

Beautiful Ballet Dance and Music

Without music, there would be no ballet. Of course, people can silently dance, but the magic and exhilaration would certainly be lost. There is a magical harmony between ballet dance and music.

When a dancer performs on stage, he or she depends on a certain beat to provide added enthusiasm. As human beings, we innately carry a natural melodic pulse wherever we go. The ways in which we walk, speak and breathe are all rhythmic. Ballet dance also carries specific techniques that are dependant upon music. The relationship is simply inevitable.

Jean Baptiste Lully, one of the leading personalities in the 17th century, was a ballet composer as well as a choreographer. For this reason, any of Lully's major productions were never without an accompanying piece. Since the advent of theaters in the 18th century, serious instrumentalists and lyricists began to turn away from creating music strictly for ballet dance. Instead, they became attracted to creating music for the "new dance crazes" like the waltz, polka, marche, polonaise, czarda and mazurka. In the aftermath, little room was left for mediocrity or innovation. This lull continued until the 19th century, with the exception of a rare few composers including Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, who was responsible for such brilliant pieces as Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker and Onegin.

In the 20th century, a new respect was gained for the relationship between ballet dance and music. Once again, composers began to view it as an intelligent art form, deserving of their talents. Ballet dance and music experienced a great revival. Ballet choreographers used music of many leading composers during this period. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Frederic Chopin, Johannes Brahms, Franz Liszt, Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel, Franz Joseph Haydn, Antonio Vivaldi, Arcangelo Corelli and Hector Berlioz lent their formidable talents to ballet productions. Theatres imposed strict restrictions in terms of deadlines and bureaucratic demands that composers were obligated to adhere to. For this reason, many geniuses were deterred from working with theatrical productions.

The musical conceptions of Igor Stravinsky and George Balanchine support many of today's human movements in ballet dance. The rhythmic irregularities and sophistication of their compositions makes one view ballet dance and music in whole new ways. Neither dictates the other, rather each challenges and enhances the other. Another collaboration, more experimental though equally important, is that of two contemporary Americans, choreographer Merce Cunningham and composer John Cage.

Many people believe that choreographers who are also composers are able to create dance movements that perfectly follow the rhythm of the music. While anyone can create a tune or a dance step, it takes special talent to keep these from being dull, simple forms. Truly skilled choreographers are able to create performances that express more than simply the music or the dance. Rather than being legalistic, these choreographer-composers arrange particular steps for the ballet dance that move perfectly with the longer phrases of melody. Choreographers will even ask their dancers to work against the flow of music, generating special touches and dramatic effects. The integration of ballet dance and music has pushed composers to become more innovative and ingenious.

The interrelation between ballet dance and music has led to a unified appreciation of both forms. For this reason it's no wonder that musical created specially for ballet is considered to have unique complexity and timeless appeal.