

Percussion Lesson

Where's the beat?
ask the crows crowing—
Where's the pulse?
ask the peepers peeping—
What's the time?
asks the river changing—
What's the measure?
What's the plan?
asks the cave
measureless to man.

circle of fifths
circle of fifths
turkey vultures fly
in a circle of fifths

The Book of Patience commands
equal temperament—
Our Lady of Holy Consonance
commands just intonation—
My mind is too tired
to answer my conscience
when it asks:
Have you crossed clave?

ave ave
I'm out of clave

Is the music of the spheres
3-2 or 2-3?

ave ave
I'm out of clave

I am falling out of ratio—
In a swoon—
in a vision I see rational numbers
inside rational numbers—
There are *ands* between one and two
ands between three and four—

multiplied
pulsified
metric

One *and and* two
two *and and and* three
three *and and and and* four—
between each *and* an infinity of *ands*
and so on infinitely.

I see the measure
divided into irrationals
I feel transcendental
numbers pulse
the beat falling
on phi
(*O Fibonacci spiral me a dream*)
on natural log e (*modulo*)
on π

I hear a drummer in West Africa
in a port neighborhood in Havana
in the Ozark highlands
banging on wood and skin

phi
e
 π

phi
e
 π

phi
e
 π

Rhythm no rational number
can corner—
no one else can find—
yet they all appear
on the real number line

ave ave
real numbers
all in and all out
of clave

moving all matter
the swing and the clatter—
the living and the latter
the ditch and the ladder

each rhythm a universe
each universe
home
to infinities
of rhythms

When the spell breaks
and I return to my soul self
I look up

circle of fifths
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