1 ~ *What Is Dance Accompaniment?*

Music must move a dancer emotionally, literally, and figuratively. It must give the dancer a reason to dance.

The purpose of music for dance is different from music for the concert hall. Unlike music to be listened to, music for dance complements, reflects, motivates, and enhances movement. An accompanist's classroom repertoire must therefore be geared toward helping dancers learn movement through music.

Dance is movement. That is obvious. A series of pretty poses does not impress an audience. How a dancer moves into and out of those positions makes an audience sit up and take notice. The flow of the movement—the physical peaks and valleys in relation to the music—is a large part of the visual stimuli to which an audience reacts.

By now, thanks to television and movies, almost everyone has seen some form of dance. Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Martha Graham are household words. These artists, along with myriad others, prove one thing that is common to all styles of dance: It looks easy. That may be one reason why "easy," insubstantial music seems acceptable in the dance classroom. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The following are a few misconceptions about music for dance:

- Many non-dance-oriented musicians say, "Music has to be distorted for adaptation to the dance classroom." While I understand and sympathize with the reasons behind this pronouncement, I hope to show how distortion can be avoided. This topic will be discussed at length, especially throughout the information for accompanists.
- "Music for dance has no substance." Some of the music composed specifically for dance is, indeed, insubstantial. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, composers such as Ludwig Minkus and Riccardo Drigo were accused of writing "yard music." They would be given detailed instructions concerning stage action, meter, and—in many cases—even the number of bars needed by the choreographer. They would then retire to write music by the yard to these exacting and restricting specifications. While some of this music may be inconsequential, it served the needs of the choreogra-

phers at that time, and much of it remains in the international dance repertoire. And there is an abundance of music by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Ravel, Bartók, Debussy, and Stravinsky—to name but a few respected composers—which certainly holds its own on the "serious" concert stage as well as in the pit at a dance performance.

- "All you have to do is keep the beat." While rhythm is a motivating constant behind most dance music, there is a good deal more to music than rhythm, just as there is more to dancing than legs and feet. The "keeping the beat" misconception may also stem from the fact that one may often see no reaction to music from some dancers, especially students. The demands of technical execution may sometimes leave a look of grim concentration on all but those rare dancers who are truly musical. But they *are* hearing the music—certainly not in the way a person sits down and listens to a piece of music on the radio—and not even in the way the teacher is hearing it. A dancer absorbs music almost through the fibers of his body; it seeps into him by osmosis, providing guidelines for the beginner and inspiration to the advanced dancer.

Music for dance is not elevator music. It is not just a thudding beat for maintaining rhythm. It is not background music, and it is not frippery. It is *almost* not accompaniment, for it should be as organic a part of the dance as the dancer's body. The only sense in which it is literally accompaniment is that it accompanies the music that is already inside every true dancer's body.

While there are some schools of thought that believe that music should not always reflect the dynamics of the movement, this book is written on the premise that dancers (including students) need and deserve all the support they can get. I have taken dance classes on and off for decades, and the technical improvement and spiritual liberation I've felt in a class with a truly fine, supportive accompanist is an unmatchable high.

Aside from the inspiration music should provide for dancers, music is the only guide a dancer has onstage. (There are dances done to silence, such as Jerome Robbins's masterpiece, "Moves," but they are rare.) Teachers, ballet masters, and choreographers do not stand in the wings yelling, "Tendu! Fourth position! Seventeen pirouettes!" The music tells the dancers where they should be and when—and how.

Cues for curtains, lighting, and scenery changes are very often written into the musical score which a stage manager may use for his cue sheet. If a dancer stops dancing during a piece, the performance will usually continue, but if the music stops during a piece, there is chaos.

Music is a dancer's only temporal link to the audience. He must learn to be responsive to its structure, complexities, and nuances, not just to the rhythm.

This process begins in the classroom, so classroom accompaniment must reflect the myriad genres of music to which dancers dance.

The most difficult aspect of dance accompaniment is that it is impossible to categorize. How easy (but, ultimately, how boring) it would be if "You *always* play a march for grands battements," or "You *always* play a 3/4 for ronds de jambe à terre." One of the reasons it cannot be categorized is because there are as many ways of teaching dance as there are dance teachers. The learning and teaching of dance is done primarily by handing it down from generation to generation. There are some codified systems of teaching ballet, such as the Vaganova, Cecchetti, Bournonville, and Royal Academy of Dancing methods, as well as Graham, Limón, and Cunningham techniques in the area of modern/contemporary dance. But each of these systems takes on the personality of each individual teacher. Dance is a purely physical art; the essence and nuances of movement will probably never be captured in the written word.

Another reason that dance accompaniment can't be standardized is that some teachers feel the dancer must do most of the work unaided by supportive music, while others feel the music should match the quality of the movement and provide a reason for moving. For the purposes of this book, I shall concentrate on the second approach.

Dance is perhaps the most difficult art form to master. It requires total control of almost every muscle in the body. Sadly, many students, as they work to gain this control, lose both the essence of what dance truly is and the motivation that made them want to dance in the first place. Music is the constant reminder that tells the student that he is not involved in a series of calisthenic exercises. It must provide a constant impetus and energy source for his movement; it should almost impose itself on his consciousness (or even his subconscious) in order to enable him to express himself through movement.

One of the main reasons for the scarcity of good accompanists is the communication problem between dance teachers and musicians. (While the following true story is amusing, it illustrates perfectly the problems of a novice accompanist. An accompanist once came to me for help, saying, "I don't have the slightest idea of what that teacher is talking about. Yesterday it sounded like he wanted two frappés, three Grand Marniers, and four croissants with camembert.") This book is intended to help bridge the communication gap, emphasizing above all the productive and pleasurable interaction between the two driving forces of the classroom.

2 ~ *Essential Elements of Music for Dance*

Music evokes images. Walt Disney's *Fantasia* is a perfect example of how certain music can be translated into complementary images. Disney in a sense choreographed *Fantasia* in direct response to the feelings and visions that the music suggested to him. That is how choreographers often work: A piece of music suggests a story, a mood, or a quality of movement that they develop into a dance. Usually, classroom accompanists are asked to reverse this process: We see a phrase of movement and are required to match its physical qualities with corresponding musical ones. No matter which way the process goes—music inspiring movement or movement inspiring music—our task is to evoke images and help dancers want to embody our music.

An accompanist must realize the effect music has on a moving human body. If you've ever done any sort of physical exercise such as calisthenics, isometrics, jogging, or weight lifting, you've felt the rhythm inherent in the execution. And exercise takes on a different feeling and added dimensions when melody is added; even more with the addition of harmony, and so on.

The musical elements which follow are arranged in order from the most obvious to the most subtle.

Rhythm

Rhythm is the prime moving force for a dancer. It must be as constant as his pulse, and just as vital. It sets the pace for his dance and must never be vague. For dancers in a professional company, the music for stage performance will become a part of them during the many hours of rehearsal. In the classroom, however, dancers will not always hear the music before they execute combinations, so the rhythm must be instantly obvious in order to provide a firm foundation for the movement.

As an accompanist, you want to re-create the lower register of an orchestra with your left hand. The rhythm of a symphonic composition is generally carried in the percussion section and—for richness of tone—in the low

strings and brass. Be sure to take advantage of the piano's properties as a percussion instrument with a full range of tones, and strive for a lush, full sound (when appropriate) while maintaining the inexorable momentum and energy of the rhythm.

Syncopation is something that all dance people need to understand, partly because it defines some ballet steps, such as temps de cuisse and contretemps, and mostly because it is an ear-catching, enjoyable ingredient of music. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* defines it thus: "A device used by composers in order to vary position of the stress on notes so as to avoid regular rhythm. Syncopation is achieved by accenting a weak instead of a strong beat, by putting rests on strong beats, and by introducing a sudden change of time signature." Listen to a tango or a rag, and you are listening to pieces built on syncopation.

If any reader has a problem identifying the rhythm or meter of a particular piece, listen to the low notes of the music; in an orchestra, the low strings and brasses, as well as the percussion section, are usually responsible for the rhythm, and a pianist's left hand re-creates these tones. Or ask the pianist to play just the left hand for you, until you can identify the difference between the rhythm and the melody. For those readers who don't read music: On each page of the musical examples you will see five sets of two connected staves, each of which has five lines. The melody—what you would sing—is written on the upper staff, and the rhythm—what your feet would tap—is written on the bottom staff.

Meter/time signature

I don't think of meter as an element of music in the same way that I do of rhythm and melody. But meter is vital to everyone involved in dance, because meter is reflected in how one counts a piece of music that will eventually be danced to.

Meter is the way in which rhythm is organized. The meter of a piece is also called the time signature—the fraction appearing near the beginning of nearly every written piece of music. The top number represents the number of beats in one measure of music, and the bottom number denotes the value of each beat. Therefore, 3/4 means there are three beats in one measure of music, and each beat is a quarter note; 5/16 means there are five beats in one measure of music, and each beat is a 16th note.

Very simply put, 99 percent of the music in dance classrooms is counted either, "ONE and two and THREE and four and . . ." (duple meter) or, "ONE and uh two and uh THREE and uh four and uh . . ." (triple meter) in the

appropriate tempo, and in phrases of either six or eight.[1] A two is counted in duple meter and is arranged in maxi-phrases of eight. A three is counted in triple meter and is arranged in maxi-phrases of eight. A six is subdivided in either duple or triple meter, and is arranged in mini-phrases of six. I have been hearing these terms ever since I started playing for dance and, while they are not as incisive as we accompanists might like, they are certainly better than nothing.

I purposely don't use time signatures to identify pieces of music because they can be misleading to someone without training in music theory. For example, say "3/4" to most dance teachers and they will probably think waltz and nothing else. Polonaises, boleros, minuets, and example 55 (a 3/4 adagio) are but a few examples of pieces throughout the world of music that bear no relationship to what most dance teachers think of as a 3/4.

The words in a movement phrase can change:

	ONE	two	three	TWO	two	three
	ONE	and	uh	TWO	and	uh
	FRONT	side	back	FRONT	side	back
glis-	*SADE*	*as-*	*sem-*	*blé*	-	*glis-*
	ONE	two	three	FOUR	five	six
ten-	*DU*	-	and	LIFT	-	and
	PAS'D	*BOUR-*	*REE*	*PAS'D*	*BOUR-*	*REE*
	ONE	-	and	TWO	-	and
	STRETCH	-	and	MELT	-	and

but the meter will not change.

Melody

Rhythm is such a powerful element of dance movement that it is possible, though not recommended, to teach most of a ballet class to drum accompaniment. (Can you imagine an adage done to the beat of a drum?) The addition of melody can soften the rigidity of the percussive rhythm without detracting from it.

Singing a melody is a more natural form of expression than voicing a rhythm, and a well-trained dancer should ultimately dance to a melodic phrase instead of to metronomic beats. If a pianist hears a dancer humming something he has played in class, the dancer will probably be humming the melody, not the rhythm. When this happens, it means the pianist has made himself truly heard, not just felt.

The sensitive use of melody can contribute a great deal to a dancer's progress through improved breathing. Surprisingly, dancers sometimes forget about breathing because of the art form's rigorous technical demands, but a truly musical dancer will often sing along with the music, breathing with the melodic phrase, which often corresponds with the movement phrase.

Melody can often mirror the choreography in frappé, petit battement, and petit allegro combinations. While this one-to-one correspondence is less often used in choreography, it can be a helpful device for students learning a new step in the classroom. This will be illustrated more fully in the section on qualities of steps and movements.

In this book, I purposely do not delve into the fine points of how music is put together because I feel that teachers are already too insecure about their knowledge of music, and theoretical discussions could easily make them even more uncomfortable. But there are two points to be made about music that will hopefully clear up some long-standing misunderstandings, and they are both about melody.

- Hemiola is a device that composers use. (Interesting: Do they actually use it, or does the flow of their creative impulses result in hemiola?) Anyway, hemiola is what you hear when the melody is in two and the rhythm stays in three (or vice versa). (It is possible for hemiola to occur in other time signatures, also.) Tchaikovsky was very fond of it; maybe it was just a relief for him to get away from the waltz feeling in the huge number of waltzes he wrote. Hemiola is very much in evidence at the ends of the Waltz of the Flowers and the waltz Finale from *Nutcracker.* Dancers who have to count can be confused by this change in the melody; if they are told that the basic underlying waltz rhythm is still there, they will know what to listen for and be more secure.

- Most nonmusicians think that the first note of a melody they hear must be "1." In probably 90 percent of the cases it is, but if you are having trouble counting a piece organically, it is probably because it is one of the other 10 percent. For instance, in the famous female variation from the last-act pas de deux of *Nutcracker* (better known as the Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy), the first note one hears in the melody is actually the "and" after "1." This is such a well-known piece that it doesn't need to be counted, but there are other less well-known pieces that can cause counting confusion. (See examples 2 and 60.) And melodies can occasionally start before "1," as in example 3. (One teacher I know won't let me play this piece because she can't count it. It's so famous that it's not necessary to count it unless one is totally unmusical.)

Tempo

The tempo of a piece of music is as intrinsic to its particular personality as its rhythm and melody. The easiest way to understand this is by playing or listening to any well-known piece twice as fast and then twice as slowly as what you are used to hearing.

Because so much music from the traditional ballet repertoire is unfamiliar to a beginning accompanist, he will often not know the tempo of a piece, and will play what may sound totally wrong to a dance teacher. It is up to the teacher to help the accompanist understand the correct tempo—rather, the proportion of tempo variance.

There is not just one single tempo in which a piece may be played, but rather a range of slightly slower and slightly faster tempos in which it still retains its special character. This same variability of speed is also present, to a lesser degree, in the way a dancer dances a variation from day to day. A sensitive dance conductor knows the proportion of tempos not only of his music but also of the dancers' movements, and will try to adjust his tempos according to how he sees a dancer moving onstage.

Because of the importance of this proportion of tempo, MMs (Maelzel metronomes markings) should be used solely for the purpose of establishing the median tempo—the tempo in between the slowest and the fastest proportional limits—of unfamiliar music. Metronomes operate inflexibly, but music must reflect the variability of humanity. This is especially true in the marriage of music and dance.

It is impossible to state the exact tempo of a given piece of music because tempo depends on the composer's directions and on the conductor's interpretation, as well as on each piece's particular personality. The needs of a dancer, as well as an accompanist's own personal taste and technical ability, are two more factors affecting the tempo. Therefore, each MM in this book represents a median of the proportionate range of tempo.

Tempo is one of the main communication problems between dance teacher and accompanist, and will be dealt with in detail throughout this book.

Harmony

Harmony provides music with additional texture. This added richness helps a dancer to feel more breadth in his movement.

Tonality

The subject of tonality often elicits interesting opinions, branching off into esoteric discussions of the color of E-flat major, the emotional content of g minor, and so forth. I will confine my comments to very pragmatic considerations.

Pieces in minor keys should be given as much consideration as those in major keys, but accompanists will eventually realize that a musical pall can descend subconsciously on the dancers if they hear too many pieces in minor keys.

As accompanists become more experienced, they will become aware of the necessity of changing keys from combination to combination. There are too many other things to think about at first, but after a while, accompanists usually hear for themselves why it is wise to avoid playing more than two pieces in a row in the same key.

Transposing and the changing of registers are extremely effective ways of adding a lift and a renewal of energy for dancers. In both cases, a dancer will more than likely not be able to describe what has happened musically, but almost invariably he will say something like, "That new section really picked me up when I was getting tired!"

Changing from a minor to a major key within a combination also gives dancers an extra surge of strength, although—again—they will rarely be able to define it, or even to remember it after class.

Phrasing

Basic phrasing is often difficult for a beginning accompanist to put into practice. Mere execution of the notes may seem to have the highest priority, but ignoring phrasing, whether the composer has written it in or not, produces wooden music. The result is much like omitting breathing when you speak, or omitting punctuation when you write. A helpful way to keep phrasing uppermost in your mind is by actually singing. The human voice naturally phrases and uses dynamics because it depends on breathing for execution, so phrasing and dynamics are inextricably linked.

Phrasing is to dance and music what syntax is to language: the arrangement of words for effective communication. Just as you would not communicate with a friend in blunt, clipped sentences, neither should you ignore the inherent phrasing—the ebb and flow—the peaks and valleys—of any piece you play.

All combinations of movement have peaks and valleys in varying altitudes. A series of eight tendus is an example of a movement phrase having barely discernible peaks and valleys. On the other end of the spectrum, grand allegro and pirouette combinations are full of peaks and valleys, and the peaks normally fall on odd-numbered counts, which a sensitive accompanist will want to accent with more volume. (It is a moot point whether the music we use is actually written with these peaks on the odd-numbered counts, or whether we just subconsciously react to them that way in our playing.)

Peaks occur on the odd-numbered counts in the maxi-phrases of twos and threes. Peaks occur on "1" and "4" of the mini-phrases of sixes.

Over the years I have felt the need to use the terms *mini-phrase* and *maxi-phrase* to help clarify some matters of phrasing. The proper terms are *phrase* and *period;* I have found, however, that most nonmusicians have a hard time remembering that the "phrase" is mini and the "period" is maxi.

Tchaikovsky's Waltz of the Flowers from *Nutcracker* (example 1) will serve to demonstrate these terms. This piece was chosen because it is one that almost everyone connected with dance can sing.

The first sixteen bars—a maxi-phrase—are made up of two mini-phrases of four counts each, then two mini-phrases of two counts each, then a final mini-phrase of four counts. (Not all musicians' bars are equal to dancers' counts, but in this instance they are. Please refer to page 65 for a detailed description of this common misunderstanding.) This maxi-phrase repeats and is followed by another sixteen-bar maxi-phrase which is made up of four mini-phrases of four counts each. These four mini-phrases have identical rhythmic patterns in the melody (hereafter referred to as melodic rhythm), a device common to almost every form of pre-"contemporary" music.

Tchaikovsky wrote this music to be danced to, and musically sensitive choreographers can't help but observe the phrasing as they create movement. The more experienced an accompanist becomes, and the more varied his repertoire and/or improvisational abilities become, the better he will be able to reverse this process: to see mini-phrases of movement within maxi-phrases of dance combinations, and to play selections that correspond to them. This will remind the dancers that there are indeed phrases of movement, not just long strings of steps—and it will remind them to breathe.

The terms *peaks and valleys, maxi-phrase, mini-phrase,* and *melodic rhythm* will be used throughout this book.

Dynamics

Just as you would not speak to someone in a monotone, neither should you ignore the dynamics (whether written or implied) in a piece. As variety is said to be the spice of life, so are dynamics the spice of music, and their markings are self-explanatory. There are instances, however, when we accompanists must tamper with these markings, and these will be described and justified in their appropriate places throughout the book.

Music for performance is always executed according to the composers' wishes. Music for the classroom, however, must be executed according to the dancers' needs. It makes no sense to observe a composer's "subito pp" when the dancers have reached a point in a combination requiring maximum output of energy.

Accompanists gradually learn to associate particular dynamic levels with particular movement combinations. For example, grand battement and grand allegro combinations are always loud. Teachers may request different dynamics for very legitimate reasons, and they should be quick to point out these wishes to their accompanists before they start demonstrating their combinations, so that the accompanists will not waste time looking for a piece with the usual dynamic quality.

If you come across a piece of music that has no dynamic markings, think of lines and of peaks and valleys. Ascending and descending melodic lines are going somewhere, so let the dancers know where the departure and arrival points are dynamically. Awareness of the peaks and valleys will help prevent the movement of both the music and the dancers from becoming static and colorless.

Music builds up momentum too, just as movement does. This is especially true in music for dance, and is reflected in the classroom not necessarily by an increase in tempo but by an increase in dynamic intensity.

Line

Line is found everywhere in the performing arts: A dancer works to perfect his body line; a singer or musician practices the lines of scales endlessly; an actor studies his lines; and so on. Sadly, during the rigors of accomplishing these lines, performers often forget that *how* one gets to the peak of a line can often be of more artistic value than the final point of the line. The end of every line is usually the end of a phrase; this is indicated in punctuation by a semicolon or period, and in speaking by a breath. Lines in music for dance are

a helpful way to show a dancer how to move effectively from one step or phrase to another.

The composer Aleksandr Glazunov was a master of line. An excerpt from his Grand Adagio in the first act of *Raymonda* (example 2) is used here to illustrate line in music.

The soprano, or melodic, line is the most obvious, as is true with most adagios. Note, however, the subtle line of the rhythm in the bass—the dotted half, half, and quarter notes in the left hand. They make up a kind of melody also. Then notice the running 16th-note figure in the first half of the excerpt. This is a fairly standard rhythmic structure that adds underlying substance to music, assuring flow and energy. Notice that, in the second half, the 16th-note figure sometimes changes to a scale that leads very definitely from one point to the next. A sensitive dancer will be led by that sound, and will make movements grow with the ascent of each scale. Lines such as these, whether in the melody, harmony, or rhythm, are hereafter referred to as leading lines.

Style

Of all the elements in music for dance, style is surely the most difficult to understand or to define. And so it is with dance: One of the most fundamental visual lines in classical dance, the arabesque, must be executed in a variety of different ways appropriate to the style and emotional content of each dance work, but the basic form rarely changes.

Style is the realm in which an accompanist can become an educator. By providing himself with an ever-expanding repertoire of music in all styles, he can help the dance students become aware of all those styles. If one plays Satie's *Gymnopédie no. 1* for an adagio combination one day and a Verdi aria for the same combination the next, the difference should be reflected in the movement quality of the dancers. (The dance teacher, of course, must help less advanced students to become aware of the difference in styles.)

One can broaden one's stylistic education through exposure and experience (always the best teacher). Every person involved in dance owes it to herself and her art (whether it be music or dance) to experience as much dance as possible: live, on film, on videocassette, on record or tape, or on television. See the various styles of dance. Compare Marius Petipa's formal grandeur with the lightheartedness of Auguste Bournonville, for instance; or effusive, lush Michel Fokine choreography with the starkness of some George Balanchine pieces. Hear the many styles of music in their original instrumental forms. And begin to form your own judgments about good taste with the help of people whose opinions you trust. (Just because something is pre-

sented on a stage does not necessarily mean that it is good or tasteful or artistic.)

Dance accompanists cannot afford the self-indulgence of being "Chopin specialists" or "schmaltz specialists" or "Impressionists." We must be conversant in many styles of music, and must have a keen eye for judging not only what music would be stylistically appropriate for any given combination, but also when to play it. The element of top-notch dance accompaniment that is probably the most difficult to grasp, especially by accompanists who have never taken a dance class, is assessing the mood of a class and knowing how to deal with it.

The atmosphere in class is so often governed by what accompanists play, and a first-class accompanist will play what he senses, from the teacher's mood and/or the dancers' vibes, would be appropriate. An experienced accompanist plays certain styles of music at certain times according to what he feels would help the class: an uplifting group waltz from *Swan Lake* for pliés on a particularly dreary day, or a sarabande for pliés after a particularly strenuous performance the night before. And for the first combination after each of these choices, a contrasting musical style is called for. An experienced accompanist has learned that there can be as many as ten different musical styles for, say, one dégagé combination.

The style of each piece an accompanist plays must be appropriate not only to the quality of each individual movement combination but also to its place within the context of the class. For example, many teachers find the group waltz from *Swan Lake* stylistically inappropriate for pliés; they prefer music with a less driving emotional motor for the first combination of the class. There is no right or wrong here; it is purely a matter of taste. As another example, a Sousa march is a wonderful choice for grands battements at the barre or a pirouette combination in the center, but totally inappropriate for tendu combinations at the barre, which are often counted in exactly the same rhythm and tempo as grands battements. As a last example, I remember being in one of Perry Brunson's classes with a very fine pianist who was just beginning to play for dance. The last combination at the barre in a Brunson class was always a simple one facing the barre: either finding our balance or just four grands pliés in second position—four counts down and four counts up. The mood was always very inner-directed. The accompanist played a legato waltz in exactly the right tempo, but it was mezzo-forte (medium-loud) and very dissonant, and my attention was thoroughly distracted from my body by this atonal intrusion.

Most teachers, especially those who have danced professionally, understand stylistic differentiation, and—instead of refusing an accompanist's choice of music with, "No, I don't like that" or "It doesn't work"—will probably have to explain their musical needs to novice accompanists.

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A dance accompanist's sense of responsibility grows according to his understanding and involvement. It is unreasonable to expect a beginning accompanist to be able to incorporate all the necessary elements of music for dance into his work at first. He may make stylistically inappropriate choices, misjudge tempos, lose energy, play wrong notes, or sacrifice certain musical components in order to accomplish the basics of skeletal rhythm and melody. It is up to the dance teacher to help him become aware of the dancers' needs. If she senses that he is on the right track, she can alter her teaching methods temporarily to suit his capabilities. If he makes the same mistake(s) repeatedly, she should speak to him after class, telling him not only what is wrong, but why it is wrong and suggesting, if possible, how to fix it.

An accompanist, it seems, should strive for a happy balance between being a computer and a free spirit. No competent classical musician—and especially no dance accompanist—ever sacrifices the inexorable rhythm of music. However, the emotional and evocative qualities of music—the basic uplifting purpose of music—are equally important. A cohesive, artistic whole is impossible to achieve if any one factor is left out. This achievement is quite an undertaking, but I can think of worse ways to spend a lifetime.

How to count an allegro 12/8: in three: "ONE - and two - and THREE - and four . . . ," up through "eight - and."

The adagio - examples 51–64

To a musician, *adagio* is a word that means slow(ly). In the dance world, *adagio* (or *adage*—both terms are used) is a noun that refers to either a section of a grand pas de deux (see "The grand pas de deux" section in chapter 5) or a classroom combination of slow steps and movements. An adagio is not a form in the same way a rag or bolero is, because it doesn't come in only a single meter or quality (a tarantella, for example, is always a fast 6/8). But it will be referred to hereafter as a form. The adagio is the most difficult form a dance accompanist must deal with. It is one form that proves conclusively, if proof were necessary, that the meter alone cannot be the deciding factor in selecting appropriate music for a given combination.

What I call a normal adagio is what 98 percent of the teachers in the dance world count as a medium-slow 3/4, even when they say, "I would like a 4/4 adagio, please." After about fifteen years of playing only this kind of adagio, I asked some of the teachers for whom I was playing if they could sometimes count an adagio in two, so I could play something new. However, dance teachers seem to be constitutionally unable to count adagios in anything but three—possibly because they sound so martial in two. (If you are a teacher like this, you can solve the problem by asking your accompanist to play a bit of an "abnormal" adagio for you, so you have the rhythm in your ear and your body before you start to set the combination.)

Eventually I began to recognize movement combinations that would benefit from a slower tempo than that of a normal adagio; at around the same time I realized that the median tempos of 4/4 and 12/8 adagios are slower than those of normal adagios. I will never forget the day that I first dared to substitute a 12/8 adage (a two) for a normal one (a three); it felt like a real liberation from the medium-slow-three rut. The difference in counting doesn't seem to confuse anyone (maybe I should be depressed about that): "ONE and uh two - and THREE - and . . ." for a normal adagio, as opposed to "ONE and two and THREE and . . ." for 4/4s and 12/8s.

If a teacher has difficulty finding music slow enough for an adagio or plié combination, or if an accompanist finds he has to slow down and distort an adage to suit the tempo needs of the teacher, a 9/8, a 4/4, or a 12/8 will usually solve the problem.

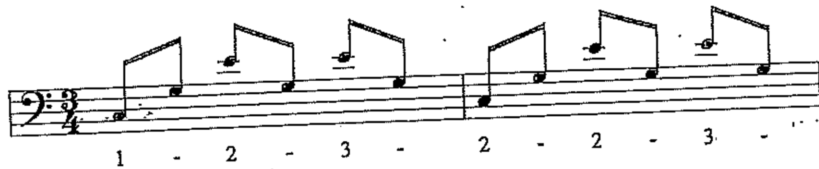
Substituting a 9/8 to slow down a normal 3/4 adagio would seem like a very logical approach. But I think the main reason I never do it is because it is really difficult for most people to grasp the highly unusual 9/8 meter from the

introduction unless one is expecting it—and is familiar with it. (I learned this the hard way. I would try to use the 9/8 when I knew that teachers would slow down their demonstrated normal adagios, and invariably they would say, "No, I'd like something else, please"; they would never say, "That's nice, but I can't count it; could you help me, please?" I always thought that nobody liked my 9/8s until I realized that it was just a question of not being able to count them.)

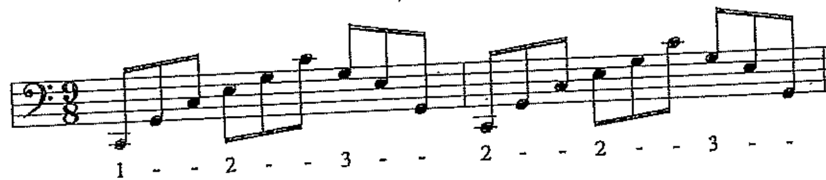
The following diagram shows the rhythmic structures of two bars of music that can be used for a demi-plié in two counts (or a mini-phrase of adagio movement in two counts). The slow 3/4 has more notes—more substance—than the rhythmic structure of a waltz, and the 9/8 has even more, and so on. These additional notes and the increased substance allow more time for the execution of the movement, because the tempo is slower. I encourage teachers to get together with their accompanists and decide on the median tempo that they feel is the best for their plié combinations. This is certainly not to say that it can never be changed, but rather that the accompanist has an idea of the tempo parameter within which he can choose plié music—certainly one of the most important musical choices he will make in every class.

A) Slow waltz
MM: ♩ = 104

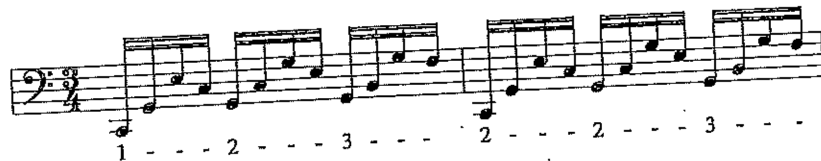
B) Slow 3/4
MM: ♩ = 96



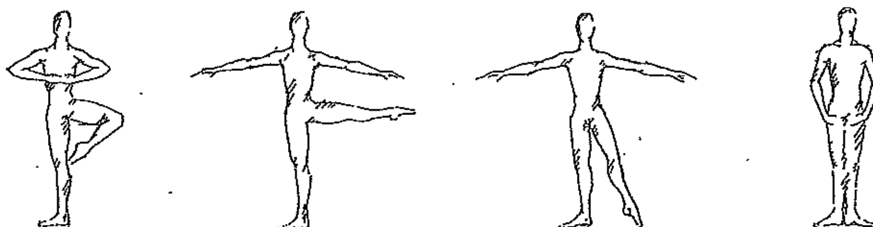
C) Slow 9/8
MM: ♩ = 80



D) *Very* slow 3/4
MM: ♩ = 69



I have never been asked for what I call the *very* slow 3/4 for pliés; it is too slow. I can't think of a better term than *very* slow 3/4, but it is a dangerous one; most teachers unwittingly say they want a very slow adage, thinking—probably—that if their movement is slow, the music should be correspondingly slow. *Wrong*—it's just the opposite. The following discussion will hopefully clarify this prevalent misunderstanding.



Since a développé—a staple of adagio movement—normally goes through four visually identifiable positions, we will use it as an example. Most développés à la seconde look like the following: (a) passé, (b) développé à la seconde, (c) tendu à la seconde, and (d) close. If each position is attained in two counts in a tempo like A in the preceding music diagram, they will all constitute an 8-count développé in a reasonable tempo for the body. If each position is attained in two counts in a tempo like D in the preceding music diagram, they will all constitute an 8-count développé in an absolutely murderous tempo for the body. However, there is no reason for not doing a 2-count développé in a tempo like D—or C. This would, of course, require the teacher to be aware that her entire adage combination has to be counted in and adjusted to an unusual tempo. (Remember that 98 percent of dance teachers count adagios like B.)

Most teachers count développés in four counts; tempo A would produce a rather speedy 4-count développé, tempo B a normal one, tempo C a slower-than-normal one, and tempo D a grueling one. From another point of view, it will take 12 seconds to produce a 4-count développé in tempo A, 14 seconds in tempo B, 17 seconds in tempo C, and 20 seconds in tempo D. A three-second difference in holding one's leg extended in the air may not seem like much to the uninitiated, but in certain situations it can feel like three hours.

2/4 adagio - example 51: two

The prevailing quality of an adagio is slow, smooth, and lyrical. Most adagio 2/4s have a nonflowing rhythmic structure; they are usually built similarly to what I call moderato twos, like example 51, and they are not well suited to sustained movement. They are very useful for tendu combinations with demi-plié, for some fondu combinations, for ronds de jambe à terre in duple

meter, and for "adagios" in beginning children's classes. Some teachers always give a pre-plié warm-up for the feet which they always count in three; I like to vary the musical choice by using one of these moderato twos sometimes—with their permission, of course.

Time signatures don't always mean what we expect them to mean: Mendelssohn wrote his op. 85, no. 14 in 2/4, but it sounds to me like a 12/8.

How to count 2/4 adagios/moderato twos: "ONE and two and THREE and . . . ," up through "eight and."

3/4 adagio - examples 52–55: threes and sixes

Adagios in 3/4 exhibit several different rhythmic structures, as well as an endless variety of dynamic ranges. The following adages are arranged in a descending scale of tempo: the fastest first, the slowest last.

Example 52 has six notes per bar in the rhythmic structure. It is typical of what I call a normal adagio. (This example is analogous to Tempo B in the preceding tempo diagram.)

The six chords per bar, instead of single notes, in example 53 slow the tempo down a shade from the previous example's rhythmic structure.

How to count examples 52 and 53: in three: "ONE - and two - and THREE and uh four - and . . . ," up through "eight and uh."

Nine notes per bar in example 54 slow the tempo down even more from the previous two examples. This rhythmic structure will be referred to hereafter as a 9/8, because of the nine consecutive triplets in the left hand. (This example is analogous to Tempo C in the preceding tempo diagram.)

How to count a 9/8 adagio appears after the 9/8 adagio information.

Twelve notes per bar, subdivided in three sets of four eighth notes each, make example 55 slower still. (This example is analogous to Tempo D in the preceding tempo diagram.)

How to count example 55: in six, also, but with a difference: "ONE and two and three and FOUR and five and six and, TWO and two and three and FOUR and five and six and . . . ," up through "FOUR and two and three and FOUR and five and six and." The six counts per mini-phrase in example 54 were subdivided into triplets; example 55 is subdivided into quadruplets. To *see* the theory behind this, compare the second bar of example 55 with the second-to-last bar of example 54; then, if you can't play them yourself, get someone to play the two different bars for you (preferably the two different pieces in their entirety), so you can *hear* the difference.

3/8 adagio - example 56: three

Example 56 is a simple, lovely adagio that I find very similar to the normal adagio (example 52) in the areas of tempo and dynamic range. The so-called 3/8 factor is present in 3/8 adagios but, because of the inherent quality of adagios, is less pronounced.

How to count this 3/8 adagio (for some reason, I hesitate to say, "all 3/8 adagios"; there may be some renegade 3/8 out there that defies normalcy): in three, like a normal adagio: "ONE - and two - and THREE - and . . . ," up through "eight - and."

4/4 or C adagio - examples 57–60: twos

There is a variety of underlying rhythmic structures for 4/4 adagios. I shall deal with the three most common ones here in, again, a descending scale of tempo.

The consecutive eight notes/chords per bar in example 57 doesn't produce the flowing feeling necessary for most adagio movement, so it is a more appropriate selection for tendus with demi-plié and ronds de jambe à terre in duple meter. It is in my moderato two category.

Example 58 has an undercurrent of twelve notes/chords per bar, subdivided in four sets of three 8th notes each. Pieces structured like this will henceforth be called 12/8s.

Example 59 has sixteen notes per bar, subdivided in four sets of four 16th notes each, to maintain the flow and energy.

Example 60 is a highly unusual piece, in that it contains all three abovementioned rhythmic structures. It is advisable to play the first three bars slightly more slowly than might feel natural, in order to leave room for the 16th notes that begin in measure nine, thereby maintaining the same tempo throughout.

Teachers who want to be able to count this piece should know that the first note one hears in the melody is not "1." I'm not sure it's so important to be able to count this piece; one could become so caught up in the unusual counting that one misses the beauty of the music. The phrasing is not at all difficult to grasp.

How to count all 4/4, C, and 12/8 adagios: in two: "ONE and two and THREE and . . . ," up through "eight and."

6/8 adagio - example 61: three

The median tempo of most 6/8 adagios is approximately the same as that of barcarolles, but the consecutive 16th-note figure produces more smoothness. (If there are consecutive 16th notes in a slow 6/8 piece, I put it into my adagio category; if there is the previously discussed 6/8 factor—OOM - pah, OOM - pah—it goes into my barcarolle file.) This 6/8 median tempo, like the one belonging to example 61, is usually the same as the normal adagio tempo.

How to count a 6/8 adagio: in three, like a normal adagio: "ONE - and two and uh THREE - and . . . ," up through "eight and uh."

9/8 adagio - example 62: six

Not once in more than forty years of playing for dance has a teacher asked me for an allegro or adagio 9/8 (except for my students). And not until I met Vera Volkova did 9/8s become an extremely useful category for me. Madame Volkova, like most teachers, could not explain in musical terms what she wanted, but she was adamant, like all good teachers, about having the proper accompaniment for each combination. At the beginning of our working together, she was not happy with my plié music. "Too heavy—too plodding," she grumbled. One day I played one of my favorite adagios, and she literally bounded over to the piano and exclaimed, "That's what I want for pliés!" It was a 9/8—example 62—and I have treasured all 9/8s ever since.

Many adagio 9/8s are labeled 3/4; if the left hand has triplet 8th notes throughout, I always put it in my 9/8 file. Here is another instance of realizing that the meter is not the sole factor in determining the suitability of a particular piece of music; the composer may not have labeled it as carefully as we dance accompanists would like.

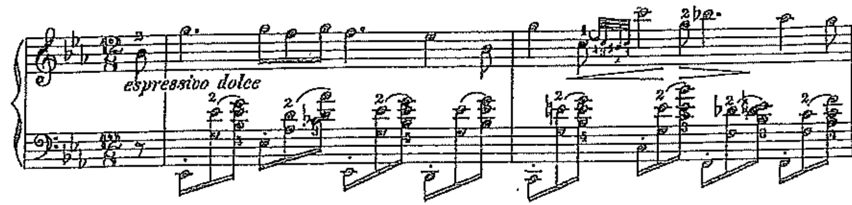
How to count a 9/8 adagio (it may be written in 3/4, but it neither sounds nor feels like a 3/4 adagio): in six: "ONE - and two - and three - and FOUR - and five - and six - and, TWO - and two - and three - and FOUR - and five - and six - and, . . ." up through "FOUR - and two - and three - and FOUR - and five - and six - and."

12/8 adagio - examples 63 and 64: two (rarely, three)

Adagios in 12/8 exhibit a variety of rhythmic structures, and the three most common are shown here.

I have chosen to include as an illustration only a small part of this Chopin Nocturne (in E-flat, op. 9, no. 2). It is played to death—and often badly—in dance classrooms, and is probably the most famous 12/8 in the world. It is

definitely not a waltz, but its rhythmic structure is fairly similar to a waltz, and produces a choppier, less flowing feeling than the rest of the 12/8 examples.



How to count this 12/8: in three: "ONE - - two - and THREE - - . . . ," up through "eight - - ."

Example 63 has consecutive 8th notes throughout, and does not have a wide dynamic range.

Example 64 has consecutive 8th-note chords throughout, and has a huge dynamic range.

How to count examples 63 and 64: in two: "ONE and two and THREE and . . . ," up through "eight and."

FOR MUSICIANS ONLY: Just to be absolutely clear, the *very* slow 3/4, the 6/8, and the 12/8 adagios all have twelve units of sound in each bar of the rhythmic structures—twelve 16th notes in the first two cases, and twelve 8th notes in the last. The key, of course, is the subdivision: In the *very* slow 3/4, we have three beats of four units each (a six); in the 6/8, we have six beats of two units each (a three); and in the 12/8, we have four beats of three units each (a two).

The following is an example of something that really complicates the counting and understanding of adagios.

Martin Schläpfer—the best music-for-dance-teachers student I have ever had and currently my boss—was observing class yesterday. He was listening to me play a normal 3/4 adage and said, "That's a 12/8, isn't it?" I said, "No, it's a three." "But I hear twelve things in the left hand." And of course he's absolutely right: there are twelve eighth notes in two bars of many adages in three. He studied both the violin and the piano, but what he hears and what I see on the printed page can have two completely different labels. I think it is a grave mistake, in cases like this, for musicians to tell dance teachers that their thinking is wrong. Granted, it is hard for us musicians to explain why it is not a 12/8, but the fact of the matter is, his ears *are* hearing twelve eighth notes. It is not realistic to expect dance teachers to understand music notation (most pianists are not conversant in dance technique, either), and I am almost at the point of discouraging them from delving deeply into music theory. If further

attempts at understanding this foreign language called music produce only confusion, it seems to make no sense for dance teachers to try to digest any more than the fact that adagios in 9/8, 12/8, and 4/4 will give a slower tempo than normal adagios in three.

It is important for teachers and essential for accompanists to remember that the majority of 12/8 adagios can be more productively counted in duple meter.

The importance of each adagio's median tempo cannot be stressed strongly enough, if the respect for music is to be maintained and fostered.

The meters and forms that have been discussed in this chapter comprise the majority of all dance accompanists' repertoires. But there are pieces in many other meters that are suitable for the dance classroom: 5/4, 3/2, 12/16, 6/4, 4/8, etc. And there are many other forms—often folk-dance forms—which are just as suitable for dance but less well known: jota, trepak, hopak, krakowiak, redowa, jig, hornpipe, schottische, reel, and so on.

It saves time when a teacher can say, "I'd like a polonaise, please" instead of, "I need a piece that is broad and majestic and grand . . . maybe in 6/8 or 3/4. . . ." As we have already discussed, an understanding of musical forms and meters is very helpful. But if a teacher is not absolutely sure about the name of the form or meter she wants, she must rely on clear body language or an accurate verbal rendering of her combination. Recently I played for a very musical teacher who demonstrated a "normal" pirouette combination, and I played one of my "normal" pirouette waltzes. He came over to the piano and said, "Maybe it would be better with a 6/8." Despite many years of experience, I was totally confused—first, because I didn't see anything wrong with my selection and, second, because I didn't understand how a 6/8 (as I understand 6/8s) would improve the situation. Because I knew it would take a lot of time to decipher what he really wanted, and also because I didn't want to undermine his authority in front of the students, I changed to another kind of waltz (which he fortunately accepted) and said, "Let's talk about this after class." During our discussion, he said, "I wanted something that sounded like, 'ONE two three FOUR five six,'" which in my mental computer is not a 6/8. I would call it a 3/8, but I neither expect nor suggest that dance teachers try to figure out what a 3/8 is. This teacher would have been better off humming or singing what he spoke to me after the class. A less experienced pianist would have played a 6/8 of heaven knows what kind—probably one for a petit allegro combination, since he is probably not yet familiar with 6/8 waltzes (many of

which are grand allegros)—and a lot of time would have been wasted trying to make sense out of this unclear communication.

It would be most helpful for all teachers and accompanists to be familiar with the musical forms contained herein, but this is rarely the case. Often the accompanist's knowledge of musical forms for dance is as limited (if not more so) as the teacher's. So the fact remains that the most prevalent method of communication by teachers is body language, augmented by vocal inflections.

Background information for beginning accompanists

This section is directed specifically to novice accompanists who are as yet unfamiliar with both the technical vocabulary of dance and the way dance is taught.

Classroom etiquette

We will begin this section by examining some rules of classroom etiquette and professional behavior that you are liable to find in a dance studio.

Just as most rules of etiquette are based on common courtesy, so too are the ones found in a dance class. Eating during class, conversations with anyone other than the teacher while the class is in progress, and leaving before the class is over (unless there is a real emergency or you have prearranged it with the teacher) are generally frowned upon; normally you stay until the teacher excuses you. Smoking is usually not allowed in the classroom or—often—the entire building. Yawning without an attempt to disguise it is not very polite (this is mentioned because the air in a dance classroom loses oxygen very rapidly, so yawning is not uncommon). You may have the urge to open a window because of the lack of oxygen, but the teacher should have the final say on this; a draft—even of the hottest, most humid air—can be potentially very damaging to perspiring bodies and warm muscles, and to your back. Making faces should be avoided at all costs. If you are one of those people who makes faces or shakes his head at his own mistakes, try to program it out of your repertoire; dancers and teachers may misread it and think you're making faces or shaking your head at them. Reading or doing crossword puzzles is downright rude; if you are that bored, spare everyone concerned—including yourself—and find another job. Arguing with the teacher is inexcusable, as is being habitually late (more than once every six months is too often). It is discourteous and distracting to practice "that tricky little section," even though the teacher seems thoroughly involved in corrections. Bathing every day is an absolute must, as is a daily change of clothing. (If you "re-perspire" on a shirt already perspired on, your nose may become accustomed to it, but nobody else's will.) And *never* correct a student in class—not even about the music.

Your attitude in class has a decided influence—if not on the students, then most certainly on the teacher. A bad day every once in a while is a normal occurrence. If you are one of those people who are prone to bad days, try to keep it to yourself. Bringing your personal problems to class is counterproductive and unprofessional. You cannot really get involved in your work if you let your negative emotions get the best of you. And, while total involve-

ment in your work certainly won't solve your problems, you'll at least get a temporary respite from them by throwing yourself completely into class.

Some self-indulgent accompanists who play quite competently one day may go in the next day and refuse even to try to help the teacher or students. Occasionally, they forget how much teachers and students rely on them to motivate and lift the class. But usually, their egos are bruised, either personally or professionally, and they need to have their presence validated. Whatever the reason, there is no excuse for deliberately undermining a class. You are being paid for providing a service, not an emotional display. If you find yourself in one of these moods, go ask someone for a hug before class; it works wonders.

Although your prime responsibility in the classroom is to be the teacher's alter ego and to support her efforts, she will be the first to agree that the reason you are there is to help the students learn how to dance. If you are having a temporary personality clash with the teacher, don't take it out on the students. Don't let your grumpiness affect their progress.

There is more to accompanying than just playing music.

The structure of a dance class

The technique of classical ballet is very logical, though hardly simple. However, people tend to complicate it. Idealistically, it is a system by which the body is trained to meet the demands of the artist's mind. There should be an unbroken line of approach, understanding, and commitment from the beginning of the barre, through the center work into rehearsal and on to the ultimate testing ground: performance. Students tend to lose track of this because they must often spend many years in the classroom before they are technically equipped to set foot on the stage. Students who form good habits, and understand the reasons behind the demands that are made on them, will automatically carry those habits into their professional work, as well as into their daily lives.

The reverse, of course, is also true. If a teacher doesn't demand that her students develop good working habits—among other things, doing the combinations as she sets them and on the music—the students more than likely will be unable to remember a choreographer's steps, and will have no understanding about how to work both with other dancers and within the framework of the music. There is more to dancing than pointing one's foot and turning out.

Teachers usually repeat movement phrases without stopping because the brain has to transmit an essentially new pattern throughout the body. The first (and sometimes the second) execution of the movement phrase often are taken up with memorizing and assimilating the shapes of the patterns; once

these are mentally anchored, the brain can command the muscles to get down to the profitable business of full muscular, mental, and motivational response. Robert Joffrey once said, "Dance is muscular memory." (So is playing the piano. Before I discovered engrams—see note 14—I used to look at my fingers during a fast passage and think, "If I had to consciously think about every one of those notes, I could never play that passage." Now I know the process that enables me to play a fast passage.)

It is important for accompanists to remember the process behind the execution of any given combination. Because a dancer's output of energy is considerably greater than a pianist's (rarely do we gasp for air after playing a 32-count grand battement combination, whereas after performing one dancers usually do), the accompanist must continue to maintain the energy and build toward the end of a combination, and to never slacken in intensity.

A teacher owes it to her students to demand from them certain qualities—technical execution, discipline, musicality, and professional behavior—in the classroom that will stand them in good stead in the professional situation toward which some of them may be striving. You are working hand in hand with her in this endeavor. Although you may not be aware of the techniques she is using, know that there is usually a method to her madness.

Beginning accompanists cannot be expected to have the faintest notion of the structure of a dance class unless they have taken one. There is a logical development to each class, and it might help to explain some of the basic rudiments here.

The barre (sometimes called side practice)

The barre is a series of combinations of steps and movements done holding onto a barre (usually a thick wooden rail), which helps a dancer find his balance. These combinations are given in an order designed to improve technique, as well as to warm up, strengthen, and elasticize muscles, tendons, and ligaments.

A teacher rarely varies her own particular order of barre, but it often differs from teacher to teacher. It is advisable for a beginning accompanist to write down the order of the barre combinations and the corresponding musical possibilities of teachers for whom they regularly play. Most teachers like to vary the way steps are combined within each combination, in order to train the brain to be as responsive as the body. (There are some valid teaching systems that believe in doing the same single class all week in order to perfect it; the music should change, however, or the class will become stultified.)

Just as you would not begin your first practice session of the day with a Liszt concerto, neither would a dancer start his first class with movements requiring great strength or sustaining power. Therefore, the barre starts slowly, either with the traditional pliés or—as more and more teachers seem

to be doing these days—with a floor barre or a warming-up foot combination.

We will not go into the whys and wherefores of every barre movement here; only the qualities of steps and movements will be discussed in the next section. If you are the curious sort, ask a teacher to explain the physical structure of and reasoning behind a barre—and then go take one.

All barre combinations are executed on both sides. You will be asked to accompany these combinations in one of three ways:

- stopping after one side and repeating exactly the same thing on the other side, including any given preparation and balance;
- at the end of the combination, continuing seamlessly—with no break in the rhythm—with another preparation and repeating the entire combination again to the other side; or
- if the teacher has included a turning movement at the end of the first side, repeating the same piece without preparation (with ritard at the transition, if requested) as the dancers continue on the other side. (Information on preparations and balances begins on page 144.)

The center (sometimes called centre practice)

The center defines the combinations done in the center of the room without the support of the barre.

The same rule applies to the center as it does to the barre: logic. After a concentrated period of warming and strengthening muscles and improving technique, it doesn't make sense to go into the center and do the most strenuous movements until one's balance is regained without the barre. The ways teachers approach this are as varied as the teachers themselves.

The act of jumping—probably the most potentially injurious movement in all of dance—should never be attempted until all muscles are thoroughly warm. Therefore, jumping almost always comprises the final part of class, preceded by any number of terre-à-terre (non-jumping; literally, floor-to-floor) combinations including adagios, pirouette and port de bras combinations, coordination exercises, and so on.

Whether or not you are able to recognize and label each step is less important than being able to read movement phrases and remembering that the momentum of each combination and each class continues to build. Just as each selection you play builds in energy until the students are back in a finishing position, so too does the support for the entire class—from pliés to révérence—depend on you. Some pianists think that a pianissimo on "1" in a grand allegro is a welcome change of pace for dancers. It *is* ear-catching, but startlingly so; they need support all the way through a combination, especially at a place where the most interesting—and possibly difficult—move-

ment happens. Remember that a step may be easy, but the physical exertion that has come before sometimes makes just standing still an exercise in stamina.

Center combinations are repeated too, but not in the same way as those at the barre. The following is one way in which many teachers organize their center combinations:

- Musical preparation; group A executes a 16- or 32-count combination that may or may not include both right and left sides;
- (no musical stop) musical preparation for group A to move forward and to the sides of the room as group B moves onto the floor;
- group B executes the combination;
- (no musical stop) musical preparation for group B to clear and group A to move onto the floor;
- and so forth.

This allows the pace of the class to continue while the teacher makes corrections during execution of the combination.

If a teacher says four groups, I stop after four groups, even if I see another group wanting to go. Some dancers think I'm being lazy, stubborn, or mean when I stop like that, but I do it because (a) the teacher makes the rules in class, not the students or the accompanist; and (b) it wastes time to have more groups than necessary.

Eventually, the structural patterns of the dance class will become clear, and it won't seem quite so mysterious.

How teachers demonstrate

There are two ways that teachers demonstrate their classroom combinations. The method most often used is for the teacher to demonstrate combinations to her own counts, leaving the choice of music up to the accompanist. The other method is for the accompanist to play a piece according to the request of the teacher ("a slow waltz for ronds de jambe à terre, please" or "a rousing 6/8 march for grands battements, please"); then she will either set a combination after hearing only four counts because she will know that the piece will suit her needs, or she will ask for a different meter, tempo, quality, or whatever. How the teacher speaks is often just as helpful as what she says. For instance, it is difficult to describe legato movement in staccato phrasing, and vice versa. That's why it is a good idea to really listen to what the teacher is saying all the time; you will have a better idea of what she wants musically. The voice of the teacher is a strong motivating force for you, as well as for the students.

The demonstration of combinations lays the basis for the entire class.

In case you become aware that you constantly misunderstand some request of the teacher, take the initiative and discuss the problem with her either before or after the class. One mistake I made for a long time was, after asking the teacher to clear up something, to say, "I understand," even though I didn't. I didn't want to look like an idiot. But it is absolutely not stupid to be confused if you (still) don't understand something. Being honest about still not understanding helps the teacher know that she must be clearer in her explanation. Additionally, if you say, "I understand," she will assume that the problem is solved, and will wonder why you still make the same mistake.

The confusion generated by faulty communication from the teacher is extremely frustrating to the beginning accompanist, but you will gradually learn to sort out what teachers really mean. One of my editors, a conductor, wrote over and over in the first version, "Teachers *must* understand something about music if they are going to teach dance." I couldn't agree more. However, it is counterproductive to make a teacher so paranoid about her musical abilities that she doesn't dare to open her mouth. Until every teacher-training course insists that its graduates are properly schooled in the musical needs of the dance classroom, accompanists need to have as much practical information as possible concerning the way teachers currently conduct their classes.

Qualities of steps and movements

The following is a very general discussion of the basic qualities of steps and movements in classical ballet. Its purpose is to assist the beginning accompanist in choosing appropriate music for each step and movement. I have emphasized that an accompanist should choose his music from the observation of movement phrases and not from the names of the steps. But there are numerous instances whereby you can eliminate many musical choices simply by hearing the name of the combination, which can save a lot of time. For example, when a teacher says, "pliés," an accompanist knows a coda is never suitable; when a teacher says, "frappés," an accompanist knows a smooth waltz or adagio is never suitable.

Knowing the quality of a particular step will expedite your choice of music. For instance, it is possible to count many combinations of tendus, dégagés, fondus, grands battements, pirouettes, and jumps in a medium-tempo duple meter. However, you would probably not choose the same piece for tendus as you would for grands battements, not only because the movement quality is different but also because a rousing march is usually not appropriate for one of the first barre combinations. An important aspect of effective dance accompaniment is the ability to maintain the pace of the class

that the teacher establishes. Therefore, the accompanist has to learn to find perfect musical choices as quickly as possible.

In some cases, the direction of a step or movement will affect your choice of music. While it is impossible to suggest sideways or across-the-floor movement other than by rhythmic drive and melodic movement, the verticality (the up-and-down motion) of some movement can and should be reflected in what you play, as well as how you play it. This verticality will be mentioned in the appropriate places.

Some steps and movements begin with leg motion before the "1" (the first count of the combination), and will be so noted. This will help the novice accompanist to know that there can be movement before he plays the "1."

When a particular meter or musical form is generally used for a certain step or movement, it will be duly noted. Otherwise, a step or movement can be given to practically any meter or form, as long as the musical quality matches the movement quality—unless, of course, the teacher requests something else.

The *standing leg* or *supporting leg* is the one that remains on the floor while the *working leg* is usually off the floor. (In reality, both legs are working legs.)

There are instances when a step or movement can be duplicated musically in a specific way. These instances will be dealt with as they arise.

A description of classical ballet's steps and movements would, in many cases, be too confusing for beginning accompanists to understand, so they have been described instead by personality. (In the glossary you will find brief descriptions of all the terminology used in this book.) No one told me at the beginning that there could be many different musical forms in varying characters for one combination, or that different teachers could ascribe varying qualities to the same movement or step. Accompanists should keep this in mind when they play for many different teachers.

I hope some readers won't get caught up in what they think is incorrect terminology. It may be different from what you use, but it is not wrong. I have tried to be as clear as possible; for example, my term *dégagé family* denotes dégagés, jetés, and glissés. You may call a step sissonne simple, I call it temps levé; your retiré is my passé; your sur le cou-de-pied is sometimes my coupé, and so on. In America, the word *battement* is often omitted from many steps; hence, *battement tendu* becomes simply *tendu*.

Not every step/movement category will appear in every class you play. For example, grand allegro (big jumping steps) is almost never done in classes below the intermediate level. And it should be noted that all of the qualities described herein reflect the ultimate personalities of each step and movement. In other words, a pas de bourrée, for example, is done as a three-or four-count step for beginners in a medium-to-slow tempo, but is often a crisp one-count step for more advanced dancers.

At the barre

The barre combinations listed in this section are arranged in the way most teachers structure their barres. Teachers of less advanced students may omit some of them.

Barre combinations are rarely marked—that is, practiced with music before dancing them full-out.

Some teachers give a "pre-barre" or a floor barre, consisting of movements to help the body warm up and to improve alignment. These movements can be given to such an endless variety of meters, tempos, and musical qualities that I have chosen not to enumerate them here. It is safe to say, though, that the mood is usually calm and gentle.

Pliés

Pliés are always smooth, flowing, never-ending, and legato.

To an untrained eye, pliés go down and up, but in reality they are a study in contrary motion. If a dancer allows his full body weight to sink into his legs during a plié, his thigh muscles will become bulky from pushing all that weight up again. If, however, he breathes correctly and thinks of lifting his torso up and away from his legs as they bend, it is much more beneficial—and easier.

It is very difficult to re-create contrary motion musically in a dance-related fashion, but the first thirty-two counts of example 65 illustrate the concept fairly well. This is a very advanced concept of dance accompaniment, and certainly not something for a novice accompanist to lie awake nights over. However, an awareness of the reasons behind it will help to keep all elements of plodding and heaviness out of plié music.

It is safe to say that pliés must be reasonably slow. They are the first, most important, and most basic movement in a dance class, and must be executed diligently. The vast majority of teachers use slow 3/4s for their plié combinations. Slow waltzes are sometimes requested, but their "OOM pah pah" structure at a slow tempo does not lend itself to the flowing quality that a plié must have. Younger students, however, need a slow waltz for pliés, since the counts are more easily heard in a waltz than in a slow 3/4. Many of the 3/4 and 9/8 adagios in this book are in the correct tempo for pliés, but their high emotional intensity makes them unsuitable. Example 74, for instance, is so overwhelmingly powerful that it is not qualitatively conducive to the first combination of a class. The purpose of pliés is to begin the process of warming up and building technique and strength, not, at that point, to express emotion. By the time a dancer gets to the adagio in the center, his body should be thoroughly warmed up, making him prepared to express the motivation behind his movement.

In this book I have tried to steer clear of stating my own personal preferences as much as possible. The preferences of teachers and the needs of dancers have provided the basis for the observations and suggestions contained herein. But I would like to state my musical preference for pliés. This preference has also grown out of observing teachers and dancers in their response to music.

I vote for the medium-tempo flowing waltz as the form most conducive to pliés. It gives me more leeway in being able to express motion than other forms because the music is moving at a faster pace. And I find it easier to make dynamic changes which evoke the soaring, uplifting quality so appropriate to any movement of the cambré/port de bras family, which are almost always included in plié combinations. A demi-plié uses two counts of the waltz to go down and two counts to come up, and a grand plié uses four counts down and four counts up; the movements remain slow, but the music is alive and energetic. There is more substance in the rhythmic structure, which helps to generate fuller execution of the plié throughout the whole leg, rather than just bending the knees. (I don't mean to brag, but just today I played one of the group waltzes from *Swan Lake* for pliés for the Bern, Switzerland, company class, and they all applauded. That is not a normal occurrence from a group of professional dancers. I'm sure they were grateful for something to really lift their spirits on a Saturday morning after a hard week of work. The applause surprised me, and made me feel great—and the music probably made them feel even better.)

Example 65 is one of everybody's favorite pieces for pliés. The choreography included with it is the plié combination that Mr. Brunson's students did in every class he taught. The choreography never changed (which was never the case in all other combinations), and we were *never* bored.

To be fair, I will state the three complaints I have heard concerning the use of this form.

- "It's so heavy on the legs." *All* musical forms are heavy on the legs if a dancer "sits" at the bottom of the grand plié. I know teachers who have used this form for many years in their classes, and their students have well-developed—*not* bulky—thighs. If a dancer uses the music logically, he will never get heavy legs. The key to the logic here is for the dancer to start down in the plié more slowly than he is used to, so he won't have to sit and wait at the bottom for the right time to come up. It is the static parking that produces tree-trunk thighs.
- "It's too grand for anything but professional-level classes." I agree with that, for the most part. But I've watched what happens when I play this kind of waltz for a class of students who come "once a week to dancing school"; their eyes pop, the adrenaline starts flowing, there are actually one

or two beads of perspiration on their bodies, and they think maybe there's something to this dancing business, after all. As a steady diet, maybe not, but as an occasional taste of what pliés can really be like, I feel it's a great idea. And adult classes love it.

- "It's too loud!" This was from a dancer in a professional company who said she wasn't awake enough for that much energy. I politely refrained from saying, "That's the whole point. Pliés deserve as much, if not more, energy than any other combination."

Tendus

Tendus defy qualitative categorization. When the quality of a particular step cannot be succinctly described, the tempo in which it is executed often defines the quality. Hence, slow tendus with demi-pliés suggest an "andante con moto"—a moderato two with a smooth 8th-note figure or Alberti bass in the left hand, or a slow and flowing waltz. Don't forget dynamics; just because the movement is slow, that doesn't mean that the music is "sleepy" or lacking in energy and contrasting dynamic levels.[1]

Medium-tempo and fast tendus suggest a host of different meters, depending on whether the leg goes out on the count or on the "and." (A detailed discussion of "ands" begins on page 196.)

The dégagé family

Dégagés, jetés, and glissés are, from the accompanist's point of view, the same step, and are usually referred to throughout this book as the dégagé family. The term a teacher uses depends on which system of dance she studied.

These steps are a bit easier to define qualitatively than tendus. The action of the leg going away from the body is always brisk and crisp; the return of the leg is either equally brisk or, if the leg's return ends in a demi-plié, legato and melting.

Some teachers emphasize geographical locations—the outs and ins—of this step, in which case a duple meter works best, since it reflects those locations. Other teachers emphasize different facets of the step—for example, they want might more of a rebound, in which case a triple meter works best, since it doesn't have an accent on the "out" movement.

I am including a dégagé combination (example 66) that is typical of some that used to be a problem for me for many years. Many teachers like to give dégagé combinations in a medium-tempo two that allows for clean, turned-out closings in fifth position, immediately followed by sixteen counts tacked on at the end for dégagés in first position to emphasize speed. A change of music for these last sixteen counts not only perks up the dancers' feet *and*

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ears; it also is helpful for the accompanist, who may already be playing the first section as fast as he can.

Dégagé-family combinations also can start either on the count or on "and," and can be done to as large a variety of meters as can tendus.

Ronds de jambe à terre

Ronds de jambe à terre are usually called simply ronds de jambe. Another movement of the same family, ronds de jambe en l'air, always includes the words en l'air.

There are definite geographical locations for the leg and foot in a rond de jambe à terre (a perfect one is in the shape of a D), and the musical accent may be requested in different locations. There are two different kinds of rond de jambe à terre combinations, and the meter of the music is different for each.

In two

One kind of rond de jambe combination includes the following pattern: two slow ronds de jambe and three fast ones. (Sometimes when I dissect this movement phrase, I come up with three slow ones and two fast.) Example 9, a moderato two, shows this pattern written, between the staves, where it can occur. Neither a rhythmic nor a melodic figure complementary to this particular combination of movements can be found easily in a waltz. Carefully chosen legato tangos will also work for this type of combination.

In three

The other kind of rond de jambe combination usually contains no quick ronds de jambe, so the inherent roundness of the movement is best enhanced by a smooth and flowing waltz or gentle ländler. I like to fill in the melodic holes with eighth notes in the left hand, which is demonstrated in the A section of example 75.

Ronds de jambe à terre normally start in one of two different ways:

- from first or fifth position, so the first actual leg movement occurs on "1"; or
- from second position, which is usually preceded by the teacher saying, "Preparation." This can be confusing to the new accompanist because, theoretically, there is a preparation before every combination. But this rond de jambe preparation is unique. During the 4-count introduction, one complete rond de jambe is accomplished in the following way: The student fondus on one leg while the other leg tendus to the front ("5" and "6"); the fondu leg straightens as the tendu leg goes to second position ("7"); on "8," the tendu leg completes the preparatory rond de jambe.

Fondus

Fondus are always melting, smooth, legato, and extra-controlled.

Fondus may not look as vertical as, for instance, grands battements or grand allegro, but they definitely are, and are also one of the most demanding steps in the dance vocabulary. Ideally, they should be executed smoothly from the lowest depths of the demi-plié to the highest point of the demi-pointe. The standing leg has to press the entire weight of the body up with no help from the rebounding action of jumping, so you can imagine how important it is to have the torso correctly placed and as lifted and buoyant as possible, as described in the plié section. Therefore it is helpful to reflect this motion in melodic lines and in your pedaling. I maintain a legato melodic line throughout, and use the pedal as the dancers use their bodies: Depress the pedal when they are down, lift it when they are up.

Some teachers will begin fondu combinations by having the students' working legs tendu to second position before the "1."[2]

Fondus may be done to waltzes, barcarolles, the lassú section of czardases, and—in more advanced classes—to carefully chosen tangos.

Frappés

Frappés are always bright, crisp, and staccato. Vera Volkova once said, "Frappés are never sad."

Frappés and the dégagé family share the same energetic footwork, but their rhythmic structure is often quite different.

Dégagés, when given in a duple meter, are usually executed rhythmically evenly, as in the following example:

Teachers are often very specific about the rhythmic execution of a frappé, calling upon their students to do four single frappés either in the rhythm of the above dégagé example, or in the following rhythm:

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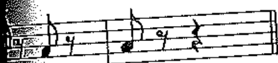

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Single and double frappés are the usual form of this step; triple frappés occur occasionally.

Since most melodies are not written to the rhythmic specifications of frappés, an accompanist can either invent some, or use pieces whose melodies contain notes where the frappés' accents fall, and stress them with contrasting dynamics and pedaling, as in examples 67 and 68. Both examples contain the correct accents for single and double frappés.

Many teachers devise their own preparations for frappés, getting the working leg out to the side in tendu so that the inward movement to the ankle can be executed on the "and" before the "1."

Adagios/développés

The quality of these movements is sustained, controlled, deceivingly powerful, smooth, elongated, reaching, and extending beyond the body.

These movements can often be grueling to a dancer at the barre because of the stamina required. In the center, the class is divided almost always into at least two groups of dancers, allowing one group to rest while another group works. This is not the case at the barre; all the dancers do every combination with no rest in between. Therefore, strong, substantial, helpful, supportive—but always legato—music is called for here.

(Although the following information may not seem relevant to this book, I want to mention an important "discovery" that is just starting to take hold in the dance world. This revelation is something I have retained and cherished from my first years of dance study with Mr. Brunson, and it seems to have fallen out of favor these days: strength and stamina developed through aerobic execution of dance classes. Sweat seems to have become a dirty word; it boggles my mind to see how few dancers—even professionals—come away from the barre with barely a sheen on them. We used to be dripping after pliés. Sweating doesn't necessarily prove that one has good working habits, and I have known a very few dancers who just don't sweat, but an entire roomful of barely damp bodies suggests that something is missing from the execution of such a physical endeavor. Dr. Eileen M. Wanke has done extensive research and tests on a number of dancers, and the results of executing aerobic ballet class on a regular basis show that the dancers are not only stronger and happier, but also less injury prone. I will not go further into this subject, as it will comprise a large chapter in my next book but, for those of you whose interest is piqued, you can get more information from Dr. Wanke at the following address: Bereich Tanzmedizin, Sulingerstrasse 20, D-27211 Bassum, Germany. (This information is available in both English and German.)

Adagios are comprised of a number of different steps and movements, some of which are développé, relevé lent, grand rond de jambe en l'air (whose

shape and texture is decidedly different from a "normal" rond de jambe en l'air), attitude, and arabesque.

Passés/retirés are often included, too, as they are the first movement of a développé. The personality of a passé depends on the mini-phrase of movement in which it appears; in the case of adagios and développés, it will require the same quality as the rest of the combination. It has a distinctly different personality in pirouette combinations, as we shall see.

Accompanists must learn immediately that the longer a leg is held in the air, the harder it is for a dancer.

Adagios in all the meters I have discussed are suitable for this family of movement. A more detailed discussion on your choice of music will appear in the section on adagio center combinations.

Petits battements serrés and battus

These movements are always brisk, crisp, repetitive, "busy," and staccato.

An accompanist's ability to musically reflect the quality of this movement family will increase as his technique expands. As a beginning accompanist, you will probably start out by playing a medium-tempo two, preferably with a lacy, filigreed melodic figure in the right hand to reflect the shape, speed, and texture of the movement. As your confidence, understanding, and technique increase, you will graduate to a fast waltz, such as Chopin's "Minute" Waltz (op. 64, no. 1), or a coda. Both a fast waltz and a coda have more notes in the rhythm—and often in the melody—than the medium-tempo two; these notes reflect the dancers' movements more accurately.

Battements serrés are often given in the same rhythm as single frappés, and teachers may improvise the same sorts of preparations.

Ronds de jambe en l'air

This step is a chameleon, like a tendu. Ronds de jambe en l'air can be executed to a variety of musical forms, depending on which particular quality the teacher is stressing.

Their oval or teardrop shape suggests that they are always smooth. But when they are done at a brisk tempo with the foot just slightly off the floor, there is a definite, almost staccato, finishing accent as the foot and leg stretch to complete each one (see example 12). When the teacher demonstrates ronds de jambe en l'air in a fast tempo, a brisk waltz, 3/8, or non-coda two is usually suitable. When she demonstrates them in a slow tempo or smooth quality, the same rules apply to "en l'airs" as to "à terres": a legato waltz if they are all done at the same speed (see example 69), or a slow two if there are three slow and two quick ones (see example 70).

Teachers occasionally start en l'air combinations in almost the same manner as à terres. The main difference is that, on the accompanist's last count of

the 4-count introduction, the working leg will often dégagé to second position and do one rond de jambe en l'air, arriving in second position en l'air again by the "1."

A grand rond de jambe en l'air bears slightly more resemblance to an à terre than to an en l'air. It has the same shape as an à terre (the letter D), but it is executed with the foot and leg off the floor at varying heights, and is almost always executed as part of an adagio combination.

Grands battements and battements en cloche and en balançoire

These movements are perhaps the most spectacular of the steps executed at the barre, often earning a respectful "Wow!" from an audience during a lecture-demonstration. Verticality is very much in evidence in grands battements; the height of the movement, as well as the power necessary to get the leg to that height, must be reflected in both the musical structure and the dynamics. Melodic lines as well as leading tones in octaves in the bass, leading to the peaks of the movements, are most helpful to the dancer.

Most teachers, and probably many pianists, think that all marches are written in 4/4, so accompanists often end up playing only 4/4 marches for grands battements. More experienced accompanists like to vary the musical forms they use for each step/movement group at the barre, and the grand battement group includes 4/4 and 6/8 marches, grandiose waltzes, and—occasionally—polonaises.

Grands battements with the leg going up on the count

Duple meter marches and grandiose peaks-and-valleys waltzes are recommended for this kind of combination.

A polonaise, not a mazurka—as is so often requested—is called for when teachers give grands battements in three counts: The leg goes up on the first beat of a bar, descends to tendu on the second beat, and closes in fifth position on the third beat. (Polaccas and boleros have the right tempo and rhythmic structure for this kind of combination, but their quality doesn't match the power necessary to support it.)

Grands battements with the leg going up on "and"

Almost all 6/8 marches work for this kind of combination. A few duple-meter marches, such as example 80, work also, depending on the melodic accents.

The quality of this and the previous grand battement combination is always broad, loud, energetic, and uplifting.

Grands battements en cloche and en balançoire

These are very swinging movements, and require a triple meter with stress on every count, as in 3/8s. Mazurkas have stress on every count, too, but they are generally too slow and too heavy for this movement.

The quality of this combination of movement is more relaxed and free than the two previous ones (see example 71).

Battements en cloche may also be done very quickly with the toes barely off the ground to the front and back. They have a radically different quality from the "grand" variety.

Stretching

Stretching is the only end-of-barre combination we will deal with here, as the others are as personal as each individual teacher.

The quality of stretching is self-explanatory. Other applicable adjectives are *smooth* and *elongating*. For dancers who are not loose in the hip joints and/or hamstrings, another applicable adjective is *grueling*, but this should not be reflected in the music.

I often "audition" new adagios during stretching combinations to see if teachers like them. If a teacher rejects one for use as a barre or center adagio, she will usually be amenable to your playing it for stretching. Since I prefer to save my "inspirational music" (as a dancer once called it) for adagio combinations, and since no rhythmical impetus is necessary to help a body or a leg get off the ground, I use adagios with flowing rhythmic structures and relatively quiet dynamics. Even dancers with loose hip sockets can often be in pain from stretching, so a serene, peaceful atmosphere generated by the music is always appreciated.

The cambré family

Cambré, port de bras, port de bras en rond, port de corps, circular port de bras—these are some names of movements that are designed to warm up, stretch, and strengthen the entire body from the ankles up. They often directly follow a period of intensive leg activity, providing not only a rest for the legs but also the opportunity to work on the vital stomach and back muscles. For the sake of brevity, cambré will be used as a generic name throughout the text, unless otherwise specified.

A closer look at any movement of this family can illustrate the difference between just making shapes with the body, and doing the movement so it is both pleasurable and beneficial. The cambré can be done correctly only if the tempo of the music accommodates it. If the tempo is too fast, which is usually the case, a dancer usually sits back in his hips and sloughs through the movement. It takes concentration and the right amount of time to use the stomach muscles, activate the back, and maintain perfect verticality from the hips down to get the stretch in the backs of the legs.

A lot of dancers execute cambrés in a hum-drum fashion—as just another exercise. Mr. Brunson, bless him, exhorted us to experience them as soaring, liberating movements at the same time that they were doing great things for our muscles. (I am convinced that that liberating feeling contributed to the

benefits our muscles received; without the emotional motor behind the movement, it would indeed feel like an exercise and produce less technical improvement.)

There is a distinct change in dynamics whenever any movement of this family is done, and this change starts before the movement begins: A leading line, a crescendo, and a breath with the pedal all help the dancer to inhale and renew his energy—and to change the position of his arms, if necessary.

We will discuss two of the most common movements of this family here. To facilitate reading, they will be referred to as cambré and circular port de bras.

- A cambré exhibits obvious verticality. It is executed in four sections: The torso bends straight down from the hips, comes up, bends back, and returns to an upright position. (For the purposes of this discussion, I will use the cambré in which the back remains straight during the second section, not the one that rolls through each vertebra.) It really feels good to a dancer to bend his body down so that his chest touches his legs; the back enjoys not having to support so much body weight for a few seconds, and the blood gets a chance to refresh the brain. You can reflect breaths in your pedaling at the two vital points where a dancer should inhale: just before he starts down and just before he starts back.
- A circular port de bras is not at all vertical; it is two huge, sweeping circles of the body from the waist up. There is one inhalation before the dancer starts diagonally out, down, and around; and another before he reverses the entire movement. Each movement and musical phrase is accomplished in a seamless, roundly flowing fashion which builds dynamically to each finish.

The tempo is not the same for the cambré and the circular port de bras. That may explain why the circular port de bras is given less often than the cambré; many teachers and most accompanists don't realize that the two movements need different musical tempos to be effective. Some teachers seem indifferent to tempo in general, while most are very specific about it, but sometimes they forget that a cambré or circular port de bras section needs a different tempo than what preceded it. (For years I have watched dancers attempt to do circular ports de bras in a plié combination in four counts—their usual allotment—and it is sad to see them producing movement that only warms up instead of also strengthening and lengthening. Especially if a dancer has been taught properly during his pre-professional training, he will just give up trying to do it correctly if he hasn't enough time.) Establishing the tempo for every combination is always the teacher's responsibility. It is up to her to watch her students' movements in order to discern whether a tempo is so unsuitable as to prevent the beneficial execution of a step or movement.

The following illustrations will show the accompanist how to translate these movements into music.

Cambrés and circular ports de bras within plié combinations

Medium-tempo waltz. Example 65 is a plié combination. In bars 21–28 there is a cambré forward. In measures 89–104 there are two circular ports de bras. Notice that this latter section is slightly slower.

Slow waltz, slow 3/4, or 9/8. Example 52 is part of a plié combination, and contains a cambré forward.

A circular port de bras in these three forms is not recommended. Four counts in this tempo is too little time to execute well the circular port de bras, and slowing down the already slow tempo would produce a heavy, plodding quality with none of the uplifting brea(d)th necessary for the movement. Speeding it up, in order to accomplish the movement in eight counts, would be not only difficult technically but jarring musically. Changing to a waltz, which will be covered in the following rond de jambe section, is too much of a musical jolt for the first combination of the class. I think this is why I have observed that most good teachers include circular ports de bras in later combinations at the barre.

Cambrés and circular ports de bras added onto rond de jambe à terre combinations

The majority of rond de jambe combinations consists of thirty-two counts of ronds de jambe and related steps, followed usually by eight, sixteen, twenty-four, or thirty-two counts of the cambré family and a balance.

Slow waltz. If you are playing a slow waltz—one rond de jambe per measure—most teachers keep a cambré at the same tempo, so each of the four sections is executed in two counts. However, I prefer to speed up or change the waltz (or both) so that each section is accomplished in four counts. I do this to emphasize the dynamic changes and soaring quality of the movement. I never do this without explaining my reasons to the teacher before class and asking her permission.

The tempo during a circular port de bras must be sped up so that each "sweep" is accomplished in eight counts. Otherwise, the same problem as in pliés occurs: The same tempo means not enough time to do it correctly, and a slower tempo means music that does not evoke the liberating feeling of the movement.

Moderato two or tango. After the 32-count (usually) rond de jambe section, I prefer to change to a waltz for the cambré or circular port de bras section. The change in dynamics and meter is especially effective and uplifting after thirty-two counts of duple meter. Because radical transitions are often problematic for beginning accompanists, it is advisable to stay with the duple meter for the cambré section. But it is not a satisfying evocation of the movement quality, and it is especially unsuitable for the sweep of a circular port de bras.

Medium-tempo waltz. If you are playing a medium-tempo waltz—one rond de jambe in four bars—you are probably playing for a children's or beginners' class, in which circular ports de bras are rarely given.

The medium-tempo waltz is already the approximate tempo of a cambré, as we have seen in the foregoing plié section.

Movements of the cambré family included in combinations of a non-legato quality

Rarely will a teacher tell an accompanist during her demonstration that there must be a change in the musical quality to accommodate a movement of this family. Often, she will just say something like, "Cambré at the end."[3]

The teacher must decide how many counts a tacked-on cambré needs, and communicate this to her accompanist. For instance, she could say to her accompanist, "Thirty-two counts of dégagés, followed by a 16-count cambré, plus an amen." Translated into musical terms, this becomes, "Thirty-two counts of a staccato two, followed by sixteen counts of legato music, plus an authentic cadence." The teacher would, of course, demonstrate the tempos to both her accompanist and students.

Cambrés can be included in any combination (unfortunately, most teachers restrict their usage to plié and rond de jambe combinations), and teachers should decide how they want them treated musically: whether the accompanist should continue with the same piece, changing the dynamics, quality, and tempo as necessary; or whether he should change over to a waltz.

In the center

The first combinations in the center

The first few combinations in the center—usually until the adagio—are mainly comprised of various steps that have been executed at the barre. None of these first combinations will be dealt with here, as they are almost identical to some of the barre combinations already described, and are as varied as the

teachers themselves. But a fairly standard one will be covered in the pirouette section.

The tempos of these first combinations are usually fairly slow, and the moods are fairly low-key, in order for the dancers to get fully "on their legs"—to establish correct body placement without the support of the barre.

Discussion of the vocabulary used during the remaining part of the class will be primarily in terms of families of steps, rather than individual steps and movements.

Adagios

Adagio combinations in the center can be basic academic practice of typical adagio movements (which were listed earlier in the barre section), and they can also include expressive movements of the arms, head, and torso that are not found in a dictionary of classical ballet. These "atypical" movements are just as important as the classical steps, since choreography on the stage these days rarely is limited to pure classical technique. And a student doesn't suddenly learn how to move expressively on the day he signs his first company contract.

I have heard that the young girls in Alicia Alonso's school in Cuba are taught to blow a kiss as they move their arms from first to second position. While this may seem a bit flowery and overblown to us, it teaches them from a very early age that movement is *not* empty; it expresses something to an audience, if only the sheer joy of moving. After all, the classroom is the first preparation for the stage. Even in a school for amateurs, expressive movement should be encouraged. Classical ballet technique is not just about stretched legs and pointed feet; it is also a language of expression, just like English or music or Russian or painting. If the students come (or the parents want the students to come) only for physical exercise, they are probably better off in a gymnastics class.

To novice accompanists, adagios may sometimes look like a series of static poses, but in reality they are moving positions that require a great deal of strength to both maintain and—often—elongate. While some teachers feel it may be beneficial and strength building for a student to park in an arabesque and hold it there through sheer brute strength for eight counts, it is also beneficial and aesthetic for him to be aware of the length of a musical phrase and to make his movement grow proportionately within and to the end of that phrase. Parking in a position is beneficial only when the proper muscles are being used, which requires a great deal of strength in the torso. (It is sad to see a male student trying to hold his leg up in second position for eight counts in preparation for à la seconde turns when the strain on his face, the misplacement of his body, and the bulge of his thigh are obvious signals that he is using and developing the wrong muscles.)

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The turn/pirouette family

The adagio turn or pirouette

This is an exquisite, controlled, slow, single turn that can finish in a melting lunge to the floor, and is usually found in adagio combinations. The quality of this movement needs no further elaboration.

"Normal" pirouette combinations

"Normal" pirouettes are revolutions of the body on the ball of one foot or on the tip of one point shoe, with the other leg usually in the passé position. Remember that the quality of passés in adagio combinations is always smooth, matching the quality of the rest of the movement. In pirouettes, the quality is decidedly different: The passé must zip up the leg to the knee as quickly as possible, and pirouette music needs to reflect that.

While the various qualities of pirouettes cannot be defined in a manne helpful to a beginning accompanist, dancers who are natural turners almos always say that coordination, a fluid demi-plié before the sharp takeoff, an rhythm are absolute musts in the accomplishment of good pirouettes. Excep in the case of adagio pirouettes, every pirouette combination should be sup ported by a very firm rhythmic structure which the dancer will use for hi "spotting" and for the pistonlike action of his legs during turns in successio No matter what you play, the rhythm must be especially firm in the turn se tion, and uncluttered by arpeggios, which detract from the steady rhythm pulse. A crescendo on the demi-plié preparation before pirouettes not on reflects the verticality of the turning position but also reminds dancers th sneaking gently up to demi-pointe will never provide enough impetus to around more than once. The height of the crescendo should be maintain throughout the duration of the turn(s).

Sometimes beginning "pirouetters" need to just lurch around at their o tempos, either to overcome their fear of turning or to just get used to t strange new sensation. But the rhythm in the music, combined with teacher's comments, will eventually sink into their consciousness, and t will gradually learn to use that rhythm.

Some teachers request that the pirouette section of a combination (of in the first tendu combination in the center) be slowed down, presumabl allow for more pirouettes. I feel that this practice leads dancers to unc sciously expect slower tempos for pirouettes, which will never occur in ch ography for the stage. And it will adversely affect a natural turner's tur tempo, which he has already established in his body through the foreg music. It makes more sense to have two separate sections within one co nation, with music suitable for each section, as in example 72.[4]

Pirouettes can be combined with virtually every combination in the ter, but when a teacher demonstrates a "normal pirouette combination,'

forms most commonly used are waltzes in a variety of dynamic levels (especially if the combination includes balancés), mazurkas, and medium-tempo 3/8s. When they are danced to pieces in duple meter, the head spot rhythm is usually faster.

Turns in attitude and arabesque

Turns in attitude and arabesque are rarely called pirouettes, but they are a part of that family. They can be done as parts of so many different combinations of movement that it is impossible to suggest a particular meter or musical form.

Turns in succession

Turns in succession will be discussed after the grand allegro section, since that is where they usually occur.

Chaînés/déboulés

Chaînés/déboulés should eventually be executed at lightning speed, but they need many years of sometimes excruciatingly slow tempos for the body to get used to doing them correctly before speed is attained. I have been asked for so many different kinds of music for chaînés for beginners that I can't remember them all. Suffice it to say that, whatever you play, it should not sound as heavy as the students will look during their first attempts at chaînés; light-footed music should remind them what they are striving toward.

Because of the difficulty of the step, some teachers turn a blind eye to their students' lack of rhythmicality as they start learning to do chaînés. I agree with this, having myself plodded around at one point, trying to do chaînés; I could stay within my own tempo, but it was decidedly different from that of my neighbors in front and in back of me. (This is definitely an unusual exception to the necessity of ordering one's movements to the music's demands; rhythmicality is the first step toward—and an innate part of—not only musicality but also technical improvement. Anything less is self-indulgence.)

Soutenu turn

A soutenu turn (they are almost always singles) is done on the toes or the balls of both feet, can be either legato or staccato, and is often used at the barre to change from one side to the other.

Tour en l'air

Tour en l'air (usually double in choreography) is a turn that is part of the basic vocabulary of male classical dancers; it is often included in the variations and codas of traditional pas de deux. Music similar to these variations

and codas (if not they themselves) are recommended, as well as robust waltzes and marchlike twos (very rarely tarantellas).

Balancés

Balancés deserve their own category, simply because they are probably the most dancy (for lack of a better word) movement in the dance vocabulary. How a dancer does balancés shows clearly how he feels about dancing in general. They are danced to threes 98 percent of the time. One exception is a fast friszka—usually the finale of a rousing character dance.

Sautés/jumps

There is a very specific order in which jumping steps are given. The logic of it may not be visibly apparent to the accompanist, but it is certainly there.

The first jumps in every class are almost always executed from two feet to two feet. In the next category, referred to here as petit allegro, the jumping becomes progressively more difficult as the jumps are executed from two feet to one foot, from one foot to two feet, and from one foot to one foot. Then come medium allegro (slower and higher) and grand allegro (even slower and, when applicable, as high as possible). Many of these steps can be beaten.

Changements

Changements often comprise the majority of steps given in the first jumping combination of the class. Most teachers are very specific about the tempo, since this combination is about warming up the feet and preparing the body for jumping, not about how high one can jump. There are often other steps included in this combination, and it is usually done to a two in the median tempo of a polka. Certain 6/8s (similar to example 45) are also possible and highly recommended.

Many teachers give combinations that include three changements and a demi-plié. There are two different ways of doing this, with decidedly different tempos. The first version is faster than the second, and needs a polka or a rag:

A dotted melodic rhythm is suitable for the second version:

♩=112 "And": a two Ex. 39

5. position 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

p r e p a r a t i o n plié CM CM CM plié CM CM CM plié

Unless the teacher has a specific reason for changing the accent, changements begin before the "1." The dancer pliés on the last count of the introduction, jumps into the air on "and," and lands on the "1." (I greatly regret not asking Mme. Volkova why she occasionally asked her students to reverse this process and be up in the air on "1" after they had just executed it the "normal" way. What a can of worms! The students had a very difficult time changing the accent. It was another instance that proved that the dance vocabulary was set up according to organic, sometimes indefinable, laws that often relate to music.)

Petit allegro

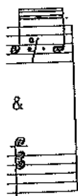
Most petit allegro steps exhibit verticality, but the height of this family of steps is seldom as important as the cleanliness of execution.

Many of these steps (glissade and pas de bourrée are but two) can be combined with adagio movement, giving them a completely different personality. Many petit allegro combinations can be done in either duple or triple meter. And some of them can be done "grandly," such as assemblé and jeté.

Many petit allegro steps start before the count. It seems to make more sense to advise beginning accompanists to watch for the accents than to analyze them all.

Because they are so prevalent in so many different kinds of combinations, four steps deserve mention here.

Glissades are usually not jumping steps, but they are components of a large number of petit allegro combinations, so they are included here. They are normally executed as they are pronounced, with the accent falling on the second syllable/movement: "glis-SADE"—"and ONE." There is also a noteworthy mini-version of a glissade, called a précipitée (sometimes glissade piquée), that usually has the personality of a hiccup. These are also found occasionally in adagio combinations, at which time their hiccup quality is slightly mellowed.



Pas de bourrées are also not jumping steps, but they are very often combined with petit allegro movement. They look like three-part steps, but are often taught to beginners in four counts, a plié on the supporting leg being the fourth part. And advanced dancers often execute them in one count.

Pas de bourrées can be done to almost every conceivable musical form, and can begin on every conceivable beat in a bar. It would require a separate volume to demonstrate all the possibilities. Suffice it to say that, if a teacher gives a combination of only pas de bourrées, watch and listen carefully: First, ascertain whether she wants a two or a three, and then observe where the more stressed parts of the step fall, so you will know where the "1" is.

Consecutive chassés are especially popular in children's classes. They can and must be done to both duple and triple meters, but the feeling of the step—and the sound that the feet make—are definitely in three. If the teacher you play for always requests a two, ask if you can play a three now and then. (And vice versa.) Teachers often speak and mark chassés in two, but they will normally dance them full-out (as opposed to marking) in three (usually a 6/8).

Assemblés can occasionally cause problems. Teachers and accompanists must work especially closely to prevent any hint of heaviness from intruding upon assemblé combinations. I have played for many "Russian system" advocates who give consecutive assemblés in duple meter every day. If dancers have to do this combination on a daily basis, I think they should occasionally do it to a three; they will not always dance assemblés to a two, and a three changes the emphasis of the step. Twos with a dotted melodic rhythm are usually reliable choices for this combination, but the same type of music every day with the same combination deadens the ears, to say nothing of its effect on the body. Assemblés for beginners are done slowly, of course; slowing down a waltz to accommodate the necessary slowness produces lighter-feeling music than slowing down a two.

I find that 6/8s rarely work for assemblés in triple meter; waltzes seem to be better, and "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" works wonderfully. (I get no reaction from it in Europe, but I wonder if I would be laughed out of an American studio for playing it.)

There are legions of meters and forms that effectively complement petit allegro steps: rags, polkas, some gavottes, boleros, jigs, reels, schottisches, hornpipes, medium-tempo waltzes, Spanish waltzes, fast waltzes, tarantellas, polaccas, some 3/8s and 6/8s, and allegro 9/8s and 12/8s.

Medium allegro

These combinations are slower than petit allegro and faster than grand allegro. They can often be done as comfortably in duple as in triple meter, and the teacher can jump back and forth between the two meters during her demonstration (which happens quite often with petit allegro combinations, too). When this happens, inexperienced accompanists should ask her which meter she wants; experienced accompanists can either ask or surprise her.

A two with a dotted melodic rhythm often works well for medium allegro combinations in duple meter, and some duple meter marches are also effective. Certain kinds of 6/8s (like examples 43 and 48), medium-fast waltzes, some Spanish waltzes, and some 3/8s can be used for medium allegro combinations in triple meter.

Grand allegro

Grand allegro tempos are never as fast as what a musician thinks of as allegro.

Many grand allegro combinations can, like all the allegro families, be done in both duple and triple meters. Many duple-meter marches, big waltzes in 3/4 and 6/8, as well as occasionally codas and some 3/8s are good choices for grand allegro combinations.[5]

The qualities of grand allegro steps are always big, broad, powerful, robust, extending into space, and soaring.

Turns in succession

Turns in succession is a generic term for combinations of turning movement that is repetitive. In other words, a single piqué turn, a single fouetté turn, a single chaîné turn, or a single grand pirouette à la seconde (the four most well known) will rarely occur in a phrase of movement; they are almost always done in a series. Many steps of this family can be done diagonally across the floor or en manège (in a circle)—not ménage (household).

In advanced and professional-level classes, a coda is almost always used for these steps, because they are almost always included in the codas of traditional pas de deux. In less advanced classes, a simple, uncluttered, rhythmically clear triple or duple meter may be used. Tempo is of the utmost importance.[6]

Révérence/port de bras

Révérence/port de bras varies from teacher to teacher, and sometimes is not used at all. A révérence has various purposes, depending on the teacher's taste and heritage. Some people have accused this practice of being a ridiculous holdover from the formal French court days. Most agree, however, that it is invaluable for practicing one of the most important elements of a dancer's stage performance: the final acknowledgment and thank you to the audience.

The teacher may ask for eight or sixteen counts of a slow waltz during which her students bow to her and to the accompanist. (Be sure to look at the students and acknowledge this bow; they are being taught to appreciate you and your work!)[7] Or she may ask for an adagio in which her students execute a combination of, usually, adagio movement combined with cambré/port de bras, which may or may not include bows. (Ninety-five per cent of the révérences/ports de bras I play include cambrés that are executed in two counts bending forward and two counts coming up. Since the students don't have a barre to help them with balance, I usually play a 4/4 or 12/8, to give them enough time to attempt to execute the cambré/port de bras properly.) Or she may ask for a robust piece of music to which she may improvise, expecting her students to react immediately and follow her movements. This is an invaluable aid in training the students to be instantly responsive to a choreographer.

The two most common ways a révérence is given are:

- as a separate combination (as noted above); or
- tacked onto a grand battement combination or a series of small, fast jumps; in either case, both the tempo and quality of music must change.

If you know that the teacher will use a révérence or port de bras at the end of class, be prepared for it. Before the class starts, put your chosen piece in a place apart from the music you might use during the class, so you won't have to hunt for it when the teacher says, "Révérence—AND!"[8]

Being familiar with the individual qualities of dance movement will gradually allow you to become quicker in your choice of appropriate music. However, because teachers want to keep their students' muscles warm and moving, class rarely moves at a pace leisurely enough for you to analyze all the material that is bombarding you at once. The teacher may begin a combination without you if she feels the class has waited long enough and the students' muscles are beginning to cool down. There will be times when you completely "bomb out" and choose something laughingly unsuitable. That's fine, as long as you learn from it. Not even Baryshnikov started doing every step perfectly at the beginning.

Start developing the ability to analyze your mistakes when you are in the middle of them; try to figure out why something was inappropriate. Did you misjudge the tempo? Was the piece too technically advanced for you at this time? Did you misread the quality? And so on. Whatever you do, *don't stop*. Don't give into yourself in this manner. Pushing ahead and making it work will do you much more good than stopping. That is just as important to re-

member as the fact that it is better for the students to continue too. You can often get away with an inappropriate selection, but improvement, no matter how gradual, will give you more enjoyment and fulfillment in what you are doing than just getting by.

Periodic sessions for the teacher and accompanist together, outside the pressures of the class, are vitally important. Whether it is five minutes just before class starts, two minutes at the end to clarify something, an hour a week, or a pleasant "dinner-music" session once a month, the increased exposure to each other's problem areas, needs, and abilities will reap mutually rewarding benefits.

The tools of an accompanist's trade

Repertoire

How to develop it

There are two choices for playing suitable music for dance: improvising and using written music.

Improvisation

Some of the finest dance accompanists don't use or even read music. Because their eyes are not glued to the printed page in front of them, they are free to observe the teacher as well as the class. They more easily gauge the teacher's and dancers' reactions to their music. Accompanists who consistently improvise for dance, however, run the risk of repeating themselves stylistically. Much of their music may tend to sound the same after a while, not only in style but also in key signature. And improvisers tend to "noodle" inventively with their right hands, leaving the left hands to fall where they may, thereby short-changing rich rhythmic propulsion. It is therefore important for the accompanist to remain open and free with regard to melodic inventiveness, harmony, texture, tonality, and stylistic approach.

Dance teachers very often choreograph their classroom combinations to specific musical lines or accents, which must be reflected consistently—in the same place each time in a given combination—in your improvised music.

When you *must* improvise

If you are an accompanist who relies completely on printed music, you may still be required to improvise occasionally. While the music selections in this book have been carefully chosen to give as complete a range of rhythms, tempos, and styles as possible, there is the possibility that a teacher will ask for something not included here.

Potential areas of misunderstanding

The misunderstandings that occur through faulty communication with and from the teacher are especially frustrating for the beginning accompanist. You must remember that you will gradually be able to understand exactly what the teacher wants. (Well, maybe not always. I am writing this the day after playing some teachers' examinations. It has been a long time since I could not decipher a request from a dance teacher, and I was especially confused yesterday when a teacher asked me for "more accented music" for her plié combination. I personally cannot imagine accented music for pliés, but I try to please every teacher. Even after a protracted discussion after the class, I was still unable to understand what she meant. Her nonexistent English and my less-than-fluent German probably didn't help matters much.)

I think it will be helpful for less experienced accompanists to be aware of the usual trouble spots. One of my biggest frustrations as a beginner was knowing that I had a problem in a particular area, and being unable either to find a solution or to even formulate a question. Over the years I have sorted out a lot of my misunderstandings, and I hope this section will smooth the way a little bit for accompanists who are new to the field.

Tempo

Tempo, as usual, is number one on the list of misunderstandings in the classroom. Correct tempo is vital for the safety and correct development of the dancers, and for you, the accompanist, to be able to play what the teacher wants. For this reason I repeat ad nauseam that the teacher must either demonstrate in the correct tempo or establish it just before the dancers begin dancing. And if you are not experienced enough to be able to figure out when she wants the tempo she demonstrated and when not, ask.

The following are some standard tempo-altering devices that are commonly used in the dance studio.

Ritard

Ritard is an abbreviation of the word *ritardando*. There are differences between *ritardando, rallentando, ritenuto, allargando,* and all the other words that denote a slowing down; and I have heard that discussions over their various nuances cause fights between some conductors. To save time, facilitate reading, and avoid violence, I have chosen to use *ritard,* as either a verb or a noun. Most dance teachers, as well as many musicians, use it in this way.

A ritard is usually a gradual decrease in tempo. A tempo change from one bar to the next is not really a ritard, and is often preceded by a fermata.

As a general rule in the dance classroom, don't ritard unless you have a complete understanding and visual grasp of the movement that is being executed at the time—or unless, of course, the teacher asks you to do so. Beginning accompanists who are inexperienced in reading movement usually don't realize that seemingly static poses that have less visible movement to the untrained eye (such as arabesque, attitude, and balances) are, in truth, often the most difficult to sustain, especially when a ritard prolongs the sustaining.

As you become more experienced, you may find yourself wanting to ritard in the following situations:

- In plié combinations, when specific counts have not been given to change the feet from one position to the next, a slight ritard will allow the students enough time to finish the preceding movement properly, and to change the feet neatly.

- The same reason applies to stretching combinations, when the standing leg must often be adjusted from one body position to the next.

- A ritard for "music to balance by" was covered on page 151.

- When an adagio combination is done to both sides without a break in the music, the ritard before the second side serves two purposes: It gives the dancers an extra space to breathe and renew their energies; and many adagios start softly and build to a big climax, so the ritard gives you an extra space to diminuendo to the proper beginning dynamic level.

Ritards are often found within the main body of many pieces used for adagio combinations, and the teacher must be familiar with them before she starts choreographing her combination. If you have a new adagio with ritards in it, play it before class for the teacher, so she knows where the ritards are and can adjust her steps and movements to the proper technical level of her students. She might give a balance in arabesque to her advanced students during this ritard, and a lovely port de bras (with both feet on the floor) to her intermediate and beginning students. If the ritards are unsuitable for her movements in that particular case, choose another piece. (Ask her if she doesn't like it at all, or if it just isn't what she wants for that particular combination. If she doesn't like it at all, another teacher might adore it, so don't throw it away—along with all your hard work learning it.)

Ritards are sometimes used in barre combinations for changing from one side to the other without stopping the music. Almost without exception, you

will be expected to resume the original tempo after the ritard is completed. This sounds easy, but most beginning accompanists have trouble with it. An awareness of the problem often solves it. (I do not advocate the use of these ritards on a regular basis. I have explained why on page 76 in the Teachers' chapter, since it is the teacher's decision to use them or not.)

Some teachers ask for a ritard in the pirouette section of a combination so that a dancer can accomplish more turns. This is generally unwise, since the most logical and dependable execution of pirouettes is accomplished through the use of rhythm: The head spots to the rhythm of the music, regardless of the tempo. Most musical dancers are thrown off by a ritard in a pirouette section because they rely completely on the impetus of the music to govern their movements. More logical—and more musical and more satisfying—solutions have been described in the section about the pirouette family, beginning on page 115.

While there may be instances to the contrary, a ritard is generally executed with the spaces of time between sounds growing longer as the ritard progresses. The proportion of this space enlargement depends completely on each situation, as does the length of the ritard—whether it begins (for instance) on count 13 or count 15. This is another situation in which your powers of observation and awareness of the teacher's needs must be turned to "high."

The execution of ritards is primarily dependent on three elements: proportion, instinct, and the dancers' needs. It would be nice to be able to let our musical instincts alone govern the length and breadth of a ritard, but—since the dancers' physical security and artistic interpretation are interdependent with the music—you must learn to compromise, when necessary, and to be reasonably consistent in your use of ritards. This is covered more fully in the tempo section of "In the rehearsal room." (See page 207.)

An important element in the execution of music is energy—the indefinable something that evokes an ongoing impetus and feeling of propulsion. It is easier, of course, to maintain this energy when the tempo is moving along at a regular pace. Be aware that a beginning accompanist may lose some of this impetus during ritards; aim toward maintaining the necessary support.

Your increasing awareness of the most suitable proportion of a ritard in each situation will allow you to couple instinct with consistency. Never lose track of the fact that you are a part of a whole; your worth depends not only on how well you play the piano but also on how much you can contribute to and interact with others.

Rubato

Rubato is the Italian word for stolen, and the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music defines it thus: "A feature of performance in which strict time is for a

while disregarded—what is 'robbed' from some note or notes being 'paid back' later. When this is done with genuine artistry and instinctive musical sensibility, the effect is to impart an admirable sense of freedom and spontaneity. Done badly, rubato becomes merely mechanical. The question of rubato in Chopin is particularly contentious, since its use in his music may be dangerously open to abuse. Accounts of his playing (and of Mozart's) suggest that he kept the left hand in strict time and added rubato to the right."

The use of rubato in the classroom is a very touchy subject. Its primary drawback to classroom suitability is its elasticity of tempo. (I find lamentably few musicians these days who execute rubato according to the last sentence in the previous paragraph.) If a dancer were allowed the luxury of learning through daily private lessons, its use might be more prevalent. But it is practically impossible to train—and to synchronize the movements of—more than one body to this elasticity. (One of the benefits of dancers working in groups is learning to move as one, as a corps de ballet or any ensemble of dancers is required to do.) And it should be remembered that it takes many hours of very expensive rehearsal time to get an orchestra to play with rubato.

I play very little Chopin in class, partly because so much of his music has suffered from overexposure and misguided execution, but mainly because much of the magic of his music lies in the use of rubato. His music does enjoy widespread exposure in the dance classroom; he was one of the few romantic master composers who used dance forms that are still part of the dance—and musical—vocabulary today: waltzes, mazurkas, and polonaises. (However, most Chopin mazurkas are stylistically and dynamically worlds apart from what most dance teachers think of as mazurkas.)

It is often difficult (and musically unsatisfying, to say the least) to play adagios without rubato or ritards. Creative teachers will usually be able to make use of your "most rubato" adage, as long as she can make sense of the phrases, and can hear the beginnings and ends of them.

Fermatas and accelerandos

Fermatas and accelerandos are not covered extensively in this section, as they are seldom used in the dance classroom. They are dealt with in more detail in the section "In the rehearsal room" (page 207).

A fermata 𝄐 is a hold—a device for stopping the action. Its use is rare in the classroom, and its length is governed totally by each situation in which one is used. Occasionally, I find myself playing for a teacher who yells, "Balance!" on the very last bar of the music. At that point, it is too late harmonically to go into my standard four-count addition, so I resort to a dominant-seventh fermata. This lends such a dramatic element of suspension that I wonder if it is possibly more effective than four or eight counts of additional music to balance by. If the teacher gives me no cue to relieve the tension, I

"take a poll": I resolve the chord when the main body of the class starts returning to the finishing position, not when the first student falls out of the balance, or when the last one decides, "Well, that's enough of that."

Accelerandos are almost unheard of during the phrases of a classroom combination. The tempo of each combination almost always stays the same within each movement phrase. However, the teacher may want a change of tempo for the second execution of a combination. If there is a 4-count preparation before the faster section, begin the accelerando directly on the first count, and have the new tempo firmly in control by the fourth count. If there is no 4-count preparation, an accelerando is not involved; it is an immediate change of tempo.

Setting and changing tempos

Although a few teachers allow the accompanist to set the tempo, this is a dangerous practice. The reasons are obvious with a beginning accompanist. A more advanced accompanist will usually have a good general idea of the tempo of each combination, but only the teacher knows what particular thing she is aiming for in each combination, and the tempo is vital in this regard.

No accompanist, regardless of level or experience, should ever consider it a personal affront to change a tempo at the teacher's request. There is no such thing as an accompanist who can accurately judge every tempo every day. More often than not, I will say to teachers with whom I've never worked, "Please tell me right away if the tempo is not right." This immediately establishes open communication: It reminds the teacher that tempo is her responsibility, and it reminds me not to get uptight if she asks me to change it.

The most crucial section of every combination is the first four counts. If the tempo is wrong, the teacher will almost always adjust it during this time. A teacher will often do the first four counts of the combination with the students to see if the tempo is the one she wants, and you would be wise to start watching her while you are playing, so that you can use her visual and oral cues to make any necessary adjustments. This is especially helpful in classes where teachers demonstrate in faster tempos than what they will ultimately want.

Accompanists eventually learn to change tempo on a moment's notice, although it is always helpful for the teacher to give every accompanist—and her students!—at least four counts of warning. When communication is well established between teacher and accompanist, just a glance will suffice to indicate that a tempo change is forthcoming.

Under no circumstances should a student, dancer, ballerina, premier danseur, prima donna, or diva ask the accompanist to change the tempo. When

this occurs, my standard remark is, "Ask the teacher. It's her class, not mine." ("And not yours, either," I mutter to myself.)

Grand allegro combinations are often executed with the women's group(s) going first and the men's group(s) next, with no break in the music. The men often require a slower tempo, and a 4-count preparation in the new tempo between the groups is clearer for all concerned.

There is a certain thought process that I use when teachers, choreographers, ballet masters, conductors, or directors say, "Just a hair faster (or slower), please." (It is really true that a hair's difference in tempo to a dancer can make a vast difference in his execution and overall performance.) It often takes a while to learn how each person measures a hair; some actually mean a whole hank. But for those who truly mean a hair, I tell myself, "the same tempo but faster (or slower)." I know it sounds oxymoronic, but it works for me.

Marking

Marking a combination can sometimes contribute to a misunderstanding about tempo.

Dance teachers usually mark combinations because they are out of shape. The term "out of shape" refers not to the teacher's figure, but to her muscles. Without a daily class, it is impossible to retain the strength and muscle tone necessary to execute correctly many of classical dance's steps and movements. So the teacher resorts to marking: demonstrating physically watered-down versions of the combinations with either her body or her hands.

She also marks to save time. It would probably require five hours to teach a class in which the teacher demonstrated every combination all the way through in the proper tempo. So, once she has established for you (and for the students) the proper tempo, she may mark the rest of the demonstration much more quickly. This is especially true for (but not restricted to) inherently slower combinations, such as pliés, ronds de jambe, and adagios. A beginning accompanist needs to start to practice retaining the tempo of those first eight or so counts (before she starts to mark) while deciding what to play, since that tempo is a major factor in the decision. As you become more experienced, you will also be able, through the inflections in her voice, to pick up any deviation from the way she normally phrases combinations (such as a rogue 9-count phrase), and to intuit when it is almost time to start—even though your conscious mind is involved in deciding what to play.

It is conceivable—and absolutely understandable—for an accompanist at any level to lose that first tempo. If that is the case, ask the teacher to clarify it for you just before you begin a combination.

If the teacher wants to mark a combination with the music for the students after the demonstration, I always play more softly than usual, so the teacher can be heard clearly. (The dynamic level of both her voice and my playing during a mark is decidedly different from when the students are doing a combination.)

It is not uncommon for even experienced accompanists sometimes to be unsure about a teacher's request. If you are 95 percent sure that you know what she wants, and she asks you, "Is that clear?" you can save time by saying, "Let's mark it with music and see." Having her re-demonstrate the combination is time consuming, and marking is always helpful for everyone concerned.

Adagios

Adagios are the worst troublemakers in the communication process between teacher and accompanist. Tempo is the biggest problem, primarily for the reasons described above in the marking section. Very few teachers are still able to demonstrate an adagio in the tempo in which they want their students to dance, so they give the accompanist a false impression of tempo during the demonstration. And most dance teachers don't realize how vital it is for us to know an adagio's median tempo before we choose a piece, so—either as an afterthought just before beginning or during the first few counts of the execution—they yell, "Slower!"

Overall mood and quality, which touch upon the areas of style and dynamics, can be misunderstood, too. So it is highly recommended that the teacher ask the accompanist to play an adagio before she sets it, so she can either choreograph her movements to the accompanist's selection or ask him for a different one.

Probably the greatest misunderstanding about adages is that a teacher often says, "I want a really slow adagio" that will include an 8-count développé. The students will *dance* it really slowly, but if we *play* a really slow adagio, it will do the students in. A medium-tempo gentle waltz, such as example 23, would be appropriate for this request. (A really slow adagio works with a 4- or 2-count développé.) If you are a new accompanist, you may want to discuss this with a teacher: Play a medium-tempo gentle waltz, then a "normal" adagio (such as example 52), and then ask her how her legs feel after doing the same combination to each piece. (If necessary, refer back to the detailed discussion on adagio tempos on page 37.)

I have played for several teachers over the years who have asked me in the center for the same adage that I played at the barre or for stretching. It took me decades to figure out why they would ask for something so boring. Finally

I realized that they had choreographed their center adage combinations to what I played at the barre. After the light dawned, I learned to ask, "Do you really want the same music, or may I play something similar in the same meter and tempo?"

If a teacher asks me to play an adagio before she sets one, I usually ask two questions: "What size—gentle, medium, or huge?" and "Does it have to be square?" About one-fourth of the adagios in my repertoire are not in convenient 16- or 32-count phrases. It's not so much that I *won't* cut them down to fit, as much as it is that I *can't*; their musical phrases are so right the way the composers wrote them that they can't be valid statements if I alter them. (My exception to this rule is Rachmaninoff's 18th Paganini Variation, described on page 138.)

The quality of any given adagio combination is not always apparent, even to advanced accompanists, especially if the teacher verbalizes it as she would a grocery list. It is possible to execute the same adagio combination to both the hush of a *Gymnopédie* by Satie and the somber grandeur of a section of Rachmaninoff's Prelude in g minor (op. 23, no. 5). The choreography of the adagio would be exactly the same, but there should be a vastly different quality of movement, according to the music. You must listen carefully to the way the teacher verbalizes her demonstrations. If in doubt, ask.

If you love adagios as much as I do, the following personal experience may be of help to you:

I went back to New York City to play and teach for Marjorie Mussman during the summer of 1978. Since I hadn't played for her for many years, I made at home a cassette of all my "unusual" adagios (including their names and composers for later identification) and sent it on ahead to her. Our schedules were so hectic that summer that we could never have found enough time to cover as much ground as this tape did. These unusual adagios (a "usual" or "normal" adagio is a fairly slow three of thirty-two counts) come in every conceivable meter and tempo, as well as in a variety of qualities and unconventional phrasing. She familiarized herself with the tempo, phrasing, and dynamics of each piece, and, with her students, we were able to more fully explore adagio movement than if I had been restricted to normal adagios.

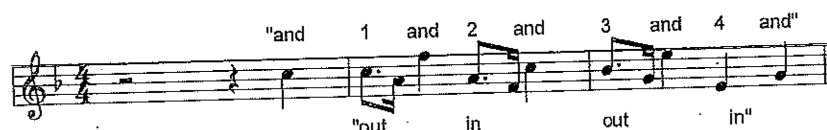
I am certainly not alone in believing that the adagio in the center is a very special time during the class. (I think of it as the heart of the class.) Regardless of the level of your experience, you and the teacher(s) for whom you play regularly might want to make use of an adagio cassette in order to provide a wider variety of adagio music. Person-to-person communication is, of course, the best, but if time constraints dictate it, this is a reasonable substitute.

"Ands"

There will probably be many accompanists who deal with "ands" very easily, but they were such a big problem area for me for so long that I felt they should be mentioned here. If I had realized (or been told) that it is essentially a mathematical problem, I could have solved it sooner.

"Ands" is a convenient label to describe certain combinations in which steps go out on "and" and in on the count. These combinations are usually tendus, dégagés, and grands battements, and the following discussion applies to all three in exactly the same way.

Using tendus as an example, tendus going out on the count almost always come in on the next count, not on the next "and."



But when tendus go out on the "and," they never come in on the next "and" but on the next count.

This produces twice as many tendus twice as fast as in the first example, and the music will need to have the corresponding accents. The musical excerpt in both examples works well for both ways of executing tendus because of its melodic structure.

On the other hand, example 12 works only for tendus that go out on the count. Even though there are notes on each "and," the piece is more of a lilting polka; its personality suffers and it becomes very heavy when it is slowed down, which it must be in order to accommodate most "and" combinations.

Pieces in duple meter with a dotted melodic rhythm are always reliable "ands" for tendus and dégagés. Many codas work well, too, but I play them only for dégagés, because that's usually when dancers start to come alive at the barre. The more driving and energetic rhythmic structure of a coda seems to intrude upon the dancers' concentration on warming up their feet and legs during tendus.

Almost all 6/8 marches have a melodic structure with appropriate "ands" and a rhythmic structure full enough to support the proper workable tempo

for "and" grands battements. For some reason, they make the legs feel lighter than most 4/4 marches. (Remember: They are counted just like 4/4 marches.) Ever since I discovered the reliability of 6/8 marches for "and" grands battements, I have tended to fall into the rut of using them exclusively, and I have to remind myself every once in a while to play the few 4/4 marches that work for "ands," such as examples 34a and 80 or the triumphant, martial theme from Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto.

"That's too heavy"

At one time or another almost every accompanist has heard a teacher comment, "That's too heavy." "Heavy" is the best teachers can do to verbally describe the sound of music that beats dancers into the ground instead of helping them into the air. They can't speak in musical, theoretical terms any better than you can discuss the theoretical intricacies of dance, so your request for clarification will usually be met with frustration on both your parts.

"Heavy" can be a description of either the music you have chosen or the way you play it. One of the following remedies will usually solve the problem.

- Your pedaling is misplaced. Try reversing your normal pedaling so that different beats of the music are emphasized.
- You misread, or were probably misinformed about, the tempo or meter or both. In all cases, choose another piece whose inherent tempo matches the teacher's needs. In the case of adagios, choose another one or slow down your choice with arpeggiation. In the case of non-adagios, choose a piece that has fewer notes in it, especially in the left hand. For example, a polka has half as many notes in the left hand as a coda, but both can often be played at the same tempo. A change in meter can also relieve heaviness (for example, from a fast 3/4 to a rag or polka).
- You are playing a few notes harshly and loudly, instead of more notes with more volume. Work on your octaves.
- Someone has exhorted you to play "louder! fuller!" so you are playing every note of every bar at triple forte. Take the previous tip to heart, and remember that one does not play every note loudly in any loud piece.

Miscellaneous

The following situation illustrates the need for your constant alertness in class. The teacher is giving a correction or demonstrating a combination, and you are hunting through your music for a particular piece or (hopefully not) putting together your shopping list. The magic "and" jolts you out of your

reverie, and you react like Pavlov's dogs by playing a preparation without looking at the class. But this "and" is only part of her dialogue to the students, and you are left with egg on your face. When this happens often enough, you will see the necessity of being tuned in at all times to the teacher, if only to prevent further embarrassment.

The following are two instances in which a beginning accompanist may become confused by what the teacher says.

- A teacher may say, "Now we are going to do dégagés," and she will set the following combination: "tendu, lift, tendu, close." This is a beginner form of dégagé; the entire step—one dégagé—is accomplished in four counts to a fairly brisk piece of music. (See example 66 section A.)

Then she may say, "Now we are going to do faster dégagés," and she will set the following combination: "four dégagés with the leg out on 'and' and in on '1.'" Do not be misled into thinking your music will go faster; one dégagé is now being executed in one count to a considerably slower piece. The music is entirely different from the first example. (See example 39.)

This concept is applicable to many steps in dance. They are learned in a very slow body tempo (but the music doesn't always have to be slow), or are broken down into parts, as in the foregoing dégagé example. Grands battements are usually taught in exactly the same way. And ronds de jambe à terre at the beginning level are usually broken down into four parts: tendu front, tendu side, tendu back, and close in first, third, or fifth position. You would not play "tendu music," however; the smoothness and roundness of a rond de jambe à terre must be evident from the beginning, so a medium-slow legato waltz would be appropriate.

- A teacher will often ask for a waltz for a grand allegro combination, and the accents in the movements she demonstrates—or even the words she says—will suggest a duple meter. You might ask, "May I play a two?" If she says no, don't argue; go to her after class and ask why, so that you can understand why she wanted a waltz, and so that she can understand why you're confused. (Mr. Brunson used to count every grand battement demonstration in three, so I would always play a waltz, and he would always stop and say, "No, I want a march." After about the fourth time, I went to him after class and said, "If you always want a march, why do you always count a 3/4?" He said, "I don't know why, but let's just say that, no matter what I count, I usually want a march." "Usually," of course, is the key word here; I ended up playing 6/8 or 4/4 marches for his grands battements unless they included grands battements en balançoire or en cloche, which almost always demand a 3/4.)

These two situations illustrate what can happen with many groups of steps. How much leeway you have in changing the choice of music depends on the relationship you and the teacher cultivate together, and on your degree of experience.