

# Chapter 4

## Music for Dancing



### FOCUS POINTS

#### *Western Dance Music*

Estampie  
Dance Suite  
Waltz  
Ballet  
Square Dance

#### *World Dance Music*

Balinese Gamelan  
Tibetan Buddhist Skeleton Dance  
Italian Saltarello  
African Ritual Dances  
Celtic Reel

Dance, the art form that finds its expression through bodily movement, has been an inspiration for music from ancient times to the present. Whether music was the catalyst for dance or whether dance existed before music is a question that may never be answered definitively, but since such a large portion of the music in existence is dance music it deserves our attention and a thoughtful examination.

The written record of dance is not as old as the written record of music. The earliest descriptive texts on dance date from the fifteenth century. Understandable manuscripts of music date from nearly a thousand years earlier. References to dance are as old as Old Testament Bible stories and the ancient Greeks wrote of dance, but what the movements that constituted those dances looked like is lost to us. Understanding what the dances looked like or how they were performed is not our purpose in studying them in a music class, rather, we will be examining dance music for its musical content, such as its form and rhythmic characteristics, and its purpose in a social context.

### RHYTHM AND METER IN DANCE MUSIC

Any discussion of dance must begin with **rhythm** since that musical element is the foundation of dance. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, rhythm is the aspect of music that animates it, makes it feel like it is alive and vibrant. We tap our feet to the **beat**, the basic, underlying pulse of the music. Beats are often felt in groups of two, three, or four beats at a time. Feeling groupings of beats is called **meter**. **Duple meter** is when two beats are grouped together; **triple meter**



Girls performing acrobatic dances. Corel



*The Dance Class* by Edgar Degas (1834–1917). Corel

is when three beats are grouped together. Those are the two most basic meters. Other commonly used meters include **quadruple meter**, groupings of four beats at a time, and **compound meter**, felt as duple or triple meter with each beat consisting of three pulses. Less common are asymmetrical meters in which the number of grouped pulses changes instead of remaining constant.

The last term we need to know regarding rhythm is **tempo**. Tempo simply refers to the speed at which we feel the beats. For example, you can have two pieces of music in duple meter that feel completely different depending on how fast the tempo is of each piece. Count out loud a duple meter beat as if it were a march. Now count the same duple meter but wait longer between each beat. Now it no longer sounds like a march, well, maybe a funeral march, but not a sprightly piece to instill pride and courage. That's the difference tempo can make in a piece.

## Time Signatures

The term **time signature** refers to the meter of a piece and is usually expressed as a fraction such as 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, or 6/8, which is written at the beginning of a line of music. The numbers refer to how many beats are felt in each measure/bar of music. A measure, or bar, the terms are interchangeable, is a small unit of time in a piece of music that contains a certain number of beats. The number of beats in a bar is expressed by the top number in the time signature. For example, the time signature 2/4 indicates that there are 2 (the top number) quarter notes (the bottom number) in each measure of music. A quarter note generally receives one beat in most music. So, counting four measures of music in 2/4 time would feel like this:

| **1** 2 | **1** 2 | **1** 2 | **1** 2 |

The vertical lines are called bar lines. The space between each of the vertical lines is called a measure or bar. Within each measure there are two beats with the first one, in bold face, emphasized. This is duple meter. The time signature would be 2/4.

Triple meter, with a 3/4 time signature, would be felt with three beats within each measure.

| **1** 2 3 | **1** 2 3 | **1** 2 3 | **1** 2 3 |

Quadruple meter, with a time signature of 4/4, or just the letter "C" denoting common time, would be felt like this:

| **1** 2 3 4 | **1** 2 3 4 | **1** 2 3 4 | **1** 2 3 4 |

Whereas quarter notes receive one beat each, eighth notes each receive one half of a beat. That is a difficult concept to think of in the abstract so think of eighth notes in terms of how they relate to quarter notes. Two eighth notes equal the time during which one quarter note is played. Count out loud the quadruple meter example above. Now, in the example below count the numbers at the same speed as you did above but add the word "and" in between each of the numbers. In this example each number and the following "and" constitute two eighth notes. They fill the same space of time as the "number" beat alone, but now there are two pulses, two eighth notes, filling the same amount of time.

| **1** & 2 & 3 & 4 & | **1** & 2 & 3 & 4 & | **1** & 2 & 3 & 4 & | **1** & 2 & 3 & 4 & |

The other time signature mentioned above, 6/8 time, is based on eighth notes rather than quarter notes. Each measure in 6/8 time contains six eighth notes, but you don't usually feel all six beats in each measure of a piece with this time signature. What you usually feel are two main beats with each one having three subdivisions within them. Here is the duple meter example from above. Say it out loud fairly slowly.

| 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 |

Now say the main beats again at the same speed but after each number say the words "and a." In this example you still have a duple meter pulse but there are actually six beats played in two groups of three beats each.

| 1 & a 2 & a | 1 & a 2 & a | 1 & a 2 & a | 1 & a 2 & a |

These are the most common time signatures. Understanding them allows us to discuss dance music with a bit more authority and detail.

## DANCE MUSIC IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

From Medieval times to the present, dance music has been an important part of the musical experience. A discussion of dance music from each of the historical periods can show us not only what the music was like at different times throughout history but also illuminate some of the characteristics of the societies from which it arose.

### Medieval Dance—Estampie

The physical movements of dances from the Medieval (500–1450) period are shrouded in mystery and conjecture, but we can still enjoy the music for its own sake. A fair amount of secular music from that time has survived until the present and a significant portion of it is dance music. The **estampie**, a quick, triple meter dance from the Medieval period, reveals that the secular music of the Middle Ages could be just as upbeat and energetic as any dance music heard today. Decisions as to how to perform this music are based on notated manuscripts of the melodies, paintings, illustrations in books that depict instruments used at that time, and literary references that describe the dances. From these sources we can infer that it was common to play percussion instruments along with melodic instruments during this time period, even though the music exists in written form as melodies only, without any accompanying parts. The entire range of instruments in use at the time was employed in the performance of dance music. Some of these instruments include the tambourine, drum, shawm (forerunner of the modern oboe), rebec (forerunner of the violin), bagpipes, lutes, and trumpets. The estampie was a dance believed to have employed a signature stomping motion.

Dance music from the Medieval period usually consisted of a melody that was repeated numerous times with different sections of music serving as endings to each of the repetitions. Sometimes one type of dance might be paired with another to create a small **suite** of dances, but during this time there was no agreed upon sequence of pairings. During the later Renaissance (1450–1600) and Baroque (1600–1750) periods consistent sequences of dances became established and the dance suite became an established genre.



Dance in the Medieval era was often accompanied by instruments such as the lute and the vielle.

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Estampie—  
Anonymous

## The Dancing Master of the Renaissance and Baroque Periods

During the late Renaissance (1450–1600) and Baroque (1600–1750) historical periods it became commonplace for wealthy noblemen and aristocrats to employ a large household staff to provide for the everyday tasks of cooking, cleaning, gardening, etc. as well as the artistic, musical, and dance requirements of the nobleman and his family. While the artistic members of the staff were generally treated well, they did not hold a place of especially high rank within the staff, but served and lived much as the other servants. An artist would provide paintings, sculptures, and other adornments to visually enhance the home. A musician, usually an accomplished performer on some instrument in addition to being a composer, would write music, rehearse ensembles, oversee performances, and give instruction on instruments or the voice for the master of the house, his family, and guests. It was also not unusual for the household to employ a **dancing master**. This person gave performances of dances that may have been too difficult or intricate for the members of the household to perform themselves, and he was expected to teach the master, his family, and their guests the intricate steps of popular dances. These duties were analogous to what was expected of the musician in that the musician performed music, even though the master was often a musician of some accomplishment, and instructed other musicians as well as the family on whatever instruments they wanted to learn.

Some of the dances from the Renaissance that were common at court included slow, stately dances, such as the **bassadance** and **pavane**, and fast dances such as the **galliard**.



*Country Festival* by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564–1636). Corel

## The Baroque Dance Suite

The presence of the dancing master at court coupled with a generally high level of dance ability within royal and aristocratic households contributed to the development of a refined style of courtly dance, more restrained than the earthy dances of the peasants. Some of the dances that were popular at court and became established within the genre of the dance suite were:

- Courante**—French, fast, triple meter
- Allemande**—German, fast, quadruple meter
- Sarabanda**—Spanish, slow, triple meter
- Minuet**—French, moderate, triple meter
- Bourrée**—French, moderate, duple meter
- Gigue**—English, fast, triple meter
- Hornpipe**—English, fast, triple meter

During the Renaissance dance music was intended to be danced to by the aristocrats for whom it was written. But during the Baroque period it became fashionable for composers to write dance suites, consisting of movements of music based on the popular dances of the time, without expecting anyone to actually dance to them. The suites were inspired by the contemporary dances that were in vogue, but the music itself was performed at locations and during events which would have made dancing to the music impracticable. These **stylized** dance suites became very popular at large public gatherings where entertaining music came to be expected. This type of dance suite was usually composed for large ensembles of brass, wind, percussion, and stringed instruments, basically large bands or orchestras. Other dance suites were written for solo instruments, including the harpsichord, violin, and cello, which were performed in more intimate indoor settings.



A ball in the Baroque era.  
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## The Orchestral Dance Suite

The Baroque period was the time when the orchestra as we know it became a common instrumental ensemble. An orchestra is a performing ensemble consisting of string, woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments. The orchestra of the Baroque period was smaller in scope than our modern orchestra, which can have as many as 100 players. The Baroque orchestra typically had the full complement of string instruments from the violin family, violin, viola, cello, and contrabass; woodwind instruments such as the flute, oboe, and bassoon; brass instruments, primarily the trumpet and French horn; and tympani from the percussion family. Woodwind and brass instruments were often used singly or in pairs while multiple strings might be distributed as follows:

1st violins 4–6  
 2nd violins 4–6  
 Violas 2–4  
 Cellos 2–4  
 Basses 1–2

Orchestral dance suites could vary greatly in the number of movements they contained depending on the occasion for which they were written. A typical suite might contain 5–7 movements, while unusually long compositions might have twice as many or even more.

## What Makes Music—Musical Instruments

### The Woodwind Family

Instruments of the orchestra are grouped into four families according to certain characteristics. Originally these instruments were all made out of wood, but today some are made out of various of metals. The instruments in this family, unlike the strings, make their sounds in many different ways.

**Flute**—The flute is made out of silver, gold, or platinum. Its sound is produced by blowing air over an open hole, much like when you make a sound by blowing over the top of a soda bottle. There is a smaller version of the flute called a **Piccolo**. Since it is smaller it plays higher notes.

**Oboe**—This is an example of a double-reed instrument. Two pieces of cane are shaved very thin and tied together, then air is forced between the pieces and this produces a sound which is often characterized as nasal. There is a larger version called the **English horn**. It is lower in pitch because of its larger size.

**Clarinet**—This is a single-reed instrument. It has one piece of cane pressed tightly against a piece of plastic or glass.

Air forced between these makes a very pure tone. The size and shape of the instrument give it its characteristically mellow quality.

There are larger and smaller versions of the Clarinet. The larger version is called the **Bass Clarinet** and sounds lower. The smaller one is called the **E-flat Clarinet** and sounds higher in pitch.

**Bassoon**—This is the largest member of the Woodwind family and sounds the lowest. It is a double-reed instrument like the Oboe and English horn. There is a large version of the bassoon called the **Contra Bassoon**, which sounds even lower. It is so large it is held up by an endpin that rests on the floor.

**Saxophones**—Saxophones are only sometimes found in orchestras, but as members of the woodwind family, should be mentioned here. Saxophones are made out of brass but use a mouthpiece similar to the clarinet, a single-reed mouthpiece. The saxophones come in a number of sizes and their names are taken from the names for the voices: **Soprano Sax**, **Alto Sax**, **Tenor Sax**, and **Baritone Sax**.



The University of Memphis Woodwind Quintet: Dan Phillips, French horn; Michelle Vigneau, oboe; Bruce Erskine, flute; Lecolion Washington, bassoon; Carina Washington, clarinet.  
 Photo courtesy of Chris Hill

There is a standard performing ensemble for the Woodwind family called the **Woodwind Quintet**. It consists of one flute, one oboe, one clarinet, one bassoon, and a member borrowed from the Brass family called the French horn.

View the video of English composer Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* performed by the YouTube Symphony Orchestra on the chapter video playlist.

The woodwind family of instruments is featured from :33–:56 and each of the woodwinds is featured individually beginning at the 2:10 mark.

## The Water Music

**George Frideric Handel** (1685–1759), a German born composer living in England, was noted for his writing of dance suites. Two in particular have had a lasting popularity among concert audiences, the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, written in 1749 for a fireworks display in London celebrating the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, and the *Water Music*, written in 1717 to accompany King George I on a barge trip on the Thames River. The *Water Music* is an especially long composition consisting of dozens of movements arranged in three separate suites. In addition to the standard dances of the time, suites frequently included an **overture** preceding the dance movements and **airs**, leisurely paced lyrical movements, interspersed among the faster movements.

The following two movements from the *Water Music* provide an interesting view of two dances of the time, the menuet (minuet) and the hornpipe, both of which share essentially the same definition but vary slightly in execution. The **hornpipe**, as it was performed in England from this time period, was a dance in triple meter in **A-B-A form**. The second section of the piece, the “B” section, was usually calmer with fewer instruments playing than in the more energetic “A” sections that began and ended the movement. The **menuet** was a dance in triple meter and A-B-A form as well, with the “B” section contrasting with the “A” sections both melodically and in mood. What was the difference? The hornpipe was characterized by a **syncopated** accent on the second half, or “and,” of beat one. A syncopated rhythm is one where the emphasis is placed on unexpected beats or offbeats. A small difference in definition but a significant one in the mood the piece sets. The syncopation makes the hornpipe bouncier and more jovial in character than the more restrained menuet. Both of these movements were well suited for outdoor performance making use of the full orchestra of the time. Also note how short sections of music are repeated, often with a different group of instruments playing the repeated section, in order to provide contrast and **timbral** interest. Listen for the three distinct sections, A-B-A, in each of these excerpts from the *Water Music*. This is one of the most common forms used in music from all time periods. It is sometimes called **ternary form** or **three-part form**.



*Water Music* (excerpts)—  
George Frideric Handel  
“Menuet”  
“Alla Hornpipe”

In order to provide contrast to the upbeat dances of the time, composers often included airs to provide peaceful, lyrical movements within the suites. One of the most famous of these airs is from an orchestral suite, the *Orchestral Suite in D major*, by **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685–1750), another German composer. The beautiful melody in the violins is supported by the basso continuo with the other strings providing a simple harmonic accompaniment.



“Air” from *Orchestral Suite #3 in D major*—  
Johann Sebastian Bach



of the social spectrum. The rather slow acceptance of the waltz is often attributed to its being the first “forbidden dance” due to the close hold of the dancing partners. The burgeoning middle class of the nineteenth century propelled this dance to the forefront as the most popular dance of the century.

**Johann Strauss II** (1825–1899) was known as “**The Waltz King**” for his numerous compositions in this genre. Strauss not only composed an enormous number of waltzes, but he wrote many other types of pieces as well including the famous operetta, *Die Fledermaus* (*The Bat*). He toured extensively with his own orchestra performing his compositions across Europe and in his native Vienna. While originally composed for dancing, performances of Strauss waltzes today often reflect a more stylized performance practice with many rhythmic irregularities, such as extensive **ritardandos** (a temporary slowing down of the tempo) and drastic tempo changes between sections of music that make them inappropriate for dancing. These pieces were usually composed using several different waltz tunes, with each being treated fairly extensively. These individual waltzes would be strung together to create an extended composition with several changes of mood.

Strauss’ most famous waltz is *An der schönen blauen Donau* (*On the Beautiful Blue Danube*). This piece was written in 1867 and the first performance was not quite the success Strauss hoped it would be. Perhaps that was due to the inclusion of less than inspiring lyrics sung to the main tune. In subsequent all-instrumental performances, the work was enthusiastically received and has remained a staple of the orchestral repertory ever since. Today the piece is frequently referred to as *The Blue Danube Waltz*.

This composition is in triple meter and takes approximately 10 minutes to play. As you listen to it you will note that there are a number of different sections to the piece. Can you perceive how the piece is structured? How does the composer tie it all together? What concepts does the composer employ to keep you interested for ten minutes?



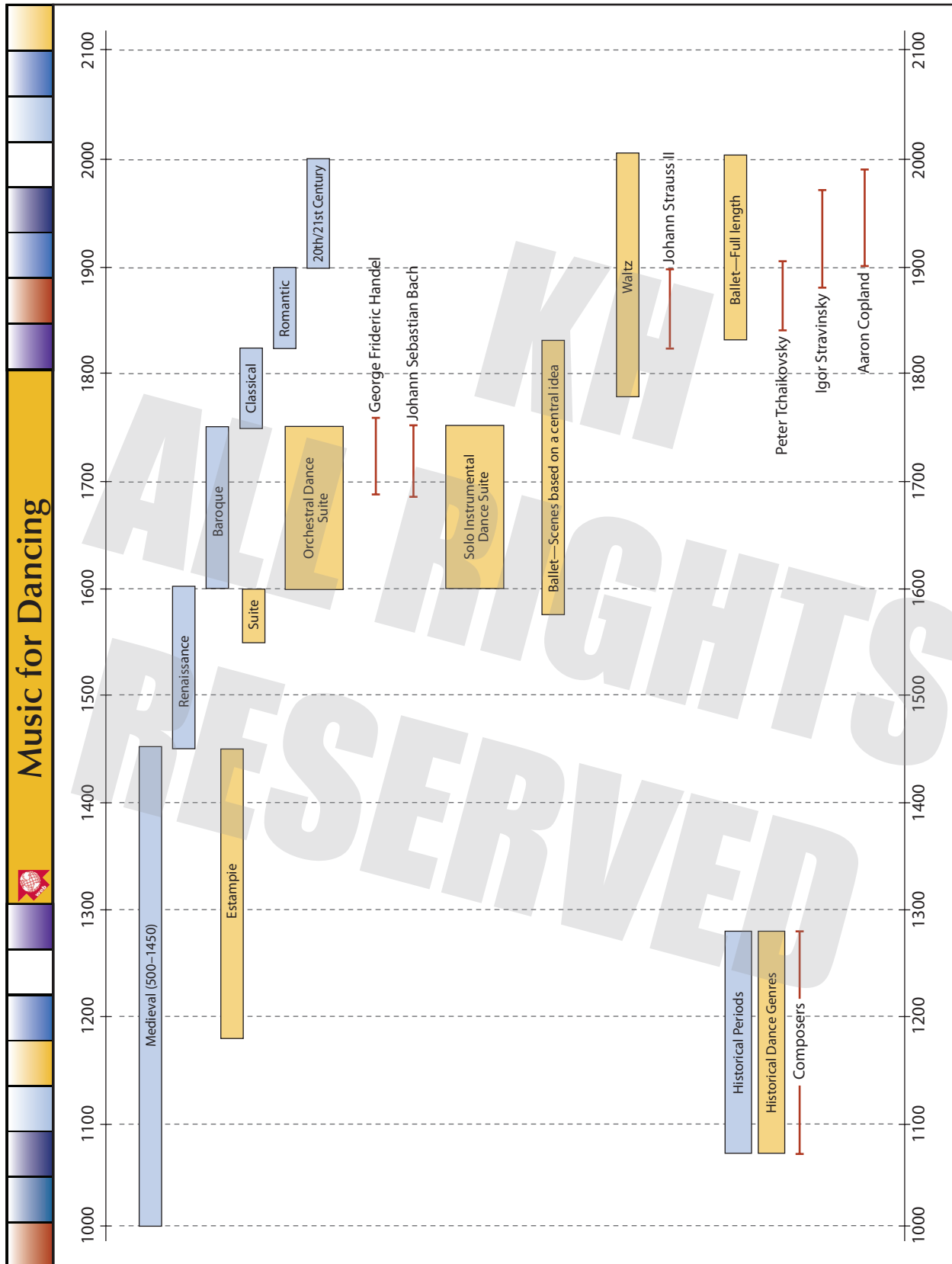
*An der schönen blauen Donau* (*On the Beautiful Blue Danube*)—  
Johann Strauss II

## THE FULL-LENGTH BALLET

The waltzes of Johann Strauss were relatively significant musical compositions. Each had a number of large sections in contrasting moods, compared to the relatively short dance movements, each in one characteristic mood, of earlier suites. The nineteenth century saw dance music evolve further into full-length ballets telling a continuous story over the course of an entire evening’s entertainment. **Ballet** was a type of dance with a rigorous set of movements and techniques by which to execute those movements. Ballet had been in existence since the late sixteenth century at the royal courts throughout Europe. Early ballets consisted of sequences of scenes that were based more around a central idea than actually telling a complete story. But in the nineteenth century ballet came to be the highest expression of the art of dramatic movement, vying to be the dance equivalent of opera in its story telling ability and dramatic effect. The music written for ballets was initially not very distinguished, serving merely as a decorative time-keeping device for the dancers, but it eventually became the genre for which some of the most interesting, provocative, and forward-looking music ever written was created.



*The Orchestra* by Edgar Degas (1834–1917). Copyright © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY



The word ballet brings to mind images of rows of ballerinas in tutus dancing on the tips of their toes, “**on pointe**,” in seeming defiance of gravity. That stereotype of ballet was born in the nineteenth century when the role of the male dancer had diminished, following the decline of the dancing master, and ballet was centered around the **prima ballerina**. The male dancer was relegated to a largely supporting role. Fascination with contrasting the mortal and the immortal was an enduring theme in Romantic ballet beginning with the first full-length story ballet, *La Sylphide*, in 1832. This recurring idea is the basis for what is perhaps the epitome of Romantic ballet, *Swan Lake*.

## Swan Lake

*Swan Lake* was written by Russian composer **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840–1893), and choreographed by **Marius Petipa** and **Lev Ivanov**. It germinated from inception to the version we know today over a period of twenty years. When the “final” version was performed in 1895 Tchaikovsky had been dead for two years. In nineteenth-century ballet, composers often worked almost independently from the **choreographer** in composing the music. They were given the basic story, how many dances were required for how many dancers, and expected to have it done by a certain date. *Swan Lake*, was the first ballet that Tchaikovsky composed and he brought to it a fresh approach that was fundamentally different from ballet music of that time. Until *Swan Lake*, ballet music was almost suite-like in its intermittent character. Tchaikovsky brought a more symphonic approach to the writing of *Swan Lake*. Many of the individual musical pieces within the ballet are longer, more complex, and more musically related than earlier compositions for the ballet. Tchaikovsky elevated the writing of ballet music to a level not previously attained and in so doing opened the door for other significant composers to follow suit.

In *Swan Lake* Prince Siegfried happens upon a group of beautiful swan maidens by the shores of an enchanted lake led by their queen, who is really a mortal princess named Odette. They have been turned into swans by an evil sorcerer named Rothbart. The swan maidens return to human form each night from midnight until dawn. The spell can only be broken by someone pledging eternal love, which Siegfried does for Odette. Later Siegfried mistakenly claims Rothbart’s evil daughter, Odile, who is an exact double of Odette, as his bride. Realizing his mistake, Siegfried rushes to the lake where he finds Odette dying of sadness. As Siegfried tosses her tiara into the lake the waters engulf the tragic lovers and their spirits rise to heaven.

The scene depicted in this example is of the lake in the moonlight. It contains the haunting melody that represents the swan princess and is synonymous with this ballet. It is heard played first by the oboe and subsequently by the rest of the orchestra. This theme returns several times in differing moods throughout the ballet, imparting a sense of symphonic continuity over the length of the performance.



*Danseuse sur Scene*  
by Edgar Degas  
(1834–1917). Corel



“Lake in the Moonlight” from *Swan Lake*—  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

## PERSPECTIVE—ANCIENT DANCE REFERENCES

The presence of dance in ancient cultures is often inferred from pictorial representations in works of art, figures painted on or carved into buildings, and literary allusions. Since dance, like music, does not leave physical evidence of its presence we must be satisfied with an incomplete picture of it when discussing it in its earliest forms. While we know dance has been an integral part of virtually every society since ancient times, the exact manifestation of it, how it was performed, is often no more than an educated guess.

One of the few descriptions of actual dance movements from ancient times exists in a literary work from India. Bharata Muni, an Indian writer who lived, as best as can be determined, between 500 BC and 200 BC wrote a detailed textbook on theatre, music, and dance called the *Natya Shastra*. Bharata gave clear descriptions of movements appropriate to different types of dances as well as portray the various dances in the appropriate social context. Other references to dance from approximately the same era come from the nearby island nation of Sri Lanka off the southeastern coast of India. In the *Mahavamsa* (*The Great Chronicle* of early Sri Lankan society), dance is often referred to in relation to royal society. For example, “. . . and having gods and men dance before him, the king took his pleasure, in joyous and merry wise,” and “The king . . . surrounded by many dancers . . .” The *Mahavamsa*, while written by a Buddhist monk named Mahanama in approximately 500 AD, describes Sri Lankan society from 500–200 BC and is based on fragmentary writings from that time.

Another ancient culture that developed dance to a sophisticated level was ancient Greece. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) spoke eloquently in his *Poetics* of the expressive qualities of dancers, “. . . for by means of rhythmical gestures they represent both character and experiences and actions.” The Greek poet Homer (ca. 750 BC) refers many times to dance in Book XIII of the *Iliad*. For example, “All things pall after awhile, sleep, love, sweet song, and stately dance . . .” and “Heaven has made one man an excellent soldier; of another it has made a dancer or a singer and player on the lyre . . .”

Biblical references to dance are numerous with perhaps the oldest being from the second book of the Old Testament, *Exodus*, believed to have been written ca. 650 BC. Chapter 15, verse 20 states, “Then Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.” Perhaps the most familiar biblical reference to dance comes from the book of *Ecclesiastes*, chapter 3, verse 4, “. . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

Ancient Egyptian dance is known mostly through pictorial representations of dance found in tombs. The earliest scenes come from the era known as The Old Kingdom, approximately 2650–2150 BC. Dances from this time were apparently performed by members of the same sex, women with women or men with men. Men and women are never shown dancing together. The dances often seem to be acrobatic in nature with synchronized motions being common.

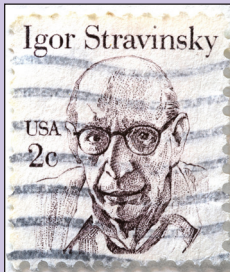
## BALLET MUSIC OF REMARKABLE SIGNIFICANCE

### *The Rite of Spring*

The symphonic treatment of the musical **score** for *Swan Lake* really didn’t break any new ground in the musical sense. It simply brought the existing standards for extended musical compositions of the Romantic period into the realm of ballet. But a composition for the ballet, *Le Sacre du Printemps* (***The Rite of Spring***), by Russian composer **Igor Stravinsky**, had profound effects on all dance and concert music that came after it.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) had already composed two major ballets, *The Firebird* in 1910 and *Petrushka* in 1911, when he undertook the composing of a new full-length ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, for **Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes** in Paris in 1912. Diaghilev was a major force in the music and dance world of the late nineteenth and

## Biographical Spotlight



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### Igor Stravinsky

Igor Stravinsky was born on June 17, 1882, and died on April 6, 1971. He was a Russian-born composer who later spent significant time in both France and the United States where his reputation as one of the leading composers of the twentieth century was established and reaffirmed through several significant stylistic changes. He studied music as a youngster but attended law school at the behest of his parents. He was an indifferent student, spending more time in his musical pursuits than studying law. At the age of twenty he met the highly regarded Russian composer Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who took him under his wing and gave him lessons in composition until Rimsky-Korsakov died three years later. Stravinsky was married in 1905 to a cousin with whom he eventually had four children.

In 1909, at the age of twenty-seven, a performance of Stravinsky's music was heard by Serge Diaghilev, a Russian living in Paris who was about to begin producing operas and ballets in the French capital. Diaghilev commissioned Stravinsky to write the music for a planned ballet called *The Firebird*, which was to be performed the following year by his dance troupe, *The Ballet Russe (The Russian Ballet)*. The success of *The Firebird* led to commissions for *Petrouchka*, *The Rite of Spring*, and *Pulcinella*, all ballets produced by Diaghilev's company. These compositions, especially the radically different *The Rite of Spring*, established Stravinsky as the leading figure in the move away from the Romantic style.

For several years after the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* Stravinsky's family split their time between Russia and Switzerland. They moved to Paris in 1920 and stayed there until 1939, becoming French citizens. This time, after the end of World War I and prior to the beginning of World War II, saw a radical change in Stravinsky's compositional style. He moved away from the large-scale compositions that had secured his reputation as a major figure in the world of music and gravitated toward a more austere style that came to be known as "neo-classicism." Stravinsky supported his family through astute business arrangements with a player-piano manufacturer, royalties from performances of his music, and commissions for new compositions. He, his wife, and a daughter all contracted tuberculosis in 1938 from which only he survived. Stravinsky moved to the United States in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. He settled briefly in Boston where he married Vera de Bossett, with whom he had carried on a long-standing affair since they first met in Paris in 1921. They remained married for the remainder of his life, and she was at his bedside when he died in 1971.

In 1945 Stravinsky became a United States citizen. His composing style would change radically one more time in the mid-1950s when he gradually adopted the serial techniques of composing, which many of his contemporaries from earlier in the century had done years before. This move toward a predominantly dissonant style remained Stravinsky's approach for his remaining years. He moved to New York City in 1969 and died there on April 6, 1971. He was buried according to his wishes in Venice, Italy, near his long-time friend Serge Diaghilev, with whom he had changed the course of music history.

### Biographical Spotlight Exercise

**Instructions:** Log in to the textbook web site and click on the **Assignments** tab. Click on **Chapter 4** and scroll to the **Biographical Spotlight area**. Answer the question based on the information in the biography above.

Which of the following is a true statement?

1. Stravinsky never studied with any known composers.
2. Stravinsky wrote his most important works in collaboration with a fellow Russian working in Paris name Serge Diaghilev.
3. Stravinsky maintained his style of writing large-scale compositions after World War I.

early twentieth centuries. An **impresario** of enormous talent, Diaghilev commissioned provocative works by the most forward-looking composers. He promoted adventurous choreographers, like **Vaslav Nijinsky**, choreographer for *The Rite of Spring*, who were not afraid to break with the conventions of the past.

*The Rite of Spring* had its premier in 1913 in Paris and created an immediate uproar due to the radical nature of both the music and the dance. The story was based on Stravinsky's images of the pagan rituals that would accompany the coming of spring in prehistoric Russia. In fact the work was subtitled, "Scenes from Pagan Russia." A disturbance at the premiere, and it was a virtual riot, was caused by a combination of factors. The music was not at all what the audience expected, **dissonant**, rhythmically unpredictable, and extraordinarily loud at times. This combination of musical qualities is often referred to as **primitivism**, *The Rite of Spring* being the most renowned musical example of that style. The expanded brass, woodwind, and percussion sections of the orchestra were not common in ballet orchestras of the time and were something of a shock to the Parisian audience. The two previous ballets by Stravinsky, *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, had been written in a forward-looking late-Romantic style but gave no hint as to the radical departure represented by *The Rite of Spring*.

The dancing was a second shock to the system for the audience. Expecting traditional, elegant ballet moves, they were puzzled to see angular, jagged-shaped movements. The dancers frequently engaged in downward movements to the floor rather than the upward extensions of line for which ballet was noted. Gliding effortlessly over the floor gave way to short, **staccato** steps of a harsh, primitive nature. The story line did little to endear the work to the audience either. It was a story of human sacrifice to propitiate the gods of springtime, resulting in the sacrificial dance of a young girl.

In this work Stravinsky used short, motive-like melodies, reminiscent of the folk melodies he imagined would have been common long ago. Harmony in this piece was noteworthy for its characteristic use of **unresolved dissonances**. Composers had always used dissonant sounds to create tension. That tension was relieved by resolving the dissonant sounds to consonant ones. Whatever the historical period, the resolution of dissonance to consonance had been a universal concept. Not so with *The Rite of Spring*. Unresolved dissonance became a signature sound for this piece, and composers after Stravinsky adopted that as an acceptable harmonic concept.

Rhythmically, *The Rite of Spring* was ground breaking as well. Until that time the overwhelming majority of music in the Western world had utilized a repeating meter



Royal Ballet's production the *Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London. © Robbie Jack/Corbis

as the rhythmic engine of musical compositions, especially music for dancing. Meter that stayed constant provided a stable point of reference for the listener, making it easy to anticipate the flow of a melodic phrase or the pacing of a section of music. Composers might change the meter on occasion, or alternate between different meters for a short time within a composition, but it was always done as an unusual event. Changing meters provided temporary rhythmic diversions; it was not the norm. In contrast to this accepted practice, great sections of *The Rite of Spring* were written in constantly shifting **asymmetrical** meters, giving an unpredictable, almost out-of-control, feeling to the music. In addition, Stravinsky used many unusual meters in the piece, ensuring that even if played for an extended period of time those meters alone would provide an unsettled metrical basis for the work.

These compositional innovations were difficult for the audience to passively accept at that first performance. However, other composers heard in Stravinsky's writing elements of a new musical language that many were eager to adopt and adapt to their own compositional styles. The harmonic and rhythmic innovations heard in *The Rite of Spring* soon became the norm for much Western art music. Today we listen to this music almost disbelieving that it could have caused such a commotion. To our ears it sounds like exciting or scary music we hear every day in movies. That may be the greatest testament to Stravinsky's vision for this music. He intended it to be visually linked to the action on the stage, just as music for the movies is linked to the action on the screen. So when we hear the music today, even when played in a "**concert performance**" without dancers, we have no trouble conjuring up images that fit the music.

The two excerpts below highlight the primitivistic qualities associated with this piece. The first excerpt, "Auguries of Spring (Dances of the Young Girls)," is the first scene the audience saw in the original production as the curtain went up following the rather atmospheric introduction. The dissonant repeating chords, accented at unpredictable intervals, completely masked any metrical order. The lack of a discernable melody until well into this scene further confused and alienated the audience. And when a melody was heard it was a very short one never to be heard again in the piece.

The second excerpt, "Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One)," is the final scene of the ballet during which the young girl is forced to dance herself to death. Continually shifting meters with interjected melodic motives create a relentless urgency toward the final frenzied atmosphere of the sacrifice. Even though the music is notated in exacting detail, the effect for the listener is a kind of compelling rhythmic anarchy, at once rhythmically strong and powerful while being totally unpredictable. *Swan Lake* this is not.



*The Rite of Spring* (two excerpts)—

Igor Stravinsky

"Auguries of Spring" (Dances of the Young Girls)

"Sacrificial Dance" (The Chosen One)

## THOROUGHLY AMERICAN BALLET

Aaron Copland (1900–1990) was an American composer who consciously decided to create a uniquely "American" sound in his music. Early in his career Copland was strongly influenced by the trends that were gaining in popularity among composers of the time, such as harsh dissonance and rhythmic complexity. But he saw in the audience reaction to his works a reluctance to fully accept those challenging concepts. That

led him to adopt a less adventuresome compositional style, one that incorporated all of the revolutionary concepts but in a more constrained way. In addition Copland wrote music that had an “open” quality about it, suggestive of the openness and freedom of the American spirit. This atmospheric, open quality was created by the use of harmonies with wider **intervals** between the pitches and by **orchestrations** that refrained from close groupings of notes in the lower-pitched instruments. And while Copland did use dissonance and rhythmic complexity in his pieces, the restraint with which he handled these characteristics added a charm and attractiveness to the music that the more heavy-handed use of these same qualities did not. Think of it this way, in cooking, adding just the right amount of various spices to a recipe can create a wonderful flavor, whereas an overabundance of those same spices can make the food unpalatable.

Copland also made his music attractive to the listener by writing beautifully lyrical and memorable melodies, some of which were actual folk tunes of primarily American origin. The use of the Shaker hymn tune *Simple Gifts* in the ballet *Appalachian Spring* is the most frequently recognized traditional melody used by Copland. His use of recognizable melodies is in stark contrast to many of his contemporaries who often eschewed writing melodies in the traditional sense. The importance of the melody in Copland’s music cannot be overemphasized. It is the first thing the ear is attracted to, and his tunes linger in the memory long after the music has ended.

All of the aforementioned characteristics were used by Copland in music that was written for the ballet. Just as Stravinsky had made a name for himself in this genre, so did Copland. His association with two of the great choreographers of the twentieth century, Agnes DeMille (*Rodeo*) and Martha Graham (*Appalachian Spring*), brought Copland to the forefront of both the musical and dance worlds. Beginning with the music for the ballet *Billy the Kid* in 1938, Copland’s name became synonymous with a signature American style of music and dance. Some of the works by Copland with a distinctly American flavor include *Quiet City* (1940), *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942), *Lincoln Portrait* (1942), *Rodeo* (1942), and *Appalachian Spring* (1944). These works ensured Copland’s reputation as the most distinctly American voice among the significant composers of that era.

### *Rodeo*

The two excerpts from *Rodeo* below illustrate the unique attributes of Copland’s writing, evocative mood setting, and attractive use of both melody and rhythm. *Rodeo* is the story of a young Cowgirl in the American West who has a crush on the Head Wrangler of the ranch. The Head Wrangler wants nothing to do with the tomboyish Cowgirl, preferring the prettier rancher’s daughter. At the big Saturday night dance the Cowgirl exchanges her cowhand clothes and hard-edged appearance for a more feminine look. Immediately she catches the attention of the Head Wrangler but she rebuffs him in favor of the Champion Roper who had always been kind to her, regardless of how she looked.

The first excerpt, “Corral Nocturne,” reflects the sadness and loneliness of the Cowgirl as the Head Wrangler and the other men find the women from town more to their liking. The second excerpt, “Hoe Down,” is the culminating scene of the ballet taking place at the Saturday night dance. The original tune from “Hoe Down,” is variously known as *Bonaparte’s Retreat*, *Bonaparte’s Farewell*, or *Bonyparte*.



The ballet *Rodeo* (1942). Music by Aaron Copland, choreography by Agnes de Mille. Courtesy of Photofest, NY



*Rodeo* (two excerpts)—  
Aaron Copland  
“Corral Nocturne”  
“Hoe Down”

How is the dance music from the Medieval and Baroque periods different from later dance music? Do you think the waltz by Strauss would make a good ballet? Why or why not? Do you think the ballet music you’ve listened to would be enjoyable if you did not know the story behind the music?

## FOLK DANCE MUSIC FROM AROUND THE WORLD

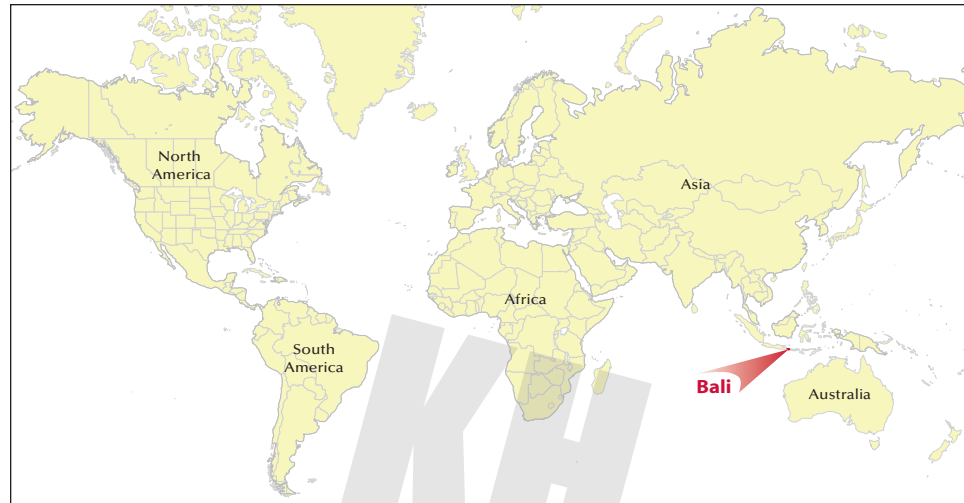
### Balinese Gamelan Music

A **gamelan** is a collection of instruments played as an ensemble that is found throughout the Indonesian islands, particularly in Java and Bali. The instruments are predominately “metallophones,” percussion instruments consisting of a series of differently sized metal bars that are struck with hard sticks. Gongs, cymbals, and flutes are also commonly found in gamelans. Gamelan music takes several different forms, including **gamelan gong**, for a large group of instruments, **gamelan angklung**, for a smaller group of instruments, and **gamelan beleganjur**, with a somewhat different variety of portable instruments more suited to playing while walking during rituals and ceremonies.

Gamelan gong and angklung often accompany dancing. The dancing typically tells a story from Balinese history or religion through elegant movements done in elaborate costumes. Dancing in Bali is not restricted to professionally trained dancers but is an activity shared by people of all ages and ability levels. The gamelan music that



Bali Temple Dance. © Bettmann/Corbis



accompanies Balinese dancing can be fast and energetic, gamelan gong kebyar, or more restrained and elegant, gamelan angklung.

Gamelan music is based on two different types of scales, **slendro**, a **pentatonic** (five-note) scale and **pelog**, a seven note scale where only five of the pitches are usually used. It is important to understand that the pitches of these scales, and the way the instruments of the gamelan are tuned, do not mirror the concepts of pitch common in Western music. Balinese gamelan music has a characteristic, shimmering, and wavering sound quality that is the result of the instruments actually being slightly out of tune in the Western concept of pitch. The music often consists of very short melodic ideas split up and shared by several instruments and repeated numerous times.



*Gamelan Angklung—*  
Balinese Gamelan Music

Can you imagine dancing to this music? What is the meter? Is this the kind of music you would dance to with a friend?

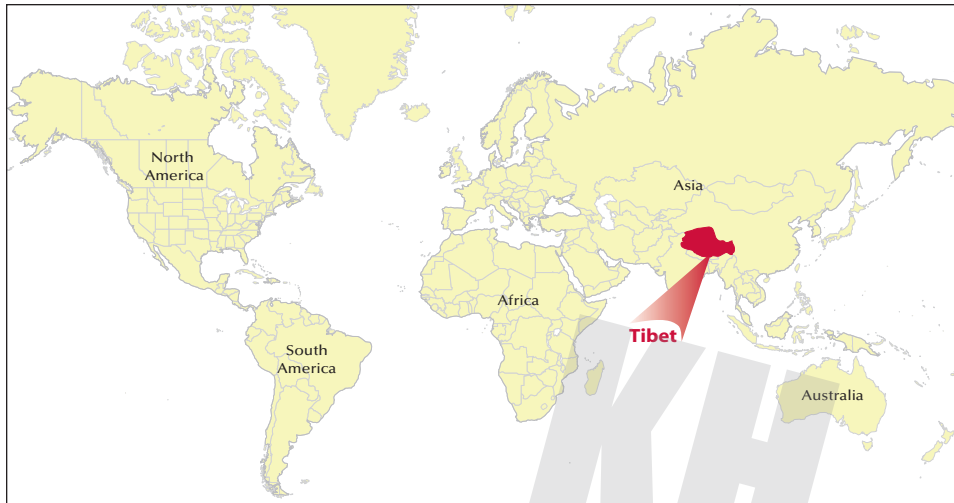
## Tibetan Buddhist Monk Dancing

The **Dance of the Skeleton** (*Skeleton Dance*) is performed by Tibetan Buddhist monks wearing skeleton costumes. The costumes suggest the temporal aspect of life and serve as a way of warding off evil spirits. The *Skeleton Dance* is a type of sacred dance, **Cham**, danced by the monks in Tibetan Buddhism that is performed during religious rituals and ceremonies. Another type of Tibetan dance, **Achi Llama**, is a kind of folk dance, danced by the people outside of the monasteries for the purpose of preserving and retelling historical facts, legends, and myths of their culture.

In the sacred *Skeleton Dance* percussion instruments and low-pitched horns accompany the guttural vocal chanting of the monks, creating an eerie sound that is at once exotic and mesmerizing. The sustained vocalizations sometimes result in the production of **multiphonics**, the singing of two or more pitches at one time by a single performer.



Tibetan Monk in ritual dance. The symbolism of the sword is to cut the attachment we have for things, wealth, people, etc. © Tiziana and Gianni Baldizzone/Corbis



### *Dance of the Skeleton— Tibetan Buddhist Monks*

Can you imagine dancing to *this* music? Never mind trying to figure out the meter to this music, what about the basic beat? Can you feel one? Is there a basic beat? Do you need a beat or meter to dance?

## Italian Tarantella and Saltarello

The Italian **tarantella**, a kind of song as well as a dance, takes its name from a legend that originated in Taranto, Italy, in the sixteenth century. The legend reportedly recounted numerous instances of people descending into trances characterized by constant vigorous dancing after having suffered the bite of the tarantula spider. Townspeople would play various types of increasingly faster dance music until the person, usually a woman, was cured of the poison. The tarantella is a fast dance in duple compound meter.



A similar dance, the **saltarello**, is a fast triple meter dance that incorporates a jumping motion from which the name is derived. Saltare is the Italian word meaning “to jump.” This traditional folk dance was heard by the German composer Felix Mendelssohn on a visit to Italy in 1831 who was inspired to include a saltarello as the final movement of his *Symphony #4*, subtitled the “**Italian Symphony**.”



*Saltarello*—  
Traditional Italian Folk Dance



*Symphony #4*—  
Felix Mendelssohn  
“4th Movement” (Saltarello)

Contrast this music with the previous two examples. How is rhythm used in this music as opposed to the two previous examples? Does this music seem more like dance music as you understand it? Can you feel the three-note pulses within each beat?



African ceremonial dancer.

Courtesy of Marcus Hurt &  
DeWayne Hambrick

## West African Folk Dance Music

Despite differences in certain characteristics, such as instruments used and the names and occasions for specific dances, the traditional folk dance music of western Africa is based first and foremost on drumming. Music from countries such as Senegal, Liberia, and Togo utilizes a complex practice of drumming based on the simultaneous playing of multiple rhythmic meters and/or rhythmic patterns. This type of music is called **polyrhythmic**.

Dance music from western Africa, like much folk music from around the world, is not music that you would find in a concert hall. It is music that accompanies ceremonies, rituals, celebrations, and events important to the culture. Marriage ceremonies, religious rituals and rites of passage are always accompanied by music and that music is almost always for the purpose of dancing. This dance music might include vocalizations such as shouts, chants, and call and response sequences, as well as other instruments, but the emphasis is always on the rhythmic drumming.





A common format for the performance of this type of music is for a basic rhythmic pattern to be established at the beginning of the dance. That pattern is then transformed by the addition of layers of rhythmic patterns that can either modify the established pattern or change it entirely into a new metrical pulse. Any number of transformations can take place during a piece depending on the length of the performance.

In the following three examples, listen for the rhythmic changes that take place and decide whether they change the entire rhythmic pulse of the music or just modify the existing rhythmic feel.





### Initiation Dance— Togo

Can you feel the beat in these examples? Can you figure out what the meter is? Is the concept of rhythm different in this music from the previous example? If so, in what ways?



## Celtic Reels

The term “**Celtic**” is most commonly used when referring to the people and cultures of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The people of these areas share a common ancestral culture and language and many of the characteristics of their respective styles of music and dance are indistinguishable. Some of the dances associated with Celtic culture are the **reel**, **hornpipe**, and **jig**. The hornpipe and jig (gigue) were discussed earlier in reference to dance suites of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, their influence being felt far beyond their geographical roots. The Irish reel was the model for the dance music that would become the American **square dance**. There are two basic types of dance in Celtic culture, the **set dance** and the **step dance**. The set dance is performed by four couples while the step dance is primarily a solo dance. The reel is a type of set dance.



Celtic reels.

© Berry Lewis/  
Corbis

A set dance is composed of a sequence of sections danced first by the entire group of four couples, then repeated by individual couples. The set dance form fits well with the repeating nature of the music. Celtic reels are in quadruple meter and the traditional instruments used include the pipes, flute, Celtic harp, and bagpipes. In the following examples can you tell how many measures of quadruple meter constitute a repeating phrase?



*Three Reels* (played without pause)—  
Traditional Celtic Dance Music  
“The Boys of the Lough”  
“Over the Bog Road”  
“The Merry Harriers”

This music is obviously very consistent in its beat and in its use of meter. Is this more to your liking than some of the previous examples?

## The American Square Dance

The **square dance** consists of four couples starting from a position in which each couple faces inward forming one side of a square. This is essentially the same as the starting position for a reel. The entire group, as well as each couple within the group, performs a series of moves that are directed to them by a “**caller**.” The caller literally calls out what moves they are to do next. The dance ends when the caller decides it is over. Square dances originated in Europe and became popular with the settlers of America. The music for a square dance could readily be played by a single **fiddle** player. A fiddle is essentially a violin. With room for a minimum of extras, such as musical instruments, the fiddle became a favorite instrument of the American settlers as they moved west.

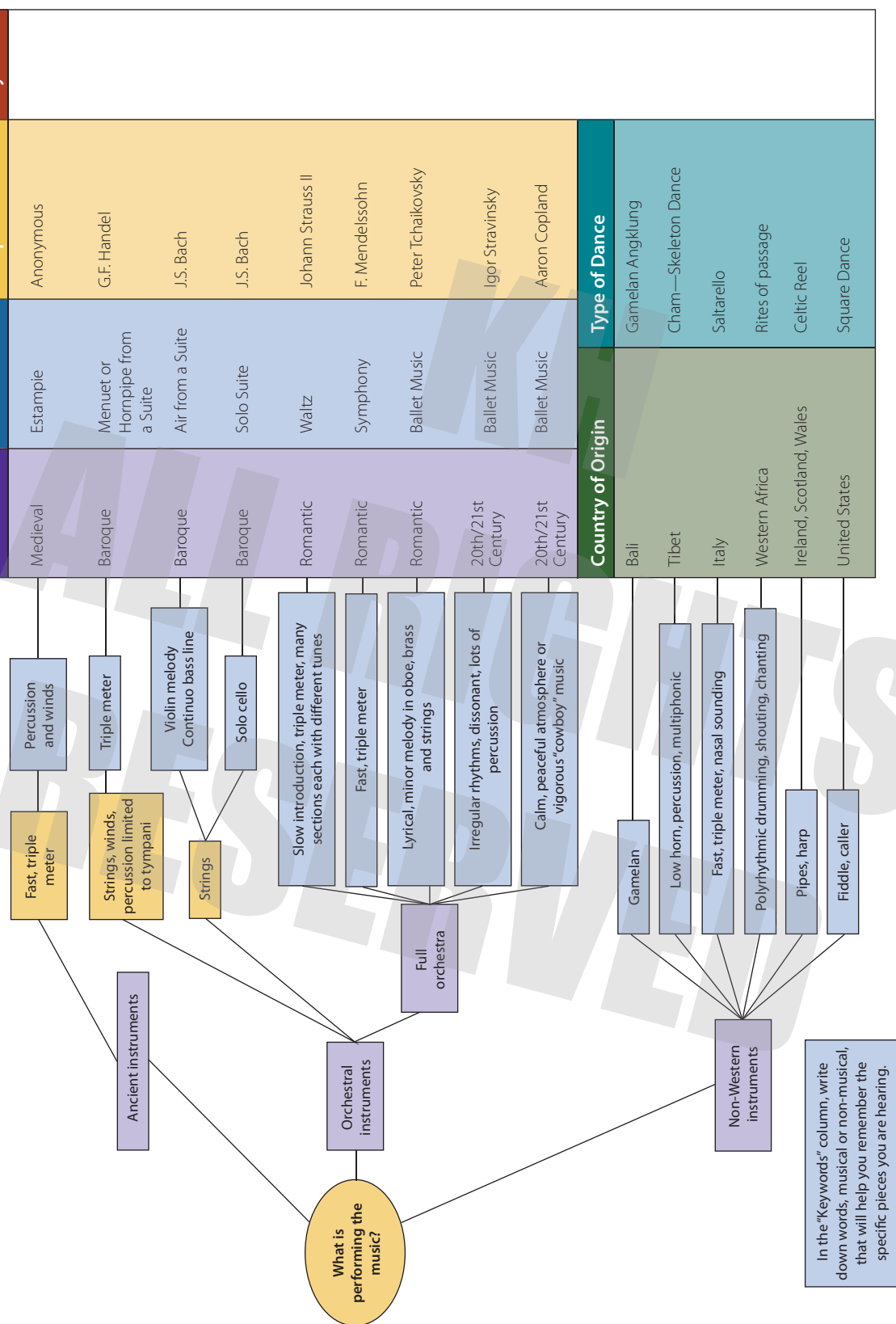
The music for square dances is similar to reels in the repetitive nature of the music. It is constructed in phrases of eight bars (measures) with two sub-phrases of four bars each, providing a kind of question and answer format. The eight-bar phrases are often repeated. Any number of eight bar phrases might constitute the entire piece.

The square dance is still a popular dance in America with numerous square dance clubs and organizations dedicated to its propagation. The square dance might have gone the way of most of the dances that the early settlers brought with them, disappearing gradually with time, if not for three men whose interest in the dance sustained and spread its practice well beyond the realm of transitory immigrants. **Henry Ford**, the inventor of the automobile, took an interest in the dance and together with a master square dance caller, **Benjamin Lovett**, published a book entitled *Good Morning*, which was an enthusiastic endorsement of the square dance. A school superintendent in Colorado named **Lloyd Shaw** read the book and was inspired to collect as much information about the dance as he could. His book, *Cowboy Dances*, chronicled the square dance in more detail than anyone had until that point. Through a combination of writing, holding summer classes, and his limitless enthusiasm for the square dance, Shaw rekindled interest in the square dance that spread throughout the west.



*Bob Wills Square Dance #1*—  
Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys

**Listening Chart**



## SUMMARY

The history of dance is as long and as varied as the history of any other art form but perhaps more difficult to trace. Art leaves paintings and sculptures behind as evidence of style, concept, and evolution. Poetry and writing leave the written word. Music has a written language of its own, even though the earliest examples may be difficult to understand and interpret accurately. But dance has nothing to leave behind. There are no physical items such as musical instruments left behind from which we can infer what the movements were like; only images captured by ancient artists on walls and in books. Though there is now a dance equivalent of a written musical language it is not very old. Most dances have been passed from generation to generation through imitation, where one demonstrates how a dance is done, and others remember it as well as they can. What survives today, in a fairly accurate state, of much early and folk dance is the music that accompanied it.

Some dances have been associated with the common people, such as the Estampie and folk dances, while others have been aligned with the rich, such as courtly dance suites. Dance music of the common people tended to rely on a lot of repetition. We see that in the Estampie, the dance music of West Africa, in Celtic reels, and the American square dance. The courtly dance suites of the Baroque period often used a more sophisticated, A-B-A form, such as can be found in the minuet, bourées, and the hornpipe. During the Romantic period the waltz became one of the dances shared by most people in society. It was during this time that dance evolved into the more refined form known as ballet, practiced on the highest level by trained professionals, much like the art of music. But, no matter what the societal station of the dance or the place where it had been performed, or how complex or how simple, there has always been music with the dance. And that music covers the entire spectrum, from the simplest accompaniments to the most esoteric progressive music of the Western world.

## SUGGESTED FURTHER LISTENING

*Music for the Royal Fireworks*—George Frideric Handel

*Emperor Waltz*—Johann Strauss II

*Pizzicato Polka*—Johann Strauss II

*Polonaise in A-flat major*—Frederic Chopin

*Hungarian Dance #5*—Johannes Brahms

*The Nutcracker Suite*—Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky

*Prince Igor: Polovetsian Dances*—Alexander Borodin

*La Gioconda: Dance of the Hours*—Amilcare Ponchielli

*The Firebird*—Igor Stravinsky

*Pulcinella*—Igor Stravinsky

*It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got That Swing*—Duke Ellington

*Oblivion*—Astor Piazzolla

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## QUESTION ASSIGNMENT

**Instructions:** Log in to the textbook web site and click on the **ASSIGNMENTS** tab. In the Chapter Question Assignment area read the instructions and answer the question(s) or provide the asked for information. Be sure to click the **SUBMIT THIS FORM** button after you complete the Assignment.

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Name three types of dances, commonly found as individual movements within dance suites, which are usually composed in an overall A-B-A form.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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## LISTENING EXERCISES

**Instructions:** Log in to the textbook web site and click on the **ASSIGNMENTS** tab. In the Listening Exercises area click on the links to the musical examples for each question and answer the questions. Be sure to click the **SUBMIT** button after you answer all of the questions.

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Listen to each of the musical examples below from the Chapter 4 Playlist while noting the appropriate descriptive prompts on the Listening Chart for Chapter 4 and determine the best answer to each question.

1. “Menuet” from *Water Music Suite in D major* by George Frideric Handel—This dance, for **orchestral instruments** is in **triple meter** and begins with the French horns playing the first statement of the melody. Choose the timing below that represents when the **strings**, **winds**, and **percussion** instruments first enter.
  - a. 26 seconds
  - b. 45 seconds
  - c. 60 seconds
2. *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* by Johann Strauss II—This waltz for **full orchestra**, in **triple meter**, begins with a slow introduction. The main melody of the piece occurs at approximately the 1:30 second mark. This is followed by **many sections each with different tunes**. Choose the timing below that represents when the main melody returns later in the piece.
  - a. 3:10 seconds
  - b. 5:30 seconds
  - c. 8:40 seconds
3. “Lake in the Moonlight” from *Swan Lake* by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky—This **full orchestra** piece makes use of a **lyrical minor key melody** that is constructed in two parts. The entire melody is initially played by the oboe. The first half of the melody starts from the beginning and goes until the 30 second mark. The second half of the melody begins there and lasts until approximately the 1:02 second mark. At that point the **brass** instruments take over playing the first part of the melody. Choose the timing when the **strings** take over playing the second half of the melody.
  - a. 1:20 seconds
  - b. 1:32 seconds
  - c. 2:10 seconds