

Rhythm

Like all musical notation, rhythmic figures are quite inexact, and the correct interpretation will vary greatly depending on the context. In Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* the dotted rhythm will probably be played quite straight. After all, this is a battle scene (see page 26).

Example 2



Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*, 5 after Rehearsal 49, snare drum part

But many pieces of classical music are based on dance forms, and for those pieces our notation doesn't quite capture the right rhythm. In the "Habanera" from Bizet's *Carmen*, the sixteenth note is usually played quicker than an exact sixteenth – more like a sixteenth-note triplet.

Example 3



Bizet: *Carmen*, No. 5, 4 after Rehearsal 30, tambourine part

On the other hand, jazz is also traditionally notated with a dotted rhythm, but the sixteenth notes in this style are often played fairly relaxed – closer to eighth-note triplets. This applies to the "Cool" section of Bernstein's *West Side Story* and other pieces that have a swing feel.

Strauss waltzes also provide a great demonstration of how dance style can affect rhythm. In Example 4, from the *Emperor Waltz*, the eighth notes will probably be played tighter than exact eighths.