

Music in Motion:  
A Study of How the Knowledge of Dance Movements Affects the  
Interpretation of Music.

By  
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## Abstract

This paper will discuss research on how knowledge of actual dance movements affects the interpretation of music. The essence of rhythmic elements can be easily misunderstood, despite performers' efforts to study the context of the notes including programmatic backgrounds, dynamics, harmonic languages, and textures. One of the reasons why rhythm can be easily misinterpreted is the current notation system, which hardly can give the performers enough information to show the characteristics of rhythmic movements unless the performer comprehends the context of the rhythm. This problem can lead musicians to misinterpretations of the aesthetics of the piece because rhythm is one of the major elements that makes music distinctive.

People often think music inspires the dancer's movements. However, we should know the beat is, in fact, from our body's natural rhythms. Eventually, our body rhythm and the beat are intermingled. Also, even before composers write their music, what they hear and experience in their culture, which is deeply associated with the folk dances, courtly dances, and simple body movements, can have a strong influence on their music. Thus, the sound and tone that have invisible motion in the space could be specified with visual dance movements.

Historical research on the relationship of the dominant dances and music from the renaissance era to the twentieth century will be one of main resources to provide the knowledge of dance movement. These are the questions that I would research for better understanding of the intention of the composers in each period:

- When was the dance historically performed and for which circumstances was the dance appropriate?
- How were the dance movements choreographed, and what is distinctive about the dance?

- Where were the dances performed, what speed was preferable, and what were the specific gestures for the meters?

Furthermore, comparing the current recording examples to describe the motion in the space is expected to provide the performers with the ability to discern the choice of rhythmic interpretation. Also, this research will provide a critical interpretation of the major musical repertoire.

In this way, performers can have critical discernment of interpretation based on the rhythmic context, not only for music with dance titles, but also for music that was not originally written for dancing. Not all piano music was intended to be dance music, and thus, learning and researching the major dance movements of a specific historical period will allow us, as musical performers, to more richly understand the music. The idea of spatial understanding of musical notation will enhance pianists' ability to interpret and interact with piano music.

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## Introduction

When thinking of famous dances that were popular in the twentieth century such as tango, salsa, and others, most musicians today have some idea about the style of the physical dance movements.<sup>1</sup> This is because musicians are easily able to directly or indirectly experience these dances from media productions or personal experience. However, many musicians do not have conceptions about the physical motions associated with dances that are centuries old. Dance historians are able to reconstruct the form of dances by studying paintings, images, and dance treatises from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, even if musicians are familiar with dances of their time, studying the dance movement by multimedia tools and method books can bring great depth of dance knowledge in the modern days. Studying dance history can impact other art forms beyond dance, such as music performance.

When it comes to performing keyboard music from the baroque period, understanding the historical dance style can significantly improve a performer's ability to interpret the music. When keyboard music arose in the baroque era, a majority of the repertoire was based on dance forms. As the keyboard dance was a favorite genre of the baroque period, the subtle understanding of the dance will guide performers to avoid misinterpreting the music, for example, by playing a minuet like a courante.

Moreover, understanding what kind of musical idiom changes the motion in body movement is crucial to interpret music because the implied motion in the music starts to have different gesture and flow. For example, for the popular processional music at weddings, if the music changes from *The Prince of Denmark's March* by Jeremiah Clarke (c. 1674-1707), written

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Waxman and Wendy Hilton, *A Dance Pageant: Renaissance and Baroque Keyboard Dances* (Boston: Galaxy Music Corporation, 1992), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 3.

in  $\text{♩}$ , to the *Trumpet Tune* by the same composer, written in  $\text{♩}$ , the music may have a different feel (that is, the sense of motion in the music changes), even though the quarter notes in the two pieces are at approximately the same speed.

Pianists should understand dance movement and how the body movements can be associated with music. This can increase the imagination of the performers and allow pianists to better comprehend the rhythmic and melodic qualities in the music. This allows pianists to better comprehend the rhythmic and melodic qualities in the music, leading to more stylistically informed interpretations. For example, keyboard music from the renaissance and baroque eras should not be treated the same as more modern pieces. The pattern of the rhythm is written for a certain motion, so the pianist should understand what motion is intended in the rhythm. Most dance-titled repertoire is deeply connected to the physical dance even if the music was not actually written for the purpose of accompanying dance. Moreover, the knowledge of dance movements can help to find proper tempo, dynamic level, phrasing, accent, and interpretation of ambiguous notation, such as the dotted rhythm against the triplet.

This approach differs from traditional methods of learning the music. However, this will benefit the pianists, allowing them to feel the music and make the music alive on another level. If the performer realizes the function of certain rhythmic patterns and phrases within the dance, it will help them to interpret the piece more closely to the original intention of the composers. For example, this can help performers understand why accents or rubato are necessary. Also, it will help performers distinguish what makes mazurkas, waltzes, and courantes different even though those are written in the same meter or with similar rhythmic patterns.

The first part of this paper will explain the three reasons why this research is important with examples of psychological approach, historical background of music notation, and the role

of dance in the society of the baroque period. The second part investigates the historical background of several major dances, presents realistic descriptions of the dance movements, and defines major dance terms. The third part of the paper will show my interpretation of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Partita* No. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825, Frédéric Chopin's *Mazurka* in B-flat Minor, Op. 24, No. 4, and Igor Stravinsky's *Tango*. To conclude, I compare existing recordings to my interpretation of these works. This will offer readers several critical views on this matter and further information to enhance their knowledge of the music presented. Additionally, this research can contribute to piano pedagogical methods, encouraging teachers to share these ideas through visual demonstration to inspire young students.

### **Embodied Cognition**

Because humans feel music on an unconscious level with the movement or motion, musicians can benefit from understanding a visualized version of music, such as dance. The musical sound seems invisible but it is actually made visible by our brain or an unconscious level. In Arnie Cox's book *Music and Embodied Cognition: Listening, Moving, Feeling, and Thinking*, he describes the concept of *mimetic engagement*, which "refers to the more general aspect of merely being engaged with the music as a listener, and one of the claims to be explored is that whenever we are aware of it or not. ... for example, singing along with a melody or dancing to a song are two kinds of mimetic representations of music. A mimetic representation is thus a kind of copy that we make, or that we embody, as part of how we perceive and comprehend something exterior to us."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he mentions "Such participatory motor

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<sup>3</sup> Arnie Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition: Listening Moving, Feeling, and Thinking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 15.

actions, and their counterparts in motor imagery, can make the phenomenology of musical motion more similar to actual motion and thus seemingly less metaphoric.”<sup>4</sup> These statements support the perspective that as humans, we feel the music as having a physical presence and imagine actions in space. For example, Cox shows the kinds of motions that reveal the direct relationships between the musical terms and the manner of movement. These include:

as if searching: *ricercare*  
as if fleeing: *fugue*  
as if running: *corrente* and *courante*  
as if walking: *andante*  
as if moving at ease: *adagio*  
as if moving lightly: *leggiero*  
as if flowering: *fioritura*  
as if moving gracefully: *grazioso*  
as if moving heavily: *pesante*  
as if thrown: *precipitato*  
as if swinging: *swing*  
as if mating: *rock-n-roll*<sup>5</sup>

As Cox’s list shows, many musical terms are associated with movement instead of actual tempo. The speed can be varied by the interpretation of the movement. For example, *Andante* can be interpreted faster or slower than *Moderato* as long as the interpretation can contain the quality of walking. Even if *Andante* is performed as slow as *Adagio*, the piece with *Andante* should include a walking-like feeling instead of moving at ease. Thus, imagination and motion with this knowledge will help the pianist to feel and show the whole mood of the piece.

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<sup>4</sup> Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition*, 135.

<sup>5</sup> Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition*, 136.

## Musical Notation

Modern pianists too often neglect musical ideas that are not captured in notation. Since the nineteenth century, composers have indicated more and more expressive details in the music, sometimes even adding explanatory text, so it is easier for pianists to comprehend the composers' intentions. However, when it comes to music composed before the nineteenth century, composers tended to write fewer details into the music. Moreover, the meaning of the notation symbols in each era since the baroque period may seem similar to each other. However, their meanings are not always the same and often times performers misinterpret it to be same. According to George Houle, "The concept of the musical measure, time signature, and bar lines evolved gradually from sixteenth-century's mensural notation."<sup>6</sup> For example, the mark "C" and its diminution "C" are from the mensural notation system, but are also represented in more modern fractional notation as 4/4 or 2/2 time signatures. Whereas the mensural marks were simply shorthand for indicating rhythmic subdivisions, during the baroque era they also took on implications of tempo, genre, and style.

### Time Signatures and Pulse

Understanding the hidden messages of the time signatures and the inner pulse beyond the notated meter are important for pianists because these factors will help the performer to understand how the dance movement is related to the motion in the music. The meter signs 2, C, and 2/2 were identical according to the theorist François David.<sup>7</sup> These meters were used in bourrées, galliades, and gavottes, etc. The other duple meter, 2/4, was sometimes considered as

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<sup>6</sup> George Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800: Performance, Perception, and Notation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 57.

<sup>7</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 57.

a meter equivalent to 2/2, but it mostly implied a faster tempo than other duple meters. Also, according to Houle's *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, "Quantz, who related his tempos to the pulse, said that in Allegro 2/4 or quick 6/8 time, there was one pulsation for every bar."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Johann Philipp Kirnberger states 2/4 has the same speed as cut time but that it was performed is with a lighter and more playful character.<sup>9</sup>

The other meter signs also could define the tempos to some degree. For example, Grassineau said, "6/8 is proper for gay, lively, animating strains,"<sup>10</sup> and 12/8 "is fit for gay and brisk movements. Sometimes the word *affetuoso* and *adagio* are placed to direct what the movement is to be; for itself 'tis naturally quick."<sup>11</sup> This explains why often *Gigue* is written in 6/8 or 12/8. Moreover, Mattheson stated, "at length on the use of this fast meter for slow pieces, in that it gave a feeling of gravity despite the usual quickness of eight notes. He felt that using 12/8 for slow music, marked *grave* or *adagio*, was a sign of the general preference for slow music."<sup>12</sup>

To understand further how the meter can be associated with specific dances and dance movements, the idea called *tactus* should be understood. This means beat and inner pulse, which is a part of the meter sign and from the mensural system.<sup>13</sup> This shows down and up gestures of the beat. This *tactus* gives the different momentum of the music. For example, if the pulse or *tactus* is the quarter note in 4/4, it will sound like a march-like. Whereas if the *tactus* is the half note in 4/4, it will sound more flowing. The latter one will sound smoother than the former

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<sup>8</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 58.

<sup>9</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 58.

<sup>10</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 60.

<sup>12</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 1.

example. Thus, the meters along with the extra-musical indications help interpreters to understand the intended tempo and characteristics of the piece, and to explain why a specific meter fits a specific dance.

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the cognitive perception of motion correlated to music in the brain due to the limitations of our music notation system. Researching how music notation is related to the dance movements will reveal how dance has had an effect on the long-term development of keyboard literature.

### **Dance Activities in the Renaissance and Baroque Eras**

To understand the general characteristics of music during the renaissance and baroque eras, pianists should know that dance was one of the serious social activities in Western Europe. Kings, queens, and royal families led the trends, and most dances were for couples or groups of couples in a ballroom. People were devoted to perfecting the complex dance movements and hired dance instructors. Even five years old children took their dance lessons.<sup>14</sup> Queen Elizabeth I in England and Louis XIV in France contributed to the popularity of dances. People imported Italian and French dances to England in the Elizabethan era.<sup>15</sup> Louis XIV performed complex dances in a leading role, not only for the court but for the public.<sup>16</sup> As France at Louis XIV's time had a strong cultural influence on other countries in Europe, dance was at the heart of social activity in Europe.

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<sup>14</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 5.

## The Rise of Keyboard Music in the Baroque Era

The background of how the keyboard genre evolved and how much it is associated with baroque dances will give pianists direction in how to interpret the keyboard suites of J.S. Bach and other composer of his time. The popular dances listed in Table 1 all feature in the various types of baroque-era keyboard suites.

Table 1) Dance List in the Renaissance and the Baroque Era<sup>17</sup>

Renaissance dances	Baroque dances
Allemande	Allemande
Courante	Bourrée
Galliard	Courante
Pavane	Gavotte
Volta	Gigue
	Minuet
	Passepied
	Rigaudon
	Sarabande

Since dance suites became one of the most popular musical genres for the keyboard while dance culture prevailed in the baroque era, it is important to know how the music and choreography each reflected the other art form. The suites are a set of dance movements composed in the same key. The most common formula for suites was a sequence including an allemande, a courante, a sarabande, and a gigue, along with one other dance selected from other genres, such as minuets, bourrées, or gavottes.

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<sup>17</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 5.

As the movement titles might suggest, it is easy to think that keyboard suites are performed for the dances or arose from dance directly. Historically, however, the suite or music with dance titles developed separately from the dance music of the time., Dance suites written for the harpsichord or clavichord were not played to accompany courtly dances in the period. Court dances were mainly performed and accompanied by strings or small ensemble orchestras. For dance classes, a type of violin, the pochette (pocket fiddle), was used. On the other hand, keyboard suites were composed to be performed at social gatherings without dancing. It is important to recognize that the harpsichord did not perform the same role as the solo piano which often accompanies modern dance classes or dance performances. From this background, the following will show in detail what musical elements modern pianists should consider based on the knowledge of dance of the time period.

### **Interpreting Keyboard Suites**

Performers do not need to interpret the keyboard suite for accompanying live dance or make it suitable for dancers; however, understanding historical facts of dance will provide a background for style-appropriate performance with a strong understanding of the correct rhythmic components. While keyboard music was independently developed and courtly or theatrical dances, it is hard to deny that music written for the harpsichord contains the core movements or key rhythmic characteristics of the dance. Moreover, the musical elements including pulse, rhythmic motive, and meter typically reflect the title of the individual dance.

## Tempo

When it comes to the interpretation of the tempo, pianists should know the background and characteristics of each dance instead of only considering the marked tempo or musical indication added by editor at the beginning of the movement such as *andante* or *allegro*. Most dances have no specific correct tempo, or there are many tempo markings, but there are some ranges of suitable speeds for each dance. First, the bourrée, gavotte, and sarabande have a wider range of tempo choices. These were choreographed to a specific piece of music<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the gigue, often placed at the end of keyboard suites, displays a brilliant finale, while sarabande reveals religious and spiritual characteristics. As Ms. Hilton states, “The Saraband, which J. S. Bach, in particular, imbued with religious, spiritual qualities, became slower as an expressive instrumental piece.”<sup>19</sup>

To be more specific, there are some key dance movements that can determine the tempo of the music. For example, gigue has many springing steps, so the music must be suitable for the movement in a workable range of speed that allows a performer to execute the proper interpretation. In some other dances, such as the gavotte and the bourée, which have fewer springing steps, performers can choose a freer speed, and the tempo can be moderate and spacious. The range of speed for minuets is even wider because it has few, if any, springing steps. Therefore, some minuets are indicated as slow or fast minuets. Thus, based on these general facts, studying how musical and dance elements interact will help pianists with their interpretation of the music.

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<sup>18</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 10.

## Legs, Knees, and Arms

To know how the rhythm is associated with the movement in more detail, one can look at the dance treatises of the time. According to Wendy Hilton, “Raoul Auger Feuillet published the dance notation system and many dances, while Pierre Rameau gave the clearest descriptions of the steps and the manner in which they should be performed.”<sup>20</sup> The main symbols of actions of the legs and feet in the books include stepping, bending the knees, rising, and springing. Most renaissance and baroque era dances are a combination of these main elements and other actions. Even the simple movements are related to the rhythm and pulse in the music. For example, bending or springing motions happen on upbeats, while rising or landing motions happen on downbeats. To be specific, some dances—such as the allemande, courante, and gavotte—begin with the action of bending of both knees, which acts as an upbeat leading into the first beat in the next measure. Thus, there are two types of beginning motions in the baroque dances according to Wendy Hilton:

by a straightening of the knees and a rise onto the ball of one foot, the heel raised slightly from the floor, or by a spring into the air which lands on the beat:

<i>Upbeat</i>		<i>Downbeat</i>
bend		rise
	or	
bend		
spring		land <sup>21</sup>

Arm motions in baroque dances were an embellishment of the leg. Natural arm motions are a part of most dances except for minuet and passepied.

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<sup>20</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 8.

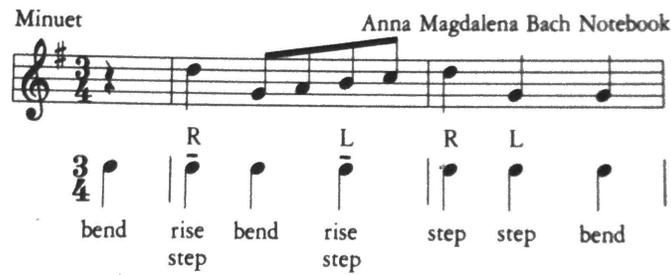
## Dance and Its Movements

This section goes into further detail about the music, movement of the dances, and the general interpretative guidelines that pianists should use when they play music identified as a minuet, courante, gigue, waltz, mazurka, and tango. This research is organized and described for pianists to understand the motions specific to each genre of music and to highlight clues that inform relevant phrasing and interpretation.

### Minuet

Understanding the essential body movement and historical facts of the minuet will give a different insight to bring out authenticity or the distinctive characteristics of minuet. The minuet became more popular than the other movements in the baroque suite, and survived by being inserted into the classical symphonies. Basic minuet steps are danced over two measures of music in 3/4. To prepare to dance, both dancers bend their left legs before dance starts. On the first beat, dancers begin with the right foot, and the right leg rises with step. In the second beat, the right leg bends, and the left foot heel is in the *élevé* position (rising to the ball of the feet). The right and left feet move forward for next two steps each beat in the *élevé* position, and left leg bends on the last beat of the whole step coordination. Figure 1 shows the minuet as an example of the basic coordination of legs with the musical notation of this piece.

Figure 1) Minuet Steps<sup>22</sup>



With the knowledge of this dance, the pianist will have an idea that two-measure units will be repeated most of the time and there is no cross rhythm. Though there are “slow minuets” or “fast minuets,” the general tempo for this genre will be moderate to execute mild steps and bending motions. Also, this was a dance where the couple faces each other most of time, which suggests the possibility of courtship. The graceful and elegant movement could be preferred. Also, even though the meter is 3/4, the pulse is not going to be a repeat of strong-weak-weak. The first two beats are smoothly connected with bending motion and the third beat of the first measure to the second beat of the second measure is connected equally with steps. The last beat is connected in one motion with the previous beat. Therefore, the accent or emphasis on the first beat of the second measure should be avoided. Also, pianists should not hurry to play the beat for rising up motion on beats one and two, and five and six. The rhythm in general should be played steadily and gracefully.

<sup>22</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 19.



era.”<sup>24</sup> However, the basic motion and elements are similar. Also, the dancers keep smoothly swirling in individual paths on the floor.

The courante is a difficult dance to define because the dance changes through the Renaissance era to the baroque era; however, the notation and the title of the courante can give ideas on how to interpret the tempo. According to Ms. Hilton “It would be simple if we could say that, up to a certain point, the courante was always fast and, after that point, slow and majestic, and that the term corrente always denoted a quick piece and courante a slow piece. In fact, the two forms progressed side by side, and certainly composers continued to write fast and slow courantes up to the end of the baroque era.”<sup>25</sup>

These terms of slow and fast should be understood in terms of the sense of motion created by the meter and rhythm in each courante. For example, as shown in figures 3 and 4, in Bach’s French Suite No. 3, the tempo in 6/4 meter is faster than in the 3/4 meter of French Suite No. 4, but because of the pulse and the rhythmic figure with triplets in No. 4, the audience will feel the motion in No. 4 is faster than No. 3. As Wendy Hilton points out, the courante of French Suite No. 3 in B minor is considered a slower French courante, which is ironic to see the editor’s marking “*Allegro vivace*” in French Suite No. 3. Thus, it is important for modern pianists to know what determines the tempo and character beyond the editorial tempo markings.

The basic courante’s rhythmic pattern consists of running eighth and sixteenth notes, reflecting the swift, springy, and light moving motion. The six quarter notes can be divided into two groups of three or three groups of two in French courante. Pianists should be able to give

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<sup>24</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 11.

correct stresses according to the different groups, as these shifting of pulse is clear in the notation.

Figure 3) J. S. Bach, *French Suite No. 3*, BWV 814, Courante, mm. 1-2.<sup>26</sup>



Figure 4) J. S. Bach, *French Suite No. 4*, BWV 815, Courante, mm. 1-4.<sup>27</sup>



### Gigue (Jig, Jigge, Giga)

The gigue is usually placed as the final movement of the keyboard suites. It shows the brilliance of player's technique, and its character is usually lively and fast. The dance gigue also has many springing steps, which makes the music and dance lighter and bouncy. The figure 5

<sup>26</sup> Editor: Carl Czerny (1791-1857) *Compositions pour le Pianoforte*, Liv.7 (pp.48-85) Leipzig: C.F. Peters, n.d.[1841]. Plate 2748. Public Domain <https://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ImagefromIndex/63613/hfgk>

<sup>27</sup> Editor: Carl Czerny (1791-1857) *Compositions pour le Pianoforte*, Liv.7 (pp.48-85) Leipzig: C.F. Peters, n.d.[1841]. Plate 2748. Public Domain <https://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ImagefromIndex/63613/hfgk>

below by Ms. Hilton is an illustration of how the steps and rhythm works together, which is called *Gigue de Roland*.

Figure 5) Gigue de Roland<sup>28</sup>



The meter of *Gigue de Roland* is in 6/4, and it is in compound duple time with dotted rhythm. In the first two measures of the gigue, landing motions follow the springing four times in a sequence, and the next measure has the quick three steps. This sequence occurs twice for the next three measures. The last three measures have more stepping motion, land-step-step for two measures, and it ends with three steps.

The energy level in the dotted rhythm with springing motion, and the stepping motion should be treated differently. The landing beat can boost the energy of springing, so the pulse with strong accents should be frequently shown, which is mostly twice in a measure. Moreover, the steps are mostly associated with quarter notes in the music. However, pianists should avoid

<sup>28</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 11.

performing with accent all the time. The sequence of steps should be smoothly connected with less energy. The dotted rhythm—either with the eighth notes or with the sixteenth notes—passes through the landing beats without accents. Moreover, the touch should be lightly detached to show the general character of the gigue, which is buoyant and upbeat. It can be performed faster than the danceable speed because in keyboard suites, the gigue is intended to serve as an exciting finale; therefore, the tempo should be the performers' choice.

### **Allemande (Alman, Almain)**

There are different features of the allemande in the renaissance and baroque eras. In the Renaissance period, the distinctive movement of the allemande is the swing of the leg at the end of a bar. The running eighth notes on the second and the fourth beat help to define the mood. With the rhythm, the step coordination goes step, step, step, and swing (hop), as shown in the figure 6. Because of the swing motion, the fourth beat has an elongated feeling.

Figure 6) Renaissance Allemande Tune and Step Sequence by Arbeau<sup>29</sup>

The figure shows three staves of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff is the main melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. Below the music are step sequence notations: 'step step step hop swing' for the first staff, 'step step step hop swing step hop swing step hop swing' for the second staff, and 'step step step hop swing step step step hop swing' for the third staff.

In the baroque era, *l'Allemande* was published in 1702, which was a new style with a new dance notation system. The baroque version contains more spring movements and quick foot work than its predecessor. The music is usually in duple meter. The landing motion is on most of the down beats, and there are three quick steps and spring at the end of the sequence, finishing with landing. While dancing the allemande, there is often a moment where dancers perform *chasses*, as series of fast, elegant gallops. The figure 6-1 is the example with the music.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 57.

Figure 6-1) Lully or Campra, *L'Allemande*<sup>31</sup>



It is important for pianists to understand the underlying pulse in a keyboard allemande. The common form of the keyboard allemande consists of broken running sixteenth notes divided in both hands. This rhythmic figure moves rapidly because allemande was commonly placed in the very beginning of suites in the baroque era; the order of the main four dance suites is allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue. It seems to have developed differently than the dance allemande. According to Ms. Hilton “Most significantly, the keyboard Allemande evolved as the opening movement of the harpsichord Suite, taking on the form and feeling of a serious Prelude.”<sup>32</sup> Also, imagining the underlying pulse with the original dance coordination will help pianists to have a fluid sense of motion in the rapidly running allemande. Playing the underlying pulse in this way will make the audience feel not too hectic but grand and flowing. Even though the keyboard allemande and the baroque period dance allemande were developed independently

<sup>31</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 57.

from one another, the sixteenth notes should be performed with a gentle push towards the next beat.

### **Sarabande (Saraband, Sarabanda)**

In the slow triple time dance Sarabande, the major rhythmic pattern is:

Figure 7) Major Rhythmic Pattern of Sarabande <sup>33</sup>



There is no specific a series of step coordination for the sarabande, but there are some important step vocabularies used in the dance. Spring was also used but it was softly controlled spring, not too high.

This is the dance list by Ms. Hilton:

- a. by a glide which culminates in a step on the second beat
- b. by a very low circling of the leg from front to side during the second beat
- c. by a half turn pivot on both feet, a pirouette
- d. by a complete absence of motion, a rest<sup>34</sup>

The sarabande has the emphasis on the second beat because the rising step on the second beat stretches to the third beat. Dancers hold the moment with rising motion before moving to the first beat of next measures. Therefore, the music naturally sustains the second beat slightly longer, yet it should not be static motion, but still gracefully slow. Composers put more elaborate notes in some sarabandes, that often seems like a *cantabile*, where the rhythmic quality is not as

<sup>33</sup> Waxman and Hilton, *A Dance Pageant*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Nettl, *The Story of Dance Music* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 203.

important as in the dance. Interpreting how fast or slow to play a phrase of the piece can be the chosen by the pianist; however, the underlying rhythm will be the essence of the sarabande, so it should not be neglected.

## **Waltz**

The waltz, which has existed since the sixteenth century, became popular as people rejected the formal minuets and gavottes during the classical era. People preferred to pursue the freer and less hindered emotional expressions through dancing the waltz. This freer type of dance already prevailed in baroque peasant weddings or intimate, closed events for aristocratic groups. However, the waltz, as a spontaneous and natural dance, started to have the focus and attention of the public as “third class” arose in the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

The basic characteristic of the waltz is the strong first beat in the ternary dance, when the dancers turn on their axis as they circle around the room. On the first beat, both dancers have a motion that one foot moves forward and the other foot bends. This motion is not a big landing from the third beat but it is smoothly connected from the third beat, which is different from the strong landing motion of a big jump. In other words, the motion which happens on the first beat is small. The up and down motion is similar to the sarabande, but the waltz is faster and forward moving in general. In classical ballet’s *Pas de Valse*, which means waltz steps, the female dancer brushes the floor with one foot on the first beat with the other leg bending at the knee. This give the dancer a strong axis, which sets up a pivot to the up-lifting second beat and the following step on the third beat. Dancers turn on the third beat for the waltz turn. Basically, both the second and third beats both have an up-holding motion.

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<sup>35</sup> Paul Nettl, *The Story of Dance Music*, 253.

There are many types of waltzes throughout history so it is hard to generalize the waltz in a short paragraph. However, the steps of waltz that prevailed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which accompanied Chopin's repertoire, were close to the classical waltz, and one that pianists can use as their idea of waltz in general. The first beat should be played as a short but strong down beat, and the next two beats should be moving forward to the downbeat without delay. Said in another way, there is an extended beat moving to the first beat after the turning which gives more of a feeling of moving faster or swirling as opposed to the feeling of an extended jump. The down beat is not a landing motion but more a gracefully bending motion to complement the soft lifting up motion on the second beat. Therefore, the down beat should not be played like a polonaise's downbeat.

## **Mazurka**

The mazurka is a famous Polish dance for a group of couples. This dance is often considered as a dance form with three different rhythmic patterns: *kujawiak*, *oberek*, and *mazurek*. The mazurka also varies by the tempo in triplet meter. Regardless the type of the mazurka, it has energetic movements. It usually starts with the up-beat, which picks up to the first beat of the next measure. Dancers jump or spring on the first beat, and the second and the third beat is kept moving forward to the first beat, which naturally makes a crescendo and accents. The accent on the third beat in particular, depending on how strongly it is notated, helps dancers to prepare spring or jump on the first beat.

As the purpose of jumping is different in the mazurka than in the waltz, the accents must be executed correctly to join the music with the dance movement. Commonly, a deep accent in the bass or an octave figure on the piano prepares for a big jump or movement on the next beat. In this case, the big movement occurs on the first beat, so the third beat gets the strongest accent.

Sometimes, there is springing motion on the third beat and first beat. This is why often mazurka has the accents on the second and third beat. Moreover, there are more springing motions in mazurka than waltz, which gives lively energy into music, so the articulation should reflect the character of the dance. This dance seems like the waltz when it comes to the rhythmic figures in the notation such as triple meter, and similar left hand rhythmic patterns, but the sense of the motion is completely different, which can change the whole mood of the piece, depending on how the accents are played or notated.

## **Tango**

Tango arose among the huge immigrant population in Buenos Aires. The immigrants were often poor and the dance was one of the tools used to make money by entertaining the sailors stopping at the port.<sup>36</sup> The origin of the word Tango is not clear, but according to David Akombo, the Latin verb “tangere” that means “to touch” is the stem of the word Tango.<sup>37</sup> The tango was the third dance which was considered scandalous because of the physical contact between dance partners after the waltz and the polka. Holding hands and a man’s right arm holding a woman’s waist was considered a scandalous activity in the society. Among all, the tango was the dance where the dancing couple physically touched each other the most: the dancers’ torsos often touched and sometimes faces as well. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, it was considered quite a sensational dance style, given how physical contact between genders was perceived during this time.

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<sup>36</sup> David Akombo. *The Unity of Music and Dance in World Cultures* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2016), 125.

<sup>37</sup> Akombo. *The Unity of Music and Dance in World Cultures*, 126.

Because of this background, the Tango was created from many different styles of dance, including influence from African slaves, Indian music, and Spanish dances.<sup>38</sup> Also, the dance was accompanied with many different instruments such as the flute, the violin and the guitar. The bandoneon, which is similar to the accordion, is the most popular instrument for tango. Since the dance is associated with prostitute culture, it is very sexual in nature. It was developed into the “dance of sorrow” according to Akombo, and contains many painful emotions including immigrants’ loneliness, pain, frustrated love, etc. Tango eventually spread to Europe and other countries in the world.

The Tango is usually in four, and it has a lot of room for improvisation. The formal ballroom type of Tango starts with two steps and the third step moves twice as fast as the first two. Also, sliding or dragging the feet changes the mood or the timing of the music quite a bit. The focal point of dancers is lower than in other dances: the knees are bent most of the time and in general, dancers’ turns and moving on their axis is very smooth. Tango music usually has usually a strong first beat, which is because the dancers drag their feet quickly on the third beat and hold their position on the fourth beat. As David Akombo’s notes, there are four main Argentine tango movements which can also affect the music:

gancho: one dancer, usually the woman hooks her leg around her partner’s leg,  
parade: the leader puts his foot against his partners’ foot, arrastre: leader drags the follower’s foot, scada: leader steps into the follower’s dancing space, thus displacing the movement of her feet.<sup>39</sup>

Now that an overview of the dance styles has been presented, the next section will show my interpretation of the dance knowledge I explained above. Each type of dance will be addressed with the important facets of interpretation that pianists need to incorporate into their

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<sup>38</sup> Akombo. *The Unity of Music and Dance in World Cultures*, 126.

<sup>39</sup> Akombo. *The Unity of Music and Dance in World Cultures*, 129.

approach to the different genres. Moreover, the information of the dance styles will be compared to previously existing recordings or interpretations and the pedagogical point will be provided along with examples of musical excerpts.

### **Johann Sebastian Bach, *Partita No. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825***

The Partita No. 1 was written in 1726 and is one of six partitas for keyboard. This partita is one of the latest harpsichord suites Bach wrote, and the music seems far from the traditional baroque dance characteristics. However, if pianists look at it closely, some of the essential points of each dance can be discovered, and this is crucial for the pianists to understand. The piece consists of a Praeludium and five dance pieces: Allemande, Corrente, Sarabande, Minuet I/II, and Giga. Each of the dance pieces will be described with interpretations of tempo, pulse, and phrase, and pedagogical points.

#### **Allemande**

The second piece of the partita, Allemande, has the typical pattern of the keyboard allemande with running sixteenth notes in both hands. As I mentioned in the previous section about allemande, the tempo should be moderate, feeling the pulse of quarter notes instead of every running sixteenth note. Renaissance's rhythm of allemande can be referred as the figure 6.

After the three steps in each beat, the dancer swings his or her leg at the end of every bar, so the pianist can consider the four beats as one motion, and this pattern repeats. The bass note indicates the motion as well. In measure 5, the notes in the first and the third beat of the left hand part can be interpreted as dancers' swinging on the second and the fourth beat as shown in the figure 8.

Figure 8) J. S. Bach, *Partita* No. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825, Allemande: mm. 1-6.<sup>40</sup>



Also, the long phrase is important for pianists to evoke the smooth motion of the dance allemande, and the last few sixteenth notes should be moving into the first beat of the next measure.

A harpsichord recording by Ton Koopman<sup>41</sup> is a slower interpretation of this allemande, which is not proper for renaissance allemande or *l'Allemande*, but the quality of the prelude, as allemande served as function of prelude, it sets the mood of the beginning and has a correct accent on the first beat, or the first and the third beat. If pianists play this too fast like an etude because of the running notes, it could sound too hectic for the next piece, the corrente. Because the keyboard suites are separately developed; especially, the rhythmic figure in keyboard allemande are very different than the music for dance allemande, the choice of tempo will be

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<sup>40</sup> Editor: Carl Ferdinand Becker (1804-1877), Publisher *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 3* (pp.46-55) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1853. Plate B.W. III. Public Domain

<sup>41</sup> Koopman, Ton, harpsichordist, *Six Partitas for harpsichord (Clavier Übung I) BWV 825-830*, Challenge Classics, UPC 0608917257427, Catalog number CC 72574, Compact Disks. Released in 2013,

according to the taste of the individual pianist. However, I agree with the tempo of Dinu Lipatti, which is faster “quarter note to 125.” Moreover, the main pulse which makes the dance Allemande should be represented, or the piece will lose the reason why it is named allemande. Pianists should be aware that the original characteristic of allemande is up-beat and lively. Therefore, a light touch to make the sound brisk will be appropriate.

## Corrente

Bach named the title as corrente, which indicates Italian style of courante. This type of corrente is considered faster than French courante. The dotted rhythms correlate to gentle but sharp hopping motions. The first beats of the first three measures will have accents, but the second beat on the fourth measure will not have the accent because of the continuous motion in measures 3 and 4 which shows the flowing character of courante.

Figure 9) J. S. Bach *Partita* No. 1, BWV 825, Corrente, mm. 1-4.<sup>42</sup>



<sup>42</sup> Editor: Carl Ferdinand Becker (1804-1877), Publisher *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 3* (pp.46-55) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1853. Plate B.W. III. Public Domain

A tempo between “quarter note =120-130” will be suitable to show the proper springing motion of the feet, and to show the sharp ankle movement of the dancers. Ton Koopman’s recording is in the range for the tempo of corrente: at this point, it can be explained that Koopman played the allemande slower to make more contrast between these two movements. Also, the non-legato touch is appropriate to show the briskness and liveliness of the dance. From the pedagogical point of view, in the dotted rhythm with sixteenth notes against the continuous triplets, the final sixteenth note should be played together with the last eighth note of the triplet, as is common in baroque music. Also, teachers can explain that the downbeat with accent is like the body movement of hopping, and the weight of the accent would depend on how deep the student executed or imagine the hop.

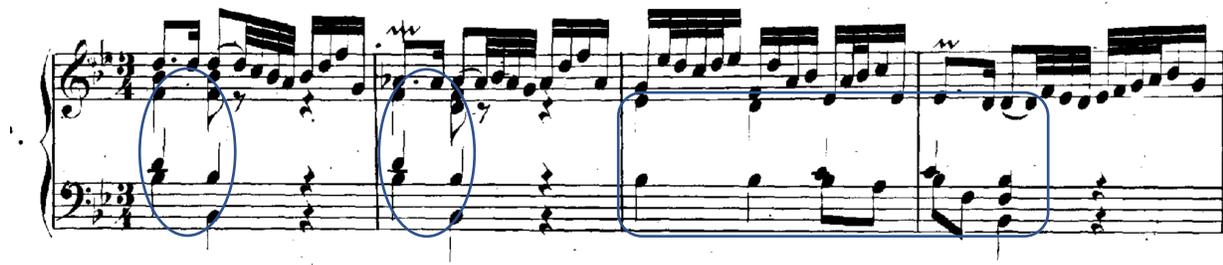
The irony here is that creating contrast between the allemande and corrente is not about the metronomic speed. The tempo I chose to play the allemande, “quarter note=105,” and corrente, “Quarter note=125,” will actually give the audience the feeling that allemande is faster, even though the tempo of each quarter note pulse of the corrente is faster. Changing the number of pulses in a measure can change the feeling. Therefore, the phrasing will be more important in showing the motion and characteristic of the movement than the tempo choice.

## **Sarabande**

The tempo I chose for this movement is “quarter note=30-40.” As I mentioned above in the Sarabande section, to show the quality of the dance, which extends the second and third beat, this has to be moved forward with the small notes, although this does not have to be strict and moving evenly. In places where the dancers can hold, some rubato, should be allowed to show the lyrical quality of the movement.

For students, it will be important to play only the main beat in the circles and a box as shown in the example below to feel the flow of the movement. Moreover, performing the basic steps of the Sarabande along with the music will help student to ingrain or experience the motion in their body. Also, it will change the ambiguous concept of the motion in the music to noticeable feeling of the motion sense; especially for the second and the third beat with long hold.

Figure 10) J. S. Bach, *Partita* No. 1, BWV 825, Sarabande, mm 1-4.<sup>43</sup>



## Minuet 1 and 2

Two minuets show contrasting characteristics by the rhythmic texture. The second minuet corresponds closely with the sequence of the traditional minuet steps, close to the traditional minuet steps. It has the measures of every phrase with step-bend-step-step-step-bend. The step-bend section is well shown with the half notes in one of the voices as shown in the figure 11.

Therefore, it avoids the accent on the first beat of every second measure of two-measure phrases.

<sup>43</sup> Editor: Carl Ferdinand Becker (1804-1877), Publisher *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 3* (pp.46-55) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1853. Plate B.W. III. Public Domain

Figure 11) J. S. Bach, *Partita No. 1*, BWV 825, Minuet 2, mm. 1-8.<sup>44</sup>



The minuet 2 has a different character than the minuet 1 in the figure 12. This minuet is similar to the *Laendler*, folk dance in Austria, Germany, and France. Paul Nettle’s “The Story of Dance Music” shows Monn’s minuet as an example of the *Laendler* style of minuet in the figure 13, and it has similar leaps and shapes in the melody of the first minuet.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 12) J. S. Bach, *Partita No. 1*, BWV 825, Minuet 1, mm. 1-7.<sup>46</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Editor: Klaus Engler Fingering and Notes on Interpretation: Edith Picht-Axenfeld, *Johann Sebastian Bach: 6 Partitas for piano BWV 825–830* | UT50192, Wiener Urtext Edition, Urtext Edition, Catalogue Number: BWV 825–830

<sup>45</sup> Paul Nettle, *The Story of Dance Music* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 206.

<sup>46</sup> Editor: Carl Ferdinand Becker (1804-1877), Publisher *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 3* (pp.46-55) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1853. Plate B.W. III. Public Domain

Figure 13) Monn's Minuet <sup>47</sup>



It has the bigger leaps in the melody line, which reminds of stamping more than a mild step. So, the articulation will change the motion of the minuet, which is little bit fast, moving forward with more energy. In this minuet, an accent on the second beat of the two-measure phrase can be an option as this can be considered a dance similar to the *Laendler*. However, the two-measure phrase is generally preferred. Thus, the change of articulation in minuet, I will fulfill the goal of making the two minuets contrast.

The first minuet in Koopman's recording, he adds many ornaments to the first minuet, which brings energy into the music. The second minuet of his recording also has brighter energy rather than graceful slower motion. This interpretation did not give much contrast between the two minuets. It may be because of the nature of the harpsichord, but it seems Koopman did not intend to make the second minuet slower. András Schiff's recording performed on the piano shows less accent on the first beat of the measure. In general, those three recordings including Dinu Lipatti performed the minuet faster than the tempo I choose which is "quarter note to 110-125."

## Giga

This giga is written in common time with running triplets and is the fastest one in the six Bach partitas. The tempo I interpreted is "quarter note=155-165." The speedy moving energy

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<sup>47</sup> Nettl, *The Story of Dance Music*, 206.

should be acquired from the eighth notes, not from the main melody. Otherwise, it is easy to perform the giga excessively fast. The articulation should be brisk and sharp to show the character. The first beat and the fourth beat of the measure can have accents, but measures five to eight should feature a leaner melody line without accents as shown in the figure 14. With or without the accents, pianists should be able to evoke the energy of constant jumping and hopping.

Figure 14) J. S. Bach, *Partita* No. 1, BWV 825, Giga, mm. 5-8.<sup>48</sup>



Koopman's recording was slower than other two piano recordings. Schiff was closest to the tempo I chose. As I mentioned before, this giga is intended for a grand finale, so a faster tempo should be acceptable while maintaining the essence of the dance movement.

### **Frédéric Chopin, *Mazurka* in B-flat Minor, Op. 24, No. 4**

This mazurka, along with three other mazurkas from Op. 24, was published in 1836. It begins with a four-measure introduction as shown in the figure 15.

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<sup>48</sup> Editor: Carl Ferdinand Becker (1804-1877), Publisher *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 3* (pp.46-55) Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1853. Plate B.W. III. Public Domain

Figure 15) F. Chopin, *Mazurka* Op. 24 No. 4, mm. 1-5.<sup>49</sup>

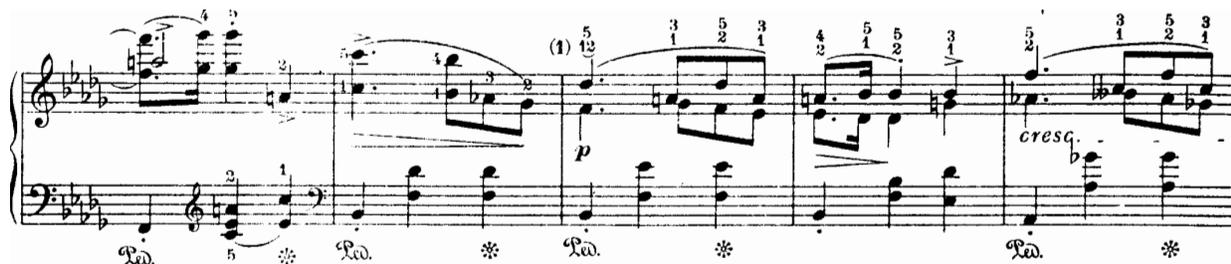


It is important to set the tempo of the mazurka in the introduction, but in essence, it is not related to the mazurka rhythm. Thus, pianists can choose to have freer choice of the phrasing. The motion of the left hand is crucial once the introduction is over, which has the forward moving motion to the second and the third beat. This should be distinguished from the waltz, which has a bigger down beat and decreases the sound towards the third beat. So, naturally it will make the accents on the third beat in the mazurka more prominent, and the pianist will be able to take time on the third beat to mark a bigger gesture in the dance steps. In this piece, there are intentional exceptions: for example, measure 12 in the figure 16.

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<sup>49</sup> Editor: Alfred Cortot (1877-1962) Publisher Info. Paris: Maurice Senart, n.d.(ca.1916-22). Plate E.M.S. 5148. Reprinted Paris: Salabert, 1943. - with possibly fraudulent copyright claim. Public Domain

Figure 16) F. Chopin, *Mazurka* Op. 24 No. 4, mm. 11-15.<sup>50</sup>



In measure 62, it is important to maintain the forward motion with a slight crescendo towards the third beat in order to make the smooth four-bar phrase. In measure 64, the decrescendo from beat 2 towards beat 3 will also make the phrase natural as in the figure 17. Also, the triplets should be rapidly played as opposed to the even triplet rhythm in measures 63 and 65 as in figure 17.

<sup>50</sup> Editor: Alfred Cortot (1877-1962) Publisher Info. Paris: Maurice Senart, n.d.(ca.1916-22). Plate E.M.S. 5148. Reprinted Paris: Salabert, 1943. - with possibly fraudulent copyright claim. Public Domain

Figure 17) F. Chopin, *Mazurka* Op. 24 No. 4, mm. 53-66.<sup>51</sup>

This motion continues from measures 53 to 60, which changes the mood of the piece (figure 17). It is better to play without the accent on the first beat and instead group the notes from the third beat to the second beat of the next measure.

The tempo of this mazurka is marked *moderato* but different artists have two contrasting interpretations. Arthur Rubinstein's recording of this piece is relaxed and graceful with the "quarter note to 135," which is different from Vladimir Ashkenazy's interpretation. Ashkenazy has a brisk quality with sharp movement yet with rubato and his with the "quarter note is

<sup>51</sup> Chopin, Frédéric, and Palmer, Willard A. *Mazurkas (complete), for the Piano*. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred Pub., 1984.

approximately 150.” I believe this is close to my interpretation. However, this can be subjective for the dancers and the pianist. Thus, the tempo can be up to the interpreter of the piece.

### Igor Stravinsky, Tango

This tango is written by Igor Stravinsky in 1940. It has a tango rhythm but it is not quintessential tango. As the tango is described in the previous section, the steps on the first two beats are slow, but the two steps on the third beat move are faster. Thus, the sixteenth notes at the end of each beat in measure 1 and 2 should belong to the first beat to lead into it and feeling the pause in the third beat with the rest is important. Keeping this main rhythmic motion steady throughout the piece is the main important. Measure 1 and 2 in the figure 18 shows the linked rhythmic patten with the step sequence.

Figure 18) Igor Stravinsky *Tango*, Measures 1-2.<sup>52</sup>



Also, the inner voice in measure 20 of figure 19 is a good example of music that reflects the tango step with an accent, a slur, and a staccato.

<sup>52</sup> Stravinsky, Igor, Stravinsky, Sviatoslav. *The Short Piano Pieces*. Place of Publication Not Identified]: Boosey & Hawkes, 1977.

Figure 19) Igor Stravinsky, *Tango*, mm. 19-24.<sup>53</sup>



For pianists, being aware of the rhythm imitating the quick step will change the interpretation of timing and execution of the rhythm.

Moreover, the syncopation can be associated with active leg improvisation, so the accent on the syncopation can be exaggerated. For example, the third beat in measure 22, and the second note in the right hand in measure 23 should be emphasized as in the figure 19.

For students, it will be effective to learn the basic step, which is described in the previous Tango section. Experiencing movement by performing the steps is much different from counting the rhythm with claps.

<sup>53</sup> Stravinsky, Igor, Stravinsky, Soulima, and Stravinsky, Sviatoslav. *The Short Piano Pieces*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Boosey & Hawkes, 1977.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to discuss and promote a pianist's imagination by learning how the music correlates with body movement. Musical ideas in our brain are deeply associated with our physical movements. There are still controversial debates and studies in history of dance, since the music and dance are subjective art forms, so the authenticity of the dance or the music is not the focus of this research paper. However, the essence of dance movement and understanding of the historical background will guide the pianist to bring more appropriate character and gesture into the music. Also, it will expand the interpretive range of how to perceive a downbeat or upbeat using the idea of the body movement. For example, first beat motion can be interpreted differently depending on the corresponding movement, such as jumping or landing, and up beat should be treated differently depending on the movement, such as brushing, jumping or bending. Connecting these ideas to body movement can magnify the imaginative response to musical notation and be a great experiment and a fun activity for the musician. Moreover, this method can be a great way to teach young pianists to draw out their innate musical sense because this method stimulates the imagination. This paper only covers a few dance genres which are major baroque dances, minuet, waltz, mazurka, and tango. These were chosen because these were considered to be one of the popular dance genres from different stylistic period. The general idea of musical patterns, the effect on how the body moves in tandem with the melody, tempo, and underlying pulse, was studied through these dances. This can be incorporated into the imagination and applied to other genres such as swing, polka, or the twentieth century rag music.

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