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A STUDY OF THE MODERN DANCE

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

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ENTITLED A STUDY OF THE MODERN DANCE

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

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A Study of the Modern Dance

Man first expressed his thought by movement. Sign or movement language preceded spoken language. The motor expression "the fresh first thots of man were expressed by movement," was the origin of dancing. Dancing has been termed "spontaneous muscular expression of the internal states for the pleasure of expressing them." It has existed down through the history of mankind,—industry, religion, love and war being factors in its development.

The beating of some kind of noisy instrument as an accompaniment to gestures in the excitement of actual war or victory or other such exciting cause, was the first type of rhythmic music, and the telling of national or tribal stories and deeds of heroes, in the indefinite chant (monotone) was the first type of vocal music. Then song and dance went on together.

The process in the development of modern music has been similar. The connection between popular songs and dancing led to a state of definiteness in the rhythm and periods of secular music, and in the course of time the tunes so produced were not only actually used by the serious composers of choral music but also exerted a modifying influence upon their style and led them by degrees to a regular definite rhythmic system.

Serious musicians were very shy of the element of rhythm, as though it were not good enough company for their artistic purpose. Consequently part writing and good progression of harmony
were emphasized in earlier times.

Dancing like all of the other fine arts received its setback during the Middle Ages. But certain dances have always been known. In nearly every nation the peasants have had some sort of ring dance. In the later Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times we find many dances existing, each closely connected with its own special music so that the music itself was known by the name of the dance.

Spain has had a far greater influence on music than is usually admitted. She played her part by creating a school of musical dances making possible the suite and its successor, the symphony. The dances were responsible too for other musical forms.

The modern world has literally danced into its classical forms of music. In fact dance rhythm may be safely asserted to have been the immediate origin of all instrumental music. The earliest definite instrumental pieces to be found are naturally short dances.

Whether or not the popular dances in use during recent centuries had arisen anew or whether as seems more probable, they had descended with modifications from the early dance chants used in pagan worship, we find that out of them have grown the great orchestral works of modern composers and modern days. The suites of pieces of Bach and Handel were originally sets of dances in different times and these have developed into successive movements of the symphony, which even now in the occasional movement named "Minuet" yields a trace of its origin.
In modern times the influence of dance music upon the musical character of the composer has become very marked, and show its influence in movements which are not acknowledged as dance movements.

There is a remarkable similarity in the dance rhythm of all European races, however different they may be in name. In various forms these rhythms have perpetuated themselves in sonatas and symphonies from the earlier orchestral suites, which were merely various dances so brought together as to give an agreeable sense of variety. Modern composers, even more than those of the classic period, borrow freely of the dance tunes of every nation.

MORRIS

England had well known dances as we may see by references to Shakespeare. One of the most national in character was the Morris Dance: this seems to have united with an earlier English pantomine celebrating the deeds of Robinhood and his band. Allusions to this dance date back to the reign of Henry VII. There were one or two musicians to accompany the dance. It could be made progressive and danced as a mode of travel from place to place.

GAVOTTE

The Gavotte was named for the City of Gap and its people (Gavots) for the dance originated there. It is genial in character with skipping intervals and many short phrases. It is in 4-4 time and begins on the third beat of the measure which causes a mild syncopation. Sometimes the Gavotte contains a Musette or rustic
interlude with drone-bass like that of the bagpipe. Like a number of other dances, it has almost disappeared as a folk dance and now has developed as a concert piece. Brahms and Saint-Saens have both given us excellent examples.

MAZURKA

The Mazurka is a national Polish dance of chivalrous character, in triple time, frequently with limitation of the motive at the second beat and with a first beat subdivided or detached: \( \frac{3}{4} \) and close \( \bullet \) 

In old mazurkas the basses are continuous, usually on the tonic. There are usually two or four parts of eight measures, each part being repeated. In old mazurkas there is often no definite conclusion but the repeats are made at liberty. Chopin treated the dance in a new and characteristic manner. He extended its original form, eliminated all vulgarity, introduced all sorts of Polish airs and thus retained little more than the intensely national character of the original simple dance tune. His works are distinguished by this new form. He kept the dance national, of ordinary rhythm, but it became exalted to a poetical dignity of which no Polish musician until then could have dreamed.

Chopin listened eagerly and unweariedly to the folksong and sought to make it his own. He afterward freed its rhythm from everything which is ordinary and retained only that which is really the intrinsic national element in it. He transfigured the melody to the ideal, glorified it, and thus came into existence his chain of mazurkas. Some are joyous, others yearningly melancholy, some laughing and others weeping.
It appears as if in this form of the mazurka, typical of the Poles, a singular peculiar feeling had revealed itself, which more or less rules all the contemporaries of Chopin. They are the musical language of longing, entirely national, and especially charming and sympathetic for the oppressed. A few of the mazurkas are almost overpowering. Of the seventy four opus numbers that Chopin composed, thirteen sets were mazurkas. Each set was made up of from three to five mazurkas, making forty-four in all. It is difficult to say to which among the great number the crown belongs. Worthy of especial mention are the mazurkas, Opus 24, No. 4, Opus 50, No. 3 and Opus 63 No. 3, but it certainly was Chopin who magnified, glorified and dignified the mazurka folk-dance into the wonderful concert-piece, especially into the solo for piano-forte.

POLONAISE

The tempo of the Polonaise is that of a march, played between Andante and Allegro; it is nearly always written in 3-4 time and should always begin on the first beat of the bar. It generally consists of two parts, sometimes followed by a trio in a different key: the number of measures in each part is irregular.

The chief peculiarity of the Polonaise consists in the strong emphasis falling repeatedly on the half beat of the measure, the first beat generally consisting of a quaver followed by a crotchet. The last measure should properly consist of four semi-quavers, the last of which should fall on the leading note and be repeated before the concluding chord, thus:

\[ \text{Polonaise symbol} \]
The accompaniment generally consists of quavers and semi-quavers. Chopin in the intensely living spirit altered it as he altered the Waltz and Mazurka, changing it from a mere dance into a glowing tone picture of Poland, her departed glory, her many wrongs and her hoped-for regeneration.

Karasowski divides Chopin's Polonaises into two classes, the first, which includes those in A major, Opus 40, No.1; F sharp minor, Opus 44 and A flat major, Opus 53, and the last which is characterized by strong and martial rhythm and may be taken to represent the feudal court of Poland in the days of its splendor. The second class includes the Polonaise in C sharp minor and E flat minor Opus 36 in C minor, Opus 40, No. 2; in D minor, B flat major and F minor, Opus 71. This class is distinguished by dreamy melancholy and is characterized by the following rhythm: \[\text{\#\#\#\#\#\#}\]

It is disputed whether the Polonaise originally was not a national Polish dance or whether it originated in the march past the princes and nobility at the enthronement of Henry III of Anjou at Cracow, 1574. This supposition receives special support from the fact that the oldest Polonaises were not dance songs but purely instrumental.

Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, Spohr and others produced Polonaises as an independent musical form until Chopin, under whose hands it reached what is perhaps the highest development possible for mere dance forms, enabled them with his own poetry and ideal beauty and filled them again with a meaning of distinctly Polish nationality. He animated the dry form of the Polonaise with a new spirit and drew a picture of Poland in her adversity.
The Fantaisie Polonaise, A flat major, Opus 61, is different in character from both classes and is said to represent the national struggles ending with a song of triumph. In modern music the Polonaise is considered only as a concert piece.

HALLING

The Halling is the most characteristic dance of Norway, deriving its origin and name from the Hallingdal. Perhaps there is no dance that expresses more than the Halling the temper of the people who originated it. It begins upon the ground, amid jogging little hops accompanied by movements of the arms in which a great strength plays negligently. It is somewhat bear-like, indolent, clumsy, half-dreaming. But it wakes and becomes earnest. Then the dances rise up and display themselves in expressions of power in which strength and dexterity seem to divert themselves, by playing with indolence and clumsiness or to overcome them. The same person who just before seemed fettered to earth, springs aloft, throws himself around in the air as tho he had wings. Then after many break-neck movements and evolutions, before which the unaccustomed spectator grows dizzy the dance suddenly assumes again its first quiet, careless, somewhat heavy character and closes as it begun, sunk upon the earth.

Grieg has developed from this many concert pieces. The structure of his work is always simple, the phrases short as in the folk tunes from which he modeled. The music is generally written in 2-4 time, in a major key, and is played allegretto or allegro moderato, but a few examples are found in triple time. Many of the most popular Halling tunes were composed by Maliser-
Kund a celebrated performer on the Hardangerfelen who flourished about 1840. The Hardangerfelen or Hardanger fiddle is a violin strung with four stopped and four sympathetic strings. The following is a traditional and characteristic example.

MINUET

The Minuet is a stately dance in triple time said to have originated in Poitou about the middle of the seventeenth century. The earliest music in Minuet form is that of Lulli. The dance became popular at the court of Louis XIV and a little later spread to the English court. It was soon adopted as one of the movements of the Suite whence it passed to the sonata.

In its earliest form the Minuet consisted of two eight-measure phrases in 3-4 time, each of which was repeated, sometimes commencing on the third but more frequently upon the first, beat of the measure at a very moderate degree of movement. A second Minuet was added similar to the first but contrasted in feeling. This was mostly written in three-part harmony, whence it received its name "Trio", a name retained down to the present time and long
after the restriction as to the number of parts has been abandoned. A further enlargement in the form of the Minuet consisted in the extension of the number of measures, especially in the second half of the dance, which frequently contained sixteen or even more measures instead of the original eight. It is in this form that it is mostly found in the Suite.

The historic importance of the Minuet arises from the fact that, unlike the other older dances, it has not become obsolete but holds its place especially in the symphony and other large instrumental works written in the same form. The first composer to introduce the Minuet was Haydn for in the works which preceded his, we find only three movements.

While in general, retaining the old form of the Minuet, Haydn greatly changes its spirit. The original dance was stately in character and somewhat slow. With Haydn, its prevailing tone was light-hearted humor, sometimes even developing into downright fun. Then it becomes quicker. Yet he does not parody the Minuet of his time, but he divests it of its distinguishing dignity. He took it as it was danced by the middle classes and filled it with national cheerfulness and good humor. He represented a certain amount of joviality and rollicking fun which would have been inadmissible in the "salon of the noblesse", and he was inexhaustible in witty suggestions and surprises, without any trait of vulgarity or carelessness of musical treatment. The spirit was genuinely national, the form truly artistic.

These Minuets thus become an anticipation of the Scherzo of Beethoven who transformed the Minuet into the Scherzo. But the
Scherzo is not a dance. The time is usually quicker, rhythm varied and sometimes the form itself is enlarged. Still Beethoven does not abandon the older Minuet. Out of sixty-three examples of the Minuet (not counting those in common time) to be found in his works, seventeen are entitled "Minuet" or "Tempo di Minuetto." In some cases a movement is entitled "Minuet" though its character is decidedly that of the Scherzo. The only one of the nine symphonies in which a Minuet of the old style is to be seen is Number eight. Occasionally we meet in Beethoven with minuets entitled, "Allegretto." It may be said that with Beethoven, the Minuet reached its highest development.

While the charming Minuet of Mendelssohn's A major Symphony provokes an involuntary smile we must remember that the Minuet was a dance of good society, affording opportunity for the display of dignity, grace and deportment. We cannot hear those minuets which best reflect the character of the dance without thinking of powder and hoops. With Mozart the form of the Minuet is identical with that of Haydn. It is the spirit that is different. Tenderness and grace, rather than overflowing animal spirits are now the prevailing characteristics. Mozart's Minuets for orchestra are almost innumerable. He wrote also many variations, for example, Opus 179, "Twelve Variations on a Minuet" by Fischer, "Opus 573, Nine Variations on a Minuet" by Duport.

WALTZ

The Waltz is a modern round-dance in 3-4 time. It is danced in several ways and composed accordingly. A great number of so-called waltzes written by our best modern composers are not
intended to be danced but are pieces for performance,—"Valse Caracteristique", "Valse melancolique" etc.

The dance is said to have originated in Bohemia, but it is now of universal popularity. It is generally admitted that the modern dance first made its appearance about the year 1780, and the only attempt at connecting the old and new dances is the suggestion that because the song, "Ach du lieber Augustin" (which was one of the first tunes to which waltzes were danced) was addressed to a wandering musician who lived in 1670, therefore, the modern dance was contemporary with the tune. That it springs from a class of country-dances, and not from the ancient stock of the volta must be obvious upon many grounds.

It was not until 1812 that the dance in its modern form made its appearance in England where it was greeted with a storm of abuse as "a fiend of German birth, destitute of grace, delicacy and propriety, a disgusting practice" and called forth a savage attack from Lord Byron. In spite of this reception it seems to have won a speedy victory and is at the present day certainly more in favor than ever. The composition of Weber's "Invitation to the Dance" marked the adoption of the waltz form into the sphere of absolute music, and prepared the way for the stream of pianoforte and vocal waltzes, not intended as accompaniments to dancing, the best examples of which are the waltzes of Chopin and Rubinstein. Of late years a tendency has shown itself to revert to what may be called the Schubert type of waltz. To this class belong the waltzes of Brahms, Kiel and other modern composers. Brahms indeed may have been said to have introduced a new class in
in his "Liebeslieder" for pianoforte duet and vocal quartet, but the original type of these is the same as Schubert's dances.

THE BALLET

The Ballet as a dance strives either toward the classic or romantic. Catherine de Medici, Henry IV and Cardinal Richelieu are those who encouraged the return of the dances and thus laid the foundation of our modern dances.

Though to the period of the Renaissance and European national awakening belong all the immortal genuises, like Bach, Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, Schubert and others who laid the foundations of the Opera and Symphony, yet they seemed to ignore the Ballet. Gluck wrote a few pieces of this order, and so did Mozart.

The main tendency of the nineteenth century Ballet is to get rid of mechanical contrivances, the monstrous etiquette and majestic solemnity, and give it more coherence and better harmony. Between 1830 and 1850 it became an inseparable accompaniment to Opera to such an extent that the occupants of the gilded boxes preferred the thrill of dancing to music. However had those same people been listening to one of Chaminade's light, airy-feathery ballets, the situation might have been different. Chaminade's development of the Ballet is so gracious that we are only glad, when listening to one, that we live in the modern day.

KAMARINSKAIA

The Kamarinskaia, which originated in Russia, is a lively dance for men. Tschaikowsky introduced it and Rubinstein has used it in the Symphony. Dvorak has enriched the Symphony with two
new dance movements, the Dumka and the Furiant. The Hungarian Czardas and other dances have influenced many composers. In our own country Indian dance tunes have had some vogue and many of these are sung for war dances and other rites.

CONCLUSION

There are many criticisms now that our dances are scarcely as good as the old ones, but in the strictly modern times the range between classical music and popular music is far greater than in semi-modern times. So, if we must have our livelier music let us have either type the best possible. Dancing is still a graceful art and our music need be equally graceful to keep it from decadence.