

# METER IN “ESPERANDO NA JANELA” (2000): A GLIMPSE INTO HYPERMETRIC SHIFTS AND PERCEPTION

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This abstract entails a brief metrical analysis of “Esperando na Janela” (2000), a sample of *Forró* music, which lies at the heart of Brazilian northeastern folklore. In this research, I explore this song’s meter and hypermetric structure, with special attention to how its text and musical clothing allow for a metrical shift, thus requiring hypermetric reinterpretation on the part of the listener. I will also discuss potential impacts of this shift on *forró* dance. This will finally lead to a brief investigation of the perception and reinterpretation of hypermetrical shifts rooted in phenomenology.

## 2. FORRÓ: STYLE AND HYPERMETERIC STRUCTURE

*Forró* can be regarded, along with many other hybrid forms, as an amalgamation between *baião* (as popularized in the Brazilian northeast by Luiz Gonzaga in the 1940s) and the Jamaican reggae. In its slow version, frequently referred to as *xote*, *forró* is a musical form that inherits its basic formative elements from European ballroom dances both in tonal and hypermetric structure. Thus, at a hypermetric level, it counts on duple, cyclic, metrical structural organizations. Generally, musical phrases will be multiples of 4 in number of bars, frequently displaying a [8 + 8] set up. The hypermetric structure thus, is perceived as falling on the downbeats of each set of 8 bars.

## 3. HYPERMETRIC STRUCTURE IN “ESPERANDO NA JANELA”

In the example analyzed in this abstract, however, the hypermeter suffers a shift, due to an elongation to the text and, consequently, to the stanza as a whole. Figure 1 illustrates the text and its musical accents. Figure 2 shows an organization of four metrical cells of four bars each, featuring a [(4 + 4 + 2) + (4 + 4)] organization. The symbols used in Figure 1 and 2 are the same so as to emphasize the metrical shift as occurring in text as well as in the overall structure.

The normal expectation is for m. 9 to be accented (Figure 2). Instead, the text has one more verse, which does not meet the listener’s “expectation” (as I will discuss below), thus elongating the second rhythmic cell. This results in a metrical shift delayed by two bars featuring, ultimately

a [10 + 8] structure, hence disrupting the usual (or *expected*) metrical structure in *forró* music.

## 4. HYPERMETRIC SHIFTS AND PERCEPTION

Phenomenologically speaking, the perceptual experience of this significant metrical shift bears no immediate influence on dancers, as the dance steps of *forró* music are based on the lowest metrical unit: the beat. This hypermetric shift has implications, however, for the listener. Other examples are also found throughout other forms in tonal music repertoire of various places, throughout history. Since most examples of the *forró* form will have an [8 + 8] structure, this additional elongation is promptly noticeable and causes a building in tension as the refrain approaches.

The phenomenology of perception of hypermetric shifts, in cases like *forró* music—which normally relies on a very simple and uncomplicated metric structure—may be defined in terms of a three-step perceptual model that can be understood in time. This model is based on the culturally constructed economy of tonal musical (1) expectation, (2) reality, and (3) potential reinterpretation. Since the expectation is not met in this example, the careful listener is likely to feel the tension caused by the elongated metric cell. In facing the reality of the new hypermetric point, which now marks the beginning of the refrain, the structure then is reinterpreted *retrospectively*, phenomenologically speaking.

## 5. FINAL THOUGHTS

Hypermetric shifts can be recurrent in folkloric hybrid forms in any repertoire or style that derives from European forms. This is to say that deviations in culturally constructed examples of formal, metrical, and tonal structure can play a huge role in the perception of folkloric music in phenomenological terms.

## 6. REFERENCES

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**“Esperando na Janela” (2000)**

**TEXT/POETRY**

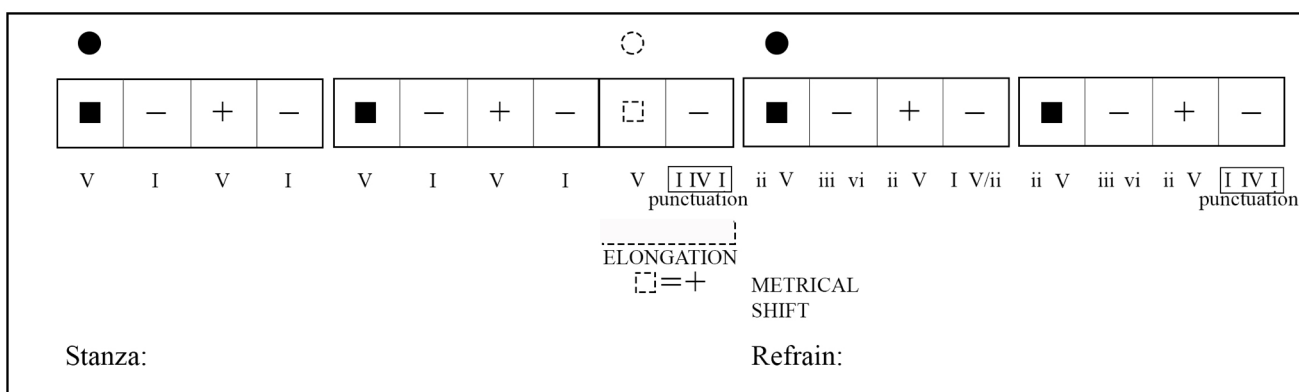
**STANZA:**

Ainda me lembro do seu **caminhar**;  
 Seu jeito de olhar, eu me lembro **bem**  
 Fico querendo sentir o seu **cheiro**;  
 É daquele jeito que ela **tem**  
 O tempo todo eu fico feito **tonto**,  
 Sempre procurando, mas ela não **vem**  
 E esse aperto no fundo do **peito**  
 Desses que o sujeito não pode aguentar, **ah**  
 E esse aperto aumenta meu **desejo** [e]  
 Eu não vejo a hora de poder lhe **falar**.

**REFRAIN:**

Por isso eu vou na casa **dela**, ai, ai  
 Falar do meu amor pra **ela**, vai;  
 Tá me esperando na **janela**, ai, ai  
 Não sei se vou me **segurar**.  
 Por isso eu vou na casa **dela**, ai, ai  
 Falar do meu amor pra **ela**, vai;  
 Tá me esperando na **janela**, ai, ai  
 Não sei se vou me **segurar**.

**Figure 1.** Poetry/text in “Esperando na Janela” (2000). Strong syllables are shown in bold and take place at the beginning of every musical bar.



**Figure 2.** Hypermetric structure in “Esperando na Janela” (2000). Each individual block represents one (1) musical bar, normally organized in [(4 + 4) + (4 +4)] fashion, but here displaying an elongation. Black circles represent the hypermeter. Black squares indicate the accents at an intermediate level. The “+” and “-” symbols represent metrically strong and weak bars, respectively, at an even lower metrical level.