HAMLET TO HAMILTON

Season One, Episode Five
So You Think You Know Scansion?

[music]

EMILY. *(Singing.)* Let's start at the very beginning
A very good place to start
When we speak in English
We use metrical feet
Which simply means
We use rhythm and beat

(Rhythm and beat)

Rhythm and beat
A line of verse
May often repeat
Rhythm and beat

(Rhythm and beat)

The interplay of which becomes a foot…!

(Speaking.) Oh dear. Let's try this again.

[music]

HAMLET 1. To be…

HAMLET 2. To be…

HAMLET 1. … or not to be?

HAMLET 3. To be or not to be?

HAMLET 1. That is the question.

HAMLET 3. … or not?

EMILY. This is *Hamlet to Hamilton: Exploring Verse Drama*. I'm your host, Emily C. A. Snyder. You're listening to Season 1, Episode 5: The Tool Boudoir, Part One: So You Think You Know Scansion.

[music]

Welcome, friends. Today we're going to start looking at our tool boudoir, because if we're doing epic verse drama, or any sort of verse drama, why in the world would we have a toolbox when we could have a tool boudoir? We should have feathers and fichus and peignoirs and things in our tool boudoir, not just hammers and nails and stuff that's colored orange. Today we're going to be looking at the first part of our tool boudoir. This will be a multi-part series, because there's a lot of tools at our disposal.

The first one that we're going to be looking at today will be familiar, or will seem to be familiar to probably many of you who've done verse drama. What I'm talking about, of course, is meter and scansion, but before you say, (French accent) "Ah, yes, but I've been doing this since I was an enfent. I know all about ze meter and ze scansion." Well, hold on just a second, because I thought I knew as well, and then as I was doing more research on it, I realized that we had schwumpfed together a lot on meter, on scansion, and the way that we casually use those words, and that we can break it down to even more component parts that are very easy to learn, and which we're going to go through today.

Now, before we move forward, I want to remind you that all of the texts, because we'll be having a lot of examples today and looking at a lot of different texts, and formatting is about to become important, so I suggest that if you want to look at the text, go to hamlettohamilton.com. You can click either on the transcript, or there's always a document that has the format of just the texts, and take a look at that. Read along with it so that you can see it as well as listen to it. I also want to remind you that we do have transcripts for *Hamlet to Hamilton*. We do pay our transcriptionist – because, if you've ever done it, it is a thankless job – and we would love to continue doing so to make sure that this information is available to people who, perhaps, are hard of hearing, or people who require a visual aid. And if you want to support that, head on over to patreon.com/hamlettohamilton and you can become a patron at any level and help make things accessible for a multitude of people.

A reminder, too, that this first season is meant to be listened to chronologically. If you want to jump in here, you're certainly welcome to, but if there's any term that we use, such as schwumpf, that you don't recognize, I highly suggest that you go back and listen from the beginning. You can also go to hamlettohamilton.com and check on the glossary link at any time for the meanings of words. We're constantly adding to it.

Now, as for meter and scansion, in the immortal words of Inigo Montoya, "You keep using those words. I do not think they mean what you think they mean." Let's get into it.

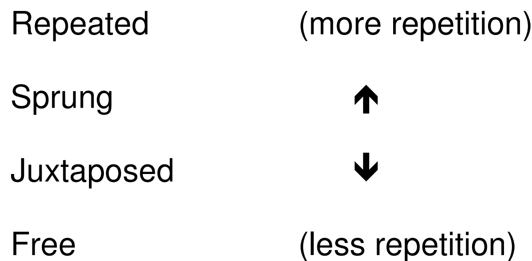
[music]

Right. So if you've hung around Shakespeareans for any length of time, you've heard people go off on meter and scansion. Well, what do those words actually mean? Meter is simply the interplay of rhythm, beat, stress, and how long a vowel is. Again, it's the interplay. It's the putting together of rhythm, beat, stress, and how long a vowel is. Scansion is just the study of meter. Let me repeat that again. Scansion just means the study of meter. When you speak in English, you can't help but speak in meter. That means you can't help but have an interplay of rhythm, beat, stressed versus unstressed syllables, and long and short vowels, because that's just how English is set up. That's how most languages are set up – not every language, but certainly English is set up with a rhythm, with beat, with long and short vowels, with stressed and unstressed syllables. That's how we're set up. So congratulations. You've been speaking in meter your whole life. If you wanted to go, like we did last time, actually, and study what sort of rhythms, what sort of beats, what is being repeated, what's stressed, what's unstressed, how long is a vowel, if you want to go and study it and graph it out, then you're doing the work of scansion, or the verb of that is you are scanning a piece of text.

So, meter, which, again, is rhythm, beat, the length of vowels, the stress or unstress of a syllable. Someone way back when in ye olde Greek times put names to all the different possible rhythmic patterns, and we will link to it. Each rhythmic pattern is called a foot, so an iamb is a foot, but so is a trochee, which we talked about in previous episodes, which is stressed-unstressed. That's also a foot. There are various metrical feet, various feet of different rhythms, that go up to five, six, and so on. We don't tend to study those as much, but we do use them. Again, we'll be linking to, at least, up through four syllables on a foot, which, again, is basically four syllables in a rhythmic pattern, in a metrical rhythmic pattern, which we call a metric foot, or we call a foot. Just so that you know that.

But we're actually not going to spend time today… Ah, you didn't see this coming, did you? We're not going to be actually spending a ton of time today going through and saying, "An iamb is this. A trochee is that. A dactyl is this." But rather, we'll describe a metrical foot when we get to it in an example. I'll trust you to go and take a look at them on your own, and trust me that we'll be talking about it in great depth in future episodes. But what I want to point out is that when we do the work of scansion, when we ask, "Does this piece of text scan?" we're presuming – we're schwumpfing together the presumption – of one last thing. We're presuming that the piece of text is written with repetition of meter. We're presuming that the rhythm, the beat, the stressed and unstressed syllables, the long and short vowels, are all being repeated. And therefore, when we're saying something doesn't scan, what we're saying, is, "Ooh, that part wasn't repeated." But what we've forgotten is that rhythm and beat don't have to be repeated. Or to put it more poetically, rhythm and beat don't have to repeat. (laughs)

Let’s start this way: by making a sort of mental diagram. We’re going to have rhythm, beat – and we’re going to put vowels and syllables slightly to the side at the moment – we’re going to have rhythm and beat up top, and then on the side, we’re going to ask the question, is it repeated or unrepeated? Because that's going to make a difference. Basically, there are four different ways that it breaks down that we tend to interplay rhythm and beat. Meter can be repeated, where both the rhythm and the beat are repeated. Or it can be sprung, which is when either the beat is jazzed up and the rhythm is repeated, or where the beat is repeated, but the rhythm is jazzed up. You can also have juxtaposed meter, which is basically when you’re switching from one regular repetition to a different regular repetition, and the audience is going to hear that juxtaposition. Then we have free, which is where neither beat nor rhythm are repeated.



Let me go through that again – and, again, this is all on the transcript, which join patreon.com/hamlettohamilton so that we can keep making sure there are transcripts for you. (laughs) But all right. So we have repeated. You might call it strict repeated, where both rhythm and beat are repeated. We have sprung, where either beat or rhythm is repeated. Just one of them might be repeated, and the other one is jazzed up. Then we have juxtaposed, where either repeated or sprung lines, either one, are sort of rocked back and forth. We’re rocked back and forth between at least two different feelings. Then we have free, which is where neither beat nor rhythm are repeated. We’re going to have examples for everything.

Let’s start with repeated, where both rhythm and beat are repeated. Now, this is what we’re most accustomed to, and this is what most people will start with when they’re writing verse drama. I think it makes sense, because you want something that obviously is not prose. And again – because, again, listen to the previous episode – this is how we’ve been taught, that this is what the proper form of verse drama is. There’s nothing wrong with it. Again, if this is what your world wants, then great. Use this tool. Just know what this tool is so that you know that this is how your characters want to speak, or this is the challenge you want to set yourself.

We’re going to look at two pieces where rhythm and beat are repeated, so this is the repeated meter. We’re going to look at two pieces. The first is *Richard II* by William Shakespeare, and the second will be the first stanza from *The Second*

Shepherd's Play, which is a medieval mystery play by someone known only as the Wakefield Master, that I referenced last episode.

Let's start with *Richard II*. Let's start from a place of comfort. We all know good old Shakespeare. This is early Shakespeare, which means that he's even being very strict about writing in iambs, which, as we know, is the rhythmic, metric pattern of unstressed-stressed. Again, we're putting a pin in vowels for just a second, how long a vowel is. But this metric pattern is that you have unstressed-stressed is the rhythm, and then you repeat unstressed-stressed, ba-DUM. You repeat that five times. So the rhythm is unstressed-stressed, which is an iamb, and we're going to repeat it five times, which we call penta-meter. Basically, that's how we get iambic pentameter. Shakespeare, very early in his career, didn't write so much in sprung rhythm, which actually he started doing as early as *Romeo and Juliet* and some of his other pieces. Almost inevitably, you're kind of forced into sprung rhythm at some point if you're writing verse drama. But he was writing fairly regularly early in his career, as, again, most playwrights do, because this is what we're taught: it's supposed to be in iambic pentameter. We're trying to follow the rules. Sometimes it's easy. Sometimes it's ridiculously hard. And if it's ridiculously hard, it's probably because your characters want to speak in a different meter. (laughs) That's all.

Let's take a look at *Richard II*. This is from Act III, scene 2, and I'm going to overemphasize the rhythm, the beat, and also take a pause so you can hear the line endings. So:

> For Gód's sake, lét us sít upón the gróund
> And téll sad stóries óf the déath of kíngs;
> How sóme have béen depósed; some sláin in wár,
> Some háunted bÿ the ghósts they háve depósed;
> Some póison'd bÿ their wíves: some sléeping kíll'd;
> Áll múrder'd:

Actually, you heard that change, didn't you, at the end? But everything else was in strict iambs, ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM.

> For Gód's sake, lét us sít upón the gróund

And it was in a repeated beat.

> For Gód's sake, lét us sít upón the gróund
> And téll sad stóries óf the déath of kíngs;

Now, if you want to write in a repeated beat, what I highly recommend doing is actually tapping out the strong beats, the pulse underneath, essentially, on your fingers, on your hand. Whether your beat is in pentameter, in trimeter, in septameter, whatever you choose. If you ware doing a repeated beat, tap that

out on your fingers, so focus more, if you decide to repeat your beat, focus more on the beat than on the rhythm.

Now, let me do this again, but this time I'm not going to over-emphasize the rhythm and the beat. So you can hear what it sounds like the way it would naturally be performed. I'm even not necessarily going to take a pause at the end of the line, although I will somehow emphasize the line break.

> For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings;
> How some have been deposed; some slain in war,
> Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
> Some poison'd by their wives: some sleeping kill'd;
> All murder'd:

And that time you probably heard a little bit more of the long versus short vowels, and how that was pulling and giving a sort of swing so that I'm not necessarily just going

> For Gód's sake, lét us sít upón the gróund

and making everything even. But

> For **God's** sake, let us **sit** upon the **ground**

So you can year that, although it is in strict iambs, the vowels can help shape it so that it's not sounding like a dot matrix, basically, so it's not sounding so precise that you actually get seasick listening to it.

I also want to point out that at the end of the selection that we listened to, because the speech does go on for longer, but it ends with a reversal, with a reversal of meter. We've been going from the rhythm that we call an iamb, ba-DUM,

> For Gód's sake, lét us sít upón the gróund

and then he puts in a reversal. He puts in, actually, a juxtaposition, which we're going to be talking about later, when he does

> Áll múrder'd:

which is – you can hear it – it's a different metrical rhythm that uses a different foot. If you want to take a step further, go ahead. Look at the sheet that lists all the different rhythm types, and then look at that piece of text and do the work of scansion to say, "What sort of foot, what sort of rhythmical, metrical foot was he using for All murder'd?"

All right, let’s move on. Let’s take a look now at a different, strict rhythmic repeated pattern, a strict repeated meter. Let’s look at the Wakefield Master. Now, this is from *The Second Shepherd’s Play* by the Wakefield Master. We don’t know who this person was. We know that they lived in England somewhere between 1400 – 1450 is what’s estimated – and the interesting thing is that the Wakefield Master essentially developed their own meter, their own poetry pattern. I do mean poems, because they wrote in stanzas, even. A stanza is a tight grouping, almost equivalent to a paragraph, but using lines of verse rather than using sentences. Way back when in these medieval times, all the pieces tended to be religious in tone in England, and people would pass down the plays and then they would add to the plays. We can always tell when the Wakefield Master had added to someone else’s play because the Wakefield Master insisted on using their own meter. I want you to hear what a different form of meter might be, because you may want to come up with your own form of meter.

What the Wakefield Master created was a nine-line stanza that he would use as dialogue, and it would be a repeated nine-line stanza. It is rhyming, with a rhyming pattern of AAAABCCCB, where all the As rhyme with each other, the Bs rhyme with each other, the Cs rhyme with each other. They’re at the end of the line, as you put a line break for rhyming verse typically at the end of a line. Now, this is more with a repeated beat, but you will hear a largely repeated rhythm. Like I said, it’s almost impossible to do drama without some sort of sprung rhythm, without some variation in your rhythm, but generally what we have here is the first four lines, which end with an A rhyme, have four beats, which, as you’re starting to hear, whatever number of strong beats or, really, the number of feet, the number of metrical feet that are in any given line of verse, that line then is called whatever meter. If there is only one metrical foot on the line, that's monometer. If there’s two metrical feet on the line, it’s dimeter. Trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, septameter, yadda, yadda, yadda, so on and so forth.

The first four lines, which rhyme on an A, for the Wakefield Master, have four strong beats or four metrical feet on it, which is tetrameter. Then it has a line of monometer. Then it has three lines of trimeter, and then the last line is dimeter. They repeated this over and over and over again for a number of plays, including this one, *The Second Shepherd’s Play*. We will do the first two stanzas from the very top of the play. The speaker is the First Shepherd. I’m going to read the first two stanzas so you can hear how the Wakefield Master is repeating the same metric pattern. Even though the metric pattern itself has juxtaposition in it, right? Because it’s going to be a line of four, then a line of one, lines of three, and then a line of two. But he repeats that pattern over and over again. So while he’s using juxtaposition, it would be considered, I guess, a repeated juxtaposed. Here we go.

Lórd, but it's cóld, and I'm wrétchedly wrápped.
My hánds nearly númb, so lóng have I nápped.
My légs creak and fóld, my fíngers are chápped;
It is nót as I wóuld, for Í am all lápped
In sórrow.
In stórms and témpest,
Nów in the éast, nów in the wést,
Wóe is hím has néver rést
Mídday nor mórrow!

But wé poor shépherds that wálk on the móor,
We're líke, in fáith, to be pút out of dóor;
No wónder, as it stánds, if wé be póor,
For the tílth of our lánds lies fállow as a flóor.
As ye kén.
Wé are so lámed,
So táxed and shámed,
We are máde hand-támed
By these géntlery-mén….

So you can hear the juxtaposition, but you can also hear how it's got a strong beat. I'm actually going to skip ahead a little bit to the first time it's dialogue. I think what I'll do so that you can hear the difference is I will try to do two different voices, but I'm still going to make the beats obvious for you to hear. Something else that I want to point out is that this is a version that has been "modernized and edited" by Antony Caputi, and so I feel, honestly, that he might have mucked about with some of the rhythm and shortened some lines and lengthened some others and things like that. But we will do our best knowing what the Wakefield Master's intentions were.

Here is the first bit of dialogue, so you can hear this is still a drama. It's not just a narrative poem. Let's see. It's going to be between the First Shepherd and the Second Shepherd, the titular Second Shepherd of *The Second Shepherd's Play*. The First Shepherd begins:

FIRST SHEPHERD. Gib, lóok over the rów! Full déafly, ye stánd.

SECOND SHEPHERD. Yea, the dévil in your máw—ye blów on your hánd.
Saw ye ánywhere, Dáw?

FIRST SHEPHERD. Yéa, on a lea-lánd
I héard him blów. He cómes here at hánd,
Not fár.
Stand stíll.

SECOND SHEPHERD. Whý?

FIRST SHEPHERD. I thínk he comes bý.
He'll tríck us with a líe
Unléss we bewáre.

Okay. So there you go. He kept his meter, his juxtaposed repeated meter, and he still managed to make it dialogue. Pretty cool.

Now, if we were to do further scansion work and take a look at what rhythmic patterns he was using, I know I was hearing

Lórd, but it's cóld, and I'm wrétchedly wrápped.

Gib, lóok o'er the rów! Full déafly, ye stánd.

I'm feeling a lot of things that are front-loaded. I'm feeling a lot of trochees. I'm feeling a lot of dactyls. Trochees are stressed-unstressed. Dactyls are stressed-unstressed-unstressed. They're kind of in the same family. You can feel that, right, that we start with a stress. We keep going with unstressed. Trochees and dactyls are sort of related.

My hánds nearly númb, so lóng have I nápped.

I mean, sometimes there's sort of a pick-up, ba-BUH-buh-buh. You can hear,

My hánds nearly

is actually a secundus paeon, which is unstressed-stressed-unstressed-unstressed. Again, it's very similar to the dactyl, right? It's just you've got a little scooping, unstressed pickup line before that.

My hánds nearly

That's the metrical foot, and it's four syllables. The cool thing is that this Wakefield Master created their own repeated juxtaposed meter, and that may be something that you want to do as well, that there's more than just iambic pentameter to begin with.

If you're very clever, then you're already ahead of me into future weeks, where we'll start playing with, okay, how many feet do you want on your line of verse? And what are some of the metrical feet, what are some of the rhythmic patterns that you're drawn to? But again, hang on. If you want to do it with us, you can wait for future episodes. If you want to rush ahead, go ahead and start doing your wild experiments.

But there we go, *Second Shepherd's Play*. A guy who was writing several hundred years before this iambic pentameter thing became all the new, hot rage. I'm curious what you're going to come up with. When we come back, we're going to take a look at sprung meter.

[music]

Have we got some exciting news for you! Next week, *Hamlet to Hamilton* will be taking a week off so that we can celebrate Thanksgiving over here in the States. But for our Patreons, we're going to have a special bonus episode uploaded just for you. It's our second Bar(d) Talk wherein Colin and I talk about how he's been applying the rudiments of the tool boudoir to his own poetry, as well as he asks me about how a couple of the shows that we're going to talk about later in this episode even came to be. Then we also talk about that old phrase, "I can't work under these conditions," because the thing is, sometimes you can't and you shouldn't work under certain conditions. So come along to our virtual bar. If you're not yet a patron, you can join us over on patreon.com/hamlettohamilton so you can get this special bonus episode and have something to listen to when you're celebrating Thanksgiving and you just don't want to watch the game.

Let's go on to this sprung meter. Now, sprung rhythm is actually a term that we get from Gerard Manley Hopkins. Fittingly for our discussion of how English meter works, Gerard Manley Hopkins is British, and he lived in the past century. He was a Catholic priest. He was a terrific poet, just glorious, glorious stuff. He was rather frustrated with a lot of the poetic forms, in fact, rely upon repeated beats and repeated rhythms. If you think about a limerick, for example, we know that a limerick is like:

> There once was a lady from Bright
> Whose speed was much faster than light.
>   She set out one day
>   In a relative way
> And returned on the previous night.
>
> bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH-bu-bu BUH.
> bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH-bu-bu BUH.
>   bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH
>   bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH
> bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH-bu-bu BUH.

That's a limerick. That's the music, that's the rhythm and the beat, of a limerick. Similarly, you can year that there's a juxtaposed beat change in there, right?

> bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH-bu-bu BUH.

That’s three.

bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH-bu-bu BUH.
bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH

All of a sudden it goes to two, to dimeter, for a second.

bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH

and then it ends with the trimeter.

bu-BUH-bu-bu BUH-bu-bu BUH.

(laughs) And you can go to the cheat sheet to look at the rhythm and do your work of scansion for that. We have that. We have sonnets, which is based, again, on iambic pentameter, but it’s just a question of if you’re doing the Elizabethan or the Spenserian, then your rhyme pattern is this, and if you’re doing the Petrarchan, your rhyme pattern is that. But your meter is the same, in English, for a sonnet. It’s still lines of iambic pentameter, of repeated beats of five, over which we use the rhythm ba-DUM.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was basically asking why can’t we acknowledge that the whole of English is actually in sprung rhythm? We have sprung rhythm when the beat is constant, but the rhythm changes. We have sprung beat when the rhythm is constant, but the beat changes. Both of these are forms of sprung meter. It’s kind of like, if we were to think of sprung rhythm, taking sprung rhythm… Iambic pentameter is

ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM

a repeated rhythm, a repeated beat. Gerard Manley Hopkins, by giving us sprung rhythm, or in our case, sprung meter, depending on whether you’re varying up the beat or varying up the rhythm, but in this case, sprung rhythm wouldn’t sound like

ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM

but it could sound like

ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DU-ba da-DUM ba-DUM

(laughs) You can mix it up.

Let’s look first at, actually, sprung beat. We’re going to look at a piece that we looked at last week, which is *The Mother of God Visits Hell*, by Daniel Guyton. He wrote this in rhyming couplets, which helps us to know, really, where the line

ending wants to be. Then let's take a look at whether the beat repeats or not and whether the rhythm repeats or not.

Before we go on, just because it's been asked, I do want to let you know what the policy is for reading new verse drama here on *Hamlet to Hamilton.* For any piece that is unpublished or has not been opened to criticism, we always ask the playwright first whether we can use their piece. That's where we've spoken to Deb Victoroff, and that's also where we've spoken to Daniel Guyton and asked if we could use his piece, *The Mother of God Visits Hell*, although it is published. It is available on Amazon, and we will make sure that you have the link to it. If there's a piece that you would like us to take a look at, there are submission guidelines on hamlettohamilton.com, and we are open to taking a look, and if you're willing to gently have us critique what you seem to be doing on the air, we'd be happy to do that. I will say that for any piece that essentially has been opened up to the public, so that's where pieces like *Hamilton* and, in the future, pieces like Mike Bartlett's works, *Charles III*, which we will be looking at, if it's open to scrutiny, if it's been performed multiple times, if it's had reviews, if it's published by a major publisher, if it's in its final form, if it's an established author that has made this a public work, then it's open to criticism. Then it's open to reviews. Then it's open to being looked at in a scholarly fashion. But as far as we can, if the author is alive, we do want to make sure that it's okay to talk about your work on air, and especially if it's not yet published, as several of the pieces that we are looking at are not yet published. We absolutely make sure that we have permissions first.

Once, again, if you want to be one of those playwrights, feel free to check that hamlettohamilton.com. Check out the submission policy, and we look forward to reading your stuff.

Okay, back into the text, which this is sprung beat, but not sprung rhythm, *The Mother of God Visits Hell*. And a reminder, if you want to hear more about this piece, listen to the previous episode. I'm going to read it, again, stopping on the rhymes. Mary says:

MARY. Hello? Is anybody **here**?

MICHAEL. Nay, step behind me quickly, Lady, for I smell Beezlebub is **near**.

All right, let's take a look at just those.

Helló? Is ánybódy hére?

We've got an established, that's an iamb. It's a line of iambic – I think I was feeling four – tetrameter, so:

Helló? Is ánybódy hére?

Then we have Michael's line, which, again, if we were to cut on the rhyme, would come out this way:

Nay, stép behínd me quíckly, Lády, fór I sméll Beézlebúb is néar.

Which is, I actually was feeing nine strong beats. You might consider breaking that up into two separate lines of tetrameter, if you felt like keeping it a strong repeated beat and a strong repeated rhythm. You might. But it could also be varying beats. It could be sprung beat. It's not sprung rhythm. It's using iambs. But it is kind of in sprung beat. That's very cool.

Then Satan enters, and he goes:

Well! Spéak the dévil's náme, they sáy, and sóon he shâll appéar.

And that rhymes. So he's got not just rhyming couplets, he's got rhyming triplets, which actually is an incredibly good tool to have in your back pocket, and whenever we get to talking more in depth about rhyme and drama, we will talk about the use of, not just a couplet, but a triplet.

He caps it with:

Well! Spéak the dévil's náme, they sáy, and sóon he shâll appéar.

That's seven. Mary was in four. Michael was in nine. Satan is in seven. But again, you could feel that strong iamb, that strong rhythm of ba-DUM. That was kept repeated, so it wasn't sprung rhythm, but this is in sprung beat, which is very cool.

Now, let's look at the other way, which is sprung rhythm, repeated beat. For that, we're going to be looking at one of my pieces. This is also going to be in rhyming couplets. I don't know why, but it seems that when people write in rhyming verse drama, there tends to be greater exploration of different beat, different rhythm. I have no idea why, but I think it's kind of cool. Some of the examples that I'm going to have are going to be more from rhyming plays than from blank verse plays. Blank verse just means that the lines don't tend to rhyme. A significant portion of the play is not in rhyme. That's blank verse. Largely, it doesn't rhyme. Rhyming verse means, largely, it does rhyme. Simple as that.

Let's take a look at sprung rhythm, but with a repeated beat. My play, *The Other, Other Woman*, which is a French farce, largely in rhyming couplets. We're going to look at it a few times today, because I use purposeful juxtaposition in this play as well. This is, rather like *The Mother of God Visits Hell,* a dialogue. For the one person who has a line in the middle of the speech, shared line, I will have an

outrageous French accent so that you know it's someone else. Let me read it first, and then we'll go back and we'll look at the scansion. It goes like this:

BEAUDEMONDE. *But she ís!* I can't *stánd it*! And nów—

LEBOEUF. You're perspíring?

BEAUDEMONDE. No, dámmit, I'm nót! I have *féelings*! I'm *crýing!*
By *GÓD!* I'M A MÁN! I feel páin, I feel pléasure,
My emótions exténd more than my pénis can méasure.
And I wón't be deníed! Yes, Jeanétte is much bétter.
I shall léave here at ónce. I shall wríte her a létter!

Okay, so let's take a look. This is in tetrameter. You probably felt that.

BEAUDEMONDE. *But she ís!* I can't *stánd it*! And nów—

LEBOEUF. You're perspíring?

BEAUDEMONDE. No, dámmit, I'm nót! I have *féelings*! I'm *crýing!*

Right? And you could really feel there's a very strong repeated beat, largely repeated.

BEAUDEMONDE. *But she ís!* I can't *stánd it*! And nów—

LEBOEUF. You're perspíring?

But did you catch the slight spring in there? Let's take a look at this.

But she ís

is an anapest, unstressed-unstressed-stressed.

I can't stánd it

That's interesting. That's rather like what we had in *The Second Shepherd's Play*. It's a single foot that has four syllables in it, and if you remember, the ones that have four syllables in it, what they're called… It's fairly easy, and I'll go through it real quick. These are all called paeons and they'll only have one strong stressed syllable. So primus paeon, the first syllable is stressed. The remaining three are unstressed. Secundus paeon, the first syllable is unstressed, the second syllable is stressed, the remaining two syllables are unstressed. Tertius paeon, which is what we had just here,

I can't stánd it

is unstressed-unstressed-stressed-unstressed. And then, surprise surprise, quartus paeon is three unstressed and the last one is stressed.

But once again, you can hear we started with, the main signifier is an anapest, ba-da-DUH.

But she ís

is unstressed-unstressed-stressed. And so

I can't stánd it

is still in the same family. In fact, then the next one is

And nów

is an iamb. We're still kind of with cousins, aren't we?

ba-da-DUH
da-da-DUH-da
da-DAH

And then we have

You're perspíring

which is another tertius paeon. So again, what you're hearing is there's the beginning of families, rhythmic families, that you've got rhythmic families that start with stresses and then have un-stresses at the end, ones that begin unstressed and then have stresses towards the end, so on and so forth. And certainly, you can start exploring these rhythmic families now. Rest assured, we will explore them in future episodes.

But I also want to point out something else that's important, is that on that particular first line of verse, there are four separate sentences. This is going to be important for another future episode, but if you already listened to the Schwumpf episode, you may be ahead of the curve here. There are four separate sentences, but they're not put on four separate lines, even though they're technically separate thoughts.

BEAUDEMONDE. *But she ís!* I can't *stánd it*! And nów—

LEBOEUF. You're perspíring?

But it's written out purposely as one line of verse, not even two lines of verse. It could have been, line one would be:

> But she ís! I can't stánd it!

Line two:

> And nów—
>
> You're perspíring

But there's something, there's an element of schwumpf and there's an element of uvriel. Just put a pin in that. Put a pin in that. Now, if you want to do the work of scansion, again, this text is available, because you're going to see amphibrachs later on. It doesn't stay just in the anapest, iamb, and tertius paeon. It also plays with a little bit more sprung rhythm as it goes on. You could certainly take a look, and I leave you, if you want some homework, to do some of the work of scansion on this piece.

But again, it has extremely strong tetrameter. It's four strong beats, sprung rhythm over it. And while you might want to make the argument that there's minor juxtapositions in the rhythm, that's the whole point of sprung rhythm, is that there are variances.

So how is sprung rhythm, or sprung beat, how is sprung meter different from juxtaposed meter? Well, basically, sprung meter means that one thing is repeated, one thing is sprung. So, the beat is repeated but the rhythm is sprung, or the rhythm is repeated but the beat is sprung. Juxtaposed means that it's going from one type of meter, whatever that is, to a different type of meter. For example, if we were to have one character speak in the Wakefield Master's meter, and then the next person answers them in iambic pentameter, that would be juxtaposed. If one person starts a soliloquy in free verse – that is there is no repeated rhythm, there is no repeated beat, all of it is sprung – and then suddenly we're in a repeated beat with sprung rhythm, that would be a juxtaposed meter. This can be very subtle or it can be very jarring.

We're going to look first at a subtle example, sort of build up to a subtle example. Then we're going to look at a very jarring example. Both of these are from plays that I've written. The first one that we're going to listen to, the subtle version, what we're going to call a minor juxtaposition, is from *The Table Round*, which is my Arthurian duology, and we actually will be doing an entire mini-season starting right around Christmas on Arthurian verse plays, which go back to the 1560s – crazy – up through plays that were written last year, including mine and including many living playwrights, which is very, very, very cool.

Before we get into the text of *The Table Round* and the minor juxtaposition, something that I want to point out for everyone is that we're now moving further and further away from poetical forms and closer and closer to dramatic forms. Just as we were talking about before, that a lot of poetry, like the Wakefield Master, uses a set meter, even if some of the lines might be juxtaposed against each other, like in the Wakefield Master or as in a limerick, even so, that's repeated. It's a set meter. It is meant to be x type of beat, x number of feet on x number of lines. It's a certain established pattern. But, as we said way back in that first episode, what we're doing is verse *drama*, and so what we're trying to do is create language that is both heightened and beautiful and epic, but only as that's appropriate. We'll have another episode on the danger and pitfall of getting too much into poetry when writing verse drama, but that's for the future.

But the thing about sprung rhythm, to go back for a second, is that sprung rhythm is something that's going to get you closer to sounding like a natural line of dialogue, even when it's in verse form. Because, again, all of English is in sprung rhythm, so what might make it feel, therefore, more like verse is to have a very set beat and then sprung rhythm, so that perhaps you feel a pulse underneath. But even that isn't quite sufficient for the purposes of drama, because in drama, the whole idea is that we have a multiplicity of different characters who have different feelings, different emotions, different wants, different needs, and also different stresses and pulls and influences on them. One of the great things about juxtaposition is that, essentially, rather like with musical leitmotifs where you can set up… A leitmotif is any piece of music that's used to introduce an idea or a character or an action. If you know your John Williams, for example, then you know whenever you hear (sings *Indiana Jones* theme), Indiana Jones is going to be on your screen. If you hear (sings Darth Vader's theme from *Star Wars*) who's going to be on your screen? Darth Vader's going to be on your screen. If you hear (sings theme from *Harry Potter*) who's on your screen? Harry Potter's on your screen. And if you hear (sings the theme from *Jaws*) what's on your screen? Well, there's this giant, mechanical, and badly malfunctioning attempt at a terrible, man-eating shark on your screen. John Williams uses leitmotifs. Again, a leitmotif is a piece of music that repeats, that signifies.

We can do something similar with juxtaposed meter, because we can take a certain meter that we develop and say, for example, this belongs to this group of people. Or this meter signifies this philosophical idea in my world. Or this meter is for just this person alone or just this relationship alone. In *Romeo and Juliet*, it's really interesting to see, for example, that while the whole thing is in variations on iambic pentameter, largely in iambic pentameter, but you have, for example, Mercutio juxtaposes by going into prose a lot, as does the Nurse. In meter, however, Friar Lawrence juxtaposes by going into rhymed couplets when he's speaking with Romeo. It's like he and Romeo almost have a secret language where they start speaking in rhymed couplets, almost exclusively, to each other. It's still in iambic pentameter, but now it's no longer in blank verse. There's a

juxtaposition. This is something that you want to be thinking about as you are working on it as a piece of drama, not just a piece of poetry.

The next two selections I'm going to have are going to be from plays wherein they're very much opposing camps, and therefore there are different meters at play, and therefore it's interesting if characters start picking up each other's meters. What does that do? What does that mean? It's similar to, for example, at the end of the score for *The Phantom Menace*, at the end of the credits – which is just genius – at the end of the credits, you have the last iteration of Anakin's theme, which, honestly, I'm sorry, I don't remember what it is, but it's something light and bright. And then it ends with a very subtle (sings a few notes of Darth Vader's theme), and those are the last notes. And of course, that means what's going to come? Anakin Skywalker's going to turn into Darth Vader. Spoilers for a 20-year-old movie and a 40-year-old franchise. (laughs) But that's how you use juxtaposition.

Now, Anakin's theme is an example of a minor juxtaposition, where you may or you may not recognize it. A major juxtaposition, for that, we might look at *The Music Man*, by Meredith Wilson. What he sets up, he actually uses juxtaposition in order to get us to the climax of the entire musical, which is pretty cool. The juxtaposition is that Harold Hill, our lead actor, the con man, the Music Man who cannot do music, he does the majority of his music in a form of sort of proto-rap, where it even begins on the train with everyone saying

> He's a what?
> He's a what?
> He's a music man.

Then some of his earliest songs are

> You got trouble.
> You got trouble right here in River City

and it's meant to be speech-sung. His only song is when he does something that sounds like a Sousa march, which is the "Seventy-Six Trombones," and that song.

This is juxtaposed. This is a major juxtaposition against, especially, his love interest, Marian the Librarian, who is a lyric soprano, and she tends to sing like one. What's also interesting about her is that her music is done in counterpoint to other people in the town's music. She's frequently singing over, and both against and in harmony with, the town's music. One of her first early pieces is the song (sings) "Goodnight, My Someone, Goodnight, My Love." Just know that.

Over the course of this, the two of them fall into at least intrigue with each other. Then right at the climax, they have a date, they sing a song in harmony, a little bit

more… She sings it more. He comes in with harmony for the very end. He's starting to get sucked into her world, into the way that she sings, into what we would say is her meter. Then at the end of the date, he's waiting outside for her to go up to change to come back down, and he sits there, and he's very satisfied with himself, and he sings his "Seventy-Six Trombones" music. She interrupts that with "Goodnight My Someone," and she doesn't hear him. She's supposedly just up in her room doing up her hair different or something. He kind of hears that, and then he buckles back down into (sings) – I'm sorry, I don't know all the words to "Seventy-Six Trombones." It goes back and forth between their two songs, and it's jarring. It's a major juxtaposition. It's also funny because what the audience feels, since it's such a major juxtaposition, is that, oh, these two characters do not belong together. But then, right in the middle of him singing, "There were horns of every shape and…" and he stops his own music, and then for the first time, we hear him really choose to be tender. He starts singing her song.

And so what we have is we've told the story of them falling in love and of Harold Hill having a change of heart by setting up from the very beginning that they have very different meters, or, in the case of musical theatre, they have very different leitmotifs. They have very different musical styles. For us, it would be very different meters, and for us, for a major juxtaposition, they're very audible meters. Then he picks up what she puts down.

Let's get into some text after this break.

[music, quiet book sounds]

Oh, sorry, you caught me reshelving my books. On *Hamlet to Hamilton*, it's very true that we talk about a lot of different scripts, some of which are even published, and we want to make sure that you have access to not just the little part of the verse that we talk about, but to the entire script, if it is available. If you want to take a look for any of these books that we mention, such as today's *The Mother of God Visits Hell* or *Richard II* or *The Second Shepherd's Play*, go ahead over to hamlettohamilton.com. Check out our Amazon link, and you will be taken directly to the Amazon page where it is available. You'll also be kicking back a few pennies towards your favorite podcast ever. Ooh, sorry. I just gotta get back to shelving these things. Hamlettohamilton.com, and… I think I need a bigger bookshelf.

Now let's take a look, first, at a minor juxtaposition and then a major juxtaposition. The minor juxtaposition is in my play, *The Table Round*, which is an Arthurian Duology of *The Table Round*, and then play two is *The Seige Perilous*. There were a couple different meters that started to become apparent as I was writing, because I tend to write, not so much planning out beforehand that so-and-so will speak in this meter, so-and-so will speak in that meter, but discovering what the characters are doing as I write them, and then going back

and… For example, in *Cupid and Psyche*, this was one of my first things I learned, was that Aphrodite, the goddess, was speaking largely in trochees, stressed-unstressed. She was speaking largely in the family of, “I’m coming down hard. Then I’ll ease off.” I found that out, though, after she started speaking.

What I learned from that is that, at least for me, I tend to work more as an extroverted writer, where I’ll just start listening and writing as I hear what they’re saying, and then I’ll go back and I’ll do some scansion to see what they’re doing. An interesting thing about *The Table Round* is that most of the pagan characters tended to either speak in a free verse or in sprung rhythm, frequently over sextameter, or technically hexameter, but if you listened to the previous podcast, you know that I like to use base six, and it frequently is passionate or sexy for me, so I call it sextameter.

Anyway, we had a somewhat free verse for generalized pagan world. We had sextameter on hand whenever there was passion, but that also was something that Morgan le Fay used a lot. Then (laughs) much to my chagrin, King Arthur demanded to speak in perfect iambic pentameter. I remember when I first started writing for him, and I noticed that he was doing this, and I was a little bit like, “Dude, come on. You know that this is my least favorite of all the meters.” It took me a little while, but then I realized that for Arthur, iambic pentameter blank verse is safety. It’s calmness. It is that heartbeat that the angry academians from last week’s podcast all say it is. It’s rules. It’s structure. It’s very, very solid and set, and it’s where he felt most comfortable. I had to give in. That was King Arthur’s happy place, and so iambic pentameter became sort of what Camelot is at its most structured.

Again, we had free verse always available, but especially accessible to anyone with a pagan background. We had sextameter available, as always, for passion, for an overflow of emotion. And then we had iambic pentameter, strict, perfect iambic pentameter which had no sprung rhythm whatsoever, so complete repeated rhythm, complete repeated beat. But, as you can tell, the juxtaposition is fairly slight. The difference between six and five is small. It will be felt by the audience, though. It’s quiet, but still the audience will feel it even if they’re not aware they’re feeling it.

Let’s take a look. I’ll read both Guinevere, and then a little bit later in the scene, I’ll read Arthur. Then we’ll go back and we’ll look at the scansion. This is Guinevere’s first arrival to Camelot. In this version, she is a pagan queen from Wales, and she begins with:

GUINEVERE. What wouldst thou, Camelot? Thou call’st me hither,
Whither I would not be, but that thou call’st me: Queen.
I *am* a Queen, of a country thou hast ruined;
Monarch of a mangled people thy “Holy” King

Hath deemed less worthy than his own to stay alive.
And here am I, summoned to sleep within his bed…

(Kneeling. Touching the ground.)

GUINEVERE. I cannot feel the Earth. The Magic
Of my ancestors, the roar of that Red Dragon
Are muffled here in Camelot, buried
Beneath the stone and steel that weigh unnatural
Upon our fragile land. What wouldst thou, Camelot?
I feel myself am conquered, here, already.
Trapped between these standing stones—that *he*
Hath built to other gods than mine. And yet:
I'll be no beggar here, constrained by war to wed,
But make proud Arthur bend the knee, and beg me to his bed.
By all *my* gods, I swear it.

That's Guinevere, and then a few pages later, Arthur arrives, and this is his first major speech. See if you feel any differences. Then we'll go back and look at the scansion. He says:

ARTHUR. Your pardon, lady. Believe you are well-met.
Although our greeting here was—*hearty*,
And rough as may befit a bachelor court,
Believe ourselves are gentle as the lamb.
Upon our shield we bear no beast but this:
The Virgin Mary pregnant with her Christ.
And child-like, we here lay by—yea, *all of us*—
Those arms we bear, unbloodied by our guests;
That with: *(Doing so:) bare arms*—we may embrace
The Queen of Wales, whose golden crown
We hope shall grace this azure field of ours,
And make a triple crown to quell all Britony,
And bring this warring isle beneath one blessèd Hand.
Hail, Guinevere. Well met.

You can hear immediately that there are some differences. You might have even felt at some point that pulse of familiar iambic pentameter.

Let's go back and take a quick look. I'll snap out the beats so that you can hear as well where the line endings are, because the line endings for Guinevere become less and less end stopped, where as most of Arthur's stuff, because it's this perfect iambic pentameter, the thought or the prepositional phrase end with the line. They're very end stopped. It doesn't flow over into the next line. So, Guinevere:

What wóuldst thou, Cámelót? Thou cáll'st me híther,

It actually starts in iambic pentameter, but she's stuck in Camelot. But then she comes in with:

Whíther I wóuld not bé, but thát thou cáll'st me: Quéen.

She immediately takes over with her own six, and in fact, in the trochee rather than in the iamb family, so in the reversal family.

I *ám* a Quéen, of a cóuntry thóu hast rúined;

And you can feel, okay, that sprung over the five.

Mónarch óf a mángled péople thy "Hóly" Kíng

That's seven, again in the trochee.

Hath déemed less wórthy than his ówn to stáy alíve.

Back in five, still sprung.

And hére am Í, súmmoned to sléep withín his béd…

Six, still sprung. And then there's actually, you heard a long pause, because I do a lot with silences, and there are quite a few modern verse playwrights who also work with silence. We will be dealing with that in a future tool boudoir episode. But there's a stage direction that says she kneels to touch the ground, so that would take up some time, and then she would come in with:

I cánnot féel the Éarth. The Mágic

That's six.

Of my áncestórs, the róar of thát Red Drágon

Six.

Are múffled hére in Cámelót, búried

Six.

Benéath the stóne and stéel that wéigh unnátural

Six. It's interesting, though, because she's in her meter, but in his rhythm.

Upón our frágile lánd. What wóuldst thou, Cámelót?

That’s six, but still in his rhythm.

I féel mysélf am cónquered, hére, alréady.

Perfect iambic pentameter. And when you get to the final

I’ll bé no béggar hére, constráined by wár to wéd,
But máke proud Árthur bénd the knée, and bég me tó his béd.

you can feel that they’re longer lines to begin with. And so it’s just taking over.

Okay, so those are some interesting things, and those are clues that an actor could pick up, that a dramaturg could pick up. It’s very subtle, and you can do it – I actually did this in a more extroverted than an introverted way, so I wasn’t sitting there going, “Aha, I shall do this,” but going back, I’m like, “Oh, wow, that's rather clever, isn’t it?” But this is the sort of thing that is valuable information to your actors, should they decide to do the work of scansion.

Let’s take a look at Arthur.

Your párdon, lády. Belíeve you áre well-mét.

Okay, he’s, you know, he’s flirting with a trochee there on “Believe.” (laughs)

Althóugh our gréeting hére was—*héarty*,

And there’s a hyphen there. We’ll be talking about emotive punctuation in another episode, but it takes the place of a rest. It’s a silence.

And róugh as máy befít a báchelor cóurt,

We’re still… There’s a little spring, but we’re getting more and more into his happy place. In fact,

Belíeve oursélves are géntle ás the lámb.
Upón our shíeld we béar no béast but thís:
The Vírgin Máry prégnant wíth her Chríst.

Do you hear that? He starts to slip in. And what was fascinating, because there are still some variations in the later part, but what was fascinating was when we were rehearsing, especially this part, because there’s… Guinevere comes in and she’s surrounded by her warrior women, and Lancelot comes in and he’s ready to take on all of these Welsh women, and it’s very fraught with tension. Then Arthur comes on, and he slowly slips us into iambic pentameter, into perfect

iambic pentameter, and you could actually feel the audience starting to ride the rhythm and the meter that they knew. It was really fascinating. It had an effect on the audience, even though they weren't sitting there and counting out where the line endings were and what the meter was. So a minor juxtaposition still is going to have an effect on the audience.

Now let's take a look at a major juxtaposition. This comes from my play *The Other, Other Woman*, which is a French farce, and unlike *The Table Round*, where I wrote, really, completely on instinct and then wrestled a little bit with Arthur's predilection for iambic pentameter, this play was predicated upon the idea, the introverted idea, that I wanted to do a French farce, sort of Moliere-esque, in rhyming couplets, primarily. Then the idea was to break that into different types of meter.

Now, I actually saw a different play that used a similar idea, where they had everyone speaking in rhyming couplets except the people from Ireland spoke in limericks. The people from England spoke in sonnets. They even used a sestina, which is a very complicated form of poetry. I think it kind of worked, to tell the story they were telling. But for me, it was a question of content dictates form, and so just like with *The Music Man*, where the whole point is that this guy sort of learns music, literally, and by the end he's singing her a song, in the same way, I was interested in having a language that was sort of like a secret language for these people who are invested in an emotional, extramarital affair. The idea, too, that the normal speak for this town would be in rhyming couplets, that we'd be signifying, and again, eliciting from the audience, because the audience is accustomed to certain meters, right? They already have an idea, for example with King Arthur, that iambic pentameter sort of equals Shakespeare's history plays, sort of equals "I feel calm for some reason." In the same way, bouncing rhyming couplets, and then coupled with the milieu of a French farce, that makes sense. We expect that. What happens, then, when I break it? What happens when I start revealing that, in fact, if we're speaking rhyming couplets, we're not telling the truth? We're obscuring who we are. We're speaking in an accepted mode, but not in an honest mode.

This whole play used verse and then used different forms of verse, different meters of verse, and then also it breaks apart into prose and subtext, and then it breaks apart into silence as we keep revealing each layer of these different relationships and the rawness between them.

I'm very proud of this play, actually, even just as a piece of text and what verse can do. Like *The Table Round*, both of these are available on New Play Exchange, and there will be links if you want to read them and try it out yourself.

Let's take a look. I'm going to ask the wonderful Colin Kovarik to read the role of Monsieur Valentine. I'll be reading the role of Princess Genevieve. This is their first meeting, and what you need to know, although this is Act II, scene 15,

because it’s cut into French scenes – which is whenever a character enters or exits the scene, it’s considered a new scene, so there’s lots of scenes in the play – and this is a six-act play, not a five-act play. We’ll talk about act structure another time.

But what you need to know is that, for the audience, they’ve had about a half an hour of incredibly strict, bouncing, rhyming tetrameter. They’ve had rhyming couplets and rhyming throuplets in very heavy ba-DA-da-da DA-da-da DA-da-da DA-da-da, and everything within a certain family, a certain rhythmic family. And so here we are. This is their first meeting. Genevieve has come to town to try to get the wayward people of the Town of Voulez-Vous to finally embrace monogamy, and she’s meeting with Valentine, who is the only man who appears to be faithful to his wife. But what she doesn’t know is, while he’s faithful, it’s a toxic relationship. And what he doesn’t know is that he’s ready to be out of it.

So, *The Other, Other Woman*, Act II, scene 15, Genevieve and Valentine. Thank you, Colin Kovarik.

GENEVIEVE. Your reputation proceeds you as a virtuous soul:
The paragon politician who exerts self-control.
A man who is honest—and who, without complaint,
To his wife remains faithful. In short, sir, a saint.

VALENTINE. I doubt that conclusion. But thank you, your Grace.

GENEVIEVE. Genevieve, my good sir. At least in this place.
Won’t you be seated?

VALENTINE. *Merci.*

GENEVIEVE. *De rien.*
So tell me, monsieur, what makes you the man?

VALENTINE. ...For?

GENEVIEVE. Making new laws. And enforcing them, too.

VALENTINE. I’m simply a lawyer. That’s not what I do.
I’m practiced in law, but this town’s clientele
Largely wants contracts.

GENEVIEVE. For their businesses?

VALENTINE. *Well...*
For their *business*, or rather—to say: to outline their diversions.
What one lover will do or not do, and with how many persons.

Who gets what money, progeny, custody from those…excursions.
In short, your/H…

GENEVIEVE. *Genevieve.*

VALENTINE. …*Genevieve*. I outline their perversions.

GENEVIEVE. *(Heavenward.)* Praise the Lord.

VALENTINE. …You *approve*?

GENEVIEVE. Of their actions? *Pas de tout*.
But if I understand correctly: neither do you.

VALENTINE. I'm just their lawyer—

GENEVIEVE. Indeed, you were forced.
You chose before choosing, which is not an endors-ment
Of the things that they do.
Indeed, Valentine, if it were all up to you:
What laws would you pass? Regarding marriage and s…uch?
You needn't fear to expose your true heart to my/[~~touch~~]…

VALENTINE. Can we speak like people?

(A pause.)

VALENTINE. …I know it's not the custom, but:
It's been a long morning. A never-ending dawn
That never *quite* rises: like fog or thick goose feathers
Through which one can almost—*squinting*—
Believe the distant burning speck will not recede
Beneath earth's heavy counterpane again.
It's difficult to believe the sun will rise
When every dawn it teeters on th'horizon.
Sick, and full of daily obligations. Of promises
You're sorry that you keep—I speak too freely.

GENEVIEVE. No. No.
—'Tis strange to speak so freely, and yet:
There's something in you invites a confidence.
I would change the world.

VALENTINE. Are not afeared?

GENEVIEVE. Am petrified!

Emily C. A. Snyder © 2020

Okay, so if we were to go back and do our work of scansion, we'll take a look just at Genevieve's first few lines. Also, bravo, Colin. Thank you so much. So:

> Your reputátion procéeds you as a vírtuous sóul:
> The paragón politícian who exérts self-contról.
> A mán who is hónest—and whó, without compláint,

So she's got sprung rhythm, but you can feel the strong four.

> To his wífe remains fáithful. In shórt, sir, a sáint.

Now, it's interesting, when he gets to

> For their *búsiness,* or ráther—to sáy: to outlíne their divérsions

You can feel it's a longer line. He's not… He's pulling even at the meter. Even though he's technically rhyming, and you see as well he's got a triple rhyme there, which, once again, the use of a triple rhyme, just like anything else, just like any other juxtaposition or the lengthening of a line or the shortening of a line, all these juxtapositions can tell your actors something.

Something else that you should notice is that there tends to be a lot of overlap. There's something called stichomythia and shared lines that we'll be talking about in future episodes. But just put a pin in that. Keep your ear out for what those mean. And I bet you, you felt… Like, your stomach dropped when we broke from the rhyming couplets and tetrameter into this blank verse. Now, this blank verse is a little free. Let's actually listen to it. The first line he speaks that is a full line is:

> It's béen a long mórning. A néver-énding dáwn

Five.

> That néver *quite* ríses: like fóg or thíck goose féathers

Five.

> Through whích one can álmost

There's a hyphen

> —*squínting*—

hyphen, and again, hyphens for me are rests. We'll be talking about emotive punctuation.

Belíeve the dístant búrning spéck will nót recéde

Six.

Benéath earth's héavy cóunterpáne agáin.

Five.

It's dífficult to belíeve the sún will ríse

Four?

When évery dáwn it téeters ón th'horízon.

That's strict five.

Síck, and fúll of dáily óbligátions. Of prómises

Six.

You're sórry thát you kéep—I spéak too fréely.

Five, and even in iambs. But if you could hear, it was much more free, really. While each line was keeping closer to five, sometimes straying into six, sometimes straying into four, there was no particular rhythmic pattern that was being used. And in fact, it tended to just open and close, like he wasn't quite sure how to do this. He was not in a natural pattern to himself. He was working it out. He was working it through.

It's interesting. Let's take a look at Genevieve, after she has, "No, no," which is its own line.

—'Tis stránge to spéak so fréely, and yét:
There's sómething in yóu invítes a cónfidénce.
Í would chánge the wórld.

So she starts in something closer to iambic, and even pentameter, and then she goes into trochees, which, again, is usually, for me, tends to be a power move, because you start with power at the beginning of the line. That's how I feel it, anyway. Again, someone else might feel it differently.

But I have to tell you that every time we performed this play, and we performed this particular scene – which I don't usually write out of chronological order. I tend to start at the top of a play, and I just write through – but this was a scene that

existed long before the play was even partially formed, and then it finally found where it belongs in the play. When we were working on it with the original actors, it was like all the air had been taken out of the room or the bottom had dropped out of the floor, or you were punched in the gut, but you could feel the change. It felt like a drop. I mean, it felt like the world changing. Therefore, to feel it in context after half an hour of relentless ba-DA-ba-da ba-DA-ba-da ba-DA-ba-da ba-DA-ba-da, relentless, relentless, relentless rhyming couplets, which were wicked fun, I mean, loads of fun. But still, you know, you just expect, okay, this is going to be the whole play. As soon as this moment happened, as soon as he said,

> Can we speak like people?

the whole audience held their breath. And then he would finish the line,

> I know it's not the custom, but…

and he could have rhymed that.

> It's been a long morning. A never-ending dawn

And it was so curious. The audience didn't quite know when to breathe again, because he had violated the rules of the world, which – content dictates form – that's what this character is doing in the play. He is violating the rules of the world, because he's about to reach for something that he doesn't think he's allowed to have, and he needs a different language for it.

And, as we can see with this major juxtaposition, Genevieve picks up his language. And in fact, I think they're the only characters in the entire play… Well, a little bit Lucrece, Valentine's wife, but by and large, they're the only characters that speak in blank verse to each other. And then as they get more comfortable with each other, they and Lucrece, his wife, slip into prose and then slip into silence, and it's… It really works. I cannot, as a dramatist, recommend using juxtaposed meter any more strongly. It is so effective. It is so effective, and that's the whole point. We are telling stories with our bodies, and unless you are telling a story where everyone is the same, using the same meter for everyone is not going to be as effective in your storytelling and what the audience receives as using at least sprung rhythm, if not sprung beat. But to juxtapose meter, mwah, chef's kiss.

Okay, we're going to finish by talking about free meter, because there is such a thing as free meter. But to review thus far, we've had repeated meter, where the beat and the rhythm are both strictly repeated. We've had sprung meter, where either the beat or the rhythm is repeated while the other one is sprung, that is to say, uses variation. We've had juxtaposed meter, where you take one form of meter, whatever that may be, and then it's juxtaposed against a different type of

meter, whatever that may be. So you could have a repeated meter, but then juxtaposed with a different type of repeated meter. You could have a repeated meter next to free meter. You could have a repeated meter next to sprung meter, so on and so forth. Possibilities are infinite. Of juxtaposed, we have minor juxtapositions and major juxtapositions. And then we have free verse, which has no repeated beat and no repeated rhythm.

To sort of summarize, I'd like to give you, actually, quick musical examples of all four versions, and then we'll look at a text that is free meter. Perhaps this will help you hear the difference between repeated, sprung, juxtaposed, and free. Again, the four different meters that we're looking at: repeated, sprung, juxtaposed, and free.

Repeated meter, and we're going to look at different pieces of music that all start in 4/4. Repeated meter would be like one, two, three, four, so we've got a repeated beat to begin with. And then (sings)

> A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
> H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P.

It's, by and large, fairly regular, isn't it? There are a few places where I do something interesting to the rhythm, but it's largely repeated. As opposed to sprung rhythm, and we'll look at sprung rhythm rather than sprung beat for music, anyway, so that you can hear the difference. Sprung rhythm is more common than sprung beat, although who knows? Maybe y'all listening out there in podcast-landia – and by the way, welcome to our listeners from Spain, Portugal, and South Africa, so lovely to have you here – but maybe all of you want to start working in sprung beat with a repeated rhythm. It would be very cool. If you're doing that, please send it my way. Let's see what you're working on. But let's take a listen to something that is sprung rhythm over a repeated beat. So where repeated beat was like

> A, B, C, D,

So a sprung meter or a sprung rhythm might sound like this (sings a song with syncopated rhythms):

> Io sono docile,
> Son rispettosa,
> Sono obbediente,
> Dolce, amorosa

Considerably more sprung than (sings)

> A, B, C, D,

Io sono docile,

Interesting, right? And you could sing the two of them at the same time. They're both in the same repeated beat, but one uses a more regular rhythm, a repeated rhythm, and one uses sprung rhythm.

If we were to talk about juxtaposition, then let's take a look, actually, at two pieces by Andrew Lloyd Weber, one from *Phantom of the Opera* and the other one from *Jesus Christ Superstar* for a minor and then a major juxtaposition. In this case, I'm going to look at tempo change juxtaposition, just because we don't really have key changes as much when we're doing verse work. That's something that musical theatre and opera has over us, is that you can actually change the key, whereas that's not a tool that we use as easily in spoken drama. We might be able to change that. Something to talk about in the future. But for right now, let's take a listen to a tempo change that works similarly to a minor juxtaposition.

In "Think of Me," for example, from *Phantom of the Opera*, most of it is in 4/4, which is what we were just doing, 1, 2, 3, 4. (sings)

A, B, C, D,

Io sono docile,

Most of it's in 4/4, and then all of a sudden it switches to 12/8, and let's see if you can feel where it switches. So, 1, 2, 3, 4. (sings)

Think of me, think of me fondly
When we've said goodbye
Remember me, once in a while
Please promise me you'll try
On that day, that not so distant day
When you are far away and free
If you ever find a moment
Spare a thought for me

Did you feel that? Did you feel that in the middle, the (sings)

Spare a thought for me

Now, if I weren't beating this out, you might not necessarily have felt that juxtaposition. It might have just felt like, ooh, she's sort of drawing that out dramatically. As a matter of fact, let me go back, and I will take it a little bit back to the 4/4. I'm not going to beat it out, but see if you still feel it. (sings)

On that day, that not so distant day
When you are far away and free
If you ever find a moment
Spare a thought for me

All right, so there's a minor juxtaposition.

Now let's take a look at a major juxtaposition, also by Andrew Lloyd Weber, although considerably earlier in his career, when he's going to go from 4/4 – 1, 2, 3, 4 – to 7/8. Once again, I'll make sure to snap the beats, and if you want to listen, this is "Heaven on Their Minds," *Jesus Christ Superstar*. My favourite version happens to be Tim Minchin, and we'll make sure that there's a link to the YouTube for that. I am a poor man's Tim Minchin, but here we go. (sings)

I remember when this whole thing began
No talk of God then, we called you a man
And believe me
My admiration for you hasn't died
But every word you say today
Gets twisted 'round some other way
And they'll hurt you if they think you've lied

Nazareth, your famous son
Should have stayed a great unknown
Like his father carving wood
He'd have made good
Tables, chairs, and oaken chests
Would have suited Jesus best
He'd have caused nobody harm, no one alarm

Listen, Jesus, do you care for your race?
Don't you see we must keep in our place?
We are occupied!
Have you forgotten how put down we are?

And so on like that. You felt that major juxtaposition, especially when we went to the (sings)

Nazareth, your famous son
Should have stayed a great unknown

Right? Suddenly it was even bouncy. The rhythm was different, as well as the beat was different. Otherwise, it's the same 4/4 that we've had. This is actually the same thing. (sings)

A, B, C, D,

Io sono docile,

Think of me, think of me fondly

I remember when this whole thing began
No talk of God then, we called you a man

Okay. We have had repeated meter, sprung meter, juxtaposed meter, and now free meter. Free meter does not have a repeated beat, does not have a repeated rhythm. If we were to do it in music, it would sound like Gregorian chant. Gregorian chant sounds like this (sings):

Salve Regina
Mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo
Et spes nostra salve

You can't put a beat under that. (sings and tries to snap along)

Salve Regina
Mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo
Et spes nos-

(laughs) It's just, nope. It doesn't actually have a beat. It wasn't written with a beat. It's not meant to be sung with a beat. Similarly, you can hear it's not a repeated rhythm. Listen to the rhythm again. (sings)

Salve Regina
Mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo
Et spes nostra salve

It's nothing repeated, whereas (sings)

I remember when this whole thing began

is

Í remémber whén this whóle thing begán

You can feel that.

Thínk of mé, thínk of me fóndly

is repeated.

A, B, C, D,

Repeated. There's some repetition to it.

There's not a repeated rhythm there either. What does this sound like if we do it in spoken verse? What does free meter feel like? Well, for that, we can take a look at T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. It would be possible, as well, to look at most translations of Greek plays, because most of the translations end up being in free meter. But since they're translations, I think it's fairer to look at what the author actually intended, so we're going to do T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.

T. S. Eliot was (laughs) he's an American expat to England, so he apparently would bristle when he'd be reminded that he was American, because he spent the majority of his adult years living in England and attempting to pass for as British as possible. This play is about the murder of St. Thomas à Becket by King Henry II of England, hence *Murder in the Cathedral*. It's supposed to take place in about the 1100s A.D., and the music at that time would be Gregorian chant. T. S. Eliot tended, actually, to write the majority of – because he's mostly a poet. You may actually know him from his overlap with Andrew Lloyd Weber, for that glorious musical, *Cats*, that waking nightmare of a movie, that beloved '80s Spandex spectacle. Anyway, they collaborated together whether he wanted to or not. (laughs) But he did write a few verse plays. He's largely known as a poet. Almost all of his poetry really is in free verse, and his verse plays are kind of all over the place in terms of scansion. But he was trying to revive the form, and I think… This will come up again when we talk about the difference between writing poetry and writing drama, because I think his major difficulty is that he wasn't actually a dramatist. He was a poet. Put a pin in that. I know we're putting pins in lots of different things, but we've got time. We'll take a look at it all.

However, here is the very beginning of *Murder in the Cathedral*, the very first few lines, actually the first stanza, which is meant to be spoken by a chorus of women. I'm going to read it, and then we'll look at the scansion. The Chorus says – and just so you know, I will give a big pause at the end of each line, just so you can hear it. Because this free verse is… There's nothing that's going to clue you in that it's the end of the line otherwise. Here we go:

Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait.
Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety that draws our feet
Towards the cathedral? What danger can be
For us, the poor, the poor women of Canterbury? what tribulation
With which we are not already familiar? There is no danger

For us, and there is no safety in the cathedral. Some presage of an act
Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet
Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.

I noticed a few things. One, I've mentioned before that T. S. Eliot's lines are just hella long, and while I don't feel that a line of six or even seven is too long, I start to get a little asthmatic on some of his lines if I don't take breaths. He does have a lot of caesuras. Again, we can talk about that more when we get to silences.

But let's take a look at what meter he is using, because he is still using meter. He is still using beat and using rhythm. He's just not repeating anything. It starts with:

Hére let us stánd, clóse by the cathédral. Hére let us wáit.

I feel six in that.

Áre we dráwn by dánger? Is it the knówledge of sáfety that dráws our féet

Seven.

Towárds the cathédral? What dánger can bé

Four.

For ús, the póor, the poor wómen of Cánterbury? what tríbulátion

Six.

With whích we are nót alréady famíliar? There ís no dánger

Six.

For ús, and thére is no sáfety ín the cathédral. Some présage óf an áct

I feel eight on that, and that was the one that was making me asthmatic.

Whích our éyes are compélled to wítness, has fórced our féet

Six.

Towárds the cathédral. We are fórced to bear wítness.

Four.

And you could hear there was no particular – it was all sprung rhythm. There was no particular repeated rhythm. The combination of completely sprung rhythm and sprung beat makes free verse, makes free meter. So:

Hére let us stánd,

Hére let us stánd,

Hmm. DUM-bum-bum-BA. Sorry, I'm even having difficulty sort of scanning out what meter.

> [NOTE FROM ESTHER WILLIAMSON, Transcriptionist, Actor and Genius: *"The name of the foot you were looking for in the Eliot is choriamb, one of my favorites!"*]

Hére let us

That's a dactyl.

stánd,

That's almost like a monometer.

clóse by the

another dactyl.

cathédral.

dum-DA-da, I would have to look that one up.

Hére let us wáit.

But do you… It's got sort of a waltzy feeling, but then

Áre we dráwn by dánger?

Trochee, trochee, trochee.

Is it the

is three strong beats. Again, I'd have to look that one up.

knówledge

Trochee.

of sáfety

I think that's an amphibrach.

that dráws

Iamb.

our féet

Iamb.

But do you feel it? It is all over the place. There is nothing repeated here. And, as we talked about in Episode 2, Content Dictates Form, it's appropriate. It's appropriate that he should be writing in free meter when that's the thing that most closely resembles Gregorian chant, and he set his play in a time when the music would have been Gregorian chant. In fact, even though common music still would use different beats, right? Think of any sort of folk tune. Still, because it's set at a cathedral, the music of the cathedral would have been a Gregorian chant, so this is all entirely appropriate.

Again, I have some issues with whether or not it's really drama, whether it's fully playable. I have staged a chunk of this, and it was very exciting, but I also was doing a lot of work. We'll be coming back to that when we talk more about things like hemischwumpfs and dischwumpfs and semischwumpfs, and ooh, what are those? More new vocab! But we're at 90 minutes now, and I'm afraid that class is over. Boo.

[music]

So your homework for this time: I would love you to find or to create these four different types of meters, which is to say you're going to try to write or to find, or to find that you've already written something that is in a strict, repeated beat. Again, you can go find a limerick and look at that. Do your scansion work on that. You can then go and find something that uses sprung rhythm or sprung beat. Either one is fine, but uses a sprung meter. Then go and find or write something that uses juxtaposed meters. And again, you can juxtapose a free meter to a very rigid, repeated meter. You can juxtapose it very tightly. You can do a minor juxtaposition or a major juxtaposition. Extra gold star if you do both. Then check out and see if you can find or create some pure free verse, some pure free meter. If you would prefer to do it this way, you can also go and find other musical examples of repeated, of sprung, juxtaposed – major and minor – and free.

Let us know what you find or what you create. And then the thing on the side that I would like you to keep – again, whether you're a writer or not, I suggest you do

this exercise – but on the side, keep a list of how you feel about it while you do it. I want to remind you that I got very angry at King Arthur as I was writing him because he was in my least favorite meter, and then I started to understand him better because he had a different feeling about that meter than I do. So jot down how trying out these different forms and meter, how it makes you feel. And then if you want to take it a step further, consider one of your characters, whether it's a character that you're playing, and so you can look at someone else's scansion if you're going for a soliloquy, or whether it's a character that you're writing – either one is fine – and see how you feel about the meter that's used, and then see how the character feels about the meter that's used.

What we didn't get into as much today, but we will be talking about in upcoming episodes, we lightly touched on the names for the different rhythmic patterns. For example, we know that an iamb is unstressed-stressed, a trochee is stressed-unstressed, an anapest is unstressed-unstressed-stressed, a dactyl is stressed-unstressed-unstressed. And again, we will link to all the different names of the different patterns, and you can start playing with those if you want, although we'll have a special exercise for you in upcoming episodes that you may want to wait for. So right now, just go off your instincts. If you're looking at the scansion of a particular piece and you're really having a strong feeling, go ahead and look up what the rhythmic pattern is, so at least you have a name for what the rhythmic pattern is and how it's hitting you. But start keeping an emotive journal about what you feel, because this is going to be incredibly helpful to you wherever you're at in terms of approaching verse drama, because this is not just – although today was very technical and these next few episodes are going to be very technical, and I hope very helpful - at the same time, none of it matters unless you have a connection to it, unless you're feeling feelings about it, unless you're doing the inside inquiry and you're asking yourself, where does this hit? How does this feel? What are the things that I'm schwumpfing together onto it? Because we're not just going to be in rhythm and beat, just sort of like DA-da DA-da DA-da DA-da DA. We're going to be putting words onto this, and we're going to be putting character onto this, and there's going to be a lot of point of views coming at us, and one of those point of views is going to be your own.

So take the time, luxuriate in the tool boudoir, and we will see you next time for (sings)

> These are a few of my versical things.
> Oom-pah-pah
> Oom-pah-pah
> Oom-pah-pah
> Oom-pah-pah
> Bum.

[music]

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COLIN. Additional voices also by Colin Kovarik.

EMILY. And original music by Taylor Benson. Special thanks to our patron, Madeleine Farley, for helping to produce this episode. Special thanks to Esther Williamson for transcripts.

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Thank you for joining us, dear friends, for all things true, good, beautiful, and frequently in verse.