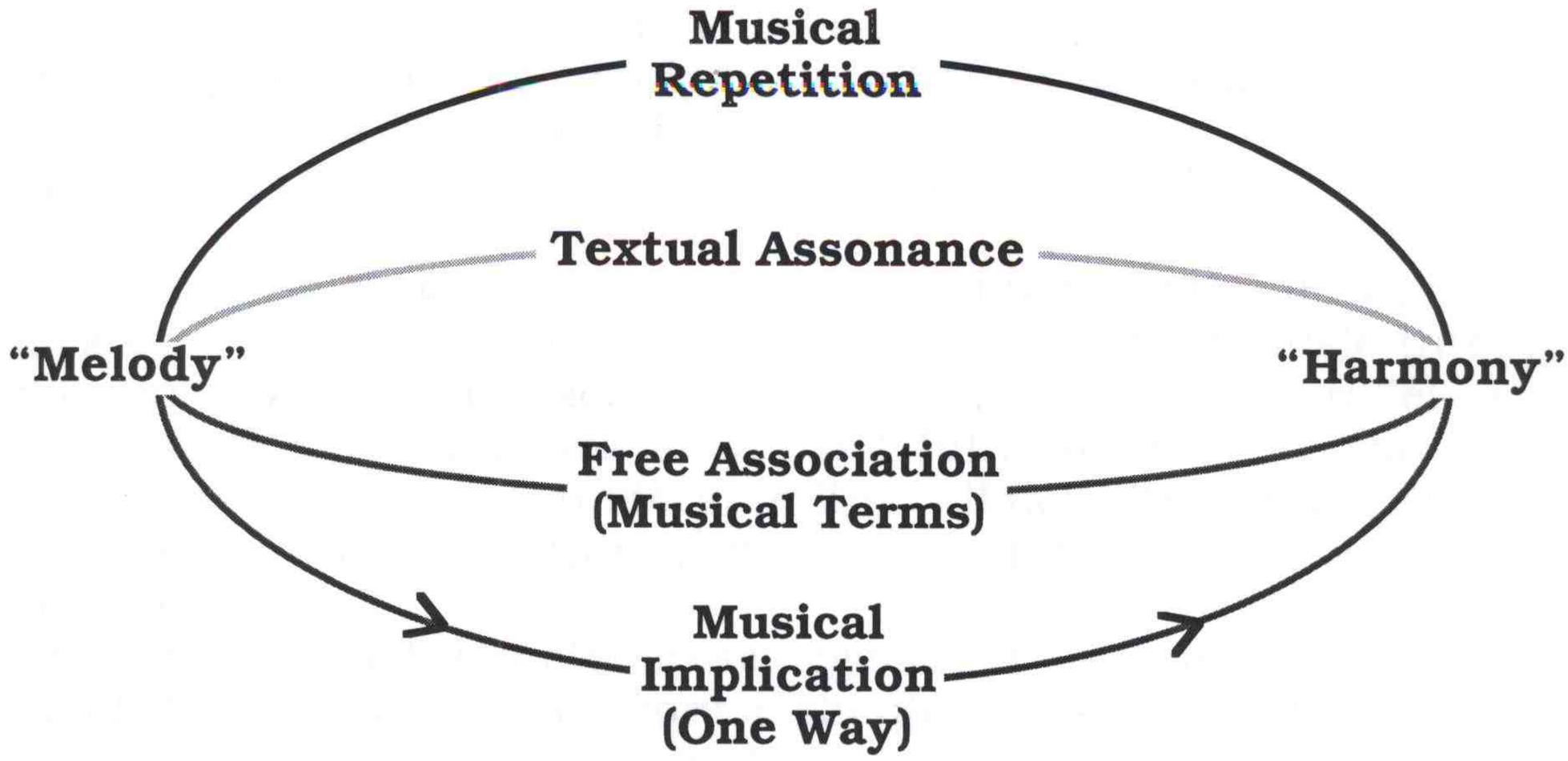
Rhyme is discarded in favour of assonance and repetition. Ending each line with a phonetic ē is all the more effective because the vowel occurs nowhere else in this refrain. The assonance between "melody" and "harmony" is enhanced because of the dipole association of musical terms. This association extends even further because both words can be applied metaphorically to the lyric; in particular, "harmony" could be reflexively interpreted as 'assonance'.

Because this text is a lyric, not an extant poem, its meaning is inextricably linked with the music. The particular assonant connection between "harmony" and "melody" therefore takes on "cross-æsthetic" dimensions:

Ex. 1.9

Cross-Æsthetic Connections of "Harmony" and "Melody"



Both words are set to the same music (musical repetition); the words are assonant; both are musical terms; a melody implies harmony, but not necessarily vice versa.

Contrasting the simple, un-ragged, style of the first refrain, the second lyric befits its ragtime accompaniment:

Musical demon,
Set your honey a-dreamin',
Won't you play me some rag
Just change that classical nag
To some sweet beautiful drag
If you will play from a copy
Of a tune that is choppy,
You'll get all my applause
And that is simply because
I want to listen to rag.

Rhymes here are colloquial and dialectic, emphasising the vernacularity of ragtime ("-al demon"/"a-dreamin'" and "applause"/"because"). The language itself is highly vernacular ("honey", "nag", "choppy"). Even the poetic description of ragtime as being a "demon" is subverted into vernacularity through the forced rhyme with "dreamin'". Imagery of ragtime being demonic is pertinent in a wider sense, because ragtime and jazz were initially frowned upon by well-to-do society folk – thus ensuring its popularity.

Berlin connects the two refrains directly by including "Won't you play me some rag" as a counterpart to the title lyric. The previous "classical" refrain is described as a "nag", whilst ragtime is considered as "sweet" and "beautiful", ("drag" is a type of dance music of the period.) "Choppy" is suitably onomatopœic – and even more so when set to the music.

Humourous use is made of triple rhymes here; the humour behind triple rhymes lies in their unexpectedness, because the Western norm is for double rhymes. Denial of expectations causes a great deal of the humour at the end of the first half of this lyric; in addition to "drag" being the third rhymed word, it is an unanticipated run-on line from the previous one, which in turn is an unexpected description of "classical".

The discussion of lyric counterpoint is problematic, notwithstanding the lack of research carried out on the subject. Western music throughout the past millennium has used counterpoint yet no such parallel exists in the literary arts. For reasons as yet not fully understood, the cognition associated with musical understanding allows stream segregation of separate lines under certain conditions, whilst that associated with language does not.

Having accepted that stream segregation of language is not possible, is it possible to come up with a theory of simultaneous lyrics? If counterpoint is defined as voices sounding together such that stream segregation is possible, then such lyrics cannot be in counterpoint: only in permanent 'dissonance'. As such, how can there be any logical analytical discussion of simultaneous texts? In these circumstances, it seems analysis can only be applied through the music – the only true contrapuntal element. This will therefore be covered in the melopoetic discussion.

Assuming that stream segregation extends to the identification of timbre, the only discussion thus possible in this section is to treat the text as vocalisations bereft of semantic allusions. A starting point is the coincidence of similar vowels and consonants. With the former, out of 67 possible vowel coincidences, only one is identical: "a" on the second beat of the second bar. Regarding coincidence of consonants, only one case is definite: "some" and "sang" towards the end of the first half. Such a rarity of vowel and consonantal coincidences aids stream segregation for the listener.

Many formal contrasts exist between the two lyrics. To fit together metrically, the ragtime text must be said at a faster pace; phrase beginnings and ends are staggered; and the rhyme schemes contrast each other –

dense rhyming in the ragtime lyric offsetting the smoother assonant simple lyric.

The Melopoetics

An unusual melopoetic case occurs in the first refrain. The lyrics of the first and last lines end identically, yet are set to dissimilar music. Likewise, the two middle lines are connected through lyric assonance, yet are also set to differing music. There is thus a counterpoint of musical and lyrical assonances. Natural textual phrasing produces the following virtual punctuation:

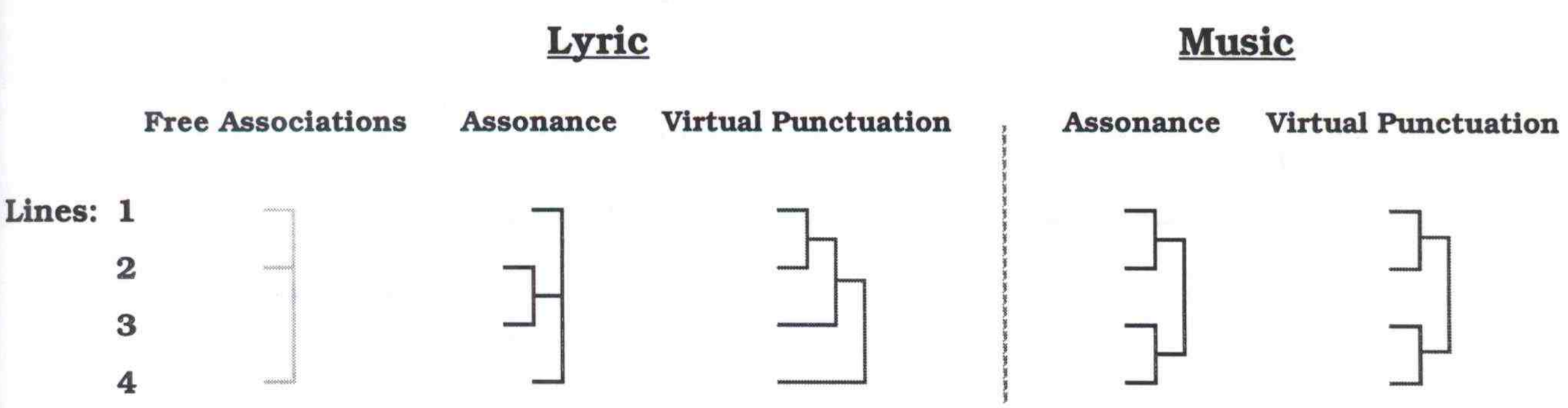
> Won't you play a simple melody
> Like my mother sang to me:
> One with good old fashioned harmony.
> Play a simple melody.

(Comparison should be made with the original, printed at the start of the lyric section)

The syntactical form is of two sentences: an antecedent run-on pair of lines with a colonised consequent, followed by a single-line sentence. Due to the simple nature of the harmony, virtual punctuation can also be unproblematically applied to the music, with two half-cadence/full-cadence pairs. By compiling this information together with the free association of the musical terms "melody" and "harmony", useful comparison can be made between the melopoetically-contrapuntal forces:

Ex. 1.10

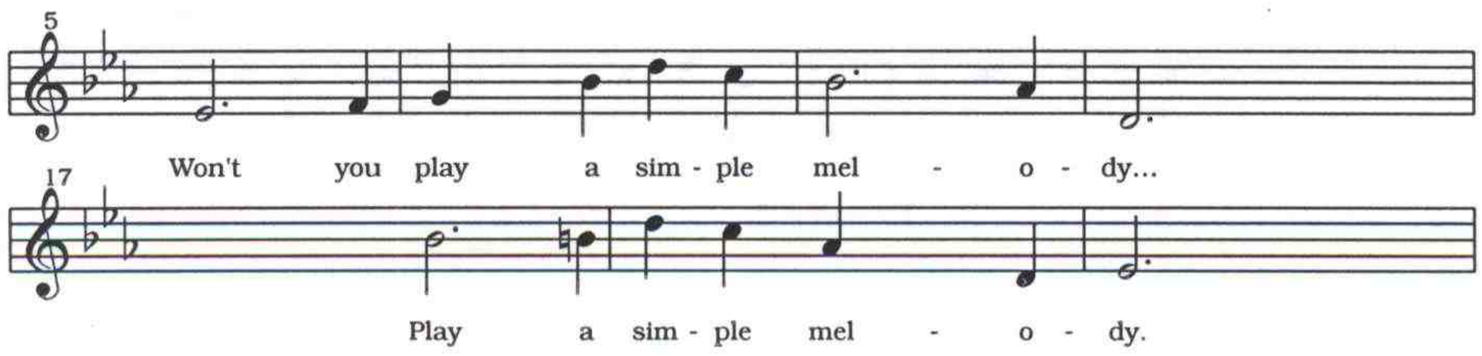
Melopoetical Counterpoint Chart: First Refrain



There is also an example of melopoetic developing variation in the first refrain between the first and last lines. What is merely abbreviated as a lyric constitutes developing variation when paired with the music:

Ex. 1.11

Melopoetic Developing Variation in the First Refrain



By contracting the phrase, lengthening "play", shortening "melody" and shifting "simple" onto the downbeat, the sentiment of the lyric has become more declamatory: a melopoetic journey has been created out of a superficially-simple sixteen-bar section.

In the melodic analysis of the second refrain, the phrases of the first line were considered as starting with three-note anacruses, because that was the derivation of the development; but the lyric phrasing differs from this pattern, providing a counterpoint. The half-bar upbeat (in cut-common time) is shifted forward a quaver and consequently elongated. This elongation of a polysyllabic word constitutes 'ragging' melopoetics. Emphasis is placed upon the ragged word due both to its shifted upbeat status and also its end-rhyme. Counterpoint of stresses is the result:

Ex. 1.12

Conflicting Phrasings in the Second Refrain



Phrasing

Music:

Lyric:

Stress Pattern

Metric:	**B**		**b**		**B**		**b**		**B**		**b**
Melopoetic:	**B**		**b**		**B**		**b**		**B**		**b**

The rising fourth scale in the melody is like the rhythm in the Gershwins' "Fascinating Rhythm": persistent. That persistence does not equate to tedium is due to it being continually interrupted. Yet interruption becomes a melopoetic tool when the imperative continuation of the scale carries a run-on line across a musical phrase-end:

Ex. 1.13

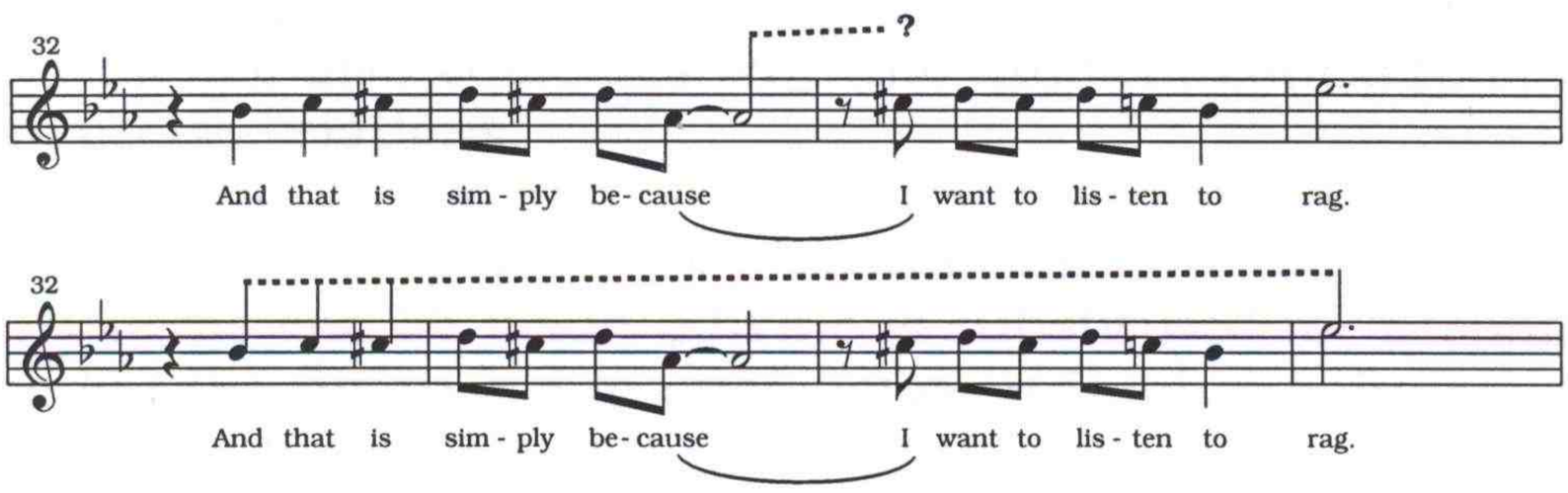
Voice-Leading Aiding Phrase-Connection



The opposite circumstance to ex. 1.13 (a voice-leading non-sequitur) is used for effect in the final lines of the second refrain:

Ex. 1.14

Short-Term Replaced by Longer-Term Voice-Leading



Instead of the expected voice-leading, as present in ex. 1.13, the connection occurs over four bars. The melopoetic effect is to shift emphasis away from the personal pronoun subject and verb, and onto the object: "rag". Because the first line of the second refrain ends in "rag" with the opposite emphasis, a melopoetic journey exists in the second refrain, as it did in the first. This parallel extends beyond lyric similarity to melopoetic similarity:

Ex. 1.15

Melopoetic Journeys in Both Refrains

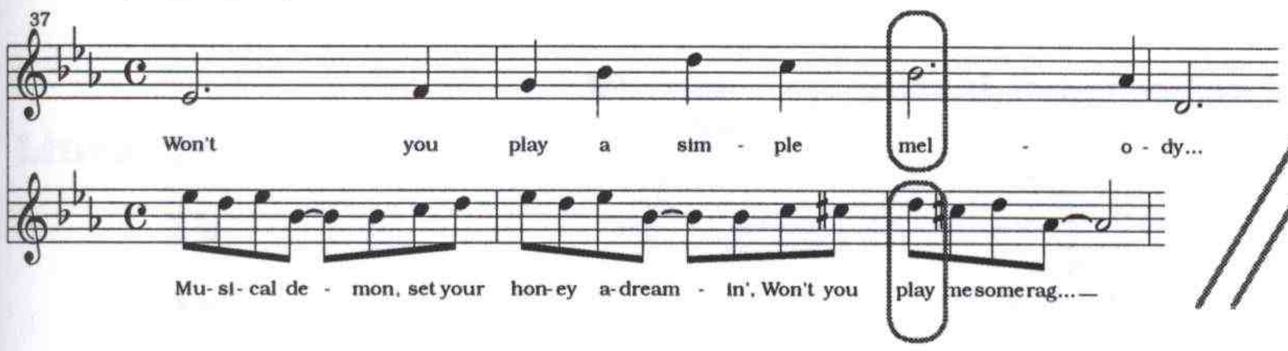
	First Line:		**Last line:**
First Refrain:	Won't you play simple melody	→	Play a simple melody
Second Refrain:	Won't you play me some rag	→	I want to listen to rag

The melopoetic journeys are opposites to each other; what goes from emphasised object to verb in the first refrain goes from verb to object in the second. Thus when the two lyrics occur in counterpoint, there are a pair of melopoetic journeys occurring simultaneously that are similar in aim but opposite in direction. Unfortunately, the emphases happen simultaneously in the first line, seemingly going against expected rules of melopoetic counterpoint. The final line's emphases do not fall prey to such a pitfall:

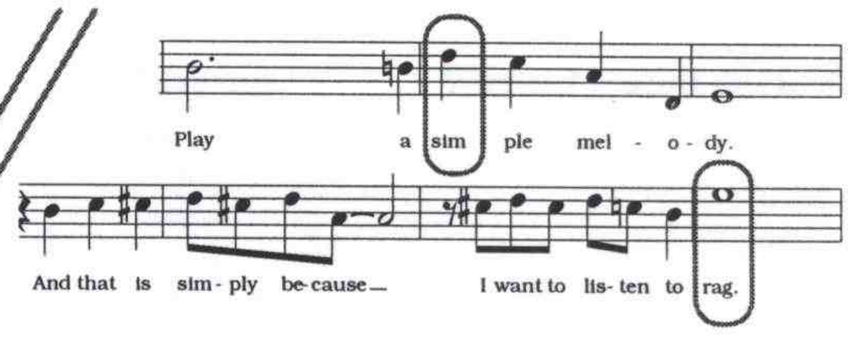
Ex. 1.16

Melopoetic Counterpoint

First Line:



Last Line:



= **Melopoetically Emphasised Syllable**

The above positive (ie. aiding stream segregation) melopoetical counterpoint at the final cadence also coincides with the musical counterpoint climax of simultaneous false relations.

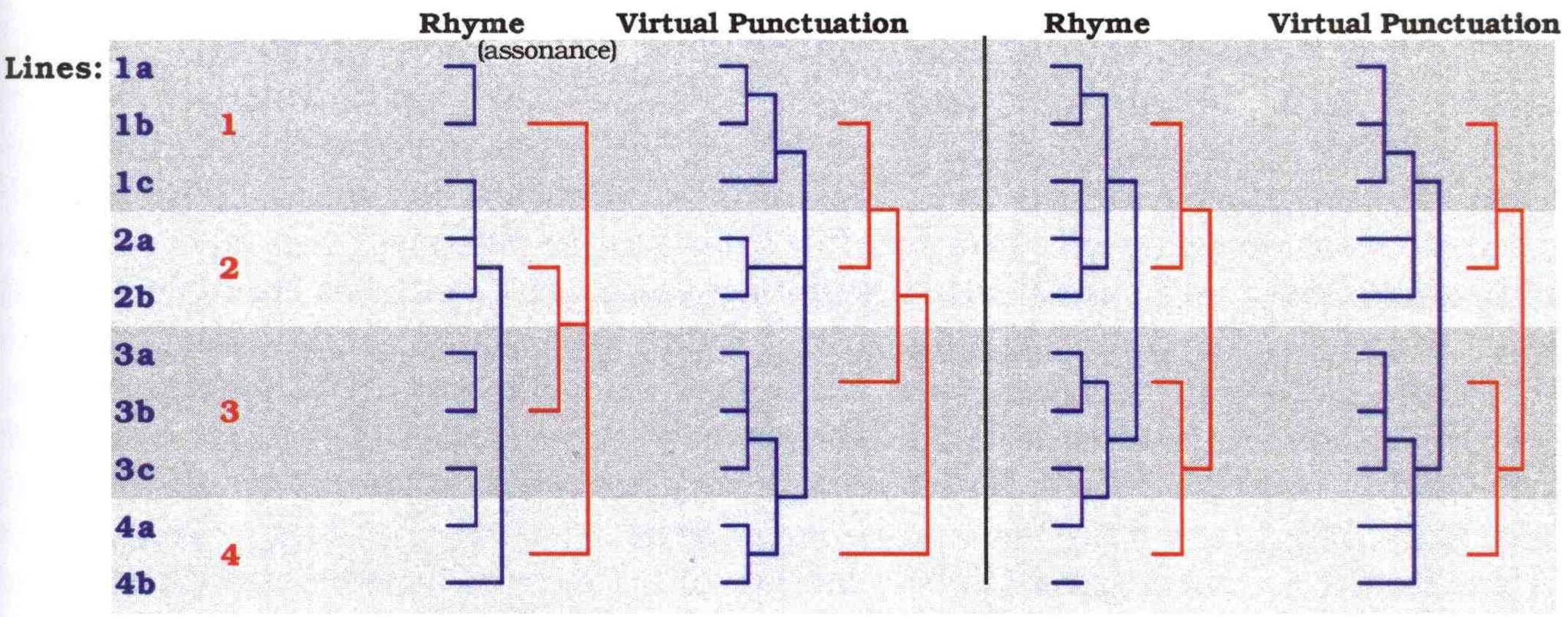
By completing virtual punctuation and assonance/rhyme tables for the second refrain, comparison of the interrelationship between the two melopoetic systems can be made. Rhyme is substituted for assonance in the tables reflecting the difference in style between the two refrains. Also, there are no easily definable associative terms in the latter.

Virtual Punctuation:

Musical demon,
Set your honey a-dreamin';
Won't you play me some rag?
Just change that classical nag
To some sweet beautiful drag.
If you will play from a copy
Of a tune that is choppy,
You'll get all my applause;
And that is simply because
I want to listen to rag.

Ex. 1.17

Conflated Melopoetic Comparisons



Red Lines = First Refrain

Blue Lines = Second Refrain

Comparing rhyme schemes/assonance, connections in the second refrain cross the 1/2 and 3/4 boundaries, so that there is already a counterpoint here. More importantly, the pairing of 1/4 and 2/3 in the earlier refrain is bisected by the connection between 2/4 in the ragtime refrain. In virtual lyric punctuation too, the schemes differ, with the second refrain hierarchically derived from two equal halves, and the first refrain not. Aside from the ragtime refrain having an extra level of musical phrase hierarchy, the syntactic musical forms are similar, although the aforementioned new material in the last phrase of the ragtime breaks up this symmetry.

From the above, it can be seen that the counterpoint between the two refrains lies more in the lyric than the music. But analysing melopoetically, new material comes to light. Whereas the first levels of both lyrical and musical rhyme in the ragtime refrain are similar, those of the simple refrain cross over (ie. the lyric connects 1/4 and 2/3, but the music connects 1/2 and 3/4). Melopoetical rhyme schemes between the two refrains are thus in counterpoint. In virtual punctuation, the second refrain has similar hierarchical schemes for both music and lyric, yet the first refrain uses a hierarchical scheme for music but not for the lyric. Thus once again, the melopoetics of the refrains are in counterpoint with one another.

Without wanting to preempt psychoacoustical research into the cognitive plausibility of melopoetics (let alone that of melopoetic counterpoint), it seems logical to propose that those qualities exhibited in Irving Berlin's "Play a Simple Melody" aid rather than hinder stream segregation of the two refrains.

George & Ira Gershwin

"The Man I Love" (1924)

During the nineteen years of their songwriting collaboration, George and Ira Gershwin completed or sketched nearly a thousand songs. The history behind "The Man I Love" is rather convoluted, but is worth documenting. It was prepared for inclusion in *Lady, Be Good!* (1924): a move that secured financial backing for the show. During its pre-Broadway tour, the song was cut because its intensity did not suit the voice of Adele Astaire. *Lady, Be Good!* became a big success without the song. The Gershwins then included the song (with the gender changed to "The Girl I Love", and consequential lyric modifications) in their first satirical operetta, *Strike Up the Band* (1927). But due to production difficulties, this show closed during pre-Broadway try-outs. The song was then tried out in *Rosalie* (1928), but was again orphaned. By this time, the song was four years old, and had become so successful as a popular (sheet music) song that its inclusion in the successful rewrite of *Strike up the Band* (1930) was impractical. Thus one of the most famous songs of the Gershwins' collaboration made its place in history outside the theatre.

The Music

The following analysis will tackle the **AABA** refrain before the verse, reflecting the order of composition.

Success in popular song relies largely on melodic memorability: 'hummability' in the language of popular music critics. Cognitive analysis might define memorability in this instance as the balancing of created expectations and the breaking of the expectations thus built up. The refrain of "The Man I Love" sets up an easily-cognitable melodic pattern using a minimum of motivic material; this is then developed into a 32-bar **AABA** structure through harmonic manipulation that is both potent yet also subtle. It thus has also the qualities required for musical memorability; historical popularity seems to add weight to this.

In the **A** sections, the principal motif (**x**) is **5 6 5 7** (invariably tied to swung quavers), developed as follows:

Ex. 2.1

Motivic Development of "x" in "A"

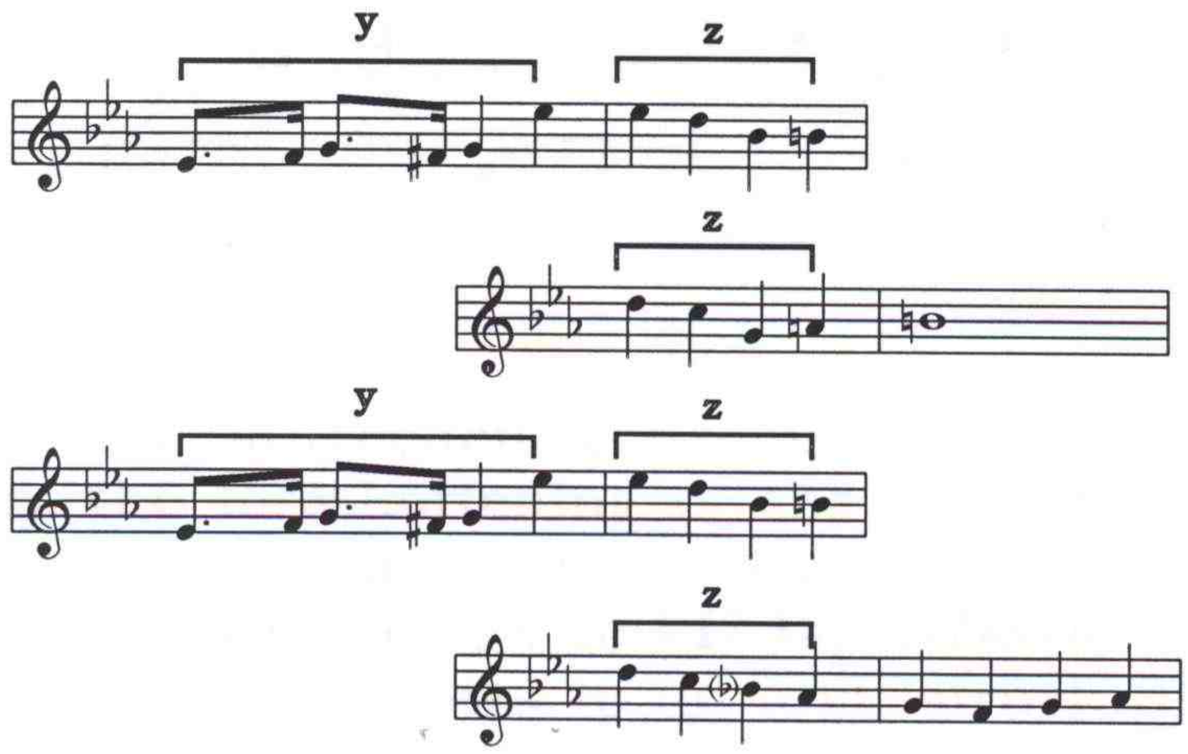


Such extensive variation of minimal material is unusual for the genre in this period; a parallel can be drawn here with Brahms' *lieder*. Also notable is the limited compass of the vocal line in the **A** sections: a diminished fifth.

B contrasts the **A** sections melodically in many ways. As opposed to a developing variation form, **B** has two new motivic units, the latter being sequentially developed: **y y z' y z z"**. Whereas phrases previously started on the semiquaver anacrusis to the second crotchet in each bar, here they start on the downbeat:

Ex. 2.2

Motivic Development in "B"

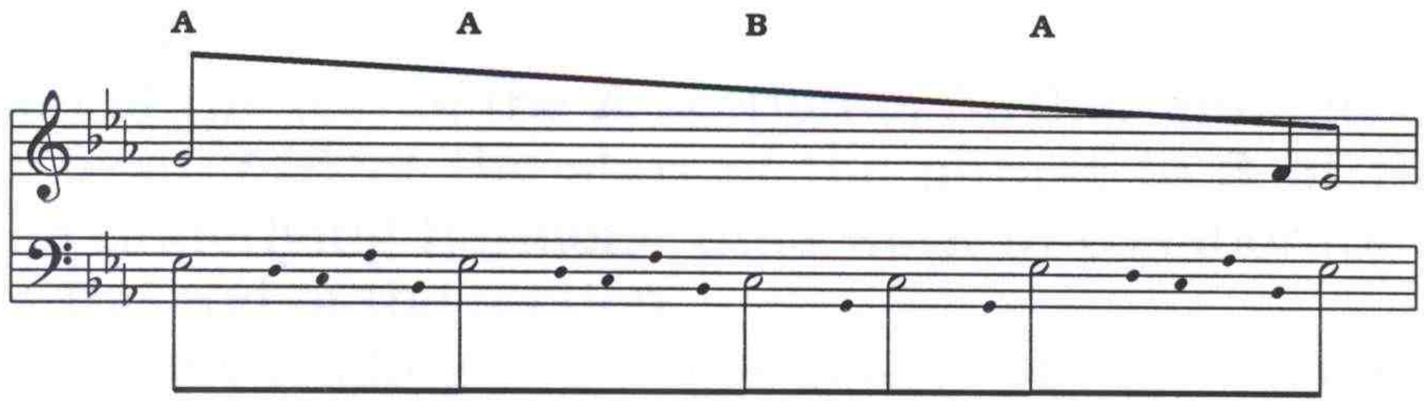


In contrast to the minimal motif **x** existing within **A**'s lean texture coupled to a harmonic movement of only one event per bar, **B** is more dense and has a harmonic rhythm of two or four times the speed. The many appoggiaturas also give an urgency not present in the quasi-improvisatory **x** motif.

One of the most remarkable (and hence endearing) features of the song is the harmonic and tonal control of the refrain. On the large scale, each **A** section is a tonic prolongation, whilst **B** digresses to the relative minor:

Ex. 2.3

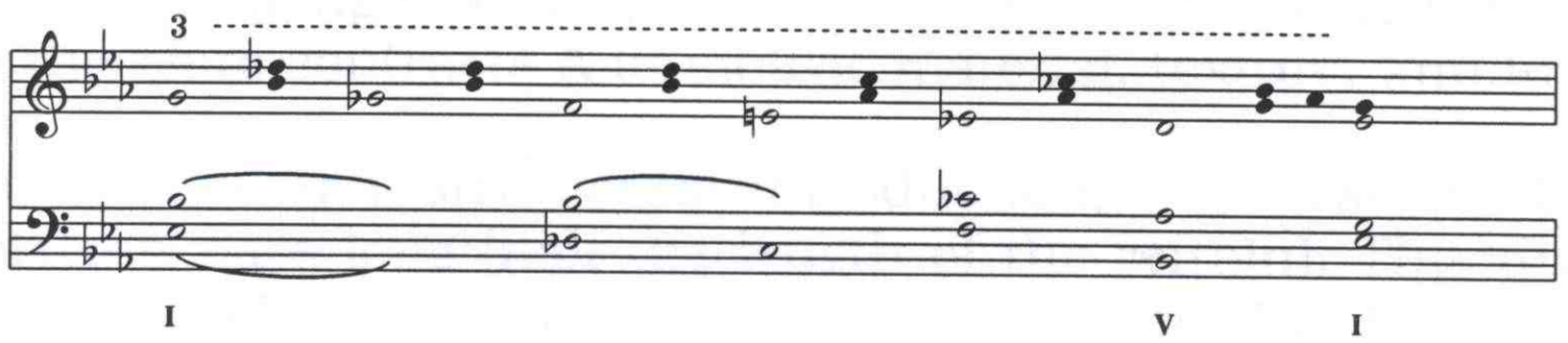
Voice-Leading Reduction of the Refrain



It is important to note that there is no large-scale dominant prolongation in the refrain. Tonal tension is controlled instead through local chromatic digressions rather than a larger tonic-dominant relationship, helping to define the song's contemplative mood.

Ex. 2.4

Voice-Leading Reduction of "A"



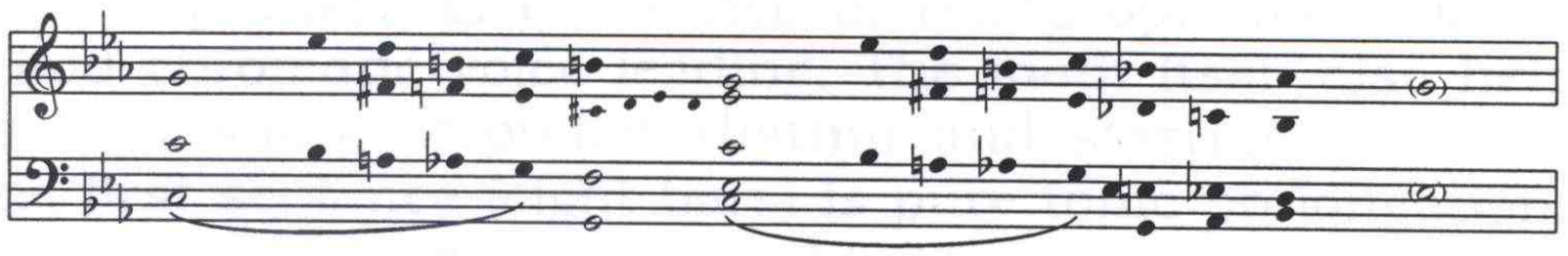
The two bar antecedent-consequent motivic structure of **A** is determined by the foreshortening of the second bar in each group: a rhythmic cadence. This antecedent-consequent structure is also reflected in the harmony: **I** resolves to **i**, **v** to **VI7,13**, **ii1/2dim7** through **V7** to **I**. The harmonic tension here equates to an arch structure, with two opposing forces meeting in the centre. Stepwise movement/chromatic voice-leading allows the initial **I** to descend to **VI7,13**, where the dominant-prolonged cycle-of-fifths pulls the harmony back to the tonic. Interaction of these two forces gives **A** its implicit momentum. The first harmonic event is a switch from major to minor third within the tonic chord: a striking effect achieved with minimal effort. From these subtle beginnings, each ensuing harmonic change is accomplished using more and more voice movement. When the cycle-of-fifths takes over, after **VI7,13**, the previously stepwise bass movement is exchanged for leaps of fifths and fourths, thus increasing the momentum even further. George's final technique to maximise tension at the end of **A** is the extending of the concluding vocal phrase into two bars. Overlapping thus occurs between a pair of antecedent-consequent phrases: the **V7** acts both as consequent to the antecedent **ii1/2dim7** and antecedent to the consequent **I**.

Resolution at the end of the **A** section is further enhanced by the vocal line's descent from **7/5** at the start of the phrase to **3** at the end. Vocal melody and the underlying harmony thus work in collaboration to drive the music towards the end of the section.

Chromatic voice leading is a major source of harmonic movement in **B** as well as **A**. But rather than a seamless **I-V-I** continuum, each of **B**'s two sub-phrases is a one-way tonal journey. **y z z'** travels from relative minor to its local dominant, and its consequential **y z z"** cadences into a restatement of the relative minor before progressing to the dominant seventh of the major:

Ex. 2.5

Voice-Leading Reduction of "B"



The local tonic pedalpoint in the bass line is an extension of the slow-

moving bass from **A** taken to extreme. Interest is maintained throughout the local tonic prolongation via the interchanges in voice leading; tonal stability (a feature of the song's atmospheric stillness) is thus achieved without tedium. **B** therefore contrasts **A** in motivic material, texture, and tonality.

After a four-bar instrumental introduction, the verse to "The Man I Love" is sixteen bars long (half the length of the refrain). This divides into two equal musical/textual sentences, each going from **I** to **V** and cadencing into the following section. The structure is very simple, using only harmonic sequence to develop a bold motif:

Ex 2.6

Melodic Development of the Verse



The first three phrases give a sense of rising optimism via the upward sequence and chromatic voice leading. The motif itself also helps: gallant due to its bold shape, crotchet rhythm and starting on the downbeat. Tonally, the first sentence (eight bars) is pure tonic prolongation: the tonic chord continually returning, most notably at the start of every phrase in the rising sequence (always in a different inversion). Only in the second phrase is a dominant prolongation used. In this instance, the A♮ in the vocal line

effects the dominant prolongation: the first functional chromatic note in the song.

As musical exposition, the verse introduces the idea of slow harmonic rhythm, chromatic voice-leading (upwardly, in contrast to the refrain), dotted quaver rhythm, the use of sequence as a developmental tool, firm E♭ tonality, and control of tension through local chromaticism rather than large-scale tonal opposition.

As musical introduction, the verse announces the arrival of the refrain through the use of the only dominant prolongation in the song. This arrival is confirmed with hindsight by phrases rising upto this point, and then falling in harmonic sequence after it.

The Lyric

George Gershwin's music in this song is unusually descriptive of a particular dramatic atmosphere, giving Ira Gershwin much help in writing an equally memorable lyric. "The Man I Love" is not a stereotypical love lyric. The protagonist is singing of love for the man that she will meet ...one day. In the verse, she tells us that she has a persistent "Prince Charming" dream; the refrain is the narration of that dream.

Verse:

When the mellow moon begins to beam,
Ev'ry night I dream a little dream;
And of course Prince Charming is the theme:
The he
For me.
Although I realize as well as you
It is seldom that a dream comes true,
To me its clear
That he'll appear.

The "Prince Charming" theme is, and necessarily always will be, a cliché of popular lyrics: idealised love encrusted with silver and gold. Ira escapes falling prey to this platitude by letting the protagonist acknowledge the cliché. This draws the audience into the song, alongside the protagonist's direct addressing of the audience ("Although I realise as well as you"). She endears herself to the listener because she confesses to a character weakness; confiding with the audience creates empathy and an interest in what she has to say next (ie. in the all-important refrain).

The refrain makes continual reference to "The man I love", "he", "him", "we" etc.: her dream depicting her concentrated passion for this imaginary protagonist.

A Some day he'll come along,
The man I love;
And he'll be big and strong,
The man I love;
And when he comes my way,
I'll do my best to make him stay.

A' He'll look at me and smile —
I'll understand;
And in a little while
He'll take my hand;
And though it seems absurd,
I know we both won't say a word.

B Maybe I shall meet him Sunday
Maybe Monday — maybe not;
Still I'm sure to meet him one day —
Maybe Tuesday
Will be my good news day.

A" He'll build a little home
Just meant for two;
From which I'll never roam —
Who would? Would you?
And so all else above,
I'm waiting for the man I love.

Considering the **A** sections alone, Ira has narrated the dream as a dynamic entity. This lifts the lyric above the more common type of love "list song", whereby facts are merely listed often with little sense of journey. The journey in this particular lyric is powerful because of the chronological thread. The first four lines of **A** describe the indeterminate future, whilst the following two lines transport us into the future-present of her reactions. Keeping within the future-present tense, **A'** draws us further into her dream by describing a specific scene. The subtlety of Ira's techniques are exemplified in his functional use of colloquialisms; the future element of events is neatly suppressed by the protagonist eliding of words in the future tense ("He'll", "I'll", "We'll, "Won't" etc.). In the final stanza, the imagery of perhaps the ultimate in idealised marriage is present: the symbol of eternal homeliness. The narrative has thus completed the journey from her hopes before meeting him, through love at first sight (the initial looking and then touching each other) to blissful marriage. It is a vivid dream succinctly conveyed to us through a minimum of words.

B contrasts **A** in many fashions. It momentarily suspends the narrative of the dream depiction, thus enhancing our ability to comprehend the **A** sections. The respite returns us partly to the literary frame provided by the verse. She expresses the urgency of her desire ("Sunday" is necessarily fewer than 7 days away), yet at the same time also exposes her self-conscious reassurings (and hence doubts) that he will turn up. Humorous rhyming of "Tuesday" with "good news day" gives the character even further depth; it is self-defensive nervous humour resulting from her insecurity.

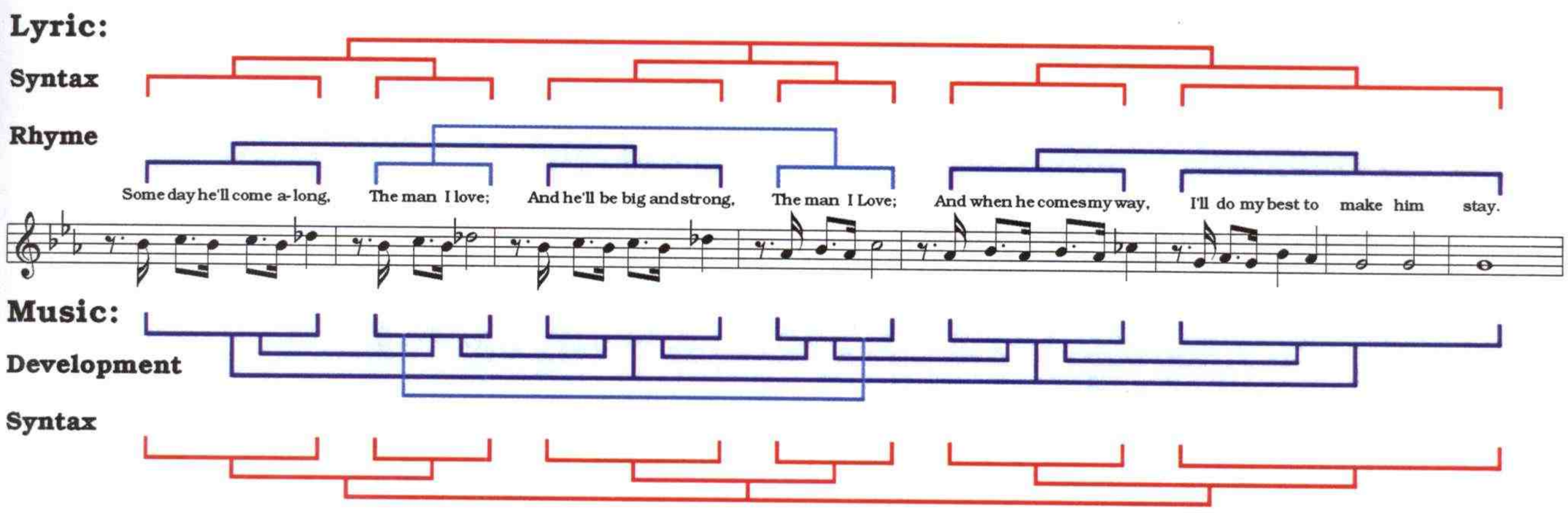
The narration frame opened up during the verse — and referred back to in the **B** section — is closed in the third line from the end, with a loaded question thrown to the audience. Her seeking affirmation of the integrity of her dream confirms the insecurity of her character and thus once again engages our empathy.

Melopoetics

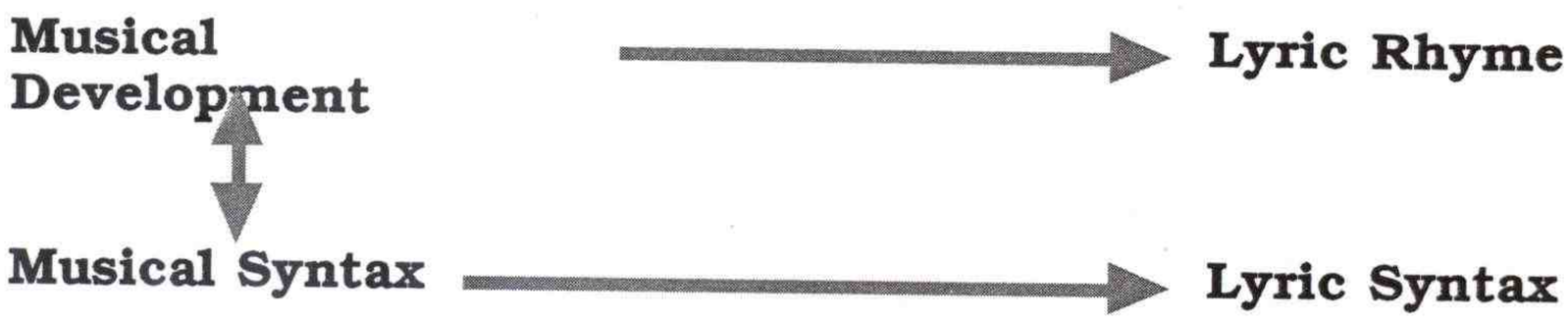
With reference to the above analyses of music and lyric, it will be seen that the large-scale forms share similarities. Both adhere to the large-scale binary form of antecedent-verse followed by consequent-refrain. Furthermore, introductory and expository functions are delegated to the verse and development to the refrain in both music and lyric. The internal forms within both verse and refrain are also shared by music and lyric alike.

Ex. 2.7

Melopoetical Structures of "A"



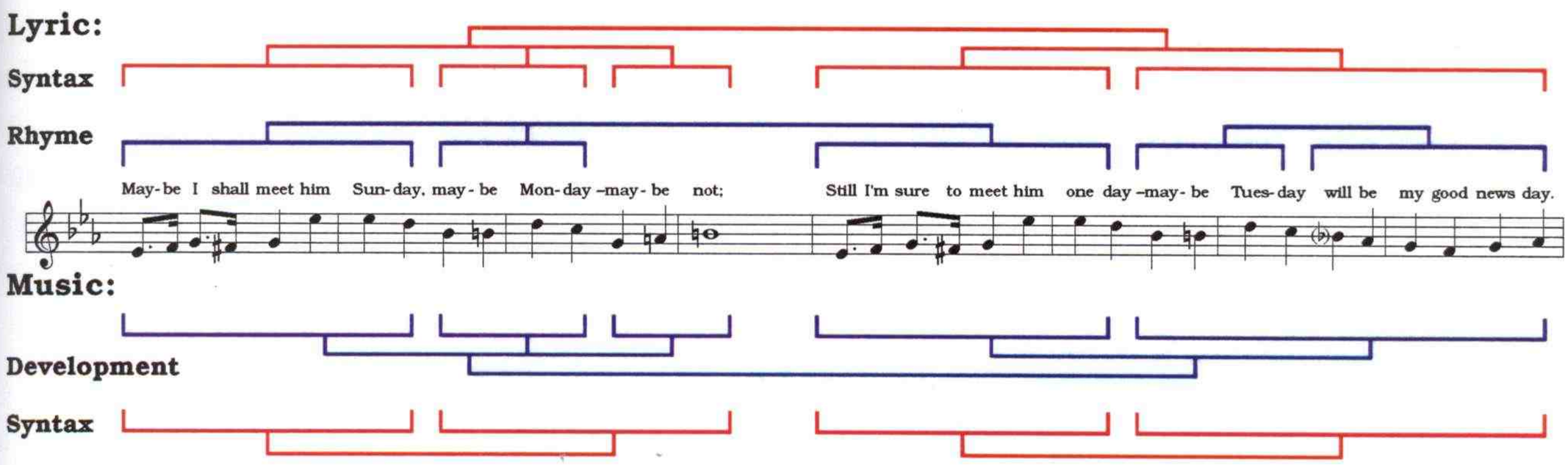
The syntax and rhyme/motivic development of the music and lyric to **A** are very closely tied. Unusually for the genre, the syntaxes of both disciplines are identical, forming three antecedent-consequent pairs; even the rhyme scheme follows the musical development of alternate phrases being contracted. The links extend further because the phrase-contractions are not only developmental but also cadential, ie. syntactic; note the close correlation between the tripartite hierarchy of the lower two charts above. Because of this, the lyric syntax and rhyme are also inextricably linked – through the music:



Allegiances differ in the **B** section:

Ex. 2.8

Melopoetical Structure of "B"

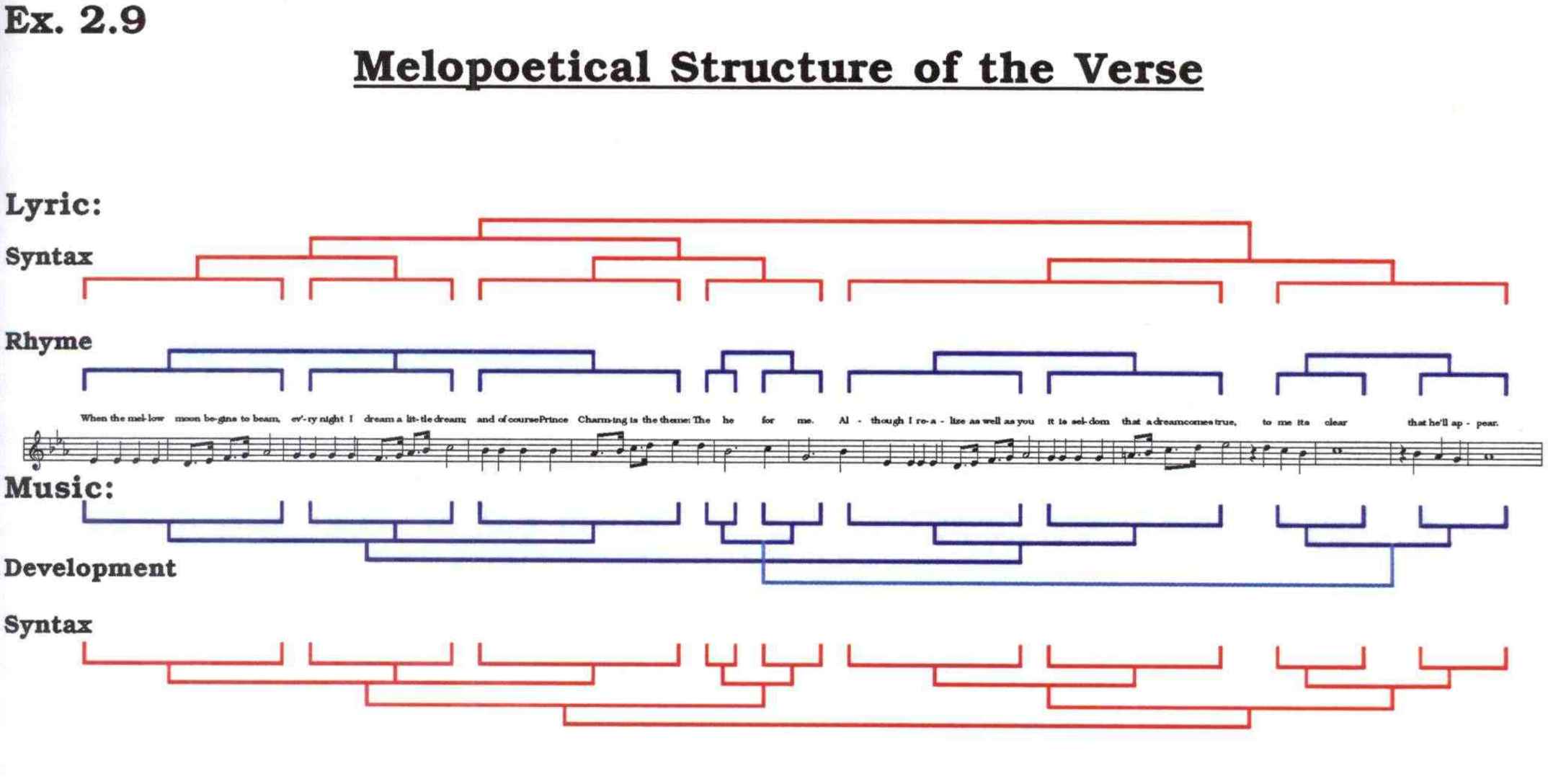


Musical syntax and development are again linked, but whilst the rhyme "Sunday"/"Monday" is set to the musical sequence (motif **z**) in the first half, the corresponding place in the second half contains only an associative connection "One day"/"Tuesday". This contradiction of expectations helps to point the humour present in its rhyme with "[good] news day". Melopoetic counterpoint is thus used to positive aural effect.

The inflexibility of the music to the verse noted previously causes problems when coupled with the lyric:

Ex. 2.9

Melopoetical Structure of the Verse



All musical sequences are rhymed accordingly, meaning that the upward sequence has an uncomfortable triple rhyme. Coupled with the unnatural lyric emphases throughout the verse (e.g. "Although I realize as well as you it is seldom that a dream comes true..."), the effect is wooden. Within the confines of such stilted word-setting, the run-on line just quoted has great difficulty in carrying across the musical phrasing.

Ira recognised the sweeping optimism in the music to the verse, and

wrote a lyric that reflects this, with vivid imagery. But setting such a lyric naturally to music that is so 'unlyrical' was a hard task, and one not achieved particularly well.

Whilst the above is an example of how negative melopoetic counterpoint can detract from cognitive intelligibility, the refrain shows just how a positive melopoetic relationship can enhance it. The refrain as a whole has little overall tonal journey, the music relying instead on local tonal digressions to sustain interest; in contrast, the strong narrative journey that runs throughout the **A** sections provides a much larger arch. Together, the large and small arches carry the song to the end in a contrapuntal relationship that benefits the whole.

"Fascinating Rhythm"
Lady, Be Good! (1924)

The complete genesis of "Fascinating Rhythm" is beyond the scope of this work[2], suffice to say that the lyric was sourced from an earlier (unused, unpublished) work by Ira, "Little Rhythm – Go 'Way". Whether or not George saw this lyric before he composed what ended up as the first eight bars of the refrain is not known. It was only when Ira was shown this promising melodic fragment that the new title-lyric came, followed by the adaptation of the older lyric.

The Music

The purpose of the four-bar introduction (ex. 2.10) is both to expose certain key motifs and set the tonality. Motif **x** becomes the key motif later in the refrain (to the words "fascinating rhythm"); the introduction thus announces the title of the song, in retrospect. The ascending parallel chords that harmonise **x** and its sequential repetition introduce the jazz harmonic style of what follows. George ingeniously repeats **x** in B major: a melodic tritone away from the start of the previous phrase. Its success lies in the German augmented sixth tonal function that it delineates. Classical strategic voice-leading thus combines and complements jazz-based parallel chords to produce an introduction that could stand as a signature for George Gershwin's musical style. The whole creates a dominant prolongation within a jazz tonality.

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[2] For a fuller description, see Deena Rosenberg, *Fascinating Rhythm: The Collaboration of George and Ira Gershwin* (London: Lime Tree, 1992), 88-91.