



The Baroque Dance Suite

5 MINUTES READING #1

“Those who dance
are thought mad by
those who hear not
the music.”

- Unknown



During the Baroque period (1600-1750), it was common to group a set of shorter dances together forming a **SUITE**. The dances were contrasted – some faster and some slower and the music reflected this by changing tempo accordingly. Most of the music that accompanied these dances was in the same key (the tonic) but sometimes the tonic minor was used as a form of musical contrast.

Famous Baroque Dance Suites written for orchestra include Handel’s *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and *Water Music* and J. S. Bach’s *Orchestral Suites*. Suites were sometimes written for a solo instrument (e.g. the Harpsichord) such as J. S. Bach’s *French and English Suites*.



Questions to think about:

1. Can you think of any other music that features several shorter pieces (or movements) that are ‘grouped together’ like a **SUITE**?
2. What do you think the music of the Baroque Dance Suite sounded like? What instruments do you think the performers played?
3. Where do you think Baroque Dance Music was heard mostly?
4. How were the different movements of a Baroque Dance Suite contrasted to each other?
5. How does Baroque Dance music differ from Dance Music of today?

In the sixteenth century, instrumentalists played a good deal of Dance Music. Dances became an important and popular diversion in courtly life and the dancing master was considered to be equal to the court musician or the chapel singer.

When instrumentalists were asked to play music for non-dancing occasions, they often naturally resorted to playing the dance music they knew so well. As the 17th century wore on, demand for instrumental music grew and instrumentalists began to collect groups of dances in the same key.



These groups of dances, eventually known as **SUITES** and began to be published sometime during the middle of the century. Suites of this time might have anywhere from five to twenty-five different dances and were not necessarily intended to be played in their entirety. Instead, instrumentalists would select dances from a suite and play them in whatever order they wanted.

By Bach’s time, the **SUITE** consisted of four standard movements – the **ALLEMANDE**, **COURANTE**, **SARABANDE** and **GIGUE**, plus several other optional ones such as the **MINUET**, **GAVOTTE** and **BOURRÉE** – which can be inserted just before the final Gigue. Sometimes the Suite would open with a **PRELUDE**. This would normally have been performed by the musicians only and will have given the dancers time to assume their positions ready for the first dance – it wasn’t easy walking (or dancing) in the large dresses that were worn at the time! Each of the standard movements is based upon a dance type from a different country. Also, each of these movement types has different time and rhythm characteristics and a distinct mood.





Paired Dance: The Waltz

5 MINUTES READING #2

“Where would I be without Johann Strauss’s beautiful ‘Blue Danube?’ Without this piece of music, I wouldn’t be the man I am today. It’s a tune that brings out the emotion in everyone and makes them want to waltz.”

- Andre Rieu



Questions to think about:

1. Can you think of any other examples of “paired dances” which are danced by couples? Think of any dances you may have seen on BBC’s ‘Strictly Come Dancing’ and the music that accompanies these?
2. Think about how it would feel to walk into a Viennese Ballroom in the late 19th century filled with people waltzing. What sort of things would you see and hear?
3. Why do you think that the waltz caused outrage among the upper classes when it first became a popular dance?

The Waltz developed out of Austrian and German folk dances at the end of the 18th century. In particular, it originated from a popular folk dance in triple time called the *ländler*. This was a lively dance for couples, involving stamping and hopping as partners turned around each other. These folk dances were combined together and taken into the ballroom, where they were transformed into the Viennese Waltz (so called because Vienna was the city where the waltz first became popular in the 1770’s).

The folk dances were refined as they entered the ballroom. The steps became smoother, and a gliding motion replaced the hopping and stamping. However, despite the waltz’s new-found sophistication the upper classes were still outraged by how close the partners dancing the waltz came to each other. The waltz was the first ballroom dance in which couples had any close contact. This indecent side to the dance was probably one of the reasons why it became so popular, and the closed position of the dance had a great influence on other ballroom dances. The waltz itself spread throughout Europe and many variants of the Viennese waltz were created.



Two of the earliest composers of the Viennese waltz were Josef Lanner and Johann Strauss (senior), both good friends and rivals. They greatly helped to popularise the waltz, transforming it from a peasant dance into a high society entertainment. But it was Johann Strauss (junior) who was the chief composer of the Viennese waltz. You are likely to have heard his waltz *The Blue Danube*, which is one of his most famous pieces.

The waltz is danced by partners (male and female) in a close embrace. The man places his right hand on the woman’s back and extends his left arm, taking hold of the woman’s right hand in his left. The woman then places her left arm on the man’s shoulder. The basic movement is a three-step sequence: a step forward or backward, a step to the side and then a step to close the feet together. Through these three steps, repeated over and over, couples rotate around the dance floor.



The dance has a graceful and elegant feel to it - the steps and movement are always very smooth. If you watch a waltz, you will see that the dancers rise a little onto their toes during the first step (the forward or backward step). They then fall back onto their heels at the end of the third step (the step closing their feet together). This subtle rise and fall contributes to the waltz’s flowing nature.



Latin Dance: The Tango

5 MINUTES READING #3

“The tango is really a combination of many cultures, though it eventually became the national music of Argentina.”

- Yo-Yo Ma



Questions to think about:

1. What sort of musical instruments perform tango dance music?
2. You have only 5 words to describe the tango and tango dance music in. What 5 words would these be?
3. How do the musical characteristics of the dance music match the dance steps of the tango?
4. Why do you think the (Argentine) Tango is such a popular dance for dancers and viewers of BBC's 'Strictly Come Dancing'?

The tango originated in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, in the late 19th century. The dance grew out of several influences - it was the product of a large, cosmopolitan city that people had migrated to from all over the world. African slaves have been brought into Argentina to work since 1588. Their music and dance played a strong part in the development of the tango. These African influences were combined with dances from Europe and Cuba to create the new style, which originated in the poorer slums on the outskirts of Buenos Aires.

Despite these humble origins, the tango rapidly made its presence felt throughout the whole of the city. In the early 1900s it was introduced to Paris and by 1913 it had overtaken in London and New York as well. This in turn led to a greater acceptance of the dance by the upper classes in the city of its birth, and the tango became a source of national pride in Argentina.

As the dance continue to spread, several different styles began to develop within the genre. The original Argentine Tango became popular in Europe and the United States. Here, dancers standardised the movements and started to dance competitively, thus creating the distinct style of ballroom tango. In Argentina, the tango continued to evolve, and Tango Nuevo began to include aspects of jazz and classical music, incorporating new instruments such as the electric guitar and saxophone. Later still, ideas from electronic music entered into tango, with electro tango incorporating samples and looped beats.

The tango is danced by partners (male and female) in a close embrace. The embrace is similar to that used in the Waltz, although in the Tango the woman doesn't lean away from the man so much.

- Walking is basic to the tango. The steps could be considered to have a stalking character - movements are quicker and sharper than in the flowing waltz.
- The upper body remains largely upright while most of the movements (and interest) comes from the dancer's legs; the woman makes fast kicks, steps and moves that often intertwine with the legs of her partner. This intertwining of the dancer's legs, along with the closeness of their embrace and the movements and gestures characteristic to the dance, make it much more sensuous than the waltz. This is reflected in the fact that women usually wear much shorter dresses for the tango than for the waltz.

Musical characteristics of tango music include: 4 beats in a bar, usually in simple duple time (2/4) or simple quadruple time (4/4); Dotted rhythms and syncopation; A strongly accented rhythm, with short, crisp notes. This reflects the swift, sharp movements found in the dance itself; A minor key and often quite jazzy-sounding chords and harmony; A moderate tempo of around 120bpm; Regular phrase lengths; An instrumental line up of bandoneón, violin, piano and bass. The bandoneón, originally key to the tango sound, is similar to an accordion. This combination of instruments formed the classic tango orchestra (*orquesta típica*). Tango music is now played on many different instruments, but there is often a strong presence of string instruments.





American Line Dance and Country and Western Music

5 MINUTES READING #4

“I think country music is popular – has been popular and will always be popular because I think a lot of real people singing about a lot of real stuff about real people. And it’s simple enough for people to understand it.”

- Dolly Parton



Questions to think about:

1. How did American Line Dance develop?
2. What style of music is most commonly associated with American Line Dancing?
3. Name 2 famous performers of Country and Western music.
4. What types of films that you’ve seen feature Country and Western music?
5. Why is it important that the phrases of Country and Western music are regular and sections are of equal length?

Line dances have been present for hundreds of years. The lack of physical contact meant that line dancing was socially accepted long before any couple dances. Line dancing in America is thought to have developed out of the **CONTRA DANCE** which was popular in New England in the 19th century and was influenced by the English and French folk dances that were being brought over to the USA from Europe.

On disco floors, during the 1960’s to 1980’s, the contra dance transformed into the **LINE DANCE**. An important aspect of American line dance, to distinguish it from the contra dance and other dances performed in lines or rows, is that the steps are **CHOREOGRAPHED**. This means that the steps for the whole dance are consciously worked out in one go, rather than evolving over a long period of time.

The 1992 hit song *Achy Breaky Heart*, sung by Billy Ray Cyrus, with a dance choreographed by Melanie Greenwood, drew international attention to American line dancing. The song also linked line dancing with **COUNTRY AND WESTERN MUSIC**, so that the two become synonymous around the world.



What does the American Line Dance look like?

Dancers stand in line, all facing the same direction, with men and women in any order.

Everyone performs the same steps at the same time without touching each other.

There are many types of step which have names such as **BOOT SCOOT**, **GRAPEVINE**, **STOMP** and **HEEL DIG**.

BASIC is the term given to one ‘run-through’ of the dance in its simplest form.

Each dance has several **WALLS** – this refers to the different walls of the room that the dancers face. There can be 1 wall, 2 wall (180 degree turns) and 4 wall dances (90 degree turns).

American line dancing is most commonly associated with Country and Western Music which developed in small, isolated villages in the Appalachian Mountains in the southern states of the USA. Although music Country and Western Music is purely instrumental, much of it is sung and many songs can be described as **BALLADS** – the emphasis is always on the lyrics and the story that they tell. As a result, the melody, rhythm and harmony are usually very simple. Country and Western singers often sing with a rather ‘nasal’ timbre and sonority.

Musical Features of Country and Western Music

4/4 time signature/metre with 4 crotchet beats in a bar. The 1st and 3rd beats are **ACCENTED** (given more stress of emphasis than the weaker beats 2 and 4).

A single melody line, which might be harmonised in the chorus by backing singers.

Very simply harmony, often based on the repetition of only two or three chords in a major key (especially Chords I (Tonic) and Chord V (Dominant)).

A steady crotchet movement in the bass line, which typically moves between tonic and dominant notes.



Regular 4-bar phrases

A simple verse-chorus structure, often with sections of equal length.

Slides in the melody and accompaniment (the steel guitar produces a sliding timbre).

The use of violin, guitar, steel guitar, banjo, harmonica, accordion and drums.



Folk Dance: Irish Jig and Reel and Folk Music

5 MINUTES READING #5

“People young and old come to listen to the traditional Irish music. Everyone’s welcome. Everyone is Irish for the day.”

- Mike Saffran



There have been folk dances present in Ireland for centuries, influenced over the years by invaders such as the Celts, Vikings, and Normans. These folk dances would all have been **SOcial DANCES** (where the main purpose of the dance is to socialise) and performed in groups.

Today, social dances in Ireland are known as céilí dances. The term céilí is used to describe a social gathering with dance and music.

Performance dance is unlike social dance as it is performed to an audience and can be danced **SOLO** (individually) **DANCE MASTERS** were highly respected dancers who travelled from village to village, teaching dances to the local people. During this period, the dance masters created the performance dance known as **STEP DANCE**.

Step dance was greatly popularised by the theatrical show *Riverdance*, first performed in 1994 and in 1995 the *Riverdance* show opened in Dublin travelling throughout Europe and to New York popularising Irish dancing.

The **REEL** and **JIG** are both types of traditional Irish dance. In step dance, the reel is usually dances with soft shoes (like ballet shoes), while the jig can be danced in soft shoes or hard shoes (like tap shoes).



Questions to think about:

1. What is the difference between **SOcial** and **PERFORMED** dances? Can you think of any examples of both type of dance?

2. Who developed the **STEP DANCE**?

3. What is the main **MUSICAL** difference between the Irish Jig and Reel?

4. What is the name of the musical texture where there is just one solo performer playing a single melody line?

5. Can you think of any other examples, venues or places where you would hear Irish Folk Music?

What does Irish Folk Dance look like?

The intricate footwork and fast, energetic steps are the most important aspect of any step dance and movement from the upper body or arms is limited often with a straight upper body and arms hanging down by the dancers’ sides. Often dancers stand in a line all facing the audience and steps include steps, hops, kicks, jumps and crossing legs.

Musical Features of Irish Jigs and Reels

The **METRE** or **TIME SIGNATURE** is the main difference between the **JIG** (which is in **COMPOUND TIME**: 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8) and the **REEL** (which is in **SIMPLE TIME**: 2/4, 4/4 or 2/2). The music is similar in terms of fast, quaver movement, a lively rhythm of the music reflected in the dance steps, mainly **CONJUNCT** (stepwise) movement of the melody, a **FAST TEMPO**, a light bouncy feel to support the leaps and jumps of the dance steps, **BINARY FORM STRUCTURE** (with both sections usually repeated: **AABB**), an **ORNAMENTED** melody line (added by the performer, rather than being a written part of the music), **SIMPLE HARMONY** (often alternating between **CHORD I** and **CHORD V**). Sometimes the music to a jig or reel is played by a **SOLO UNACCOMPANIED** instrument, but instruments such as the violin (known as the **FIDDLE** in folk music), flute, tin whistle, accordion, bodhran (a type of Irish drum), and uilleann pipes (similar to bagpipes but much quieter!) and also common in ensembles.



Disco

5 MINUTES READING #6

“Disco is music for dancing, and people will always want to dance.”

- Giorgio Moroder



Questions to think about:

1. When and where did disco first start?
2. Describe the **FOUR-ON-THE-FLOOR** rhythm used in disco music.
3. What other instruments would you expect to hear in disco music?
4. How would these instruments be used?
5. Describe an occasion where disco would be heard and what people would be doing while listening to it.
6. Do we still listen to or hear disco music today? Where?

The first “discotheques” originated in France during World War II in venues and nightclubs where recorded, rather than live music, was played. The idea of the disc jockey (or “DJ”) emerged: a person who made the announcements and played records.

In the 1960’s, the concept of discotheque was introduced to America and quickly became popular being cheaper to hire a DJ to play up-to-date music than to pay a live band. In the early 1970’s music specifically written for discotheques started to appear creating a new genre of disco music. Record producers began **REMIXING** songs, increasing the length of the song from 3 minutes to between 5 and 7 minutes in order to keep people on the dance floor. Remixes mix up elements of the original recording and combines them with new material and were often released as “12 inch singles”.

Artists such as Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, The Village People and the Jackson Five released music in the disco genre and it became even more popular after the film *Saturday Night Fever* which featured disco music by the Bee Gees.

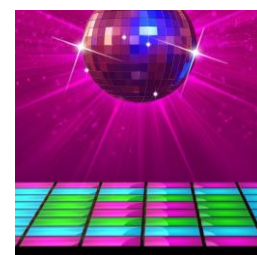


What does disco dancing look like?

Disco dancing can be done in one spot on the dance floor; no need to travel around the room. Dancers wave and move their arms around a lot and disco dances such as the *Hustle* have specific steps and routines. Disco dancing can also be individual, unstructured and improvised, basic or more complex in moves, simply dancing “in a disco style”.

What does disco music sound like?

4/4 time signature with a steady crotchet beat. The traditional disco rhythm is called **FOUR-ON-THE-FLOOR** where the bass drum plays constant, pumping crotchets, the hi-hat cymbal playing constant quavers or semiquavers (sometimes syncopated for variation) and hand claps or the snare drum accenting the second and fourth beats of the bar. The tempo of disco music is steady at around 120 BPM (beats per minute) and has catchy vocal melodies with **REVERB** effect being added to the voice and backing vocals in the chorus which are sometimes **MULTI-TRACKED** to create harmony. Regular 4-bar phrases are common and disco songs are mainly in **POPULAR SONG FORM** with catchy **RIFFS** (often on the bass guitar, guitar or keyboards) and **HOOKS**. Instruments such as the electric piano, drums, guitars (played with a ‘clean’ rather than distorted sound) along with “full orchestral sounds”: sustained strings and brass instruments (or “horn sections” – trombones, trumpets and saxophones) that ‘soar above the melody’ or play during breaks is common to much disco music.





Club Dance

5 MINUTES READING #7

“When playing big festivals, I tend to play big, over the top techno tracks, like hands in the air songs that make sense being played in front of 30,000 people.”

- Moby



Questions to think about:

1. Lots of record companies release a **CLUB DANCE REMIX** of a pop or rock tune to get it better known on the club scene. Why do you think they do this?
2. What techniques can a DJ or Producer use when producing a **CLUB DANCE REMIX** of an existing track?
3. Club Dance music DJ's and Producers use several techniques when making dance tracks. Can you describe any of the following? **MIXING, SCRATCHING, SAMPLING, LOOPING, DIGITAL EFFECTS, QUANTISING, SEQUENCING**

Chicago is one of the music capitals of the world. One of the earliest forms of club dance music that originated there was **HOUSE MUSIC**. In the early 1980's, producers took disco and made the 4/4 beat stronger and deeper. The basic house sound set the pattern for the later variations of dance music. Around the

same time, a similar music style called **TECHNO** was developing in Detroit. In the 1980's and 1990's, club dance music became more and more popular. All-night raves were organised in big, deserted buildings like warehouses and dance music developed its own culture, separate from the pop and rock scene. As **RECODING** and **MIXING** technology developed, new styles of dance music appeared, and technology has become cheaper and more widely available meaning making music and distributing it via the internet is easier.

Dancing at raves and clubs is **IMPROVISED**. Some moves involve dramatic arm movements in time to the beat, such as “Big Fish, Little Fish, Cardboard Box” and people sometimes wave glow sticks around and jump in time to the fast beat of the music.

Club dance music uses **MUSIC TECHNOLOGY** rather than live instruments. At a live performance in a club, the DJ or MC plays **BACKING TRACKS** and adds in **EXTRA SOUNDS** with samples, keyboards, or a drum machine to build up the piece. They might also add a live rap element. In the studio, a **PRODUCER** does the same thing – laying down a backing track and then adding other sounds over it, increasing the overall **TEXTURE**. Fatboy Slim and Calvin Harris are famous DJ's and their music is not just popular in clubs but also makes it into the charts.

Club dance music comes in many styles:

HOUSE (4/4 beat, repetition especially bass line and drum machine sounds)

TECHNO (fast, hard beat 130-150 BPM, rarely vocals with mechanical and electronic sounds), **JUNGLE/DRUM AND BASS** (extremely fast tempo (170 BPM), drum-based with very strong, deep bass line, disjointed feel)

UK GARAGE (uses ideas from jungle, drum and bass and modern rhythm and blues, vocal sounds are used like percussion)

TRANCE – (very repetitive, echoey and electronic sounds, lots of effects, slow chord changes over a fast beat)

AMBIENT (slow, sometimes “jazzy”, usually sounds “chilled” and “out of this world”).

