

**“When Your Mind’s Made Up”: Metrical Conflict in John
Carney’s *Once***

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Abstract

The independent Irish film *Once* (2006) won over audiences and critics alike in 2007 receiving awards at the Sundance Film Festival and the Dublin Film Festival, as well as, winning the 2008 Independent Spirit Award for best foreign film. The modern-day musical directed by John Carney and starring Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová owes much of its success to its Grammy-nominated soundtrack that was written and performed by the two actors/musicians. The Academy Award winning “Falling Slowly” is the best known song from the film but the soundtrack is filled with songs that are emotionally wrenching and musically complex. One such song is “When Your Mind’s Made Up”.

The song, about two lovers who constantly fight, takes place in a tense, climatic scene where the group of street musicians has finally procured time at a recording studio and attempts to record their first song. The song’s 5/4 meter is strictly interpreted by the piano as five simple beats, each beat divided into two equal parts, while the rest of the ensemble interprets the 5/4 as mixed meter: a measure of compound (three equal divisions per beat) plus simple meter. This metrical conflict that pits two parts of the ensemble against each other (neither willing to yield) embodies the conflict in the lyrics and underscores the tension at the beginning of the scene. To prove the affect of the metrical conflict, I recompose part of the song removing the metrical conflict and thus, changing the scene.