

A Formula for Healing: Metric Modulation in Entheos's *Time Will Take Us All*

Abstract

Although metric modulation offers many fascinating opportunities for music-making, theorists appear to take it for granted. Authors often cite few examples without exploring the technique's nuances or application outside Western art music, with limited exceptions (e.g., Lookenbill 2023, Malawey 2007). As documented by several popular music theorists in the past two decades, metal music provides fertile ground for complex rhythmic and metric compositional devices, among these metric modulation. In their 2023 album, *Time Will Take Us All*, progressive technical death metal band Entheos thoroughly utilizes the technique, notably offering support to the lyrics, which describe the emotions experienced by lead vocalist Chaney Crabb after a serious accident. In this paper, I examine the different ways Entheos uses metric modulation and demonstrate how the device supports the overarching lyrical themes of pain, introspection, and hope.

Musical Examples¹

Example 1: "Absolute Zero," 1:13, common-beat modulation

The musical score for "Absolute Zero" (1:13) illustrates a common-beat modulation. The piece begins in 12/8 time with a tempo of quarter note = 155. At the 13th measure, the time signature changes to 4/4, maintaining the same tempo (quarter note = 155). The score includes parts for Electric Guitars, Electric Bass, Drum Set, Vox, E. Gtrs., E.B., and D. S. The lyrics are: "Now I am pull - ing my - self back out of the grave".

¹ I consulted the official guitar tabs for "Absolute Zero" and "In Purgatory" after I completed my own transcriptions, leading to some adjustments. Otherwise, all the transcriptions shown here are solely mine.

Example 2: "Darkest Day," 1:00, common-division modulation followed by a common-division/cardinality modulation

The score for "Darkest Day" is divided into three systems, each separated by a double bar line. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 102. It features Electric Guitar 1, Electric Guitar 2/Electric Bass, and Drum Set. The second system (measures 5-8) is in 12/8 time with a tempo of 68. It includes the vocal line with lyrics: "So, sink - ing sun, spi - ral on Tak - ing". The third system (measures 9-12) continues in 12/8 time with lyrics: "back Voi - ces in your head pull - ing you down". The score shows various guitar techniques like bends and slurs, and drum patterns including cymbals and snare.

Example 3: "Absolute Zero," 4:34, common-absolute duration modulation
("Absolute Zero")

The score for "Absolute Zero" is divided into two systems, each separated by a double bar line. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 12/8 time with a tempo of 155. It features Electric Guitar. The second system (measures 5-8) is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 120. It features Electric Guitar and Drum Set. The score shows various guitar techniques like bends and slurs, and drum patterns including cymbals and snare.

Example 4: "The Interior Wilderness," 2:31, proportional modulation

$\text{♩} = 110$

This system contains four staves: Electric Guitar 1 (treble clef), Electric Guitar 2 (treble clef), Electric Bass (bass clef), and Drum Set (percussion clef). The music is in 4/4 time. The guitar parts feature a melodic line in the upper register and a rhythmic accompaniment in the lower register. The bass line follows a similar rhythmic pattern. The drum set provides a steady beat with occasional accents.

This system continues the musical score with the same four staves as the first system. The key signature changes to one flat (B-flat major or D minor) in the second measure of this system. The melodic lines in the guitars and bass continue to evolve, while the drum set maintains its rhythmic foundation.

$\text{♩} = 220$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

This system introduces the vocal line. The top staff is labeled 'Vox.' and contains the lyrics: "A feel - ing like drown - ing Grasps at my ver - y be - ing". Below the vocal line are staves for Electric Guitars/Bass (E.Gtrs./E.B.) and Drum Set (D.S.). The tempo is marked as 220 beats per minute, with a note indicating that the quarter note is equal to the half note. The guitar and bass parts provide accompaniment for the vocal line, and the drum set features a more complex, syncopated rhythm.

This system continues the vocal and instrumental parts. The vocal line has the lyrics: "Beck-on - ing the cold flame As dark - ness o - ver - takes". The instrumental parts continue to provide accompaniment, with the guitar and bass lines showing some melodic variation and the drum set maintaining its rhythmic pattern.

Example 5: "I Am the Void," 1:36, cardinality modulation

$\text{♩} = 95$

Vocals 4/4 I can feel the sun - light drain - ing us all — Eve - ry day is no - thing but a death to me

E.Gtrs./ E.B. *gva*

Drum Set

$\text{♩} = 95 (\text{♩} = \text{♩})$

Vox. 3/4 Close your eyes — And — clear your head Wake the earth from be - low —
let ring — *sim.*

E.Gtrs.

E.B.

D. S. 3/4

Example 6: "In Purgatory," 2:57, direct tempo change

$\text{♩} = 125$ $\text{♩} = 85$

Vocals: Life is just a dis-tant dream here

Electric Guitar 1: Bass sustains long Bs and As

Electric Guitar 2: *8va*

Drum Set

E.Gtr. 1: Gtr. 2 and Bass sustain until second measure of next system

Vox.: If you take

E.Gtr. 1: With Gtr. 2 and Bass

D. S.: *p* \curvearrowright *f*

Vox.: It all a-way, Flesh, bone, and blood, What is it that you will have to give?

E.Gtr. 1: *8va*

D. S.: *p* \curvearrowright *f*

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