This dissertation examines the compositions of the American progressive metal band Dream Theater from a music-theoretical perspective. Specifically, this project identifies the primary stylistic elements the band employs in its compositions, focusing on the complex rhythmic and metrical patterns that characterize its music in particular and the subgenre of progressive metal in general. In doing so, it isolates the musical elements that have helped differentiate Dream Theater from other progressive rock and heavy metal bands, and have provided me with complex—and often surprising—experiences of temporality. Additionally, this dissertation analyzes the ways in which rhythmic and metrical phenomena contribute to formal delineation in the band's music. The research in this dissertation proceeds from a brief history of Dream Theater into a two-part analytical discussion. First, I identify the band's most salient musical traits, making connections between each trait and progressive metal's parent styles of progressive rock and heavy metal. I argue within this part of the discussion for the band's sound to be metaphorically conceptualized as possessing a structural core of progressive rock and a stylistic core of metal. In the second part of the discussion, I analyze the ways in which the rhythmic and metrical phenomena in Dream Theater's compositions contribute to formal delineation in the band's music.
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The meters are iambs, trochees, spondees, anapests and dactyls. In this document the stressed syllables are marked in boldface type rather than the traditional "/'" and "'x." Each unit of rhythm is called a "foot" of poetry. The meters with two-syllable feet are, IAMBIC (/x/): That time of year thou mayst in me behold. TROCHAIC (/x): Tell me not in mournful numbers. SPONDAIC (/:/): Break, break, break/ On thy cold gray stones, O Sea! Meters with three-syllable feet are, ANAPESTIC (xx/): And the sound of a voice that is still. DACTYLIC (/xx/): This is the fores The credit for my experience with Dream Theater's music goes to Kyle Lavery, a childhood friend of mine whom I idolized during my adolescence. I would like to thank him for introducing me to the band's music, and, more importantly, for introducing me to bass guitar and inspiring me to learn the instrument. Mark Spicer, in the acknowledgements section of his 2002 dissertation, labels himself a "renegade" for being the first Yale student to publish a dissertation on popular music. My decision to pursue the analysis of Dream Theater's music, on the other hand, was met with no shock, dismay, or ev