Lisa Harrow jumped in to say

(with my italics through all of the entries here), *"it started at the beginning and was this amazing thread that went right the way through. You never let it ... flag for one second. It just kept on going like a huge relentless wave. It was marvelous!"* Actor Ben Kingsley said, "never let us off the hook when it's done that way. ... it took us ... to Rouen [in France]." Actor Roger Rees commented that in playwriting now there can be a "lack of language. To hear that so thickly crusted and *each kind of shape and movement in the sounds...*[sentence unfinished]." Harrow added: *"Actually it requires a fantastic amount of energy to use this language well,"* ... it is "not thrown away and deflated" like it can be now. And summing up, Barton said that "the characters need the language to express their situation and their characters;" and Kingsley responded, *"Yes, you can't say that their language is remotely incidental. Their language is them; and that should be our starting point."* In program 6 of 9, "Passion and Coolness" (at 40: min.), Barton said, "I don't mean actors shouldn't have emotions; but they need to be channeled and controlled like the rest of his performance. Thought, emotion and text must be balanced and in harness. *But in a poetic play, the text should surely be the prime thing which is working on the audience."*

And I think, how much more riveting the French King's speech would have been if Barton had been able to grasp and sustain the pulse of the 5-stress-4-beat structure as the poetic scaffold throughout.

The group had mentioned the necessity of "making" the audience listen, to hold their attention (see the opening portions of 1 of 9). I think there can be nothing better than working to relieve the audience of their heavy task of just trying to grasp the lines. Applying everything that can be harvested from the above exploration of pentameter can make the lines much more easily apprehendable. Then, without exhaustion, the audience will gladly listen and more greatly comprehend whatever transpires. *And then something more may be perceived entering the work, too; for in the giving and the receiving, the palpable 'third presence' in great works of art is summoned, that blesses and uplifts. And in the plays, each time the shift from prose to verse occurs the hearers will perceive it and be ennobled by what lives there in it.*

So, in conclusion, I believe that here in the lawful 5-stress-4-beat poetic structure are important keys to the resolution of that sense of failure that haunted John Barton. What a wonder the poetic form of pentameter is! Setting the scene on the "unworthy scaffold" of the stage at the Globe Theatre, the 'Prologue' to *Henry V* begins, "O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend / The brightest heaven of invention;" and he asks, "Can this cockpit hold / The vasty fields of France. Or may we cram / Into this wooden O, the very casques [helmets] / That did

affright the air at Agincourt?” Yes, indeed the cockpit and scaffold of both the theatre *and the verse* can hold it all. The richness that John Barton sensed on the page is really there.

And two last notes: The 1 | 4 arrangement comes less often. A very possible example of a line in which only one stress sounds in the first half of the line is Romeo’s first utterance upon beholding a ‘light’ in Juliet’s window. Now it may be heard newly within the poetic-musical pulse of pentameter. In the empty second beat, the depth of his feeling can give shivers of awe. And in the empty first beat of the next line he is spontaneously filled with words to express his perceptions of her, which he then pours out. (Also see the companion documents that suggest the pulse, word-rhythms and sounds for this scene and other passages, posted with this article.):

But | soft! What | light through yonder window breaks?  
 1 (2) 3 + 4 +

| It is the east, and | Juliet is the sun!  
 (1) + 2 3 + 4

And as a help, here are the words spaced roughly over time according to the rhythms, with the counting syllables below:

But | soft! What | light through yon-der window breaks?  
 uh 1 (2) uh 3 ee and uh 4 ee and

| It is the east, and | Ju- liet is the sun!  
 (1) ee and uh 2 uh 3 ee and uh 4

And if this is a help, here are the line-end and line-beginning together, showing the transition between the lines:

... yonder window breaks? / | It is the east  
 and uh 4 ee and (1) ee and uh 2

And, lastly, I am charmed that some rap artists have discovered the 5-stress-4-beat pentameter structure in their recitation of Shakespeare’s sonnets. Devon Glover (his first name is pronounced <sup>ˈ</sup>Devon), recites Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 as 4/4 time rap: “The Sonnet Man: Sonnet 18 Come and Be My Sunny Day.”<sup>17</sup> In lines 7, 8 and 12 he does three stresses divided evenly over the duration of two beats. In general, he fits the words to the beats in that fluid way that rap artists can have, with the strong backbeat stresses on beat 2 and beat 4. This rendition is a pleasant affirmation of the pentameter scaffold, even though the rap rhythms Glover creates are so prominent that they eclipse many of the other sound-elements in the sonnet. In his translation of the sonnet into his own words, which he had then set to rap – an approach to Shakespeare that he also takes with students – he has only four stresses per line, not five; so the pentameter is gone. And when he speaks the blank verse of Hamlet as rap, “To be or not to be,” he no longer holds onto the 5-stress-4-beat pulse, but

is free with how he fits the words to the rap beat. I sure wish he would hold onto the pentameter pulse: then the verse would *really* move!

Though I have written this article from the perspective of preparing sonnets and blank verse for spoken expression, the same approach will of course serve us every bit as well in preparing for their expression in eurythmy, too.

Do be in touch if you wish. I am open to questions and ready to help by sharing my sense of the structure in sonnets and the blank verse on request. As always, blessings on your way!

◇ ◇ ◇

## REFERENCES:

- Barton, John: “John Barton The Shakespeare Sessions 2003 VHSrip xvid,” held at the request of actor Kevin Kline, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4751F6yiGQc>.
- Reese Hurd, Kate: excerpts from Shakespeare’s plays prepared as described in this article and posted as follow-up companions to it. For each there is a plain copy, one with the pulse and word-rhythms indicated and one with speech sounds marked in addition (vowel and consonant repetitions and sounds of importance to the shaping of the lines). The soundings will of course vary according to one’s regional accent. The markings are not meant to replicate Elizabethan English – may we each do our own research toward that!
- Prologue, “O for a Muse of fire,” *Henry V*.
- Gertrude, the Queen, “There is a willow,” *Hamlet*, Act IV:vii, l. 162ff.
- Romeo and Juliet, “But soft, what light,” *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II:ii.
- King Leontes, “Inch thick, knee deep... Go play, boy, play,” *The Winter’s Tale*, Act I:ii, l. 185ff.
- Royal Shakespeare Company, nine filmed programs: “RSC Playing Shakespeare”; [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086780/episodes?ref=tt\\_ov\\_epl](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086780/episodes?ref=tt_ov_epl). Here are the programs referred to in this article:
- “RSC Playing Shakespeare 1 of 9 The Two Traditions 1984 VHSrip” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2VnxiW3oqk>
- “RSC Playing Shakespeare 2 of 9 Using The Verse 1984 VHSrip,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3rMaHqH2TE>
- “RSC Playing Shakespeare 3 of 9 Language & Character 1984 VHSrip xvid,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V18sryRXik>
- “RSC Playing Shakespeare 7 of 9 Rehearsing aText 1984 VHSrip xvid,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t-HrRaqsXI>
- “RSC Playing Shakespeare 9 of 9 Poetry & Hidden Poetry 1984 VHSrip xvid,” 52:32 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAHJnjYqTik>

Stewart, Patrick; recitation of Sonnet 18: “Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare (read by Sir Patrick Stewart) | 2020.04.07 |” #ASonnetADay <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYnj7ZutTgI>.

#### ENDNOTES:

1 For p. 1, regarding learning to hear the stressed syllables. Here is Renée M. LaTulippe’s Lyrical Language Lab YouTube video, “Top 5 Tips: How to Identify Stressed Syllables in English Words....” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R2vTDyoQRk>. Usually, a stressed syllable in a word is spoken heavier, louder; but it might also be higher in pitch or longer. Words that have three or more syllables might have **secondary stresses**, so LaTulippe helps with these, also. In her example, ‘captivate,’ the first syllable is the **primary stress** and the third is the secondary stress: **CAP ti vate**. Note that in this article on Shakespeare’s verse, we will find that longer syllables are not necessarily the stressed syllables.

2 For p. 2, regarding perception of the inaudible. Rudolf Steiner wrote and spoke about our having not just the five senses we normally consider, but seven others, for a total of **twelve senses** relative to the following: life (we sense ourselves to be alive, to exist), movement, balance, touch, smell, taste, sight, warmth, hearing, words (language), thoughts (concepts), ego (whether an ego is present in another being). See Steiner’s lecture, “Man’s Twelve Senses in Their Relation to Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition,” given in Dornach, Switzerland, August 8, 1920. Note: the word that is translated here as ‘man’ includes *all* human beings, both female and male. The three words, “Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition,” all have initial capitals because these are stages of higher cognition which can be developed by all human beings who choose to work toward achieving them. They are not the same as the ordinary imaginations, inspirations and intuitive hunches we commonly refer to.

3 For p. 3, regarding ‘apprehension.’ Actor Alan Howard also spoke about this in the first of the nine programs, “The Two Traditions,” 1 of 9 at 13:20.

4 For p. 4, regarding *An Introduction to Eurythmy*. This is a volume of introductions by Rudolf Steiner, published in English by the Anthroposophic Press, Spring Valley NY, 1984. Here are the specifics for the quotes that appear in this article – page number, introduction number, place and date:

- a) p. 15, III, Dornach, Switzerland, Aug. 11, 1919;
- b) p. 33, VI, Dornach, Aug. 15, 1920;
- c) p. 45, VII, Dornach, Sept. 17, 1922; and
- d) pp. 51-52, IX, The Hague, Netherlands, Nov. 2, 1922.

5 For p. 5, regarding the line that begins, “‘Twas the night before Christmas.” The poem is “A Visit From St. Nick,” by Clement C. Moore. The authorship of the poem was

settled in 2004 in favor of Moore by the rare-document expert, Seth Kaller. See “The Authorship of the Night Before Christmas,” <https://www.sethkaller.com/about/educational/tNBC/>.

6 For p. 7, regarding the Fibonacci sequence and the perfect fifth. In **tonal music** (classical, rock and folk genres), the **perfect fifth** has an important role. In the ascending scale that is the basis of our music, seven notes sound in a row as steps upward, culminating in an eighth step that is a re-newal of the starting tone an **octave** higher. Remember this?: “Do-Re-Mi” - THE SOUND OF MUSIC (1965) - YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmBMAEA3AM>.

Take a pitch and sing *up* the scale, ‘do re mi fa sol la ti do. **Sol** is the **fifth** member of the scale relative to the first member, **do**, which is also called the **prime**. This fifth **scale degree** – ‘sol,’ which is a perfect fifth *up* from the starting tone, the ‘do’ – has a special relationship with ‘do.’ At the conclusion of a piece of music one often hears in the melody or the bass line the sounding of ‘sol’ followed by ‘do;’ ‘**sol – do.**’ Hearing this, we feel conclusively that ‘do’ is ‘home.’ The piece has arrived at home.

The **fourth** member of the scale, **fa**, is found a perfect fifth *below* any given ‘do.’ Sing *down* the scale from ‘octave do’: ‘do ti la sol fa mi re do.’ As the perfect fifth below ‘do,’ ‘fa’ also has defining power relative to where ‘do’ is, but less than ‘sol’ does as the perfect fifth above. At the conclusion of a piece of music, we can often hear especially in the bass line the definitive movement toward a final ‘do’: ‘**do – fa – sol – do.**’ The fourth scale degree, ‘fa,’ strengthens the return home. The perfect fifth *above* is called the **dominant**; the perfect fifth *below*, the **subdominant**.

When proceeding up the scale, one can detect a sense of striving while rising through the upper members, ‘sol la ti.’ *These three feel like they are reaching upward, toward the octave ‘do.’ Earlier music (the Church Modes) did not have this quality.* This is significant for us in our time; because this phenomenon involving the **fifth, sixth** and **seventh** degrees of the scale mirrors our modern challenge as human beings to once again feel ourselves and know ourselves to be soul-spiritual beings in a process of development, who can pursue our development toward the ‘octave do’ consciously. The material world is our medium for this; but matter is neither our origin nor our destiny. *In the experience of the perfect fifth, one can have the sense of being an individuality within one’s own sheath within the greater spiritual world.*

Regarding the depth of Shakespeare’s genius in the realm of ratios such as 3-to-2, 2-to-3 and 4-to-1, the Shakespeare scholar, Sylvia Eckersley, explored the mathematical characteristics of the plays, especially of

*Macbeth*. She found surprising correspondences between the content, the location of the lines and the flow of the plot; and these reveal a discrete formative pattern. See her book, *Number and Geometry in Shakespeare's Macbeth: The Flower and the Serpent*, Floris Books, 2007.

7 For p. 8, regarding the fourteen excerpts I have worked with. These are:

Romeo, "But soft, what light," *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II:iii;

King Leontes, "Go play, boy play;" *The Winter's Tale*,

Act I:ii, l. 185ff;

Gertrude, the Queen, "There is a willow," *Hamlet*, Act IV:vii, l. 162ff;

Chorus, "Now entertain conjecture of a time," choric prologue to Act IV, *Henry V*;

Prologue, "O for a Muse of fire ... Can this cockpit hold," choric prologue to *Henry V*;

Paulina and Leontes, "I say good queen," *The Winter's Tale*, Act II:iii, l. 57ff;

Duke Orsino, "If music be the food of love," *Twelfth Night*, Act I:i, opening of play;

Hamlet, "To be or not to be," *Hamlet*, Act III:i, l. 56ff;

Viola and the Duke: "What kind of woman is't?" "Of your complexion," *Twelfth Night*, all of Act II:iv;

Portia, "The quality of mercy," *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV:i, l. 182ff;

Mercutio: "O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you," *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I:iv, l. 53ff;

Calphurnia: "What mean you, Caesar?" *Julius Caesar*, Act II:ii, l. 8ff.

Philo, "Nay, but this dotage of our general's," *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I:i, l. 1ff;

Prospero, "Our revels now are ended," *The Tempest*, Act IV:i, l. 39ff;

7 For p. 7, regarding the heartbeat. This 4-beat-1-breath ratio is what makes the movement of pentameter so different from the slightly longer **alexandrine** lines of twelve syllables, which is a leading meter in French verse that is also said to be natural to the pace of breathing. It happens that the most familiar form of the alexandrine falls into two sets of six syllables; and here is the reason for this: "Since the exact number of syllables that speakers of Fr. [ench] can routinely identify with certainty in a given verse line is limited to eight or fewer, the alexandrine is heard not as a whole but as two hexasyllabic units." See *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, Fourth Edition*, p. 36 (accessed online).

This sheds light on how poetically sound it is for the ten syllable pentameter lines to fall into two parts, as in the arrangements discussed in this article. Much of the time neither half exceeds six syllables. When the ten syllables run consecutively – as they do in the 4 | 1 arrangement – this evidently challenges our power to apprehend them. It would therefore seem to be more poetically-harmonious when this arrangement does not occur continuously!

9 For p. 7, regarding the etheric body. Our etheric body is that part of our human constitution made up of the formative or etheric forces, *which are in continual movement*. Our astral body – the next-higher, more conscious member of our human organization – lays hold of these etheric, formative forces to build, govern and maintain the shape and functioning of our physical body, which is made up of the elements of the mineral kingdom. Our life-filled physical body is therefore evidence of the existence of the etheric body, though the latter is only perceptible to supersensible perception. For descriptions of the bodies and functions, see Rudolf Steiner's books: *Theosophy*, Ch. 1, a bit more than halfway in, and *Occult Science*, Ch. 2, the first 5 pages.

10 For p. 8, regarding *The Speech Sound Etudes, Volume I: Revelations of the Logos*. There are two editions of this book: the original etudes manual which bears the above title includes material on poetic rhythms, sound shifts, and the impulses leading to bodily **gesture-movements** which can be inwardly perceived and brought forth through sensitive work with the sounds themselves; and the *Slim Edition* which presents just the etudes with the pronunciation key and glossary. Contact the author, Kate Reese Hurd, at [karehuuu@gmail.com](mailto:karehuuu@gmail.com).

11 For p. 9, regarding my markings for the vowels. These are in three sets according to the perceptions I have had after reading what the Swedish singer, Valborg Werbeck-Svärdström, wrote about vowels in her book, *Uncovering the Voice* (Ch. 6, about 2/3 in). Over the course of twelve years, she worked with Rudolf Steiner to bring new impulses into the art of singing. I find not one, but *three* different open vowel sounds in my more-or-less Standard American speech: **ah**, **ö** ('hot'), and **ü** ('love'). They seat themselves within the vocal organization differently. The other vowels can likewise be found to sort themselves out relative their placement and resonance. I have given names to these three sets of vowel sounds, that reflect these differences. In the list below, next to the headings I have also provided the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for each sequence of vowels, in case these help. You can hear recordings of each vowel and consonant sound in both American and British English here: "The sounds of English and the International Phonetic Alphabet" <http://www.antimoon.com/how/pronunc-soundsipa.htm>.

My usual markings for texts are below. I presented many of them in my Spring 2018 article, "Finding Unison in the Vowels" – but I have changed some of them since then. *These are reminders, only approximations of the sounds. Regional accents will surely differ!*



Middle full placement: IPA – α: ɔ: o u u: aʊ

- swān -côugh, sâw -bōne
- sūe, dô, snōop -ôut, cōw

Broader brighter placement: IPA – ɒ æ e eɪ ɪ i: aɪ ɔɪ

- hōt - māt - wèb (French diacritic)
- théy, fāde (diacritic adapted from French)
- sīt, hŷmn, búsinēss
- convēne brēed, thīef, ēasŷ
- līke, bŷ, ēye, āisle
- soil, toy, Frēud

Taller darker placement: IPA – ʌ/ə ʊ ɜ:ʳ

- rŷn, ābōve
- fōot, pŷsh, wōlf, bōuillon
- spŷr, bŷrd, hēr, ēarth, wōrk, mŷrrh  
(the ŷ is always followed by **R** in English)
- Gōethe (German), ōeuvre (French)  
(the umlaut is used as an alert, not as a specific ö)
- Fŷsse (German), tŷ (French)  
(again, the umlaut is an alert, not as a specific ü)
- iu: fēud, ēwe
- sweet, queen, wheat OR s/wee/t, q/uee/n, /whea/t  
OR swēet, quēen, whēat

12 For p. 19, regarding a reading by J.B. Bessinger, Jr. This is: “Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales Prologue in Middle English (Not Complete).” The text accompanies the YouTube audio. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GihRWuysnrc>.

13 For p. 19, regarding a presentation by Colin Gibbings. The Prologue begins at 5:25 minutes in; he is in costume: “General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales (Premiere)” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMsp8xHkRnA>.

14 For p. 19, regarding the medieval plays. *Christmas Plays From Oberufer*, edited by Hélène Jacquet; Rudolf Steiner Press, Bristol, 1944, 1961, 1973, 1993.

15 For p. 20, regarding the sounding of words and their meaning. “The Lost Unison Between Speaking and Thinking;” a lecture given by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach, Switzerland, July 18, 1915; published together with “The Realm of Language;” Mercury Press, Spring Valley NY, 1984.

16 For p. 20, in reference to naïve and critical art. Rudolf Steiner described the difference at the end of Chapter 3 in his book, *Truth and Knowledge*: “In all of our activities, two things must be taken into account: the activity itself, and our knowledge of its laws. We may be completely absorbed in the activity without worrying about its laws. An artist is in this position when he does not reflect

about the laws according to which he creates, but applies them, using feeling and sensitivity. We may call him ‘naive.’ It is possible, however, to observe oneself, and enquire into the laws inherent in one’s own activity, thus abandoning the naive consciousness just described through knowing exactly the scope of and justification for what one does. This I shall call critical. ... Critical reflection then is the opposite of the naive approach.”

17 For p. 21, in reference to Devon Glover, *The Sonnet Man: Sonnet 18 Come and Be My Sunny Day*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-gG4MBdjuQ>.

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### About the Author

Kate holds degrees in music and English literature (with a focus on dramatic works). She played a number of musical instruments in her earlier years and later served as a pianist while studying at the School of Eurythmy in Spring Valley where she graduated from the four-year, full-time program. For several months she also served as a pianist for one of the eurythmy schools in Dornach, Switzerland. In 2016, she came out with her book, *The Speech Sound Etudes, Vol. I: Revelations of the Logos; Poetic miniatures for sound-ing our language: a body of speech-work for speakers, actors, eurythmists, poets, writers, singers, teachers, therapists*. A description of it is near the end of the Autumn 2015 Newsletter of the Eurythmy Association of North America. A *Slim Edition* of this pithy etudes manual is also available. Since 2015, she has been reciting poems and the poetic miniatures at poetry gatherings in her local mid-Hudson region and has a webpage at her poetry home base, the Woodstock Poetry Society.

Kate’s detailed 2014 report on her speech and eurythmy work, entitled, *The Speech Sound Etudes: Feeling the Gestures and Finding the Figures*, is posted at the EANA website on the Artistic Eurythmy category webpage and is available as a booklet.

Her articles for the EANA Newsletter so far are:

- “‘The Word of My Feet:’ The Three Parts of Walking,” Spring 2015;
- “The Seven Rod Exercises: Honing the Agility of our Conscious Awareness,” Fall 2015;
- “Ethereic Bodies are Moving to the Speech Sound Etudes,” Spring 2016;
- “Eurythmy as a Critical Art: What This Means for Its Future,” Autumn 2016;
- “Eurythmy as an Art that Makes Visible the Inaudible, Invisible and Unsounded Contents of Poetic Speech and Wordless Singing,” Spring 2017;
- “Beginning With **B** in Light of Goethe’s Sensible-Supersensible Process,” Autumn 2017;
- “Finding Unison in the Vowels: The Hope and Blessing of Whitsun,” Spring 2018;
- “The Scale Degree Intervals Give Rise to Our Tonal Music Gebilde,” Spring 2019;

“Speaking Visibly in Genuine Rhythm,” Autumn 2019;  
 “The Agrippa von Nettesheim Positions: Rudolf Steiner  
 Told Lory to Jump!” Spring 2020;  
 “The Kindling Character of **K**,” Autumn 2020.

The booklet, *A Quartet of Articles*, offers the first four of these.

A description of her music eurythmy report, *Singing and Jumping Opens the Way to a Vital Music Eurythmy Foundation*, appeared in the Fall 2018 EANA Newsletter. The first third of the lengthy PART I was posted at the EANA website (Artistic Eurythmy page), in early December 2019. Completion of the book is still in progress, but this first portion is available in hard copy.

This current article, “Revealing the Music of Pentameter: Putting Shakespeare Through His Paces – An In-Depth Exploration Which Might Well-Resolve John Barton’s ‘Haunting’ Sense of Failure,” was posted at the EANA website (Artistic Eurythmy page), in September 2021. Posted with it are its four sets of companion documents of Shakespeare’s blank verse – passages from his plays. These are working documents prepared as described in the article. (The article and its sets of documents should soon be available in hard copy as well.)

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