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**The Waltz:  
A Musical Interpretation Through the Steps**

by  
Sevin H. Yaraman

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the 19th-century Viennese waltz and its permutations as social and musical phenomena. Although stylistic changes in music can be attributed to historical change and individual compositional preferences, my thesis is based on the premise that any musical form manifests the values and prejudices of the society in which it originates, and that composers themselves are enclosed in the cultural circumstances of their time, circumstances that often affect the way a piece is written.

Two distinct but related themes dominate the dissertation. The first concerns the relationship between the waltz as a dance and the waltz as music. My investigation rests on the principle that any study of the waltz as music cannot be abstracted from a consideration of the waltz as dance. But what is the nature of this association? Do dance and music exist as separate entities or does one exist within the other?

The answers depend, at least in part, on whether one takes the point of view of the dance or of the music. The dance profits from music to the degree in which the latter has been conceived with the former in view. The composers in that case create their waltzes according to the dictates of the dance, or, for a ballet, with an eye toward contributing to the execution of a classic dance form. Thus, in hearing a waltz, the dancing couple—or the ballet dancers, following the predetermined choreography—know which patterned movements the music is inviting them to execute, which step it is calling forth from them. Examining the relationship between dance and music from the perspective of the dance, therefore, I would suggest that the music is not merely an accompaniment to dance, but a component of it.

For its part, music profits from the dance as much as the dance profits from the music, though in a different way. Since all that is being demanded of it

is sound and rhythm, music is simply being invited to be itself and to display its own resources by putting them at the service of another art.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, the music originally composed to serve a dance form also becomes an independent musical form, changing the ontology of both dance and music. From this perspective, dance is a component of music. And, indeed, a great number of musical forms were dance forms at first: bourree, passacaglia, gavotte, minuet, polonaise, mazurka, and so many others.

The most significant distinction between the waltz and other dance music, however, is that the waltz—more so than any other music for the dance—has been transformed by and assimilated into different musical styles and traditions. Drawing on a wide variety of musical and textual evidence from Austria, Germany, France, Russia, Poland, and Italy, I argue that the stylistic transformations discernible in the history of the waltz resulted in part from the social and artistic functions that particular waltzes or groups of waltzes served and for which they were composed. Thus, I identify four functions assignable to the waltz: (1) the waltz as social dance, focusing in particular on the characteristics of the 19th-century Viennese waltz and the reflection in the music of the rhythm, circularity, and repetition of the dance; (2) waltzes in dramatic musical compositions (ballet and opera), where I consider how the social meaning of the waltz is used to convey character or to contribute to a turn in the plot; (3) waltzes in instrumental musical genres, such as piano pieces and symphonies, exploring the effects of the liberation of the genre from the dance steps; and (4) what I describe as waltzes about the waltz—those compositions that refer to the historical and social implications of the genre by making the waltz itself the subject.

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<sup>1</sup> Etienne Gilson, "The Dance," in *A Modern Book of Esthetics*, ed. by Melvin Rader, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), p. 219.

My second theme concerns the role of women in the history of the waltz. For the first time in the history of Western dance, the waltz dispensed with groups of dancers and brought men and women face-to-face, a position considered overtly erotic and thus looked upon with great disapproval in many circles. An abundance of textual evidence reveals that the outrage generated by the waltz as a social dance was due almost exclusively to its purported effects upon women. Though the waltz was not forbidden to women, innumerable restrictions were placed on their participation: with whom they might waltz, when, under what circumstances, and at what age. As a result, I believe, the waltz—both dance and music—acquired a gendered character, an issue that informs my perspective throughout the dissertation.

Because the four aesthetic functions of the waltz, as I identify them, are so different, a uniform approach to their analysis seems inappropriate; my aim has been to identify the most distinctive characteristics of each one. The first chapter draws heavily on textual evidence and serves as an introduction to such fundamental issues as the reception of the dance, its impact on the reception of the music, and the categorization of the waltz as genre.

In Chapter 2, I explore the musical characteristics of the waltz composed for social dancing, concentrating on those elements of the dance that were considered defining characteristics, such as the 6-step foot work and the turns; I then analyze the representation of those elements in music. For guidance in this matter, I refer to A.B. Marx's *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, in which he explains the intimate connection between music and dance.

In Chapter 3, I search for the meaning of the waltz in dramatic compositions. Opera and ballet, two forms of cooperation between music and narrative drama, are my focus. In opera, I find a particular, intimate connection between the composer's use of the waltz and the women characters. As I noted

earlier, the waltz's enormous popularity as a social dance was accompanied by even stronger disapproval of its purported effect on women. In my analysis of Verdi's *La traviata*, Puccini's *La bohème*, and Berg's *Wozzeck*, I argue that the composers of these works relied on the waltz's contradictory meanings of individual pleasure and social disapprobation and used waltz to portray their woman characters and their respective roles in the development of the plot. In ballet, I observe that Tchaikovsky, on whose works I focus here, alters or distorts the waltz's musical conventions—with which the audience is very familiar—to signal a significant turn of events.

In Chapter 4, I concentrate on the third functional category of waltzes: waltzes composed purely for listening. Based on my analysis of works by Chopin, Brahms and Tchaikovsky, I suggest that the composers of concert waltzes use the freedom from the actual dance steps as the impetus for refining and sharpening the defining characteristics of the genre. It is not, in fact, the elimination of the characteristic features but their refinement that makes these compositions different from ballroom waltzes.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I turn to waltzes that I consider to be about the waltz. Here, I focus on two compositions in particular: Maurice Ravel's *La Valse* and the second act of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. In these compositions, each composer, within his own musical language, makes self-conscious references to the waltz, thus using it as an idiom that brings to mind the particular style of the 19th-century Viennese Waltz.

This study focuses exclusively on the waltzes within the tradition of Western Art Music. An exploration of waltzes of other musical traditions and cultures would be very interesting, particularly in the context of their social meanings and their reflections on the musical forms of these cultures. But this will have to await other studies.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Curtain-Raiser: An Investigation Of Basic Issues

#### FROM COURT TO CONTREDANSE

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, court dancing was a social activity through which members of the aristocracy demonstrated their refinement and their adherence to the established social system. It was both a formal and a learned display, requiring a grasp of social hierarchies and rigorous training and skill. Towards the end of the 18th century, as most court dances were either disappearing entirely or being adapted for movements in the Classic composers' symphonies and chamber music, country dances came to replace them in popularity at social gatherings occupied not only by aristocracy but also by the new bourgeoisie.

While it was from the country dance tradition that the waltz—as one of the most controversial social dances in history—sprang, a brief examination of the nature and meaning of court dance offers us an interesting comparison and useful starting point for a discussion of, and contrast with, the waltz. Of the several court dances popular in 18th century Europe, the sarabande, gigue, bourree, gavotte, march and minuet, the latter, with its elegant choreography and emphasis on gracious manners, represents a particular refinement of the genre, as well as its most popular expression from about 1650 to 1800. It is with the minuet that our story must begin.

In the dance manuals, treatises on the dance, and etiquette books of the time, the minuet—or, more specifically, *Minuet de la Cour*—is identified as a dance of the highest order, requiring execution by a “fine person” possessed of all the graces, physical and social. While a perfect choreographic display is

important for the realization of the minuet, that alone does not fulfill its purpose of expressing the idea of beauty by means of a refined manner of dancing. The manners of the dancers and their comportment are as central as the complicated technique.

When a man leads his partner around, for example, his attention is to be fixed upon her and his ear attentive to the music, for “if he sets off out of time, he must be some time before he can recover it, and the minuet is spoiled.”<sup>1</sup> Even the facial expressions of the dancers and the direction of their gaze are prescribed: when the man crosses over, he should continue to look at his partner until he turns the corner, and then “catch her eye again with an agreeable and pleasant countenance.”<sup>2</sup> Women, for their part, should maintain a “meaningful” countenance and should concentrate on their movements and their partners.

Physical endowment also dictated who should, or should not, perform the minuet. “Well-shaped,” “undeformed,” and “well-proportioned” persons were encouraged to dance; those with “natural defects” were advised not to take part in court dancing of any sort. Indeed, it was considered absurd for people with “weak loins” or “very long arms” to attempt the minuet: “they are sure of being either laughed at, or pitied as idiots; instead of pleasure, it must be attended with the utmost anxiety, as soon as they hear the tittering of the room, or happen to be out in respect to the dance.”<sup>3</sup>

The figure of the minuet step, demanding extensive practice as well as native talent, is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the dance. It consists

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<sup>1</sup> “A new Treatise on the Art of Dancing,” first published in *The Lady's Magazine*, I/XVI, in six installments (February, March, April, May, June, July 1785); also published in *Dance Research*, XI/2 (1993), pp. 43–59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

of an exaggeration of the undulating, up-and-down motion of the body that accompanies ordinary walking, such that the body is raised by gentle degrees somewhat higher than normal and, similarly, lowered, as the dance progresses. This must be accomplished with an appearance of great ease and naturalness, with no affectation or exaggeration of the sinking and rising motions. When groups of dancers execute this step, rising and falling smoothly in time to the music, and without any abrupt movements or breaks in the flow, "they look so graceful and elegant to a degree that no dance can achieve..."<sup>4</sup>

In his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, published in 1787, the German critic Johann George Sulzer praises the Minuet for its choreographic elegance: "[This] dance is more agreeable for gathering of persons who distinguish themselves by a fine manner of living."<sup>5</sup> Feldtenstein's dance treatise of 1767 makes plain both the author's belief in the noble and charming character of the minuet and, by contrast, his disdain for unchoreographed, spontaneous country dance: "And who would not grant the minuet this honor? No one except the man who enjoys only the dancing of a rowdy peasant, and blindly admires the impetuous over the grace and propriety in all movements of the body..."<sup>6</sup>

At the end of 18th century, a new democratization of social life was taking place in Europe, and the contredanse became the leading dance, suitable for

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<sup>4</sup> James Cassidy, *A treatise on the theory and practice of dancing with an appropriate poem, in two cantos, and plates illustrative of the art*, (Dublin: W. Folds, 1810), p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Johann Georg Sulzer, "Menuet," in *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, Ed. by Christian Friedrich Blankenburg (Leipzig: Weidmannschen Buchhandlung, 1771–74).

<sup>6</sup> Christian. J. von Feldtenstein, *Die Kunst nach der Choreographie zu tanzen und Tänze zu schreiben* (Braunschweig: Schroderschen Buchhandlung, 1767), p. 37; translated by W.J. Allanbrook in *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, p. 33.

dancing by anyone and by any number of people. This marked a turning away from the formal, hierarchical, trained court dance toward individual self-expression. Contredanse has no fixed rhythmic pattern, accepting any meter, either duple or triple, perceived in two beats, 6/8, two measures of 3/8, 2/4, or alla breve. In fact, one can even find both duple and triple meter in a single contredanse (Example 1).

Example 1/1: *La Belle Iris*, from *Receuil D'Airs de Contre-Dances. Nouvelle et choisies*, by Dauternaux (1778)

The musical score for "La Belle Iris" is presented in a single system of eight staves, each beginning with a measure number. The music is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and beams. A key signature change to one flat (B-flat) is indicated by a "mineur" marking above the staff at measure 15. A repeat sign is used at the end of measure 20. The piece concludes with the instruction "D.C. al Segno" at the end of measure 36.

In her *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, Allanbrook calls contredanse “danceless dance” because of the freedom and flexibility it allows the dancers. “The contredanse’s democracy of meters,” she explains, “is a sign of its democracy of spirit.... It is essentially a walk or alternation of steps, and not a true dance, at least in the tradition of the French court dances. Their essence could never be simple alternation; for a dance to catch a particular passion it had to cleave to one meter or another”.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, contredanse can occupy more people at the same time than minuet, another sign of its inherent democracy.

Contredanse is performed by two lines of dancers, men facing women, with a top couple designated as “couple number one.” As the first couple walks down one position each time the figure is performed, the other couples walk up one position until the last couple becomes the top couple.<sup>8</sup> The two forms of the dance, the “contredanse angloise” and the “contredanse française,” are distinguished one from another more by the number of the dancers and their positions than by the music that accompanies them.

Although contredanse still displays an organized set of movements, and involves a certain degree of mental and physical coordination, it is far from the prescriptive, rigid court dance. Indeed, the most significant characteristic of the contredanse is its informality and capacity to be danced, without training, by anyone as a matter of self-expression. If the minuet, with its sophisticated choreography and elegant steps represents the highest refinement of 18th century court dance, the unchoreographed contredanse—a country dance for couples, who walk through a simple pattern, is associated with peasant dances.

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<sup>7</sup> Wye Jamison Allenbrook, *Rhythmic gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro & Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Aldrich, *From the Ballroom to Hell: Grace and Folly in Nineteenth-Century Dance* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991), p. 15.

In other words, the former is associated with “a fine manner of living,” as Sulzer puts it, the latter with simplicity and joy. It is this contrast that underlies the revolutionary implications of the waltz at the beginning of the 19th century.

## THE REVOLUTION OF THE REVOLVING COUPLE

By the 1760s, an imported German dance, the “allemande,” had joined the contredanse in France. The German Allemande appears under several names, all referring essentially to the same dance: allemande, boiteuse, Schwäbische Tanz, Deutsche Tanz, Schleifer, Ländler, Waltzer (waltz).<sup>9</sup> All these labels adhere to a German dance in a quick triple meter, with simple and repetitious figuration, very simple harmony that usually changes only once per measure, and strong emphasis on the downbeat—characteristics that resemble those of the Viennese waltz.

The techniques and methods of waltzing will be discussed in the next chapter in connection with the characteristics of the music. Nevertheless, I will briefly address here the defining characteristic of the dance which not only distinguishes it from previous social dances but plays an important role, negative or positive, in the reception of the waltz as dance and as music.

This defining characteristic—what makes a dance a “waltz”—is its two simultaneous circular movements: each couple turns on itself, in a small circle, around its own center; and the couple simultaneously traces a second circular motion, spiraling in continuous turns around the ballroom until it reaches the starting point and completes the larger circle. The social implications of this

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<sup>9</sup> Allenbrook, 59.

feature are twofold. First, partly as a result of the pattern of the dance, the waltz required dancers of sufficient experience to withstand the constant whirling. This appealed to a nineteenth-century Bourgeois' desire for sophistication; and, indeed, the waltz became synonymous with the bourgeois life-style.

The second, and more dramatic, social effect of the waltz—what made it truly a revolution in Western social dancing—was the position in which it placed a couple relative to the other dancers. While the contredanse, as well as its courtly and country antecedents, traced patterns that dictated the movements of individuals and couples in relation to the entire group of dancers, often calling for partners to be changed at regular intervals, the rules for the waltz focus exclusively on the couple itself. To be sure, waltzing couples must be aware of others so as not to collide. But the waltz is emphatically not a group dance; in the sense that society refers to social relationships among human beings, the waltz is not properly a “social” dance.

The opprobrium visited upon the waltz by its critics was, however, less a matter of a couple's exclusion of other dancers—less an issue of what they turned their backs to—than of what they turned toward, and in what manner: the man and woman turned toward *each other* in a posture of intense mutual focus and “indelicacy.”

While waltzing, the partners firmly embrace each other. The man should hold the woman by the right hand, and above the waist, while the woman holds the man by the left hand and on the upper back. This embrace of men and women is not a social or affectionate embrace as in today's “slow” dances, where partners embrace each other, more or less firmly or lightly as they wish, and oscillate. The firm embrace of the waltz is an absolute physical necessity, not an affectional preference: without it, the strong centrifugal force of the double circular motions would unbalance each partner and spin the couple apart. For

the same reason, a firm eye contact between the partners is essential: the intense visual concentration orients each partner with respect to the other, thus minimizing the effect of the whirling by creating the sensory illusion of standing still.

However, no matter how necessary it may have been to the technique, the fact that men and women danced in public face-to-face, tightly embraced and staring into each other's eyes, was considered overtly erotic and provoked a great deal of anxiety in many circles.<sup>10</sup>

### THE POPULAR AND PROFANE NATURE OF THE WALTZ

Reception is a complex concept. Any thorough examination of reception theories makes it clear that there are several basic paradigms for the concept and any number of different ways to delimit its boundaries.<sup>11</sup> Although a comprehensive discussion of reception theory lies outside the scope of my work, it is essential that I clarify the understanding that I use as a basis for this study.

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<sup>10</sup> At the end of the 19th century *Tango* met with similar disapproval. Originating in the poor neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, the dance, for couples in tight embrace, is considered overtly erotic and violent.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982); Hans Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. David G. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Robert Halub, *Reception Theory: a Critical Introduction*, (London, New York: Methuen, 1984); Janet Wolff, *The social Production of Art*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984); and several articles in *Music and Society: The politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

I believe that the nature and history of the waltz dictate that one adopt the broadest possible meaning of “reception.” It is, after all, a dance and a musical composition, and a social as well as artistic phenomenon. Thus, my investigation rests on the principle that any study of the waltz as music cannot be abstracted from a consideration of the waltz as dance. Furthermore, I take an inclusive approach to the media through which reception is expressed or from which it can be inferred. Therefore, I take into account formal criticism of both music and dance; the attitudes conveyed in the etiquette books of the period; and the comments, direct and reported second-hand, of composers. I will undertake a closer scrutiny of this material in subsequent chapters, as it relates to specific issues. But here, I want to review more cursorily the nature of the reception of the waltz as a means of establishing certain principles that underlie my study.

The waltz became a phenomenon, equally enjoyed and reviled, during the 19th century. On the one hand, people in various European capitals were enjoying their liberation by the waltz from the choreographed and calculated court dance, and, thanks to Joseph Lanner and the Strauss family in Vienna, the fulfilling sounds of the large dance orchestras. On the other, conservatives issued dire warnings against its practice, on medical as well as moral grounds, citing the dangers both of the speed at which the dancers whirled around the room and of the closeness with which the partners held each other.

Although men and women waltzed—and, significantly, did so together in couples—it was to women that the “dangers” of the dance posed the greatest threat; and it was women who were the primary focus of critical attention by contemporary writers. In his *Exercises for Ladies* the English critic Donald Walker urged his women readers to “abandon waltzing, on account of its causing too violent emotions or an agitation which produces vertigo and nervous symptoms.” The specific character of the waltz, wrote Walker—“its rapid

turnings, the clasping of the dancers, their exciting contact, and too quick and too long continued succession of lively and agreeable emotions"—was particularly damaging to "women of an irritable constitution," whose waltzing exposed them to "syncope, spasms, and other accidents which should induce them to renounce it."<sup>12</sup> Thirty years later, women were warned once again about the dangers of the waltz by Dio Lewis, founder of a school for women of "delicate constitution" in Lexington, Massachusetts. While Lewis was a vocal advocate of social dancing in general, he saw in the waltz's vigorously rotary motion the potential for "injurious" effects on "the brain and spinal marrow" of women.<sup>13</sup>

Charles Burney in *Rees's Cyclopaedia* even takes the liberty of anticipating maternal distress: "How uneasy an English mother would be to see her daughter so familiarly treated, and still more so to witness the obliging manner in which the freedom is returned by the females."<sup>14</sup> A German critic, Ernst Moritz Arndt, locates the source of the erotic nature of the waltz in women's fashions of the mid-1800s and explains that men, grasping the long dress of their partners, so that it would not drag and be trodden upon, and lifting it high, bring both bodies within its folds as close together as possible: "In this way the whirling continues in the most indecent positions, supporting hand lay firmly on the breasts, at each movement making little lustful pressures." He adds: "Now I understand very

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<sup>12</sup> Donald Walker, *Exercises for Ladies* (London: Thomas Hurst, 1836), p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Dio Lewis, *Our Girls* (New York: Clarke Bros., 1871), quoted in Elizabeth Aldrich, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Burney, "Waltz," in *Rees Cyclopaedia: or, Universal Dictionary of arts, sciences, and literature.*, Ed. by Abraham Rees (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1819).

well why here and there in parts of Swabia and Switzerland the waltz has been prohibited.”<sup>15</sup>

Parenthetically, Arndt’s disquisition on the erotic, and thus immoral, conduct of the waltzing couple itself seems to bespeak a prurient eye and voyeuristic nature.<sup>16</sup> One wonders, in fact, why his close attention to lascivious behavior and his use of “lustful” language did not result in the prosecution of the author and banning of his book for making explicit the sexual component of the waltz. Other authors, and their works, did run afoul of the law when they turned their attention to the waltz. In France, where the waltz remained banned at court until the middle of the 19th century, Gustave Flaubert was prosecuted in 1857 for his less graphic, if more effective, description, in *L’Education Sentimentale*, of the intoxicating effect of the waltz on Frederic, his anti-hero:

A waltz began, and a postilion from Longjumeau, a guest dressed like the hero of Adam’s opera *Le Postillon de Longjumeau*, seized her by the waist. Then all the women, who were sitting on the wall-sofas round the room, sprang to their feet in a line, and their skirts, stoles and headdresses started spinning around. They came so close to him that Frederic could see the beads of sweat on their foreheads; and this dizzy, whirling movement, growing ever faster and more regular, produced a sort of intoxication in his mind, filling it with other pictures, while the women passed him in a single dazzling vision, each with her distinctive beauty exciting a different emotion.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Die Ewigkeit des Volkes*, (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1934), p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> For a recent interpretation of the waltz’s sexual quality see Elvidio Surian “Turn and Turn About: *Waltz-walzer-valse*—le tre carte di credito erotico dell’opera lirica.” *EIDOS Rivista di Arti Letteratura e Musica* V/9 (October 1991), pp. 30–45.

<sup>17</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. by Robert Baldick, (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 126.

Some writers, while not objecting in principle to the waltz, were explicit as to which women might be permitted to risk it: "Unmarried ladies should refrain from it altogether, both in public and private; very young married ladies, however, may be allowed to waltz in private balls, if it is very seldom, and with persons of their acquaintance."<sup>18</sup> Along these lines, the author of *The Illustrated Manners Book* offered the following guidelines: "Those who believe that a woman should never come into any near personal contact with any gentleman but a near relation, or a probable or actual husband [while waltzing], must still object to this and all similar dances." The author of this manual concluded with the following advice: "A woman especially ought to be very sure that the man she waltzes with is one worthy of so close an intimacy; and one who understands her nature and relations well, [and that he] will not waltz with any other."<sup>19</sup>

There were, of course, exceptions to the general disapprobation. Teachers of the dance, not surprisingly, encouraged the waltz; and while many refrained from comment on the moral (or medical) issues, confining their remarks to the technical aspects of the dance, others implicitly responded to the criticisms, even suggesting appropriate social precepts applicable to waltzing couples. None urged society to avoid waltzing, nor, importantly, did they direct their particular advice to women or make any discriminatory distinction between the sexes. Carlo Blasis, for instance, in his *Code of Terpsichore*, while expressing no moral reservations about the embrace, urges the dancers to keep "as far from the other as the arms will permit, so that neither may be incommoded."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mme. Celnart, *The Gentleman and Lady's Book of Politeness*, (Boston: Allen and Ticknor and Carter, 1833) and quoted in Elizabeth Aldrich, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *The Illustrated Manners Book*, (New York: Leland Clay & Co., 1855), p. 398.

<sup>20</sup> Carlo Blasis, *Code of Terpsichore: A Practical and Historical Treatise, on the ballet. dancing and pantomime: with a complete theory of the art of dancing: intended as*

In his 1888 *Dancing and Dancers*<sup>21</sup>, Edward Scott makes an interesting connection between the embrace and the emergent state of the art of waltzing in the mid-1800s. Referring to a description of the waltz written 40 years earlier in a "cyclopaedia," in which the embrace is considered an essential component, he takes this as evidence of the waltz's not yet having been perfected. Moreover, he adds, "Can we wonder that the dance should have met with so much opposition if that is the way in which its votaries behaved? What business had they 'almost embracing in the ball-room?' Surely there were quiet places where they could indulge in these little endearments if they wanted to, without making such a parade of them before others." In place of the "firm embrace," necessary for a couple to revolve as one body and thus counteract the centrifugal force created by the turning, he recommends that the partners curve their bodies outward from the center of revolution and create resistance which is regulated by the rapidity of rotation: "... this is taking advantage of what is termed centrifugal force, instead of working against it."

Though he declines to answer the critics directly, Thomas Wilson, a dance teacher, expresses regret that waltzing aroused so much criticism and was the object of such disapproval and prejudice both in the private and public realms. He considers it particularly unfortunate since waltzing, improving, as he saw it, both body and mind, is a good form of recreation. Public prejudice prevented the "respectable and worthy classes of society from participating in an amusement" that is a "truly graceful and pleasing union of attitudes and movements; genuine waltzing." Wilson also draws attention to the ignorance of

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*well for the instruction of amateurs as the use of professional persons.* trans. by R. Barton (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, 1976), p. 505; originally published ca.1828.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Scott, *Dancing and Dancers* (London: Ward and Downey, 1888), p. 106.

society (and to the Englishness of his disdain for “southerners”) by pointing out that “[waltzing] is totally destitute of the complained of attitudes and movements used in warmer and lighter climates that give rise to those prejudices.” He believes that the prejudices fed upon themselves, for once the biases against the waltz inhibited people from engaging in the dance, “they absolutely prevented the knowledge” about the waltzing as well.<sup>22</sup>

Thus far, I have considered the criticism which was directed exclusively at the waltz as a dance. What of the music of the waltz: as it, too, grew in popularity did it provoke similar responses? The answer, if one looks only at the explicit, is no; whether it meets with enthusiasm or outrage, waltz music appears not to be a target of social outrage. As I noted earlier, however, the negative reception accorded the dance focused primarily on its putative medical and moral risks to women. I wish now to consider, first, some general themes in contemporary commentary on waltz music and, second, the implications of the women-centeredness of dance criticism for the reception of the music.

In both formal music criticism and in the reactions of composers, I have observed two distinct, but ultimately related, tendencies. First, the sexual connotations of the waltz and the moral dilemmas posed by it as dance seem not to affect criticism of the music. Critics consider the waltz as music a thing unto itself, extra-sexual in its implications and interpretation. To be sure, they admit the powerful impact of the waltz on society; Hanslick remarks that “[the waltz composers] have filled the waltz form with an undreamt-of musical charm and true poetic life. They interest the musician and make people happy. But it is hardly possible to form an adequate idea of the enthusiastic intoxication into

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Wilson, *A description of the correct method of waltzing, the truly fashionable species of dancing* (London: Sherwood, Nelly and Jones, 1816), p. 28-30.

which they transported Vienna.”<sup>23</sup> This, of course, is “intoxication” of a different sort than that into which Flaubert’s Frederic was transported: there is no suggestion in Hanslick that the enthusiasm of the Viennese, however sensual, is sexual.

Second, very little attention was paid the waltz as an independent musical form. Critics tended to associate waltz music closely with Lanner and the Strauss family—masters of the Viennese waltz with whose compositions the waltz as dance music reached its perfection and the peak of its popularity. Thus criticism was composer/composition-oriented, as exemplified by Hanslick’s further comment, in *Geschichte des Wiener Concertwesens*: “Over each set of waltzes the journals went into ecstasy and innumerable articles appeared about Strauss and Lanner. [The articles] were of all sorts, schwärmerisch, humoristic, pathetic, and certainly longer than those devoted to Beethoven and Mozart.”<sup>24</sup> His special admiration and respect for the Strausses, father and son, is evident in his remarks on the occasion of the death of the son, in 1899:

When we buried Johann Strauss, Senior, fifty years ago, I remarked in an obituary that Vienna had lost its most talented composer. This was annoying to musicians and laymen alike. They refused to admit that a correct but characterless piece of concert or church music could reveal less talent, less in the way of natural resources, than a melodious, original waltz. In this sense, I can only repeat the same plaint today, at the grave of the younger Johann Strauss. Vienna has lost its most original musical talent.<sup>25</sup>

Even when he explicitly addresses the effects of the music on dancers and listeners, as he does toward the end of his life in a description of mid-19th

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<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Ritter von Richter, “Die Wiener presse,” in *Wien, 1848-1888: Denkschrift zum 2 Dezember 1888* (Wien: C. Konegen, 1888), vol. 2, p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup> Hanslick, “Johann Strauss” in *Music Criticisms 1846–99*, trans. and ed. by Henry Pleasants (Baltimore: Penguin, 1950), p. 304-7.

century Vienna, Hanslick makes this another occasion for reviewing Strauss and Lanner as composers: "Musical life was dominated by Italian opera, virtuosity, and the waltz. Strauss and Lanner were idolized. I would be the last to underestimate the talent of these two men... but it can readily be understood that this sweetly intoxicating three-quarter time, to which heads as well as feet were abandoned, rendered listeners steadily less capable of intellectual effort."<sup>26</sup>

Frederick Niecks, thirty years after Hanslick's writing, in (1917), argued that the waltzes of the great waltz composers are real works of art and genius which "deserve to be and are admired by the serious musicians. That is to say, by all those who do not labor under the foolish idea that everything outside the grand dramatic, symphonic and that kind of thing ought to disdainfully looked down upon. But the great classics were not ashamed to write waltzes for dancing, and with such alone we are here concerned, not with waltzes of a more idealistic turn, like Chopin's for instance."<sup>27</sup> Hans von Bülow shared Niecks' admiration and respect for the Viennese ballroom waltzes and declared the waltzes of Johann Strauss, son "as worthy of inclusion in the programmes of classical symphony concerts."<sup>28</sup>

The professional critics were not alone in revering Strauss and in associating the waltz so closely with him as to make his compositions defining. Any number of compositional masters have expressed a mixture of admiration and envy for, and, often, emulation of, Strauss's accomplishments. Johannes Brahms, for one, notwithstanding his obvious devotion to concert music,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Niecks, "Historical and Aesthetical Sketch of the Waltz" *Monthly Musical Record*, 47/560 (1917) pp. 170–72.

<sup>28</sup> Niecks, "Historical and Aesthetical Sketch of the Waltz. Part II" *Monthly musical Record*, 47/561(1917) pp. 193–95.

conveyed his appreciation of Strauss by incorporating the waltz into his piano music. More explicitly, he once inscribed Alice Strauss's autograph fan with the opening bars of the *Blue Danube*, adding wistfully, "unfortunately, not by Johannes Brahms."<sup>29</sup> Some 30 years later, Maurice Ravel, in a conversation with his close friend, the music critic Manuel Rosenthal, asserted that all composers desired to succeed in writing a very good waltz. He reminded his friend of the Brahms anecdote, and added, "You see, we all try to write a waltz as good as that."<sup>30</sup> Arnold Schoenberg was to ask, some 50 years after Brahms' encomium, "Who can say how arrogantly generations of musicians would speak of that light music, had Brahms not been able and sufficiently educated to recognize its purely musical substance and the value of that; had he not had the respect for achievement possessed only by those who know at first hand what achievement is?"<sup>31</sup>

Implicit in Schoenberg's appreciation of the waltz's "purely musical substance" is a complete divorce of the music from any association with the dance. Notwithstanding whatever critical usefulness such a distinction may have, it effectively removes the waltz as music from consideration in its social context and, importantly, evades the issue of its troubled role in the lives of nineteenth-century women.

As I noted earlier, the waltz as a dance was criticized almost exclusively on the grounds of its effects upon women. Significant by its absence from the historical materials to which I referred is any genuine female perspective: the

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<sup>29</sup> Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work*, 3rd ed., (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), p. 225.

<sup>30</sup> Roger Nichols, *Ravel Remembered*, (London: Faber, 1987), p. 62.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "Why no Great American Music" in *Style and Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 178.

reception accorded the waltz as a dance is a matter of the opinion of men. Much of the documented criticism, in fact, is essentially voyeuristic, written from the point of view of men who, whether or not they themselves dance, are the “ultimate authority.” Apart from references to waltzing found in 19th-century novels by women, there is little written record of the reception of the waltz by women themselves. We do not know whether they took pleasure in it, or suffered from the effects of whirling about, or, indeed, may have been embarrassed at being held in so tight an embrace.

That women appear to have had no voice in the reception of the waltz as dance is perhaps to be expected, given the limited literary forms and subjects considered suitable for a nineteenth-century woman writer. But there is a similar silence from women composers; and I suggest that, given the remarkable anxiety over gender and sexuality attendant upon the rise of the waltz as a social dance, there are related implications for women composers’ relationship to the waltz as music. Although almost all nineteenth-century male composers wrote at least one waltz, and women composers themselves wrote music in both large and small forms (including dance music), there are only a very few women--among them Clara Schumann, Cecile Chaminade and Ethel Smyth--known to have composed waltzes. Why might this be? Was it a result of a general lack of interest or encouragement among women composers? Or does it signal their resistance to composing in a musical genre so closely associated with a dance in which women were discouraged from participating physically? I believe there is a significant relationship between the anxieties and oppression that women composers experienced as potential “dancers” themselves and the virtual absence of waltzes in the repertory of women composers of the nineteenth century.

“POP FUNCTION/ART FUNCTION”: THE WALTZ AS A GENRE

The distinction between popular music and art music<sup>32</sup> has been a sensitive one. It is commonly accepted that popular music is for the “lay” unsophisticated audience, whereas art music is for the refined and educated. The waltz has long been described by scholars as light or popular, categories that have ensured its exclusion from serious musicological scrutiny. *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, in as early as 1858, characterizes the waltz as “the music of an hour’s amusement” while defining the relation of the “classical” to the “light” and “popular”:

We hear “classical” opposed to “light” music, as if it were a thing more solid, serious, earnest, of deeper import, dealing with greater subjects, stirring deeper feelings, taxing higher powers of appreciation, than the mere music of an hour’s amusement, *the waltzes*,<sup>33</sup> polkas, variations, trifling or weakly sentimental songs, light operas, &c.

Again, we hear classical opposed to popular music, as if it were something not meant for the many, but for the few—for cultivated tastes—for “the appreciative”—for those in whose life-plan music holds so serious a place that they have deemed it worth their while to learn to love what there is best in it, and not remain content with what is easiest, or what it is the fashion of the day to like and be amused with.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “art music” and “classical music” will be used interchangeably in the rest of this chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Italics are mine.

<sup>34</sup> *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, (Dec 1858), p. 286. Also see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988); H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States*, 3rd edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988); Paul Charosh, “‘Popular’ and ‘Classical’ in the Mid-Nineteenth Century”, *American Music*, 10/2 (Summer 1992), pp. 117-35.

I believe, however, that the waltz, closely examined, resists neat categorization as either art or popular music. A passage from a recent article by Peter Burkholder, in which he discusses the reasons for the popularity of the music of Alban Berg, makes an excellent point of departure for investigating whether the waltz is properly the concern of popular or of art music:

Before considering Berg's achievement, let us take note of another fundamental problem facing a composer of his generation: the coexistence of many different kinds of musical speech, including any number of new and old musical styles. Which was a composer to adopt?

In popular music, one simply adopted the prevailing musical style for the type of music one wished to compose, such as the operetta style of Franz Lehár, the waltz style of Johann Strauss, or styles appropriate to military music, cafe music, and "piano music for amateurs to play".. Despite the harmonic and melodic language they all shared, these styles were so distinctive that they could be recognized out of context...

The question of musical style was more problematic for classical composers, for European classical concert music is unique among the musical traditions of the world in having no common style at all... In the realm of the popular music, style is associated with genre: a waltz is likely to be closer in style to all other waltzes than to a march, even one by the same composer. In classical music, style is associated less often with genres than with composers and with periods of history, as a comparison of the classical concert waltzes of Chopin, Brahms, Schoenberg, and Babbitt makes perfectly clear.<sup>35</sup>

Burkholder's analysis rests upon two premises that require closer scrutiny. First, he categorizes the waltz according to its tradition: popular waltzes, including Johann Strauss's; classical concert waltzes, such as those of Chopin or Brahms. Second, he considers the waltz a genre whose generic

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Burkholder, "Berg and the Possibility of Popularity" in *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, Ed. by David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 28.

characteristics fall more in the realm of popular music than in that of classical music, which is dominated by the individual composers' styles rather than by the constituents of the genre itself. Thus the implication is that when we hear a waltz by Chopin, we hear Chopin before we hear a waltz. In the case of a composition by Babbitt, of course, this distinction is greatest because his non-tonal language is foreign to the 19th-century waltz tradition.

Although an examination of the waltz as a genre is certainly not Burkholder's purpose in this article, the quotation above makes implicit assumptions that illustrate, in two ways, the difficulty of categorizing the waltz. On one hand, he fails to take into account the origins of the waltz as dance music, nor does he allow for the fact that the greatest number of Johann Strauss's waltzes were actually composed to be danced. Quite apart from stylistic considerations, composers of ballroom waltzes had always to keep in mind the function—social dance—of the music. This is a significant issue, because to group together in the category of "popular" music compositions as diverse as the waltzes of Johann Strauss, the operettas of Franz Lehár, cafe music, and "piano music for amateurs to play" ignores the critical functional distinction between a Strauss waltz and all the others.

On the other hand, it may be that the issue of a waltz's aesthetic function—a component of dance or an inspiration for genres of instrumental music—is precisely what makes it so useful an example for Burkholder: the waltz can be made to fit comfortably into both of his categories of musical traditions—"popular" when it is composed for ballroom dancing by Strauss and his confreres, "art" when it is composed, as were the classical concert waltzes of Chopin, for its own sake. It is, in other words, a genre of both popular (however one may define it) and classical music. And it is a genre whose interaction with

the style of the individual composer is a function of the category into which a particular composition falls.

In pointed contrast to Burkholder's measured, relatively nonjudgmental consideration of the distinction between popular and classical, Schoenberg reveals himself the unabashed elitist on the subject of popular Viennese waltzes in general and Johann Strauss in particular. In his article "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea," he instructs:

No one should give in to limitations other than those which are due to the limits of his talent...no artist, no poet, no philosopher and no musician whose thinking occurs in the highest sphere would denigrate into vulgarity in order to comply with a slogan such as 'Art for All'. Because if it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art.

Most deplorable is the acting of some artists who arrogantly wish to make believe that they descend from their heights in order to give some of their riches to the masses. This is hypocrisy. But there are a few composers, like Offenbach, Johann Strauss and Gershwin, whose feelings actually coincide with those of the 'average man in the street'. To them it is no masquerade to express popular feelings in popular terms. They are natural when they talk thus and about that.<sup>36</sup>

Alas, poor Strauss, merely "average" and "popular." But one cannot miss the irony in Schoenberg's disparagement of the composer who is, first and foremost, associated with the epitome and acme of the waltz. This same Schoenberg, the 12-tone master of the Second Viennese School, could not—or chose not to—free himself from the fascination of the genre: his first 12-tone composition, the fifth piece in Op. 23, is entitled "Waltz."

Since my object here is not to settle these complex questions of definition regarding "art" and "popular", but to undertake an interpretation of the waltz, I

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<sup>36</sup> Schoenberg, "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea" in *Style and Idea*, pp. 123–4.

will base my discussion on the following underlying principles: I take the waltz to be defined as a musical genre. Neither in the “realm of the popular music” nor in that of classical music is the waltz a signifier of a style; it is not a musical form either, but rather a *dynamic* musical genre, comprised of musical works that use certain musical properties. This genre can change meaning depending on its *aesthetic function*, the era in which it is composed, and the musical tradition in which it occurs. On the one hand, all composers have a certain measure of control over their own compositions. They can choose or alter any characteristic musical features of the waltz according to its function and do so in their compositional language. There are concert waltzes by Chopin, Brahms, Schoenberg, Babbitt, and numerous others, all of whom are considered art (classical) music composers. There are also waltzes considered as belonging to the folk tradition, such as South American waltzes, North American country songs. Moreover, there are Strauss and Tchaikovsky, two composers who wrote a large number of waltzes for dancing within the same musical tradition. On the other hand, all composers in the waltz tradition—classical, popular, folk, or jazz—must be loyal to the characteristic musical features of the waltz in order to communicate clearly. And I think the solution to Burkholder’s “style/genre” distinction regarding the waltz lies in identifying this very boundary.

When we conceive of the waltz as a dynamic genre, one that displays change in its musical style, its aesthetic function, and ultimately in its meaning, the question of whether it is popular or art music becomes irrelevant, and any effort to fit the waltz into one of these categories—or, for that matter, to split the waltz between the categories—is a meaningless task. The waltz is, of course, “popular” as the dictionary defines the word: it is “suited to the tastes, needs, educational level, etc. of the general public.” It is also popular because it is “known and liked.” Chopin’s waltzes are, indeed, intended for concert halls, but

they still fit the definition of popular. After all, we can with no hesitation refer to Beethoven's Fifth or Mozart's Fortieth as "popular" classical symphonies—they are liked, admired, and quite well-known by the lay public—without categorizing them as "popular music." As a genre, the waltz is "popular" in the same way Beethoven's Fifth is: much liked and admired, not only by the public, but by composers of two centuries.

## CHAPTER 2

### Putting Music Under The Dancers' Feet

Having examined the origins and essential characteristics of the waltz as dance and as social phenomenon, I now turn to the relationship between the steps of the dance and the music written for them. (To avoid awkwardness and repetition, I shall from now on use “the waltz” to refer to the music only; “the dance” will apply solely to the waltz as dance.) In particular, I shall first examine those elements of the dance that were considered as defining its most refined expression—the Viennese waltz—and then analyze the representation of those elements in music.

Though 19th-century dance masters described a number of variations on the dance, my discussion will be based on the *Valse trois temps*, the original circular or Viennese waltz, because it is with this that the music is most closely associated and for which the genre was developed.

Similarly, I locate what I believe are the essentials of the music in those waltzes composed for dancing. This is by no means to suggest a chronological or hierarchical progression from dance waltzes to concert waltzes. Indeed, any number of composers, including Weber and Chopin, wrote concert waltzes in the first part of the 19th century, well before Strauss Jr. composed any of his dance music. And some of the basic characteristics of the music remain unchanged, regardless of the function for which it is composed. However, I believe that the generic characteristics of the music originate in the demands of the dance, that is, that the waltz came into being to accompany a dance form with very specific

steps and patterns of movement, and to “support,” as it were, the spirit of the dance.

The *Valse trois temps*, as its name implies, consists of three steps, performed in sets of two, each set marking a half-turn by the dancing couple. That half turn is to be performed precisely and fully, so that, on completing a three-step set, the couple has rotated 180 degrees; on completion of the two united sets, six steps in all, the couple will have made a full turn (see Figure 1). It is important to note that steps 1-3 (the first set) and 4-6 (the second set) are not identical: the first turns the dancer on his or her axis, the second swings the dancer in a semi-circular path about the partner. While the man and woman both perform the same six steps and move to the same one-two-three rhythm, they alternate sets: the woman begins with steps 1-3, the man with steps 4-6, a pattern which continues throughout the dance. Hence, the floor pattern traced by the movement of the couple most resembles a spiral. In the first half of the 19th-century, this six-step circle was typically executed clock-wise, while the larger circle around the ballroom is traveled counter clock-wise (see Figure 2).

Figure 1:

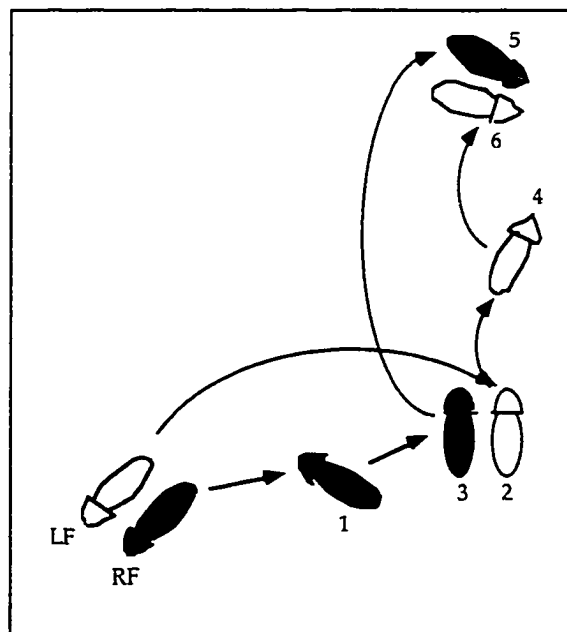
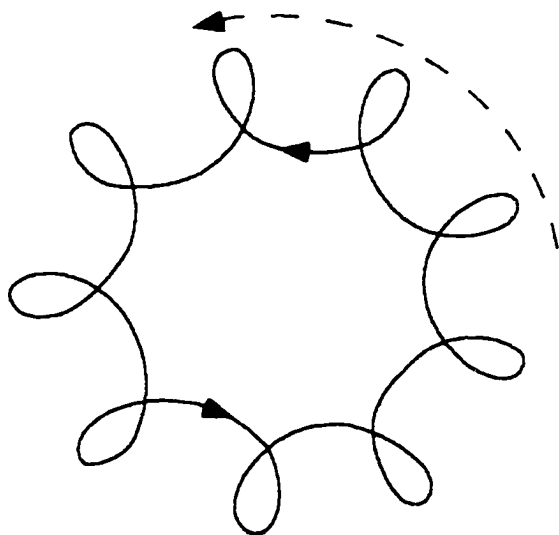


Figure 2



When the waltz begins, the man faces outward, his back to the center of both the ballroom and the large circle of couples. He steps first onto his left foot (step 4 of the six-step sequence), simultaneously beginning the clockwise rotation of his body. As he does so, he swings his partner around to his right. On completion of the first three steps, the couple has reversed position; the woman now faces outward, and it is she who will begin the next set of three by rotating nearly in place, swinging her partner around her.

If these are the requirements for the dancers, what, then, do they require of the music for their rhythm and inspiration? For guidance in this matter, I turn to A.B. Marx's *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*,<sup>1</sup> in which he explains the intimate connection between music and dance. To my knowledge, Marx is the only 19th-century theorist who not only dissects the waltz, but discusses the relationship of dance and music, assuming, as I do, that the latter must reflect the former, particularly with respect to rhythm, circularity, and repetition. In his

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Bernhard Marx, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1837-38) 2 vols., translation by Carl Skoggard.

instructions to composition students on how to write for the social dance, he explains:

The waltz has two kinds of motion. In the first place, each pair of dancers revolves in a circle centered on them; in the second place, each pair, while continuing such revolving motion, moves along the arch of a larger circle. Eventually the dancers arrive back at their original point and close the big circle. Every small revolution of the dancers is accomplished in twice three steps, the revolution being the motive of the dance, so to speak. Corresponding to this in waltz composition is the individual measure. The measure, to accommodate the three steps, must be in triple time, with either three quarter or three eighth-notes each....it follows that two such measures will fall together, within the space of which the triple-time dance motive is performed twice so as to allow completion of one small revolution.

If nothing else, the waltz must at least succeed in bringing out this basic motive of motion. Each measure, or rather each two-measure grouping, must correspond to the waltz motive. Each should clearly mark the beginning of the dance and if it does not explicitly reflect its swinging turn, at least favor such movement through a cantilena melody that springs energetically away from the first note.<sup>2</sup>

Marx's language, in the original German as well as in the translation, is somewhat problematic: he describes as the "motive" both the three-step half circle and the six-step complete circle. For our purposes here, however, this distinction is not meaningful. What is relevant is his evident reference to the original waltz *trois temps* or Viennese waltz and his insistence that each measure or two-measure phrase "must correspond to the dance motive."

Marx continues his instructions, clarifying certain refinements by reference to their absence in Weber's *Freischütz*:

The well-known waltz from Weber's *Freischütz* offers us a genuine waltz motive... It is a fact that this rustic dance contents itself with... the unaltered primitive material of the three-step motive, without elaborating clear groupings for the complete motion of

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<sup>2</sup> Marx, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, v.2, p.55.

twice three steps, as would be appropriate in a nobler, more perfect conception of the waltz. Apart from this, it should be noted [that]... in [Weber's piece] auxiliary notes are placed before the merely chordal ones in order to bring out the beginning [of the measure] and that every other melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic accentuation serves the same end. The accompaniment for these essential elements should be as simple and as clear in marking the beat as possible.

The length of a waltz is not confined within any definite limits, since the dancers can describe a greater or lesser circle, and the circling can be repeated if desired. We are therefore free to follow the familiar periodic schemes or choose larger ones (with 12 or 16 measures to the section). The important thing is an overall symmetrical construction. In this regard, a division into antecedent and consequent phrases would not appear to be essential and does not have to be conspicuous, though the hint of such a division enhances the feeling of order and always refines and ennobles the music. Precisely because these qualities are not especially felt in the haste of the *Freischütz* waltz, it strikes one as rather common--and rightly so, in view of the intentions of the composer. Here he lets a rude throng abandon itself completely to unadulterated waltz fever, and hence nothing but the pure waltz figure is heard.<sup>3</sup>

I will return to the Weber example and to a closer analysis of its effects at a later point in this chapter.

Thus, Marx instructs his would-be composers on three essentials:

1. The *temporal organization* of dance and music must correlate.
2. The *circularity* of the dance must be reflected in the music.
3. The music must be *simple*, and convey nothing but "the pure waltz figure."

In taking up each of these three principles and examining their realization in various examples of 19th-century waltzes composed for social dancing, I will, of necessity, treat them as separate for the purpose of discussion. However, they are, of course, interrelated, and it is almost impossible to speak of one without

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<sup>3</sup> Marx, *Die Lehre*, pp.56-57.

reference to the others. The um-pah-pah accompaniment, for instance, is a critical rhythmic feature, as it emphasizes the first beat of each measure; at the same time, its repetitive nature—almost an “ostinato” pattern—also makes for the simplicity Marx requires of the music. Nevertheless, I will interpret each issue in turn and, by doing so, establish what I believe to be the essential characteristics of the music for the dance.

### 1. THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE OF TIME

Marx’s instruction to his students to reflect the movements of the dance in their music would seem, on first consideration, paradoxical: after all, dance is physical and spatial, music aural. But both are aesthetic experiences that take place over a period of time; more critically, both are organized by temporal units. Thus, the first and most obvious place to seek an element common to dance and music is time. And however much dance may owe to other arts—theater, narrative, painting, or poetry—only one, music, is truly a component of dance and shares with it the element of meter.<sup>4</sup> In music composed for dancing, the synchronicity of the two in performance is crucial.

Paradoxically, an especially strong argument for the essential rhythmic quality of dance is made by Étienne Gilson in a reference to Jerome Robbins’ famous ballet *Moves*, performed entirely in silence. Writing in *Forms and Substances* Gilson comments that “when we see a dancer work in silence, we

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<sup>4</sup> Poetry, to be sure, is often conditioned by time duration; but it cannot, without distorting its meaning and aesthetic impact, be recited in a manner that truly accompanies the dance.

know that it is an art which is sufficient unto itself," a sufficiency he ascribes to the inherent metrical and rhythmic nature of dance:

The spectacle of a machine in operation whose movements are accomplished silently with impeccable measure and rhythm, at times so fascinating to observe, is enough to convince us that a dance can be performed without music and without loss of its characteristics.<sup>5</sup>

Even Gilson, however, must admit that the division and structuring of time by means of sound is easier to achieve and more precise than that which is accomplished solely by the movement of the body. It is therefore, he says, "natural for the dancer to demand from sound the temporal structure within which their dance will be inscribed." It is worth noting, too, that Gilson is speaking of formally choreographed ballet, performed by trained professional dancers, in whom an awareness of rhythm and meter is highly developed and interiorized. They may prefer to dance to music, but they are quite able to do without it.

Marx, on the other hand, is speaking of music composed for social dance, whose performers dance purely for pleasure: they may be well-trained, but they are not professionals. And he is specific as to the requirement that "the waltz must at least succeed in bringing out the basic motive of [the dance]" That motive, we recall, is the "little circle" performed in six steps divided into two sets of three. Each step the dancers take corresponds with a musical beat, each set with a three-beat measure, and each complete waltz motive with two three-beat measures.

Moreover, there is an important distinction among the steps of each set and between the two sets of three steps as well. Whereas walking establishes a

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<sup>5</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Forms and Substances in the Arts*, trans. by Salvador Attanasio (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 172.

natural and simple alternation from side to side, waltzing alternates in sets of three steps<sup>6</sup>; thus, the first step of each set of three must be stronger, in order to mark the half-turns and organize the steps for the dancers. At the same time, the difference between the pattern of steps 1-3 and that of steps 4-6 organizes the dance motive and marks for the dancers the completion of their small circle. Correspondingly, Marx insists that “Each measure, or rather each two-measure grouping, must correspond to the waltz motive.” This last instruction is significant: Marx stresses the importance of the first beat of each measure; at the same time, he identifies the smallest meaningful segment as consisting of two measures. The first beat of this two-measure phrase, which signals the beginning of each segment, must be marked musically, as it is simultaneous with the most emphatic step of the waltz motive—that is, step 1, which begins the dancer’s outward swing into the waltz’s defining spin. There is, therefore, a parallel relationship between the first set of three steps and the first three-beat measure, on the one hand, and the second set of steps and second measure, on the other: both have the quality of call-and-response, or echo, the first being more emphatic and seeming to dominate the other.

Here, then, we have the essentials of the waltz’s temporal organization: the marking of the first beat of each measure; the organization of the piece into two-measure segments; and the special emphasis placed on the first beat of the first measure of each two-measure segment.

It goes without saying that the first beat of each measure takes the metrical accent. But surely Marx, in referring to “marking,” intends something beyond just that accent. One of the most obvious organizational and marking

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<sup>6</sup> In his *Dancers and Dancing*, Edward Scott points out that one of the great difficulties in learning to waltz is adapting the muscular action of the lower limbs to this pattern of movement.

features of the waltz is also virtually its only *sine qua non*: the continual um-pah-pah accompaniment. Let us look at the means by which this type of accompaniment, with its low register um, continuously, almost hypnotically, marks the first beat of each measure (Example 2/1).

Example 2/1: Johann Strauss, Jr., *Serail-Tänze*, Op. 5/5.



Of course, the effect of placing greater emphasis on the first beat of each measure is not the only reason the um-pah-pah accompaniment qualifies as a significant characteristic of the waltz, and I will address its other effects—especially that of repetition—later in this chapter. Nor, notwithstanding its prominence, is um-pah-pah the only means of strongly marking the first beat. Indeed, Marx turns to the waltz in Act I, scene 3 of Weber's *Freischütz* by way of illustration of other available tools, commenting: "Th[is] well-known waltz from Weber... offers us a genuine waltz motive....in the piece, auxiliary notes are placed before the merely chordal ones in order to bring out the beginning [of the measure] and that every other melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic accentuation serves the same end."

Example 2/2: Weber, *Freischütz*, Act I, scene 3.

Weber accomplishes the “marking” effect by several means (see Example 2/2). First, as Marx points out, the composer places on the first beat the auxiliary tones—appoggiaturas—that resolve on the second half of the beat. By its nature, an appoggiatura, a metrically strong non-chord tone, increases the effect of the metric accent. Weber further reinforces the effect by placing an accent above the notes. Second, and more important, the piece starts with an anacrusis, a three-eighth-note motive, that occupies half of each measure throughout the piece. (Although Marx does not explicitly mention the anacrusis, he does point out that every “melodic, harmonic and rhythmic accentuation” serves to mark the first step.) The very first step of the dance is anticipated by an up-beat in the music, which has the especially helpful function for the dancers of preparing them physically, with respect to tempo and meter, and psychologically with respect to mood. The reappearance of this up-beat motive at the end of each measure creates a sense of anticipation of the next strong beat (and three-step set); and the anticipation itself places an additional accent on the first beats throughout the piece. This function of the anacrusis—that is to create anticipation for the

following strong marked beat—makes the anacrusis the standard way to start any waltz.

Depending on the relative simplicity or refinement of the composition, both the length of the anacrusis and the frequency of its repetition within a piece will vary. Johann Strauss Sr. offers a couple of very good examples of recurring upbeat throughout his very first work, a chain of eight waltzes. Example 2/3, from the second waltz in Op.1, illustrates an upbeat to every measure:

Example 2/3: Johann Strauss, Sr., *Täuberln-Waltzer*, Op. 1, No. 2.



In Weber's composition, we find accented appoggiaturas and anacruses, in addition to the um-pah-pah pattern, as accentuating elements for the strong beats. In Example 2/3, Strauss similarly underscores the metrical accent with the anticipatory effect of an anacrusis which, in this waltz, is comprised of three eighth-notes. Strauss's anacrusis not only occupies the second half of each measure, as does Weber's, but also, in combination with a single eighth note on each down beat, forms the only "melody" of the waltz. Thus Strauss takes the notion of anticipation and the marking of the strong beats even further than does Weber, composing a waltz whose melody consists of nothing else. Moreover, although the first beat is an eighth note, giving it the same value as the notes that

form the anacrusis, the rests that follow the downbeat eighth note in effect extend its value, creating a durational accent on each first beat.<sup>7</sup>

I shall now turn to the two-measure segments that “must correspond to the dance motive” and consider some of the musical elements that contribute to the delineation of these segments. The um-pah-pah accompaniment, as I have noted, continuously marks the first beat of each measure throughout the piece. But because of its close association with the harmony it can also help clarify the two-measure segments, either by changing harmony between segments—one harmony per segment—or by changing harmony within the segments—one harmony per measure—to form an arc of harmony in a four-measure phrase, i.e. I-V-V-I, or a variant thereof (see Example 2/4a and b).

Example 2/4: a) Josef Strauss, *Dispute*, no. 1.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is indicated at the beginning of the first system. The bass line features a consistent accompaniment of eighth notes on the first and third beats of each measure, with rests on the second beat. Harmonic labels 'I', 'IV', 'V', and 'I' are positioned below the bass line to denote the chord progression. The treble clef contains the melody, which includes slurs and accents.

<sup>7</sup> There is yet another emphatic feature that I address in my consideration of the circular nature of the waltz: it is what I call a *centrifugal accent*. The motivic nature of this anacrusis, a neighboring motion, is an idiomatic figure in waltz style and is very often followed by a fling, skip-wise or step-wise, to the strong beat, creating registral and durational accents.

## b) Johann Strauss, Sr., Op. 1/2.



Like the um-pah-pah accompaniment, the recurring anacrusis motive too, is a common means of weighting the first beat. If it occurs at every measure, as in Example 2/3, it marks each strong beat of the piece, making no distinction between one measure and the next. If, however, it appears only at every other measure, it clarifies the two-measure segments by marking only the first, strong beat of each segment, as in the following phrase from Lanner's *Schönbrunner*.

Example 2/5: Lanner, *Schönbrunner*, Op. 200/4.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system starts at measure 17. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower two staves. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The vocal line has a melodic line with some grace notes and slurs. The second system starts at measure 21 and continues the piano accompaniment and vocal line.

Here, we note that the 2-beat upbeat to the first measure of this section—in fact the opening upbeat of the piece—is heard at every other measure, mm. 18, 20, 22, 24. The downbeat accent, created by the anticipatory effect of the anacrusis at the beginning of each segment, is further reinforced by the appoggiaturas, mm. 17, 21, 23, 25.

Returning to Strauss Sr.'s first opus, *Täuberln*, this time to waltz No. 8, we see that he uses precisely the same anacrusis motive, the neighbor figure used in waltz number 2 (see Example 2/4). This time, however, the motive recurs only at every other measure and thus, together with the harmony, helps to form the two-measure segments (see Example 2/6).

Example 2/6: Strauss, Sr., Op. 1/8.

The image displays a musical score for piano accompaniment in 3/4 time, consisting of two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 5, and the second system contains measures 6 through 9. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody in the right hand features a recurring anacrusis motive (a half note followed by a quarter note) and appoggiaturas (a quarter note followed by a half note) on the downbeats. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and single notes.

An especially interesting example of the use of anacrusis is Labitzky's *Les Bains de Hombourg*, Op. 254, among the earliest chains of waltzes framed with an introduction and a coda (see Example 2/7). The bi-partite Introduction is divided into *Tempo di Valz* and *Andante*, the latter in 4/4. Part of the last measure of the *Andante*, precisely 3 beats, forms the anacrusis to the following waltz. As in Strauss's Op. 1, no. 2 (see Example 2/3), the melody is comprised only of an

anacrusis and a single note on the following strong beat. However, while the anacrusis figures examined thus far occupy only a partial measure, in Labitzky's piece the anacrusis occupies an entire measure—for example, measures 2 and 4, and, later in the piece, those measures where the opening melody recurs (mm. 8-12 and 24-28). As a result, the two-measure segments consist of one strong and one weak measure: because of the recurring anacrusis, the odd measures are strong, while the even measures are weak.

Example 2/7: Labitzky, *Les Bains de Hombourg*, Op. 254/1.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, starting at measure 21, shows a piano introduction in 3/4 time with a treble and bass staff. The second system, labeled 'no. 1', starts at measure 1 and shows the first system of the waltz. The third system starts at measure 6 and shows the second system of the waltz. The waltz features a characteristic call-and-response pattern between the two measures of a segment.

This brings us to the third of Marx's temporal requirements for music composed to accompany the waltz: the call-and-response, or echoing, metrical relationship between the two measures of a segment. As I explained earlier (see Figure I), the two sets of three steps that comprise the waltz motive are different

with respect not only to the footwork, but to the weight of the steps and to their effect upon the dancer who executes them. Steps 1-3 initiate the outward half-circle swing of the dancer's body, causing it to travel farther and creating a strong, swooping effect; in contrast, steps 4-6 are more nearly executed in place, and have a less strongly-felt physical impact. It is worth noting, too, that steps 4-6 are more controlled and grounded: the dancer executing these steps is the more nearly still anchor for his or her partner's swooping arc and enables the momentum for steps 1-3. Each dancer feels, in turn, the strong effect of steps 1-3 and their "echo," as it were, in the partner's closely-held body.

With this in mind, the task at hand is to examine how the music can fulfill Marx's requirement that "each segment of two measures must correspond to the dance motive marking the beginning of the segments firmly." That is to say, how is the composer to differentiate musically the weight of step 1 of the waltz motive, which initiates the entire 360-degree turn, from that of step 4, which marks the beginning of the turn's second half?

Consider, first, that the six-step waltz motive contains accentual patterning on more than one level. In music, this corresponds to a measure of 6/8 time, a compound meter whose beats are grouped in pairs of three. The first eighth note of each group of three receives a metric accent, making the strong beats the first and the fourth. At the same time, on the larger level within the measure, the first dotted quarter note is stronger than the second one, making the beginning of the first group stronger than that of the second one. Indeed, at the turn of the 19th-century, many waltzes were composed in a slow 6/8. Though composers soon began to notate the waltz in simple 3/8 or 3/4 meter, they needed to retain the hierarchical structure of a compound meter of six beats in order to express the pattern of the dance.

In the second waltz of his *Trompeten Waltzer*, Op.13, Johann Strauss, Sr., uses the anacrusis as a tool to establish the first measure as metrically strong within the segments (see Example 2/8).

Example 2/8: Strauss, Sr., *Trompeten Walzer*, Op. 13/2.

The emphasis on the first beat of the six-beat segment is effected in two ways. First, Strauss's repetition of the anacrusis motive in itself lessens the impact of the second iteration—that is, reduces its accent. Second, the motive is repeated an octave lower at the end of m.1, creating an echo effect and further subordinating the second measure. In the subsequent two-measure segment, we see the same technique again, with the additional dropping of the bass note by an octave. During the second four-measure sub-phrase, the beginning of each segment is further marked with a durational accent.

Let us return now to our first and most obvious temporal tool, the um-pah-pah accompaniment. Given that we have already established its role in consistently emphasizing the first beat of every measure, it would seem to undermine the hierarchical or echoing relationship of one measure to the next that the composers have been at such pains to establish. In fact, much of the time the um-pah-pah accompaniment serves another critical role: to layer the accents within the two-measure segment.

As it happens, the melody of the third waltz of Strauss, Jr.'s *Liebes-Lieder* is, by itself, very disorienting. The ascending quarters in the first measure are followed by a dotted half note in the second. The strong durational accent on the second measure can make the initial ascending quarter notes sound retrospectively as though they comprised an anacrusis. Once this perception has been established in the listener, the rest of the waltz melody is heard as if out of phase by one measure (see Example 2/9a).

Example 2/9: a)



However, when the piece is heard with the accompaniment, the perception that the first measure is an upbeat vanishes because of the root position tonic. Moreover, Strauss employs an oscillating bass; by changing the bass note to scale degree 5 at m. 2, he weakens the tonic chord, reinforcing the perception of the two-measure segments and clarifying the metric hierarchy between the segments.

b) Strauss, Sr., *Liebes-Lieder*, Op.114, No.3

The image shows a piano score for Strauss, Sr., *Liebes-Lieder*, Op.114, No.3, measures 1 through 8. The score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. Measures 1 and 2 are marked with a '1' and '2' above the staff, respectively. Measures 3 and 4 are marked with a '3' and '4' above the staff, respectively. Measures 5 and 6 are marked with a '5' and '6' above the staff, respectively. Measures 7 and 8 are marked with a '7' and '8' above the staff, respectively. The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, and the accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line.

In the B section of waltz no. 4 (Example 2/9c), however, the melody itself marks the beginning of the segments firmly and establishes the metric hierarchy between the segments by means of a dotted half-note with a notated accent. By tying the dotted half-note to the first beat of the second measure, Strauss emphasizes the hierarchy not only by accentuating the first measure, but also by eliminating even the articulation of the second. The accompaniment further reinforces this effect by means of the oscillating bass.

## c) Op.114/4 mm. 21-24

The image shows a piano score for Strauss, Sr., Op.114/4 mm. 21-24. The score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major). The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, and the accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line.

A careful, and lengthy, scrutiny of the repertory of waltz music would confirm that there are, of course, innumerable other means that waltz composers have employed to clarify the two-measure segments and to emphasize the beginning of the segments. But there are also some—though few—early waltzes that are not organized in two-measure segments and that therefore do not reflect in the music the hierarchical and echoing nature of the two sets of dance steps. One such example is Weber's waltz in *Freischütz*, of which, as we recall, Marx says that it reveals "a genuine waltz motive"; but, he continues:

[It] contents itself with...the unaltered primitive material of the three-step motive, without elaborating clear groupings for the complete motion of twice three steps, as would be appropriate in a nobler, more perfect conception of the waltz.

In other words, it exemplifies only the marking and weighting of the first beat of each measure, making no reference to the two-measure segment. However, far from revealing a compositional deficiency or lack of skill on Weber's part, the waltz is entirely appropriate to its context, being, as Marx describes it, a portrayal of "a rude throng abandon[ing] itself completely to unadulterated waltz fever." The piece, after all, was composed not for the ballroom, but for the theater, and not for social dancers, but for the professionals of the opera company. Furthermore, the scene in question takes place not in a ballroom, but in front of an inn in the Bohemian forest involving two foresters. Hence, the music of "this rustic dance," as Marx calls it, matches both the rusticity of the characters and setting and, as with the "nobler and more perfect" examples of the waltz, aptly reflects the requirements of the dance.

## 2. TURNING CIRCLES

Another essential feature of the dance is what Marx calls its “swinging turn.” Before considering how, in this respect as in others, the music must “respond to the dance motive,” let us remember that this swinging turn is circular—that is, when the dancers have completed their six-step segment, they have returned to the same position relative to each other—and that it relies on a strong centrifugal force for its continuity: the dancer turning on axis and completing steps 4-6 serves as the anchor for the outward swinging partner. The music, Marx dictates, should accomplish this “by a melody that springs energetically away from the first note.”

In the previous section, I examined the accent-producing and anticipatory roles of the anacrusis in Strauss’s Op.1, Waltz 2 (see Example 2/3). This particular anacrusis also serves importantly to create the swinging, circling effect required by Marx. Its motivic nature creates a neighboring motion—a distinctly idiomatic feature in the waltz style and one that, as in this example, is often followed by a fling, either skip-wise or step-wise, to the strong beat. This, in turn, creates what I refer to as a *centrifugal accent*.

One of the most striking examples of the centrifugal accent is found in Strauss’s, the son, *Accelerationen*, written in 1860 and one of the last waltzes he composed with dancing in mind. Here, in the first waltz, the rotating melody whirls faster and faster.

Example 2/10: Johann Strauss, *Accelerationen*, mm. 1-16.

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).  
 - **System 1 (measures 1-3):** Treble clef has a melodic line starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Bass clef provides accompaniment. A *cresc.* marking is present in measure 3.  
 - **System 2 (measures 4-7):** Continuation of the melodic and harmonic material.  
 - **System 3 (measures 8-13):** Treble clef features a melodic line with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. A first ending bracket is shown above the staff.  
 - **System 4 (measures 14-16):** Final system, ending with a repeat sign.

The accent-producing factors at the beginning of the waltz are reduced to a minimum: indeed, aside from the um-pah-pah accompaniment and an unremarkable anacrusis which appears only once, at the very beginning of the piece, nothing is accented throughout the first eight measures. Instead, Strauss uses these measures to build momentum, increasing several musical elements. The overall register builds higher, with a crescendo; the pace accelerates (inevitably, given the title, although there is no such tempo indication); and the

semitone circles—the neighboring motion—continually wind, as though one were turning the key in a mechanical toy, until the music seems, through the release of its own centrifugal force, to fling itself up and out into space at m. 9.

Another, more complex example of the centrifugal accent, is evident in Chopin's *Minute Waltz* (see Example 2/11a), which shares a number of features with Strauss's *Accelerationen* illustrated above: the location of the centrifugal accent on the first beat of m. 9; the durational and dynamic accents; and the ever-higher register and crescendo during the eight-measure "wind-up." However, while Strauss accomplishes this building of momentum entirely with a series of semitones, Chopin employs a repeated motive (see Example 2/11b) comprised of two incomplete neighbor-note figures. The motive occupies only two beats and itself lacks a rotating character, which effect is created by the repetition. Chopin, combining the melodic wind-up with hemiola, also creates a rhythmic acceleration (see Example 2/11c)

The *Minute Waltz*, in addition, reveals another level of refinement, one specifically related to the technique for creating a centrifugal accent and worth further scrutiny. We see that, following the accented quarter note at the beginning of the first measure, Chopin introduces the motive that he then repeats seven-and-a-half times during measures 3-7, the "wind-up" measures. But what of the second measure? On first consideration, it seems unbalanced, the motive being interrupted at the midpoint by two "foreign" eighth notes, b-flat and a-flat. These notes are never again incorporated into the motive: beginning with the third measure, Chopin picks up the original two-beat motive, from which the piece never again departs.

## Example 2/11: a) Chopin Op. 64/1

Example 2/11: a) Chopin Op. 64/1. The score shows the first nine measures of the piece. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth-note patterns, with measures 1-4 featuring slurs and ties. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

## b) motive

Musical notation for the motive, showing a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The notes are marked with 'IN' above and below the staff.

## c) rhythmic reduction, mm. 1-4.

Rhythmic reduction of measures 1-4, showing a sequence of notes with 'N' above each note, indicating a rhythmic pattern: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5.

## d) rhythmic reduction, m. 2 altered.

Rhythmic reduction of measure 2 altered, showing a sequence of notes with 'N' above each note, indicating a rhythmic pattern: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5.

To uncover a possible rationale for this quirk, let us examine the potential effect of its absence on the entire passage. First of all, the rotating of the motive would thus begin at m. 2, as would the hemiola, decreasing the gradual effect of the rhythmic acceleration (see Example 2/11d). Also, if the hemiola were to start at the second measure, the third measure, which now starts on *g*, would begin on *c*, reversing the pattern for the rest of the wind-up measures: measures 4 and 6 would start on *g*, while measures 5 and 7 would start on *c* (see Example 2/12). More to the point, this alternative order would have a significant impact on the end of m. 7, which, in turn, would affect the centrifugal accent. As Chopin wrote it, the end of m. 7 combines with the step-wise fling occupying the entirety of m. 8 to create a smooth, rushing ascent up the D-flat major scale. Absent the variation of the motive in m. 2, m. 7 would start on *c*, thus ending on b-flat, the same note with which the fling begins in m. 8. Far from the seamless transition that so gracefully reflects the impulse of the dance, the repetition of b-flat would create a hiccup (more properly danced with a hop than a gliding step).

Example 2/12: Chopin, *Minute Waltz*, mm. 1-10 altered.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Chopin's *Minute Waltz*, measures 1-10, altered. The music is in 3/4 time and D-flat major. The first staff (measures 1-4) shows a hemiola pattern with brackets above the notes. The second staff (measures 5-8) continues the pattern. The third staff (measure 9) shows a single measure. The notation ends with 'etc.'

There is an additional, pianistic purpose one may ascribe to Chopin's composition; it concerns the organization of the two-measure segment. The fingering dictates that the first beat of each segment, falling as it does on a *g*, be

played with the thumb of the right hand. As this is the strongest and lowest finger, it naturally tends to accentuate the note.

Thus far, I have considered musical circularity with respect only to its reflection of the smaller circles traced by the dancers. As they also circle the ballroom, the “swinging turn of the dance” finds its mirror in the larger scale organization of the piece—that is, in its form and, specifically, in the repetitive character of the music.

### 3. THE SIMPLICITY OF REPETITION

Though he does not say so explicitly, for Marx, the composer has but one goal in combining melody, harmony, and rhythm: to make the music danceable. This puts the music at the service of the dance, requiring not only that the former reflect the character of the latter, but that it actually be a component. The less the presence of the music itself intrudes, the better it serves the dancers.

When, in Chapter 1, I distinguished between the waltz and the precedent court dances, I pointed out that one of the most salient differences is the absence of formal choreography in the waltz. To be sure, the instructional manuals are replete with directions concerning decorum, posture, and the appropriate placement of the dancers’ hands; but these are social niceties, not choreographic necessities. With respect to the formal requirements, only a specific pattern of foot-work—a mere six steps in all—is called for and completes the motive of the dance. Dancing the waltz means only repeating this motive; there are no rules, or even conventions, for the number of repetitions of six-step small circles, the size or number of the large circles traced around the ballroom by the dancing couple, or the number of couples dancing simultaneously. The dance begins and

ends when the music does; there is no dramatic high point, no formal completion. In other words, the essence of the dance is a simple, repetitive pattern.

Simplicity is, of course, a characteristic common to most social dances and, hence, to the music composed for them, including the waltz. But waltz, like the dance, has its own characteristic form of simplicity, and that is repetition. Indeed, the popularity of the dance may, in large measure, be attributable to its repetitiveness, if we agree with Freud that "Repetition, the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure."<sup>8</sup>

Both as a concept and as an experience, repetition has been a focal point of interest and dispute in many disciplines—especially philosophy and psychology—for centuries. Typically, the discussions center on the nature of repetition and on its effect on human perception: whether the literal repetition of a word, a thing perceived, or an experience is even possible; whether repetition is boring; the distinction between cyclic and linear repetition; repetition and its interaction with change and difference.<sup>9</sup>

With respect to music repetition is certainly not the sole province of the waltz; it has, indeed, been considered an integral aspect of musical composition in general. As Heinrich Schenker comments, "Our understanding of musical technique would have advanced much further if only someone had asked:

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<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Liveright, 1924) p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Further Recommendations in the Technique of Psycho-Analysis: Recollection, Repetition, and Working Through," *Collected Papers*, Vol II, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogart, 1949); Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, trans. and ed. H.V. and E.H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1930).

Where, when, and how did music first develop its most striking and distinctive characteristic—repetition?”<sup>10</sup> He adds that “[r]epetition [is an] inherently musical invention.”

Like simplicity, repetition is a particularly conspicuous feature of any dance music; but its role is more prominent in the waltz because of the highly repetitious nature of the dance itself. In explaining the relationship between simplicity and repetition, Schoenberg notes that music is always hard to understand “unless it is made easier by repetition of as many minute, small, medium or large sections as possible... . This is perhaps the reason why, throughout the music, as much as possible is repeated as often as possible, especially in simple music.”<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Schoenberg is speaking here of music in general, without explicit reference to dance music of any kind. But his intent is clear when, in the sentence immediately following, he refers to the opening motive of Strauss’s *Blue Danube* pointing out that this motive is repeated seven times in the course of the first section and arguing that “that is why the whole melody is so easy to grasp.” To be sure, the *Blue Danube* was not originally composed for ballroom dancing, but it is the most commonly cited composition in the history of the waltz, and Schoenberg’s linking of comprehension, simplicity, and repetition is certainly applicable to music composed for the dance.

Earlier in this chapter I addressed the significant rhythmical role of the um-pah-pah accompaniment not only by emphasizing the first beat of each measure with an “um” at the lower register, but noting that most of the time the

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<sup>10</sup> Heinrich Schenker, “The Spirit of Musical Technique”, trans. William Pastille, *Theoria* 3 (1988), p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “New Music: My Music” in *Style and Idea*, p. 103.

“ums” oscillate between different notes in the lower register, thus helping to form the two-measure segments. The Um-pah-pah, however, has an additional “task” throughout the piece: The Um-pah-pah accompaniment may be the most essential repetitive feature of the waltz. Regardless of the melody, rhythm, the section of the waltz, um-pah-pah continuously and relentlessly recurs, until the piece ends. It is “as simple as possible” and equally essential.

However essential it is, the um-pah-pah is not the only repetitive feature in the waltz. Melody, too, figures importantly in repetition and, as the following example—an anonymous waltz melody from the beginning of the 19th-century—reveals with particular clarity, does so at several levels.

Example 2/13: Anonymous, engraved for Wilson’s treatise on German and French Waltz.

In this tri-partite piece, the first part (A) occupies measures 1 to 20, up to *fine*; the second part (B) consists of eight measures and their repetition; and the restatement of (A) *da capo* forms the third part. Considering that the part (A) is

ternary and that the mood of part (B) is different, I identify the piece as *Waltz and Trio*, on a miniature scale, with an overall form of

aba	trio	aba
A	B	A

The form of this piece is, in itself, repetitive: *waltz-trio-waltz*.. However, this repetition is only apparent retrospectively, after one has read or heard the piece performed. During the course of its performance, for the listener as for the dancer, the music unfolds sequentially, its overall form and internal repetitions in no way evident. How, then, is it that the repetition is revealed as the music progresses? The following phenomenological analysis will, I think, disclose the answer.

We begin by observing that, significantly, the first activity in the melody is the repetition of a note: the eighth note *a*, the anacrusis, is repeated as the down beat of the first measure. The third note of the same measure, *f#*, is also reiterated. Given that the second measure is an exact repetition of measure 1, by the end of the second measure (that is, within two seconds) the listener will already have experienced repetition on two levels: the repetition of an individual note and the repetition of a three-beat measure forming the two-measure waltz segment. The first four measures then form a sub-phrase that is repeated, with slight alterations in pitch but identical rhythmic patterns. And, finally, the repeat sign dictates that this eight-measure phrase itself be repeated. Already, at this relatively early point in the piece, two more levels of repetition have been introduced: phrase repetition and the sectional repetition.

The section that follows these opening measures makes no further progress with regard to the presentation of new material. Measures 9 and 10, which are repeated at measures 11 and 12, are based on the same melodic

material, inverted, of the (a) section. Moreover, this four-measure sub-phrase (mm.9-12) is followed by the opening, section (a) material.

Nor does the trio, which forms the middle of the composition, introduce anything significantly new. The most evident differences are its key, b-minor, and its complete freedom from the main motive of the waltz—that is, two sixteenth notes, followed by two eighth notes, as presented in m.1. These distinctions notwithstanding, it is entirely based on the rhythmic motive presented at m. 3 and 4, opening with two measures full of repeated notes and forming an eight-measure phrase with a reprise.

During the entire seventy-two-measures (counting all repeats) we have actually heard over and over only the same three measures of distinct melodic material, m. 1, 3, and 4, repeated precisely or with a slight variation.

In the above analysis, I have not considered the question posed by Edward Cone in his *Musical Form and Musical Performance*: “[I]s there such thing as literal repetition in music?” Analyzing Chopin’s Polonaise in A major, Cone draws attention to the six-fold statement of its opening period, a literal repetition each time of AABABA-Trio-ABA, making for a total of six A’s in all. He argues that “the second A is already different from the first. The first was preceded by silence and followed by its repetition; the second is preceded by the first and followed by B... . The third is now preceded and followed by B...and so on... . Each statement [of A] is influenced by its position, by what precedes and what follows it...”<sup>12</sup> He therefore concludes that, although the physical sounds are indeed duplicated in the music when the repeat signs are observed, the music is not heard as an exact repetition.

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), p. 46.

In waltz, however, this distinction is irrelevant. What is important is the correspondence of the monotonous continuity of the music with that of the dance. Whereas Cone is investigating the meaning of each statement of A—identifying as the determinant of meaning the position of the statement and its relationship to that which precedes and follows it, I believe that the repetition in waltz has a different kind of meaning. Each repeated feature, be it a note or a phrase or a section, has the same function for the dancer as does every other feature: that is, it is all part of the continuum of movement. Indeed, familiarity with the material and its continuous repetition provide the dancer with the momentum to keep whirling.

## CHAPTER 3

### Opera, Ballet, and Playing with the Waltz

As this chapter deals with the use of the waltz in two narrative performance media—opera and ballet—and on its role in the portrayal of character and advancement of plot, it is important to have clearly in mind the attitudes toward the dance during the 19th century. As I noted in chapter 1, the waltz's enormous popularity as a social dance was accompanied by equal concern for—even strong disapproval of—its purported effect, notably on women. Indeed, criticisms about waltzing were almost wholly focused on its influence on women, who were, if not entirely discouraged from participating in the dance, at least urged to observe various restrictions about when, with whom, and how much to waltz, imposed by the dictates of morality, etiquette, and health. To be sure, women continued to dance (with whom, after all, were the men dancing, if not female partners?), but it is evident that they did so in full awareness of society's disapproval and thus with a certain anxiety about the potential damage to their reputation. Waltzing was erotic, lustful, highly romantic, and profoundly associated with women.

These attitudes were pervasive throughout 19th-century culture and society, which, of course, included contemporary composers. They could not have been unaware of either sensual qualities attributed to the dance or its strongly gendered connotations, both of which accrued to the musical genre itself and influenced—consciously or unconsciously—their decision to compose a waltz.

Previously, in an effort to establish exactly what the waltz is, I discussed it as a dynamic musical genre with more than one aesthetic function and, hence, any number of potential aesthetic meanings. But genre also implies the communication of that meaning to an audience; and here, I am concerned with the power of this particular genre, the waltz, to convey the 19th-century social meaning of the dance. To that end, I turn now to two recent and illuminating works on the subject of musical genre.

In "Tropes and the Concept of Genre," Jacobsson and Treitler argue effectively that genre is not only a "concept for building a taxonomy of art works," but a concept that "can function more actively and productively in the analysis of art and its history."<sup>1</sup> This function, they note, "rests on [genre's] multi-dimensionality," which "brings together perspectives on the artists, on the work, and on the public." In other words, this is genre understood contextually—and specifically rhetorically—in the light of which author/composer and audience enter into a relationship on the ground of common musical experience and understanding. Or, as Jeffrey Kallberg puts it in "The rhetoric of genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor," genre as a concept does not inhere only in the musical composition itself, but is in fact "better perceived as a social phenomenon shared by composers and listeners alike."<sup>2</sup>

All three scholars emphasize the important notion that effective communication is contingent upon the sharing of a set of assumptions, beliefs, and conventions by the composer and the audience. It is the multi-

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<sup>1</sup> Ritva Jacobsson and Leo Treitler, "Tropes and the Concept of Genre," in *Pax et Sapientia: Studies in Text and Music of Liturgical Tropes and Sequences in Memory of Gordon Anderson*, ed. by Ritva Jacobsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1986), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor," *19th-Century Music* 11 (1988), p. 243.

dimensionality of genre that makes possible a full exploration of this communication, as Jacobsson and Treitler explain:

With respect to the artist, a genre represents a tradition of making that sets tasks and transmits conventions and models in relation to which the artist exercises his own intentions. ...With focus on the work, a genre represents a complex of structural and stylistic features and features of content. ...With focus on the public, a genre represents the function or purpose of a kind of art work, addressed to a particular public, and the expectations and responses of the public in the light of that function and of the artistic means that are adapted to it... it is only in their interaction that the genre concept can produce understanding of individual works.<sup>3</sup>

This last point—that the understanding of a musical work depends upon an examination of the interaction of composer, audience, and music—is critical to the discussion that follows. My exploration of the role of the waltz in opera and ballet rests on the assumption that the composers of these dramatic, narrative musical works have recourse to knowledge, experience, and conventions that they share with their audience and that they rely upon these to communicate with that audience. The very choice of musical genre itself is a component of that communication.<sup>4</sup> It follows that 19th-century assumptions about the waltz—that is, its reception—give it particular power in dramatic musical works to define character and develop the plot. The composer's choice of a waltz for a specific (often crucial) moment in the plot or in association with a certain character is, therefore, a sign for the audience, conveying an established, conventional meaning that composer and audience share.

Opera and ballet represent two highly refined forms of cooperation between music and narrative drama. Both have plot and character, and in both music has exceptionally strong expressive, even motivational and narrative

<sup>3</sup> Jacobsson and Treitler, "Tropes and the Concept of Genre," p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre," p. 243.

power. With respect to the story itself, however, there is an obvious difference: operas have libretti and the performers use words to express emotion and intent; ballets are wordless, and the dancers rely upon movement and gesture. However, this distinction is not critical to the comparison.

The ballets with which I am concerned are 19th-century story ballets, rather than the more recent abstract creations of such 20th-century choreographers as Balanchine or Merce Cunningham. The plots and characters of these earlier ballets were generally based upon well-known fairy tales and standard tropes, with which the contemporary audience was entirely familiar. They therefore arrived at the theater with certain expectations and knowledge that gave them a pre-established common ground with the composer and choreographer.

With respect to opera, it has been argued that the libretto does not have the absolute power conveying the story and the characters. In *The Composer's Voice*, Edward Cone describes the music of opera as a "reading" of the drama, noting that "the composer appropriates that reading and makes it a component in another work, entirely his own—a larger form created by the musical setting."<sup>5</sup> And Catherine Clément goes farther, suggesting, in *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, that the written plot of the libretto is entirely subsumed by the music. By way of illustration, she observes that the audience does not pay attention to the words; even in operas about women—"they suffer, they cry, they die"—what we hear are their powerful voices and the orchestra.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1974), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 11.

Music, the common ground for opera and ballet, is not only a component of both, but the essential—in fact, primary—medium of expression. As Kerman notes, “the fundamental mode of presentation in drama is action, and in musical drama the medium of imaginative articulation is music.”<sup>7</sup> And in both, the role of the composers in shaping the plot, developing the characters, and conveying both is paramount. The “reading,” as Cone calls it, that they give the narrative is reflected in their choice of certain tempi, dynamics, meter, form, key scheme, and so forth. They employ motives and recurring themes to convey relationships among particular moments in the plot. And they use the waltz, with its musical and social connotations and meanings, as a tool of communication with the audience.

Musically, the characteristics of the waltz—its meter, melodic structure, and accompaniment—are readily recognizable by the audience, which is familiar with the genre and for whom it has pleasurable associations. With respect to its social text, the audience could be expected to recognize its social meaning and its associations with women, love, joy, and seduction. That the waltz conveys apparently paradoxical meanings of individual pleasure and social disapproval, that it can be expressive of female vitality and, at the same time, of woman’s downfall, makes it especially meaningful in the context of the musical drama. In examining an opera or ballet, one is often struck by the composer’s use of a waltz and by the questions its presence raises: Why is there a waltz in this particular scene? What does the genre tell us about a certain character or turn in the plot?

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 58.

## OPERA: THE DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL ROLE OF THE WALTZ

What is it in opera that unfolds the plot, identifies the characters and gives the performance its dramatic and emotional impetus and color? The libretto, of course, quite literally articulates the plot, but it undergoes a substantial re-reading in the hands of the composer. The music, in fact, not only conveys the narrative and emotional content of the story, but it has the capacity to communicate the structure of the opera and to link events and characters, reminding the audience of earlier moments in the opera and foreshadowing future turns in the plot.

Each of the three operas I will examine—*La traviata*, *La bohème*, and *Wozzeck*—has a distinctive female character, with whom the waltz is associated. But Violetta, Musetta, and Marie are very different women, and their respective composers use the waltz quite differently with respect both to plot and to the portrayal of character.

It is no coincidence that Verdi uses the waltz as a framing device in *La traviata*. At the beginning of the opera—and in the spring of their new love—the lovers, Alfredo and Violetta, sing a duet that is a waltz; at the end of the third act, when the happiness of their reunion is crushed by Violetta's impending demise, they again sing a waltz duet. These duets not only open and close the drama, they mark the key moments in the classical tragicomic rise and fall, the moments of hope and despair. The theme of the first duet recurs throughout the opera, as a consistent linking thread and re-presents in the listener's mind the central motifs of love, joy, and, I believe, of Alfredo's dominance—it is his courting theme after all—in the course of their narrative and musical relationship.

The first duet (the love duet) takes place in Act I, scene 3. As this is one of the most closely and frequently analyzed scenes in Verdi's works, I have benefited greatly from the existing literature, particularly Cone's and Kerman's studies of the scene which, however brief, are particularly insightful.<sup>8</sup> My discussion, however, is focused solely on an interpretation of the role of the waltz *per se*, in this scene and at the conclusion of the opera.

Because this love duet introduces the characters and the premises of the plot, it has considerable structural and dramatic importance. As we know from the libretto, Alfredo expresses his concern about Violetta's self-destructive lifestyle and offers her his care and love. Violetta, whose past makes it difficult for her to believe in such unstinting love, demurs. But her resistance is short-lived and superficial, no match for the strength of Alfredo's declarations of devotion. This is made evident by two means. The first, more straightforward, is in the words themselves: the libretto has Violetta first offer Alfredo only friendship, urging him to forget her. Shortly thereafter, she has given him her flower and agreed to see him the following day.

If her words do not fully convey the extent to which Violetta is prepared to yield to Alfredo's pleas, the music—the second, more elaborated means—conveys both the power of his ardor and Violetta's internal conflict. Alfredo, courting Violetta, naturally leads the duet. It is the melody to which his ecstatic words of love ("Di quell'amor ch'è palpito dell'universo intero") are set that becomes the recurring theme (see Example 3/1), to which I will refer hereafter as the love theme.

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<sup>8</sup> Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, p. 133; Edward Cone, "The World of Opera and its Inhabitants," *Music, a view from Delft: selected essays*, ed. Robert Morgan (Chicago: University of Chicago), pp. 126-27.

Example 3/1: Verdi, "Di quell'amor ch'è palpito", *La traviata*, Act II, Scene 3.

16 *con espansione* *p*  
 Di quell' a - mor, quell' a - mor ch'è pal - pi - to del - l'u - ni - ver - so, del

22 *pizz.*  
 l'u - ni - ver - so in - te - ro, mi - ste - rì - o - so, mi - ste - rì - o - so, al - te - ro,

28 *con grazia*  
 cro - ce, cro - ce e de - li - zia, cro - ce e de - li - zia, de - li - zia al cor.

After 31 measures of attentive silence, Violetta enters the duet at m. 32, refusing his love and offering friendship instead. Believing that she does not know how to love, she urges Alfredo to forget her. But Alfredo uses his verbal and musical love theme to insist, interrupting her protestations and weakening her resolve. By m. 52, Violetta is already giving indications that Alfredo is swaying her: here, though her words still ask him to forget her, she sings the love theme along with

Alfredo (see Example 3/2). They may be saying—and thinking—something different, but musically Violetta is at least half persuaded.

Example 3/2: Verdi, "Di quell'amor ch'è palpito", *La traviata*, Act II, Scene 3.

47

Violetta

non ar - duo tro - ve - re - te

Alfredo

Oh a - mo - re mi - ste - ri - o - so, mi - ste - ri - o - so, al -

51

di - men - ti - car - mi - al - lo - ra, di - men - ti - car - mi, di - men - ti -

te - ro, cro - ce, cro - ce e de - li - zia, cro - ce e de -

54

car - mi al - lor,

li - zia, de - li - zia al cor.

Although at the conclusion of the duet (see Example 3/3) she keeps repeating "you will not find it difficult to forget me then," her singing anticipates her eventual yielding to him.

Example 3/3: Verdi, "Di quell'amor ch'è palpito", cadenza.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system consists of three staves: two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts have lyrics: "di - men - ti - car - mi, di - men - ti - car, ah!" and "cro - ce e de - li - zia, de - li - zia al cor, ah!". The piano accompaniment features triplet chords in the right hand and triplet eighth notes in the left hand. The second system, starting at measure 67, shows a more complex piano accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and sustained notes in the left hand.

70

ah! di - men - ti - car - mi al -

ah! cro - ce e de - li - zia al

73

lor.

cor!

The conflict suggested by the dichotomy of words and music in Violetta's part of the duet foreshadows and is made explicit in her aria, "Ah fors'è lui/Sempre libera," that follows in Scene 5—an important instance of the recurrence of the love theme and one to which I will return later in this discussion. First, however, I will address another significant feature of the opening duet scene: Verdi's use of yet another waltz as a divertissement.

At the beginning of this scene, immediately before Alfredo begins the duet, the audience and Violetta's guests—for the moment also an "audience" in the context of the performance—hear music, a waltz, from the next room. The

guests leave the drawing room and, going off-stage, are understood by the theater audience to have gone into another room to waltz. Although we do not see them dancing, we know that they are waltzing to music played by a *banda interna*, an “off-stage” band. It is a typical waltz, of the sort to which the opera-goers themselves would have danced. This audience, however, now hears yet another waltz, the love duet sung by Alfredo and Violetta on-stage, in the very room the guests have left, the music for which is played by the pit orchestra. As soon as Alfredo begins to sing, the music of the off-stage band can no longer be heard, replaced by that of the pit orchestra and by the voice of Alfredo.

At the end of the duet, Alfredo and Violetta are interrupted: the others re-enter the room, having left off dancing, and at that moment the *banda interna* is heard again, playing the second of its melodies, an episodic theme that tells the audience it has been playing all the while, unheard except by the dancers, and “that the cantabile [duet] has been, in television terms, a cutaway shot.”<sup>9</sup>

That Verdi uses two waltzes in quick succession—the one actually interrupting the other—and makes the waltz-divertissement a frame for the waltz-duet is an example of the expressive power of the waltz genre in conveying complex meaning. The social dance in the “other room”, is light and joyous. The love duet happening in “this room”, however, concerns a weighty dialogue between the prospective lovers. This is an opera of duality: for Kerman the duality is between “sentimentality and reality”<sup>10</sup>, for Clément it is “between the family, its property interests, and the parallel world of prostitution”<sup>11</sup>, and for me, it is between hope and despair. The “Valzer-Duet”

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<sup>9</sup> Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), v. 2, p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> *Opera as Drama*, p. 133.

scene presenting two waltzes with different aesthetic functions makes this duality clear.

The other waltz—unmistakably a waltz, though not so titled by the composer—is Violetta and Alfredo's last duet, "Parigi, o cara," which brings the drama to its conclusion. As the first duet and waltz brought them together, this marks their reunion after separation. Violetta's love is undiminished by the sacrifices she has made for Alfredo's sake. He, in return, appreciates her sacrifice and admires her steadfastness, loving her more than ever. Where the first duet, as I noted, emphasized the difference in their respective states of mind—Violetta resisting Alfredo's courtship by singing a different melody at the beginning of the duet—here, in this final duet, Violetta follows Alfredo's lead from her first notes, repeating his music precisely. Alas, this musical resolution belies the plot's conclusion—the lovers will not live happily ever after—and the conflict still churning in Violetta's mind. When, earlier in the last act, Violetta reads the letter from Alfredo's father, informing her that his son knows the truth and is on his way to visit her, she screams, "Troppo tardi!" It is, indeed, too late: Violetta is dying. Nor has she truly resolved the doubts first expressed in the opening duet and elaborated in her Act I, Scene 5 aria. Which way of life should she follow? Could she really trust Alfredo's love? Violetta's life is ending. She knows—and the audience knows—that there will be no answers to her questions.

Between the first and last waltz duets, and between Violetta's burgeoning hope in Act I and her ultimate despair at the end of the opera, the plot and Violetta's emotions undergo considerable vicissitudes. The key moments in the turnings of both are marked by a restatement of the love theme. That an early theme recurs over the course of the opera itself is less interesting since Verdi is

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<sup>11</sup> *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, p. 19.

known for a fondness for recurring themes. However, the recurrence of *this* particular theme is significant: the first duet is a waltz, and what we hear throughout is a fragment of a waltz.

We hear Alfredo's courting theme in five different contexts over the course of the opera. While it plays a slightly different dramatic role at different points in the opera, it is always associated with Alfredo's promise of love, that love "which is the pulse of the entire universe." The first statement of this theme, of course, is Alfredo's declaration of love for Violetta, at the beginning of the opera. Reflecting on that moment in her Act I, Scene 5 recitative, Violetta imagines the happiness of loving and being loved. In the *andante*, she sings "ah fors'è lui," perhaps Alfredo is the one for whom she has waited all her life. Recalling Alfredo's words, she sings the love theme. But when she sings the theme again, she alters his words, "quell'amor qu'è palpito/ dell'universo intero" (that love which is the pulse of the whole universe), to "Sentia che amor è palpito" (I felt that love is the pulse...). Alfredo's words bespeak certainty: love *is* the pulse. Violetta's, on the other hand, are conditional: at that moment, under the influence of Alfredo's courtship and ardor, she *felt* that love is the pulse. Now she vacillates. Even as she seems convinced of Alfredo's love—and the audience convinced of her conviction—she suddenly stops, muses for a moment, then bursts out, "Follie!... Follie!" These thoughts have been follies, a change of mind Violetta makes plain in the following cabaletta: who is she to dream of love? On the contrary, she must always be free. But as she reaches the cadence, Alfredo's voice is heard through the window, singing his love theme again. This third iteration of the theme gives the audience advance knowledge of what Violetta herself has yet to decide: that Alfredo's love is more powerful than her reservations. It is not surprising, therefore, that the following act opens at Violetta's country home, where Alfredo is once more expressing his love and

devotion, this time in her own living room. He has triumphed, at least for the moment, in effecting their union.

Because the last two restatements of the theme are purely instrumental, it is clear that the reinforcement of the dramatic theme at critical moments is Verdi's contribution to Piave's libretto. We hear the theme again as Violetta reads Germont's letter, at the beginning of the final act, reminiscing about their love; and finally, it recurs as Violetta lies dying, at the opera's very end. It seems to give her sudden strength, however evanescent; a will—however much in vain—to live; renewed hope, quickly dashed.

The first waltz we hear, the social waltz of the off-stage dancers, reminds us that, in the dance, the man leads, the woman follows. Though they perform the same steps (see my analysis in Chapter 1), it is his strength and control that keeps centrifugal force from tearing them apart. He takes three steps, she copies them exactly; he sets the course they take together.

Like the male partner holding out his hand to invite a woman to waltz, Alfredo offers his love to Violetta in a waltz. She resists; he insists; she yields to his entreaties. Alfredo acts, Violetta reacts; he leads, she follows. That she has determined to follow him is confirmed for the listener by the return of the social waltz following their duet: we can imagine them waltzing together. Nor does Violetta have any real control over circumstances as they unfold. At the end of the opera, Alfredo once again leads their duet; Violetta, the no-longer-reluctant partner, repeats his music note for note. And arching between the two waltz duets, the recurring theme—the fragmentary waltz—contrives to remind the listener not only of love and hope, but of the importance of male supremacy and of Alfredo's influence on Violetta.

Though the two waltz duets in *La traviata* are significant framing devices for the plot and, together with the recurring theme, serve to convey a central dramatic theme, they are not the only waltzes in the opera. Indeed, it is full of waltzes: sad waltzes, loving waltzes, waltzes slow and fast, “trivial, vulgar, [and] rotten.”<sup>12</sup> Everyone seems to sing a waltz at one time or another: Alfredo, Violetta, gypsies, matadors.

In contrast, *La bohème* has only one waltz and Puccini gives it not to his heroine, Mimì, but to her counterpart, Musetta, the young coquette, who sings it in celebration of her powers of attraction to men. I believe Puccini’s use of the waltz here reflects another of its well-established 19th-century associations: that women who waltzed were unabashedly sexual, seductive, and downright improper.

While Violetta represents within herself the opposites of vitality and illness, of hope and despair, of love and loss, Puccini’s opera in effect assigns these contrasting characteristics to two personae, the two central women in the narrative. One is Mimì: young, poor, and ill, she falls instantly in love with Rodolfo in the first act and dies quietly in the last. Mimì is very much the 19th-century literary type of the *femme fragile*, who is typically delicate of bearing, beautiful in her sickliness, and sexually innocent. And then there is Musetta: as young as Mimì, but healthy where the latter is sick, robust where Mimì is frail, “pigheaded as the other is sweet,” as Clement aptly puts it.<sup>13</sup> Musetta herself, in the final act of the stage adaptation of Murger’s original novel, articulates succinctly the essential difference between the two women: while both, she says,

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<sup>12</sup> Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

have suffered, “I [have suffered] from an illness that caused me to live, coquetry and pleasure; she [from a fatal illness], love and honesty.”<sup>14</sup>

How, then, is it that Musetta deserves the opera’s only waltz? It is by virtue of precisely that distinction: Musetta is the life force, the embodiment of sexuality, the seductress—everything that 19th-century social critics feared about waltzing women.

It is Rodolfo and Marcello, the two main male characters, who give us a portrait of Musetta, one that reflects not only their opinions but, we understand, the truth of her character. Introducing Musetta, in absentia, to Mimì, Rodolfo says, “Her name is Musetta. Surname: Temptation! She is like a weathervane, always changing her lovers.” Marcello—a former lover of Musetta’s who, having been abandoned by her without pity, clearly has experience on his side—adds, “She eats hearts, and that’s why I have not got one.”

Musetta makes her appearance at the café on Christmas Eve, on the arm of an old man who is one of her supporters. But her duplicity—another form of moral degeneration associated with the waltz—is quickly apparent: her goal is to seduce and regain Marcello, whom she had previously left. Her entrance brings joy, movement, attraction, and powerful sexuality to the gathering: her first utterance is a flirtatious laugh. She tries to attract Marcello’s attention, to make him notice her, even going so far as to smash a plate she claims smells of fat (a show of fastidiousness quite out of character for Musetta). Nothing works, until Musetta plays her trump card: outright seduction. The action freezes as Musetta, center stage, begins her waltz:

When I walk alone down the street people turn and stare at me.  
They survey my beauty from head to toe.

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<sup>14</sup> Henry Murger, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*, ed. Françoise Geisenberger (Paris, 1961), p. 186.

And I enjoy the hidden longing that gleams in their eyes as they imagine the hidden charms beneath my visible attractions.

Surrounded by this cloud of desire, I am so happy.

The sexuality is palpable, as it is nowhere else in the opera, and the message of Musetta's waltz—the music and words in perfect collaboration—is unmistakable: she is extraordinarily beautiful, irresistibly attractive, and unashamedly sexy. As she flirts, changes lovers, flaunts her vitality, she makes it abundantly clear that she is fully aware of who and what she is.

In *Wozzeck*, Berg gives us yet another waltzing woman, Marie, the unfaithful common-law wife of the anti-hero, a miserable ordinary soldier. Berg, we know, composed his opera at the beginning of the 20th century, using the waltz as an idiom, not by quoting from 19th-century waltzes, but by composing new ones in his own atonal language. That he distorts the romantic tonal language of the waltz without distorting the waltz identity is significant; and I believe that the waltz in this instance has a special aesthetic function, an issue I will address in Chapter 5, where I examine waltzes about the waltz.

For the moment, I am concerned instead with still another social convention: if *La traviata* brings to mind the romance and joy of the waltz and the dominance of the male partner in the dance, and *La bohème* its identification with female seductiveness and sexuality, *Wozzeck* gives us female infidelity personified—the waltzing woman as lustful cheat.

Marie is first introduced in Act 1, scene 3: at an open window, she is admiring the soldiers, especially the drum major, who are on parade in the street before her house. At the end of this first act, the drum major has returned to impress her. Falling into his arms, Marie disappears with him into the house, and the curtain descends.

As Act II unfolds, each scene marks another step in Wozzeck's discovery of Marie's infidelity. In Scene 1, Marie is looking at herself in the mirror and admiring the earrings the drum major gave her, when Wozzeck suddenly enters. Marie claims to have found them, but Wozzeck is not convinced. In the following scene, the captain and the doctor, encountering Wozzeck on the street, drop vague hints of Marie's affair with the drum major. By Scene 3, Wozzeck is sufficiently suspicious to imply to Marie that he is aware of what is going on. She pretends not to understand what he is saying. As he becomes more threatening, she becomes more defiant. Finally, in the fourth scene, suspicion turns to conviction, as Wozzeck's intuition about Marie's infidelity is confirmed, when he sees her dancing with the drum major in the tavern. They are, not surprisingly, waltzing together.

While the tavern scene lays bare any number of basic emotions—sadness, anger, jealousy, fear, revenge—all have a common thread and theme: sexuality. As Marie and the drum major pass whirling by, Wozzeck screams:

Everything is wallowing in lust: man and woman, creatures both  
human and animal!

Woman! woman! woman is hot! she is hot!

Then Wozzeck bursts out passionately, adding:

See how he feels her with his hands! Feels her body! And she  
laughs...

The sexuality of the scene is quite explicit in Buchner's text; one is, in fact, struck by the echoes in Wozzeck's words of the comments of 19th-century critics, notably Arndt, whom I cited in Chapter 1, and of Flaubert's description of the effect of the waltz upon his hero in *L'Education sentimentale*.<sup>15</sup> And Berg conveys

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<sup>15</sup> See p. 14 and 15 for these citations.

that sexuality equally in his music, employing the most erotic dance of the previous century.

### STORY BALLET AND THE WALTZ

In the introduction, I discussed the relationship between music and dance, including ballet, and suggested that the former is not an accompaniment, but actually a component of the latter. Not only do sound and movement, or gesture, work together as expressive tools, but, as Carlo Blasis holds, "Ballet music... must, so to speak, supplement [and] clarify for the audience all the mental movements which the dancer or mime artist cannot convey in gestures and the play of physiognomy."<sup>16</sup> Konstantin Skalkovsky, comparing the role of music in ballet and opera in his *Ballet, its History and Place in the Fine Arts*, goes even farther, insisting that

[m]usic alone can give the dancer or mime that fire of expression which words inspire in the singer or actor. Music in ballet must complete in the imagination of the audience everything that is beyond the means of dance and its poses to express. Although pantomime is very expressive in itself, without the melodic sounds of music it too sometimes fails to move the soul.<sup>17</sup>

And Edward Cone puts it most succinctly and emphatically: "Ballet ...should be viewed neither as a musical composition with personified rhythms, nor as a stage work with musical accompaniment, but as a synthesis of two complementary media."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Code of Terpsichore*, p. 189.

<sup>17</sup> Konstantin Skalkovsky, *Balet, ego istoriya i mesto v ryadu izyashchnykh iskusstv* (St. Petersburg, 1882), p. 15; translated in Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets* (Oxford, 1985), p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *The Composer's Voice*, p. 142.

In my discussion of opera and the waltz, I established the association of the waltz with three central women characters and its capacity to reinforce in the listener's ear and mind certain commonly-held biases and prejudices about women who waltz. Now, as I turn my attention to the waltz in 19th-century story ballets, I must begin by noting that the ballet had a very different status than did opera at the time, that women, both as ballerinas and as characters in the ballet, have a different relationship to their art than do women in opera, and that the waltz itself plays a singular role in ballet. Inevitably, therefore, I will take a different approach, but to the same end: to explore the meaning and function of the waltz.

First, 19th-century ballet does not merely have women characters in it: it is dominated by women. This is, partly, the result of the increased acceptance of women as performers. It also, in large measure, owes much to a purely technical development: the introduction of the *pointe*- (or toe-) shoe. As a replacement for the heeled shoes of the 18th-century ballerina and for the "invisible" wires that, since the end of that century, gave women the "trick" of seeming to float across the stage, the *pointe*-shoe's effect upon ballet was transformative:

The trick of stuffing the toe of the slipper with cottonwool enabled ballerinas to perform prodigious feats of brilliance and balance, and to combine them with noiseless leaps and poses to produce an effect of being airborne. The man became little more than a humble porter.<sup>19</sup>

So novel and dramatic was the effect created by the ballerina on *pointe*, it is no wonder that women characters dominated the stories and women dancers the stage in 19th-century ballet. In a standard production of *Swan Lake*, for instance, scores of women—swans, entertainers, prospective fiancées—throng

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Bland, *A History of Ballet and Dance in the Western World* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1976), p. 56.

the stage. Siegfried and a few lone entertainers provide the sole male presence. Likewise, in *Sleeping Beauty*, the fairies, all women, are rarely off-stage.

Second, we must consider the role of the waltz in ballet: to talk about 19th-century ballet is to talk about the waltz. Teliakovskii, the last director of the Imperial Theatre, insisted to the ballet composers that they should include plenty of waltzes in their works if they desired success.<sup>20</sup> Tchaikovsky, on whose works I will focus here, drew upon many dance rhythms in his ballets: from the distinguished history of French classical dance he took the minuet, gavotte, and farandole; his own Russian heritage afforded him a colorful source; he turned to exotic lands for the bolero and the tarantella; and his own imagination, fueled literally and figuratively by tea and coffee, created the Chinese and Arabian dances in *The Nutcracker*. Of all the social dances strains whose rhythms can be heard in Tchaikovsky's ballet music, it is the waltz that dominates and to which he gave an entirely new range of character. His first waltz dates to 1854, when he was fourteen and just beginning to compose. He was still writing waltzes in the last year of his life, when he composed a suite of eighteen pieces including a *Valse à cinqtemps*. The waltz held a perennial delight for him; it was a genre that

he was able to elevate to symphonic status and to which he brought a lyrical intensity that made it a cornerstone of his ballet scores, adaptable to moments of lyrical intensity, to diversion, or the sweeping up all the characters in a General Waltz.<sup>21</sup>

Tchaikovsky's three ballets—two of which I will consider here—include more than twenty waltz scenes, most of them consisting of a chain of several waltzes, with quite a few repeated throughout the individual work.

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<sup>20</sup> Alexandre Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*, trans. by Mary Britnieva (London: Putnam, 1977), p. 226.

<sup>21</sup> John Warrack, *Tchaikovsky Ballet Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corp., 1979), p. 13.

Since the waltz is so closely associated with women, it is only natural that a performance medium, the ballet, which is dominated by women, would be full of waltzes. Thus contrast with opera is marked: with so many women and so many waltzes, it would be difficult—if not impossible—to argue for any special meaning attached to a particular waltz in relation to a specific female character.

Since the specialness of the waltz itself has been decreased by its prevalence, Tchaikovsky, in his ballets, alters or distorts the waltz's musical conventions to signal the listener/viewer of the ballet to a significant turn of events: he sets the waltz themes in 4/4, intersperses non-waltz fragments within a waltz, or simply mutes the waltz's effect—either setting it too fast or removing the um-pah-pah accompaniment. The majority of Russian critics hold that, since Tchaikovsky is applying symphonic principles to ballet music, a large-scale structure can be assumed in his ballets. Boris Asafiev characterized "symphonism" as "the continuity of the music current."<sup>22</sup> The coherence of the ballet is maintained as it goes along by the principle of "through-development"; that is to say, the score is continuously responsive to the narrative and to the emotional states of the characters. Zhitomirskii considered Tchaikovsky "the most significant reformer in the history of ballet music" because he first "connected the music with the subject of the action, with its images, development, with the general style of the piece."<sup>23</sup> This seems to me the salient feature of Tchaikovsky's ballet music, and I will demonstrate how this connectedness of the music with the subject of the action is revealed in the composer's manipulation of the waltz idiom.

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Zhitomirskii, *Balety Chaikovskogo* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1957), p. 28 (translation by Ahu Öztürkmen).

The waltz itself is extraordinarily versatile, enabling it to adapt to different forms and different media without sacrificing its character and meaning as waltz. With all that flexibility, however, the waltz, more than anything else, is a metric genre: we recognize it by its 3/4 meter expressed in the accompaniment. This is crucial: with a change in the meter of a melody—a shift from 3/4 to 4/4, for instance—all sense of waltzness is lost, and the social, musical, and emotional connotations the waltz ordinarily carries are erased. It is the 3/4 meter of the waltz that lends it its specific power to communicate meaning. But once heard in a waltz, a theme can be transmuted, appearing later in another meter, while recalling its original significance. Tchaikovsky does just that, using the modification of a waltz theme—heard first in 3/4 and associated with certain feelings or with a particular character—into 4/4 in order to alert the listener to a turn in the plot or shift in the character's attitude or mood. It is the musical change that prepares the audience for a dramatic and emotional change.

Two examples from Tchaikovsky's first ballet, *Swan Lake*, aptly illustrate this effect. The first of these occurs early in the ballet, which opens with one of the most famous of Tchaikovsky's waltzes. We are at the birthday celebration of Prince Siegfried, who is entertaining himself by drinking with his friends while the peasants, men and women alike, participate in the celebration by dancing. Here, the entire corps de ballet waltzes. The themes of joy, freedom, and carefree existence, of which this waltz is so expressive with its jumping peasants and drinking guests, are fundamental to our understanding of the narrative. Frivolity and high spirits will shortly be replaced by seriousness and high drama, even tragedy, and the listener must fully grasp the spirit of the ballet's opening in order to appreciate its loss.

Suddenly, the wild entertainment is interrupted by the arrival of the Queen, the Prince's mother, who has come to order her son to put an end to his

gay and irresponsible life: he must choose a wife at the ball that will be held for this express purpose on the following day. Not only does the Queen quite literally interrupt the entertainment by telling Siegfried that he must choose a wife and marry, she interrupts his pleasant way of life. And her arrival puts an end to the joyous emotions of the opening of the ballet as surely and abruptly as it stops the waltz.

But we have not quite heard the end of this waltz. In Act II, Siegfried encounters Odette, a princess who was turned into a swan by a curse. She and her maidens, likewise under a spell, can keep their human form only during the evening. She explains to the Prince that it will require a man who is fully and deeply committed to her, who promises to love her and, more to the point, keeps his promises, to break the spell. Siegfried, altogether smitten, gives his word to her: he is that man, and he will save her and her maidens. We should not be entirely surprised that here, in the refrain of Odette's introduction, we hear a correspondence with the theme of the peasants' waltz (see Example 3/4a, 4b).

Example 3/4: Tchaikovsky, *Swan Lake*.

a) Peasants' waltz, Act I.

18

vlns.

pns.

vcl., cb. 8vb

23

vlns.

pns.

vcl., cb. 8vb

## b) Odette's introduction, Act II.

Iurii Slonimskii, in his *Swan Lake*, notes this recurrence and points out its connection to the narrative, explaining:

On the one hand the [peasant's] waltz characterizes the life of the hero, full of carefree diversions... . And it is not accidental in the first dialogue of Odette and Siegfried to hear melodic turns of the waltz expounded anew. Would the composer have sought a connection of something which, it would seem, is not related? Already in the waltz the composer prepared Siegfried's break with the courtly circle and the meeting with Odette.<sup>24</sup>

Roland Wiley, in contrast, has strong doubts about this explanation. He writes, in his comprehensive study, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, that he does not believe that the attempt to connect the related situations in the story "by means of a shared musical idea produces convincing results":

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<sup>24</sup> Iurii Slonimskii, *"Lebedinoe ozero" P. Chaikovskogo* (Leningrad: Gos. muzykal, 1962), pp. 16-17 (translation by Ahu Öztürkmen).

The distinction between dance and narrative inferred thus from the libretto has important choreographic and musical consequences. Narrative and dance in *Swan Lake* are comparable to recitative and aria in Metastasian opera, where action progresses in recitative and gives way to reflection in the aria. Dances are the arias of *Swan Lake*—moments of choreographic reflection or the elaboration of a thought, related to the narrative but during which the story ceases to move forward. Slonimsky, arguing for a connection between the peasants' waltz and Odette's narration, takes no account of the fact that the first is a dance and the second an action scene. Because a dance is involved, his conclusion, which proceeds from the hypothesis that all the music of *Swan Lake* is relevant to the narrative, is weakened if not invalidated by the libretto....<sup>25</sup>

These conflicting points of view are worth elaboration; and I have reservations with both critics' interpretations. Wiley's argument—that Slonimskii's assumption of a connection, with inherent dramatic meaning, between the first waltz and Odette's recitative is, in effect, a comparison of apples and oranges—rests on his recognition of a duality between a dance called for by the plot and a dance that advances the plot and reveals the character.<sup>26</sup> The peasants' dance, however, is not merely a *divertissement*, it has, as I explained earlier, at least as important a role in establishing mood, character, and narrative theme. It can, therefore, usefully be understood to have a meaningful connection to Odette's recitative and to the plot development.

Although I am in accord with Slonimskii with respect to the presence and meaning of this connection, I believe there is a basic fallacy in the development of his interpretation. Slonimskii argues that the waltz *prepares* for Siegfried's break with his society and for his meeting with Odette. While this may, indeed,

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<sup>25</sup> *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, p. 64.

<sup>26</sup> Wiley's categories of "dance" and "action" correspond to Edward Cone's categories of "realistic" and "artistic" (See Cone's *The Composer's Voice*, pp. 140-143). However, the distinction is not meaningful, especially in ballet, where a dance in a ballroom scene or a celebration is often of special dramatic significance.

be the composer's intention, on first hearing the waltz and being introduced to the musical and narrative themes the listener cannot possibly perceive a connection that is yet to be made. The waltz theme has no anticipatory effect, it would be perceived as just a joyous waltz for its own sake. Ballet, after all, is performed; it unfolds in time, and part of its hold on the audience lies in the immediacy of their emotional response—precisely in their not being able to anticipate the developments in the plot. Only when we hear Odette's recitative are we in a position to recognize the theme: now, in retrospect, we mentally revisit this theme and reinterpret it as a foreshadowing of the events that follow and as an establishing motive for the narrative. To the extent that genre can—and should—be understood rhetorically, and that its effect upon the audience is significant to the interpretation of an example of that genre, any interpretation that ignores the listener's perspective is incomplete.

The significance of this issue lies not in the fact of the recurrence of the peasant's waltz theme, but in the nature of its distortion in Odette's recitative. The key and the mode of the latter are different, and the melody occurs at a different scale step. But these are comparatively minor alterations to the waltz theme: the dramatic (in every sense of the word) distortion is the change of meter to 4/4—and this is not accidental at all. As I understand its implications, the joy and the happiness created and conveyed by the first waltz, and by the very fact of a birthday celebration, are gone, banished by the Queen. In their place we and Siegfried have only a happy memory. But where the Queen's insistence that her son choose a wife and marry puts an end to his merry lifestyle, his meeting with Odette—though his love for her recalls his earlier joy—will eventually put an end to his life. In effect, Odette's recitative reminds the listener of the waltz, but waltzing days are over.

The other instance of a 3/4 to 4/4 shift occurs in Act III, significantly in the ball scene, anticipated in the plot of Act I, but altered in its meaning and course by the events of Act II. The plot line of the third act is impelled by deception, decision, and, ultimately, revelation. At the ball, six eligible princesses are invited to dance—in fact, to waltz—so that Siegfried can make his choice (see Example 3/5). Siegfried, already in love with Odette, is unimpressed by and unattracted to any of the prospective fiancées. But before the night is over, his disinterest turns to rapture: Rothbart, the magician who cursed Odette, enters with Odile, the black swan, whose resemblance to Odette is so powerful that Siegfried is utterly deceived. He believes this is his beloved.

Example 3/5: Tchaikovsky, *Swan Lake*, The waltz of the prospective fiancées Act III.

14: Tempo di valse

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes staves for violin I, violin II/viola/horn, clarinet, and cello/bass. The second system continues the same instrumentation. The tempo is marked 'Tempo di valse' and the time signature is 3/4. The key signature has two flats. The music features a waltz-like melody in the upper staves and a steady, rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staves.

When the magician and his accomplice enter the ball room, we hear the 4/4 version of the fiancées' waltz theme, now associated with Odile. Her treachery is foreshadowed here, on her first appearance, by the opening music,

with its modification of the waltz into 4/4. Significantly, the listener is alerted to her deception by the distortion of the waltz: Odile's outward appearance makes her a twin to Odette, but her true nature is a distortion of Odette's goodness. Siegfried, on the other hand, is fully deceived. It is as though he hears only the waltz theme, with its connotations of love and joy, and not the change in its meter and meaning (see Example 3/6).

**Example 3/6:** Tchaikovsky, *Swan Lake*, Odile's entrance, Act III

Following a divertissement at the ball, Siegfried announces to the assembled company that he has chosen his future wife: he will marry Odile/Odette. He invites her to dance with him, and both his declaration and his invitation are set, again, to the 4/4 version of the fiancées' waltz (see Example 3/7). It is significant that both cruxes of Act III are marked by this version. Two moments of truth, two deceptions: Odile deceives, Siegfried is deceived; she presents an opportunity for the wrong decision, and Siegfried makes it.

Example 3/7: Tchaikovsky, *Swan Lake*, Dance of Siegfried and Odile, Act III.

It is important to note that, until Odile's entrance, the audience and Siegfried are of one mind, so to speak: he knows what we know. From this point on, however, we have knowledge to which he is not privy: that this is not Odette and that, in declaring his intention to marry Odile, he has broken his word to Odette and sealed both their fates. Even had the gestural language and accouterments of the ballet not made clear the importance of his decisions and the difference between his awareness and ours, the music would be sufficient. There is no new theme introduced to distinguish the interaction of Siegfried and Odile. She enters to the distorted waltz theme, he courts her with that same distortion. But by the time they dance to the original, undistorted version, we know that everything has, in fact, tragically changed.

Reference to and distortion of a previously-heard waltz is just one of Tchaikovsky's manipulation of the genre. Another, more elaborated type of manipulation is exemplified in the Act II love duet of Odette and Siegfried. As he declares his devotion, promising to love her forever and thus break the spell, the duet starts with a slow 6/8 theme played by the violin (see Example 3/8)

Example 3/8: Tchaikovsky, *Swan Lake*, Love Duet, Act II.

26 + 1

vin. con sord. *p* *con molta espressione*

2

harp *p*

The lyrical melody is interrupted by a quicker section marked by 16th notes, where all the swans join in the dance (see Example 3/9).

Example 3/9: Love Duet, Act II.

27 Più mosso

obs., clar. *pp*

hns.

via., vcl. pizz.



This is followed by a 6/8 section—faster than the first theme but slower than the second—which now fully establishes all the characteristics of the waltz. Whereas in the first 6/8 section the accompaniment emphasizes the duple division of the measure, now we hear the accompaniment emphasizing the triple division of each beat of the 6/8 measure by means of um-pah-pah (see Example 3/10).

Example 3/10: Love Duet, Act II.

Moreover, the fling in the waltz melody is very noticeable, and in Petipa's choreography, these flings serve as impetus for Siegfried's swinging lifts of Odette, a distinctly waltz-like effect. However, this waltzing is twice interrupted by the quicker 16th-note section. Following the second interruption, the opening violin theme, with its slow tempo and unwaltz-like accompaniment, returns to form a duet between violin and cello. The whole episode eventually resolves into a 2/4 allegro theme that brings the duet of Siegfried and Odette to an end.

As she dances, Odette's joy is abundantly evident: happiness and her eventual liberation from the curse would seem to be as close at hand as Siegfried himself. That the two dance a duet, and that it is a waltz, appears to confirm her optimism. However, the frequent interruption of the lyrical waltz theme by the quicker, detached 16th-note texture implies an interruption of her joy. The music of the duet is not seamless, and we have intimations that her hopes will similarly be broken. Moreover, the entire duet promotes a series of chromatic modulations. Starting in E-flat minor, it modulates, during the course of the 16th-note section, to E major, a key very distant from the original. The ensuing waltz-like section, with its flings, then sets off a series of modulations to F-sharp minor, B-flat major, and D-flat major. Although the first and the last sections of the duet are both in the key of E-flat minor, the distance traveled from key to key during the duet suggests alarm, a sudden shift of fortune, and a warning of tragedy to come.

As a means of marking a significant or anticipatory turn in the narrative, Tchaikovsky also applies these twists to the musical characteristics of the waltz in *Sleeping Beauty*, notably in Aurora's dance at her birthday party. Aurora, as the audience would have known well from the original fairy tale, had been cursed on the day of her christening by the wicked fairy, Carabosse: she is fated to prick her finger on a spindle one day and die. The Lilac Fairy has intervened, however, transforming and muting the curse from death to a long sleep, from which Aurora will be awakened after a hundred years by the kiss of a young Prince. Understandably, spindles were thereafter strictly forbidden in the palace. The events of the ballet are set in motion when, on Aurora's birthday, an old woman offers her a spindle wound with colored thread. She carelessly accepts the gift and begins to dance.

Although her dance starts in 2/4, it soon changes to 3/4. As Aurora begins to spin with joy, holding the spindle with its bouquet of colored threads, the music turns into a waltz whose theme derives from the beginning 2/4 section (see Example 3/11).

Example 3/11: Tchaikovsky, *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora's dance, Act II

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 3/11. The first system, starting at measure 355, features three staves: strings (strs.), woodwinds (wwds.), and cello/bass (cb.). The strings play a melodic line with a slur over four measures. The woodwinds and cello/bass parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns. The second system, starting at measure 359, continues the same musical material, showing the repetition of the string melody and the woodwind/cello/bass accompaniment.

As the spinning of her movements and the spinning nature of the waltz coincide, the impression is one of visual and aural endlessness, as though both would continue, effortlessly, forever. However, the second sub-phrase of the waltz theme no longer promotes a sensation of spinning, but of being stuck in place. The music is literally so, for a 6-bar passage during which the same fragment is repeated, the hiccuping effect of the chain of syncopations and the absence of an um-pah-pah making it sound like a broken record (see Example 12).



The image shows a musical score for measures 419 through 424. It consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef and begins with a measure rest followed by a few notes. The second staff is also in treble clef and contains a complex melodic line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, some beamed together. The third staff is in treble clef and contains a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The bottom staff is in bass clef and provides a bass line with chords and moving lines. A dynamic marking 'f' (fortissimo) is placed below the bass staff around measure 422. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Aurora, paying no attention to the interruption of the music's spinning nature, its waltzness, keeps dancing and turning. Eventually, at m. 425, the waltz is restated. However, at m. 435, the music becomes stuck in place once more. This time, Aurora has pricked her finger. During the 8-bar passage she spins faster and faster in place, finally collapsing to the ground at the final fortissimo (see Example 3/13).

With Aurora's dance, Tchaikovsky once more, powerfully, reveals the joyful and happy meaning of the waltz for him: being aware of Aurora's fate, he is unwilling to set her a waltz, a feeling which he expresses with a 2/4 opening to the dance. Aurora, however, a joyful birthday girl who whirls even with the two-beat music, pushes the composer to provide one. Her waltz, however, does not last long. Although Tchaikovsky, at measures 419 through 424, warns her what is to come, she, overwhelmed with joy and happiness resists to stop until she finally collapses.

Example 3/13: *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora's Waltz, Act II.

436 vlns., vla, fl. *cresc.*

hns. *mf* cb., clar. *cresc.*

vcl., cb. *cresc.*

441 vcl., cb. *ff*

In this chapter, naturally, I limited myself to Tchaikovsky's perception of the waltz and his technique of manipulation in the story ballets. But Tchaikovsky did not limit himself with his narrative works; he skillfully employed this technique to express his own story in his later works, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### Liberation from the Steps: The concert waltzes

In chapter 2, I established the essential choreographic movements that constitute the waltz as a dance and discussed the reflection of these features in the music composed for dancing. The waltzing couple, for example, forms a small six-step circle; repetitions of this small circle form a large circle around the ballroom. Thus, a “good” waltz should demonstrate this circularity on both small and large scales, so as to guide the dancers and motivate the dance.

I have also repeatedly emphasized the importance of understanding the waltz as music in the context of the dance; indeed, one cannot be abstracted from the other. What, then, does this mean for the composer who writes a waltz not for dancing? After all, that composer has no responsibility to dancers and no obligation to consider whether the music is too fast for dancing or whether each two-measure grouping corresponds to the sequence of waltz steps. And many such composers do, indeed, free themselves from the requirements of the dance by choosing fast tempi, alternating the typical waltz accompaniment with contrapuntal textures, or placing silent measures in a piece. But however free they may be from the dictates of the dance, composers of concert waltzes still should be—as most are—aware that they are writing within a dance genre.

What we find in these compositions, in fact, is not necessarily the elimination of characteristic waltz features, but their refinement: Chopin, for instance, writes a one-bar “2-against-3” and continues it for 32 measures, while Brahms permits simple repetition to give way to developing variations. The liberation of these composers from the physical constraints of the dance and

dancers similarly liberates their imagination, allowing them to emphasize certain characteristics of the waltz idea and to elaborate on it with great sophistication.

It is no easy matter to choose composers and compositions for a chapter on instrumental waltzes of the 19th century. The sheer quantity is daunting: almost all 19th-century composers wrote some waltzes, and a number of them wrote many. These waltzes appear in several forms: as movements of symphonies (such as those by Tchaikovsky, and Berlioz), as a number in character pieces (Schumann's *Papillons*, *Carnaval* and *Albumblätter*, for example), or as a volume of waltzes for piano (Schubert's, Chopin's and Brahms's come to mind).

At the same time, one of the most prominent changes of the 19th century was the rapid growth of music-making centered on the piano in the middle-class home. Indeed, the pianistic revolution played as great a part in salons as in the public concert hall, encouraging the development of short compositions, such as dance pieces and character pieces. I have therefore chosen to scrutinize waltzes by two of the greatest pianists of the century: Chopin, who was very familiar with the Viennese ballroom waltzes and who, in fact, strongly disliked them (see below); and Brahms, who, in contrast, was a true admirer of two native Viennese composers, Schubert and Strauss, Jr.

Tchaikovsky, the third composer I will consider, offers us a different perspective. Among 19th-century orchestral waltzes, Tchaikovsky's occupy a special place. In addition to his famous ballet waltzes, Tchaikovsky employed the genre three times in his symphonies. Here, I will concentrate particularly on the second movement of his Symphony No. 6, the *Pathétique*. This movement, with its 5/4 meter, not only exemplifies a qualitative metrical change to the dance, but also, as I read it, gives us insight into the meaning of the waltz for Tchaikovsky.

## CHOPIN

We have two first-person accounts of Chopin's attitude toward the Viennese waltz and two of its composers, Lanner and Strauss, Sr. The first, a letter written to his family from Vienna on the Wednesday before Christmas 1830, describes the "hotel evenings," one of the most popular pleasures of mid-19th-century Vienna: "During supper Strauss or Lanner play waltzes... After every waltz they get huge applause; and if they play a Quodlibet, or jumble of opera, song and dance, the hearers are so overjoyed that they don't know what to do with themselves. It shows the corrupt taste of the Viennese public."<sup>1</sup>

A little less than a month later, on 26 January 1831, Chopin wrote to Joseph Elsner, again deploring the waltz craze in Vienna: "Here, waltzes are called works! And Strauss and Lanner, who play them for dancing, are called *Kapellmeistern*." He adds, "This does not mean that everyone thinks like that; indeed, nearly everyone laughs about it; but only waltzes get printed."<sup>2</sup>

Chopin's open contempt did not, however, constrain him from composing waltzes of his own. In fact, he wrote and published 14 waltzes, some—including Op. 18 and part of Op. 64—during that same visit to Vienna. In Chopin's waltzes, we see obvious alterations to several essential features of the Viennese waltz. The first and most obvious of these are the *tempi* of his waltzes; and in fact, the very abundance of tempo indications within a single piece—*accelerando*, *sostenuto*, *piu mosso*, and *piu lento*—is just one sign of the extent to which Chopin

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<sup>1</sup> Henryk Opienski, *Chopin's Letters*, trans. by E. L. Voynich, 2nd ed. (New York: Vienna House, 1971), p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

has shaken off the requirements of dancers. Even more striking, we find that only one of his waltzes, Op. 69, no. 1, in the autograph version, is marked as *Tempo di Valse*. Apart from a couple of waltzes in *Tempo giusto* and *Moderato*, all of Chopin's other waltzes are either too fast—*vivace*, even *molto vivace*— or too slow—*lento*—for dancing. We occasionally see another alteration in the liberty Chopin takes with the typical accompaniment figure, interrupting it or placing completely silent measures in the pieces.

The absence of certain established characteristics of the waltz—the constant um-pah-pah or steady tempo—is not, however, especially meaningful to my discussion. Rather, a full appreciation of Chopin's waltzes as the development and refinement of the waltz tradition depends on something far more sophisticated: Chopin's elaboration of the true essence of the waltz—its intoxicating, repetitive circularity.

The refinement and elaboration of the waltz idea in Chopin's waltzes reveal themselves on two levels: on the large scale, which concerns the form, and on the small which I identify with what I call motivic circularity.

The formal aspects of Chopin's waltzes have received considerable attention from scholars. For Mosco Carner, they are either in ternary form, rounded off by a coda, or, as in the Viennese dance waltzes, a string of different waltzes.<sup>3</sup> Jim Samson called them "a parade of contrasting tunes, alternating lyrical and figurative types."<sup>4</sup> Paul Hamburger identifies the organization of Chopin's waltzes as "potpourri," a series of fragmentary waltzes.<sup>5</sup> On the other

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<sup>3</sup> Mosco Carner, *The Waltz* (New York: Chanticleer, 1948), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Hamburger, "Mazurkas, Waltzes, Polonaises" in *Chopin Companion*, ed. by Alan Walker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 87.

hand Schenker, in his remarks on Chopin's Op. 34, No. 1, rejects the idea of the fragmentary waltz. He claims that "Chopin actually combines three short waltzes into a higher unity by means of an arpeggiation. What appears to be a loose assemblage in the manner of a potpourri reveals itself, when correctly understood, to be a tightly organized whole."<sup>6</sup>

Chopin seems to have borrowed the main idea for the formal framework of his waltzes from the Viennese dance waltzes, the majority of which consist of a series of waltzes framed with an introduction—however brief—and a coda. Some very short waltzes, with no introduction and coda—such as Op. 69, nos. 1 and 2, with their ternary form—are almost like a single waltz of a series.

In a typical Viennese chain of waltzes, no single section within each waltz is presented in its entirety less than two times (if one allows for the repeat signs in the score). The overall form is as follows:

Intro, ABBA CDDC EFFE GHHG IJJI, coda

Sometimes, the first section of each waltz—A, C, E, G, and I in the example above—is repeated immediately, making the pattern AABBA, CCDDC, EEFEE, and so forth. The form of these waltzes very obviously reflects the repetitive and circular characteristics of the dance.

But in Viennese chain-waltzes, formal repetition and circularity are specifically sectional. For instance, in *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*, once the first waltz ends, neither of the two themes of this waltz is heard again until the coda, where the fragments of all the waltzes appear; it is instead followed by the second waltz which offers a different set of themes in ternary form. In other words, there is no continuation of formal circularity.

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<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *The Masterworks in Music: A Yearbook*, vol 2, trans. by William Drabkin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 7.

Chopin, on the other hand, by employing a form that strongly resembles the classical rondo in some of his waltzes, clearly emphasizes the idea of circularity and repetition of the waltz. In the rondo form, as the term “rondo”—coming around—signifies, the same section or theme, the *refrain*, is heard many times during the course of the entire piece.<sup>7</sup> In his Op. 42—the clearest example of this—Chopin follows the 8-bar introduction with thirteen sections of statements and restatements of five distinct themes. The outline of the Op. 42 reads as follows:

Intro	A	B	C	B	D
	9-40	41-56	57-72	73-88	89-104
	B	E	B	A	B
	105-20,	121-64	165-80	181-212	213-28
	D	B'	A'		
	229-60	261-276	277		

The resemblance to the rondo is very striking. First, the exact recurrence of certain material (See Example 4/1), alternating throughout the piece with new material, follows the basic refrain-episode structure of the rondo. Second, like a ring, the rondo describes a complete circle: it concludes by returning to its starting point. But Chopin also modifies the classical rondo: he alters the position of the refrain, circulating not the first theme, but the second. While this preserves the rondo's emphasis on repetition, it requires an additional

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<sup>7</sup> In fact one of the explanations of the origin of the rondo is that it was first a dance, the music to which was sung while the performers danced in a circle. See Stewart Macpherson, *Form in Music* (London: Joseph Williams, 1930), p. 107; Wallace Berry, *Form in Music*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), p. 169.

modification with respect to the end. The classical rondo both begins and ends with the refrain; had Chopin ended his piece with the refrain, which is the second theme, he would have made a qualitative change to the rondo's structure and betrayed its circular characteristic. Instead, he carefully brings back the opening theme in the last thirteen measures and meticulously closes the circle.

Example 4/1: Chopin, Op. 42, mm. 41-56.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Chopin's Op. 42, measures 41 through 56. The music is written for piano in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The first system (measures 41-45) features a right-hand melody with a long slur and a left-hand accompaniment of chords and single notes. The second system (measures 46-51) continues the right-hand melody with similar phrasing and the left-hand accompaniment. The third system (measures 52-56) concludes the piece, showing the right-hand melody returning to a form similar to the beginning and ending with a final cadence in the left hand.

Chopin's treatment of the rondo in Op. 42 has an interesting precedent in Weber's *Aufforderung zum Tanz: Rondo Brillant*, composed sixteen years earlier. It is worth a small digression here to examine the special place this piece occupied in the history of the waltz. Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*—to use the popular English title—is the first known waltz composed exclusively for concerts, for listening only; and its dimensions are new: at more than 400 measures, it exceeds

in length the longest of Chopin's waltzes. It is innovative, too, in its large-scale introduction and its synthesizing coda, both of which exerted a particular influence on the symphonic introductions of Johann Strauss.

What makes the piece especially interesting, however, is that it is a concert waltz with a program. According to annotations contained in the dedication copy that Weber gave to his bride, the introduction illustrates a dancer approaching a lady with the intention of leading her off to dance.<sup>8</sup> After the lady has flirted with him a little, she consents to his advances, and the chain of waltzes commences. Weber's written program for the rest of the piece spells out what the composition is: a chain of ballroom waltzes. The listener, for whom the waltzes are composed, is encouraged by the composer's notes to imagine the couple dancing. This dual function—waltz as both dance and music composed for listening—is reflected in the form of the piece as well. And this is what makes *Invitation to the Dance* particularly pertinent to my discussion here.

Weber alters the classical rondo form by combining it with the form of the early Viennese ballroom waltzes—small waltzes with no formal connection—and thus follows no previously existing scheme. In all, there are eight distinct, brief waltzes, one of which, the first, serves as a refrain during the piece. It is entirely possible that Chopin had Weber's composition in mind when writing Op. 42. In fact, yet another modification to the rondo form was introduced by Weber and entirely adopted by Chopin: a modification in key scheme aimed at better expressing the waltz idea. In the classical rondo, the refrain is always in the tonic key, while the episodes are normally in non-tonic keys. From this tonal contrast between the refrain and the episodes the form receives its energy and maintains

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<sup>8</sup> Silvain Guignard, *Frédéric Chopins Walzer*, Sammlung musikwissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen, 70 (Baden Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1986), p. 27, translation by Carl Skoggard.

its balance. As Charles Rosen points out, "Material presented outside the tonic must have created...a feeling of instability which demanded to be resolved."<sup>9</sup> The resolution of this instability is achieved by the several restatements of the refrain in the tonic key throughout compositions. In Weber's piece, however, the contrast between episodes and the refrain is softened: only 58 measures out of 418 are in non-tonic keys. Seven of the eight waltzes, including the refrain, are presented in D major, the main key of the piece. Chopin takes this even further: in his Op. 42, there is no key other than A-flat major throughout the refrain and all the episodes. Chopin provides us with no contrast, no instability, and no resolution; instead there is constant repetition that promotes continual circling until the very end.

Chopin elaborates the idea of circularity at the motivic level as well. As I have remarked before, the waltz is, more than anything else, a metric genre. The established 3/4 meter is crucial for the dancer, as it is for the listeners' perception of the waltz. Paradoxically, by manipulating the established 3/4 meter of the waltz, Chopin magnifies the repetitive and circular character of the dance. This phenomenon is one of the most striking features of the Chopin waltzes: the repetition of the 8th-note motives in a circular manner creates cross-rhythm in which the pattern-beginning accent contradicts the regular pattern of accents in the prevailing meter.

I demonstrated this phenomenon briefly in my discussion in Chapter 2 of the *Minute Waltz*, in which Chopin combines the melodic winding-up with a hemiola in order to create a sense of acceleration. His Op. 34, no. 3, the F major waltz, offers us another good example of cross-rhythm. Here, a 16-measure

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), pp. 72-73. See also Cone, *Musical Form and Performance*, p. 77.

introduction is divided into two sections: the first 8 measures establish the dominant harmony with repeated dominant seventh chords; the second 8-measure section, which consists only of the right hand with 8th-notes, has a rising register and crescendo, giving it the function of a “wind up” section (see Example 4/2).

Example 4/2: Chopin, Op. 34, no. 3, mm. 9-23.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, starting at measure 9, features a right-hand melody of eighth notes with a crescendo and dynamic markings of *sf* and *p*. The second system, starting at measure 15, shows the right hand continuing the eighth-note melody while the left hand plays a steady accompaniment of chords. The third system, starting at measure 21, shows the final measures of the section.

The cross-rhythms in this section can be perceived in at least two ways: if we consider the first three notes as the main motive—a double neighbor-note figure—the remainder of the wind-up section sounds in 6/8 (see Example 4/3a). But this rotating and ascending double neighbor-note motive might also be perceived as a series of “free floating” ascending thirds (See Example 4/3b).

Example 4/3: Chopin, Op. 34, no. 3, ascending thirds, mm. 9-10.

a)



b)



When, at measure 17, the winding-up ends and the waltz proper starts, Chopin reverses thirds and descends. This time, however, the thirds are metrically structured. By means of the addition of a skip at the end of the descending thirds, Chopin extends them to four 8th-note figures, creating a hemiola that, excluding the cadential measures, lasts for the entire 32-measure section (see Example 4/4).

Example 4/4: Chopin, Op. 34, no. 3, descending thirds, mm. 17-19.



Another kind of metric freedom is evident in Op. 42, where the first note of each group of three 8th-notes, the two highest notes in each measure, divides the melody into two beats, creating simultaneous duple and triple meters between two hands (see Example 4/5). Chopin is a master of metric disposition between two hands; it is hardly surprising that his waltzes are no exception to his skillful practice.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In his etudes, Op. 25/2 and the F-minor opus posthumous present a few examples.

Example 4/5: Chopin, Op. 42, mm. 9-10.



## BRAHMS

Notwithstanding his disdain for the archetypal Viennese ballroom waltz, Chopin adapted its form—the chain of waltzes with an introduction and coda—and refined it by elaborating on its essence. Brahms, on the other hand, was a great admirer of Strauss, but though his waltz cycles adopt the Schubertian style, a series of small, individual waltzes without introduction or coda. Chief among these compositions are three sets of waltzes: *Waltzes*, op. 39, the *Liebeslieder* *Waltzes*, Op. 52, and the *Neue Liebeslieder* *Waltzes*, Op. 65. All the *Liebeslieder* waltzes were originally scored for vocal quartet and piano four-hand, settings of simple love-songs from Georg Friedrich Daumer's *Polydora*, with the exception of the last song of Op. 65, the text of which is by Goethe. Although Brahms later arranged them for four-hand piano only (Op. 52a and Op. 65a), their composition is inextricably associated with a text. And since a full understanding of these waltzes would require consideration of text and music equally, they are beyond the scope and purpose of my analysis here. I will therefore confine my discussion to Op. 39.

Brahms's Op. 39 is unlike the other waltzes I have examined thus far in that several of the differences between them and the Viennese ballroom waltz are immediately and unmistakably evident. Brahms wrote not for the ballroom, with its large orchestra, but for private salons in which, as I noted earlier, the

piano was a standard feature. Unlike the ballroom waltzes, Op. 39 consists of a series of short and independent waltzes; there is no introduction, no coda, and no bridge section. Moreover, in most of these short waltzes Brahms eliminates the characteristic waltz accompaniment: he employs the continuous um-pah-pah in only five of the 16 pieces.

As with Chopin, Brahms's elimination of these features does not in itself constitute the major source of innovation in the work. It is true, however, that the lack of continuous accompaniment would have impaired the essential "waltzness" of Op. 39, had Brahms not simultaneously heightened and elaborated another characteristic and prominent feature: repetition. More to the point, Brahms, as I will demonstrate shortly, does not simply use exact repetition, as do the Viennese waltz masters for the most part, but rather employs the technique of developing variation. In doing so, he not only demonstrates loyalty to the genre and homage to its masters, but modifies the characteristic repetition to suit the function of the piece: one that is to be heard without dancing. In other words, Brahms's modifications and variations of the genre achieve an aesthetic refinement that would be appreciated by his intended audience.

In Chapter 2, I argued that repetition, a characteristic feature of music in general, is particularly prominent and significant in the waltz, both as a dance and as music. Brahms's use of repetition has been a particular subject of scholarly analysis. But, curiously, his transformation of this characteristic by means of developing variation has not been examined with respect to his waltzes. Schoenberg, who identified this procedure, analyzed numerous Brahms works to clarify the technique.<sup>11</sup> His interest was limited almost exclusively to

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of developing variation and Schoenberg's analyses of Brahms' works appear in a number of Schoenberg's writings: *Style and Idea*; see

the level of the individual theme, which is formed by the continuous modification of the intervallic and/or rhythmic components of an initial motive. The intervals are created by such procedures as inversion and combination, the rhythms by such devices as augmentation and displacement. He formulates the technique most characteristically in his essay "Linear Counterpoint" by saying "Whatever happens in a piece of music is nothing but the endless reshaping of a basic shape."<sup>12</sup> The absence of any Brahms waltz from Schoenberg's consideration is surprising: one would think that the waltz, a short piece whose essence is repetition, would have been an obvious and excellent object for his study of the "endless reshaping of a basic shape."

Schoenberg's followers extended his analysis and its scope beyond the level of the individual theme by examining the interaction between the developing variation and large-scale organizations such as the sonata form.<sup>13</sup> From their point of view and for their purposes, a small form, such as the waltz, does not offer the necessary formal sophistication to demonstrate the principles they wish to elucidate.

For my purpose, however, Brahms's waltzes are especially interesting, since they contain both the repetition that is essential to the genre and the

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also, *Johannes Brahms: Klavierquartett G-Moll, Op. 25, für Orchester gesetzt*, ed. Rudolf Stephan (Vienna: Universal, 1972); Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London: Faber, 1967). See also Rainer Wilke, *Brahms, Reger, Schönberg Streichquartette: Motivisch-thematische Prozesse und formale Gestalt* (Hamburg: Wagner, 1980); Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley and London: University of California, 1984).

<sup>12</sup> Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, p. 290.

<sup>13</sup> See Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. by Anne Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury, 1973); Arno G Mitschka, *Der Sonatensatz in den Werken von Johannes Brahms* (Ph. D. Diss., University of Mainz, 1961), trans. in Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, pp. 24-26.

developing variation that was Brahms's stylistic hallmark. A particularly interesting example is the first waltz of Op. 39, in B Major (see Example 4/6).

Example 4/6: Brahms, Op. 39, no. 1

The image displays a musical score for Brahms's Op. 39, no. 1, consisting of four systems of piano accompaniment. Each system is written for a grand piano, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is B major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system shows the initial measures, including an anacrusis. The second system begins at measure 7, the third at measure 13, and the fourth at measure 19. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The piece concludes with a double bar line and two first endings, labeled '1' and '2'.

The first four notes of the piece, three of them belonging to the anacrusis, present a set of intervals—a fourth, fifth, sixth, second and a third—that are used over and over in various orders, serving to shape the melody of the entire piece (see Example 4/7). The first two measures consist of skips of 6ths and 4ths—



b) Johann Strauss, Sr., *Trompeten Walzer*, Op. 13/2.

In Op. 39, No. 3, Brahms combines exact repetition on the rhythmic level with developing variations on the melodic level (see Example 4/10). The first two measures present the motive of the waltz, which consists of intervals of descending 4th and 5th, between them, an upper neighbor-note figure; he derives nearly all his sixteen-bar melody from this melodic motive (see Example 4/11). But Brahms also repeats the single rhythmic motive over and over again; if one follows the repeat signs, there are 31 repetitions of it in 32 measures.<sup>15</sup>

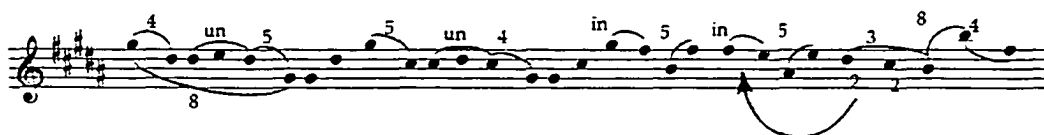
Example 4/10: Brahms, Op. 39, No. 3.

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<sup>15</sup> He revisits this rhythmic motive once more, in No. 15. There, however, although the rhythmic motive is still prominent, it is not used as continuously as in No. 3.



Example 4/11: Brahms Op. 39, No. 3, mm. 1-8.



In discussing some of the waltzes composed by Chopin and Brahms for the piano, I have emphasized the different, but equally innovative, ways in which an essential waltz feature, repetition, is elaborated and refined: Chopin's heightened effect of circularity, and Brahms's developing variations and repetition at the rhythmic level. Notwithstanding these significant refinements, it is critical to bear in mind that both retain the characteristic 3/4 meter; even the occasional measure of silence and, in some instances, the absence of the um-pah-pah accompaniment, do not disguise the essential beat. The listener has no difficulty—even with Chopin's manipulations of the 3/4 meter and creation of hemiolas—in recognizing the genre of the waltz.

With Tchaikovsky, however, we enter a different musical universe with respect not only to the composer's treatment of the genre, but to its personal significance.

## TCHAIKOVSKY

That Tchaikovsky was fascinated by the waltz is evident from the dozens he wrote; that his fascination was life-long we know from the first example, dating from 1854 (and now lost), when he was only fourteen and just beginning to compose. He wrote glorious waltzes for ballet (a number of which I examined in detail in Chapter 3) and lyrical waltzes for piano. He also integrated the genre into the symphony: in addition to the third movement of the Fifth Symphony and the first movement of the Fourth—both marked as “valse” and in the characteristic 3/4 meter—we have also the second movement of the Sixth Symphony, *allegro con grazia*, a graceful but peculiar waltz.

As Tchaikovsky's career and life were coming to an end, he introduced a dramatic innovation, new not only to his repertory but to the waltz in general, composing two five-beat waltzes. The first is *Valse à cinq temps*, No. 16 of the *18 Morceaux*, Op. 72; the other is the second movement of his last symphony, the *Pathétique*. Given that the defining characteristic of the waltz is the 3/4 meter, a five-beat waltz would seem a contradiction in terms. And in the *Pathétique* Tchaikovsky does, indeed, take on an extraordinary challenge: to compose what is recognizably a waltz—a piece his listeners will understand as such—but to do so in a meter that represents a strong departure from expectation.

The *Valse à cinq temps* is a curious piece, unlike any other waltz, including the others in the *18 Morceaux*. It does not present Tchaikovsky's customary gracefulness with the waltz: its tempo is *vivace*, hardly suitable for a waltz; it lacks even a hint of um-pah-pah accompaniment; the melody is very fragmentary and too jumpy for a waltz; and, most important, its meter is 5/8 (see Example 12). Indeed, were it not for its title, I would be hard-pressed to recognize it as a waltz. It is a waltz because Tchaikovsky says it is.



repetition of four rhythmic motives (see Example 4/13a, b, c, d). Motives a, b, and c are the only rhythmic material for the melody in the first part. In the middle section, mm. 57-95, Tchaikovsky employs motive d as the main rhythmic motive up to m. 82, where he begins to combine it with the motives from the first section.

Example 4/13: Tchaikovsky, *Pathétique* Symphony.

a)

b)

c)

d)

Although this symphonic movement shares with *Valse à cinq temps* the five-beat measure—in this case, a 5/4 meter—it is more discernibly a waltz than the latter. I identify the movement as a waltz for several reasons. First, and perhaps most important, the music itself presents characteristics of the waltz: the repetitive motives, legato melodies, flings, turns and rhythmic gestures of the movement establish a sense of waltzness right from the beginning. In fact, one may even suggest that Tchaikovsky's 5/4 meter, if considered to be a compression of a 3/4 waltz, contributes to this perception. Instead of the conventional rhythm, with its mixture of half-notes and quarter-notes, the composer simply uses pure quarter notes to fill the intervals, creating a smooth texture and promoting continuity (see Example 4/14a and b).

## Example 4/14:

## a) mm. 1-8 re-composed in 3/4

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The first staff contains two measures of music, each with a bracket above it labeled "6th". The second staff contains two measures of music, each with a bracket above it labeled "5th".

## b) mm. 1-8 original meter

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The first staff contains three measures of music. Brackets above the first, second, and third measures are labeled "6th", "6th", and "5th" respectively. Below the first three measures are the counts "1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 3 etc.". The second staff contains one measure of music with a bracket above it labeled "5th".

The second has to do with its reception: Though I have not been able to find any indication of its being perceived as a “waltz” in the contemporary reviews of the symphony,<sup>16</sup> in the secondary literature, even in the program notes or record covers, the second movement has almost always been referred to as a “limping waltz” or “distorted waltz.” For instance, Martin Cooper finds in the movement an “impending doom, that one of the partners might be a skeleton, that the dance is the dance of death.”<sup>17</sup> Henry Zajackowski suggests

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<sup>16</sup> Alexander Poznansky documented over twenty critiques of the premiere in *Tchaikovsky's last days: a documentary study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Martin Cooper, “The symphonies” in *The Music of Tchaikovsky*, ed. by Gerald Abraham (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 43.

that “the composer almost appears to mock at his own complacency by means of a waltz whose elegance is perverted into a limping 5/4 meter.”<sup>18</sup>

Third, Tchaikovsky had already established the precedent of writing 5/4 waltzes with his waltz for the Sapphire Fairy in *Sleeping Beauty* and with *Valse à cinq temps*.

And finally, another kind of manipulation of the waltz’s meter in Tchaikovsky’s ballets encourages me to consider this movement as a “waltz” with distorted meter. We have seen in Chapter 3 how Tchaikovsky communicates with his audience by means of such manipulation. I noted, too, that it is the 3/4 meter of the waltz that most particularly conveys the popular associations with the waltz: its romance and elegance, the glamour of the ballroom, the embrace of lovers. In some of Tchaikovsky’s ballets, for instance, the waltz theme—heard first in 3/4 and clearly associated with joy and hope—is then modified into 4/4.<sup>19</sup> The listener is thus alerted to a negative turn—an unhappy ending, danger, deception—in the plot, or to a shift in a character’s attitude or mood. The musical change expressly tells the listener something about the course of dramatic events.

What, then, is Tchaikovsky telling us with this 5/4 waltz?

Before I explore this question, I consider it necessary to review the contemporary reception of the symphony from a particular aspect: whether the symphony, or any part of it, conveys a feeling of death, or even anticipates the composer’s death. The *Pathétique* was Tchaikovsky’s last work: the composer died on 25 October 1893, nine days after the premiere. That his death was

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<sup>18</sup> Henry Zajaczkowski, *Tchaikovsky’s Musical Style* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> See my *Swan Lake* analysis in Chapter 3.

sudden and untimely, and that he was the most celebrated Russian composer of the time, prompted speculation among the contemporary public and critics who tried to find an answer to their anguish through Tchaikovsky's own compositions. Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich writes in his diary: "The final in the tempo *Adagio* has passages reminiscent of a funeral service." Walter Nouvel, the music critic, describes the conclusion of the symphony "as a dying breath," while Leopold Auer, violinist and pedagogue, identifies it as "a kind of funeral song." He adds: "it almost seemed as though the composer had anticipated his sudden end." Yury Yurvey, in his diary, makes a rather interesting observation: During a dinner (a few days after the performance) Tchaikovsky asked him what he should play for his friend. Yury requested the waltz from *Sleeping Beauty*. The composer played the waltz but before the final chord he started to play the funeral march from his music for *Hamlet*.<sup>20</sup>

All these and more (such as the observations of the friends and family members who were present in the restaurant when Tchaikovsky drank unboiled water) gave rise to the suicide theory, of which one of the most known advocates is David Brown. In his biography of the composer as well as in his other writings, Brown strongly expresses his belief that "though it is certainly not proven," Tchaikovsky committed suicide.<sup>21</sup> Poznansky, citing an enormous quantity of documents including diaries, letters, and critical writings, objects to the suicide theory, finding it both "idle and naive."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky's last days*, the chapter titled *Pathétique* .

<sup>21</sup> David Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 4 vols. (New York: Norton, 1978-1992); *Tchaikovsky Remembered* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> *Tchaikovsky's last days*, p. 19.

Tchaikovsky might or might not have committed suicide. Although there is no hard evidence that proves he did, we cannot be sure, either, that he did not drink the contaminated water deliberately. But this is irrelevant to our purpose here: the fact that he did not commit suicide does not invalidate the perception of the writers cited above, and others, regarding the pessimistic and morbid character of the last movement. My interpretation of the second movement, in fact, leans in this direction. In 1892, the composer scribbled some notes concerning his symphony: "The ultimate essence of the plan of this symphony is life. First movement is all impulsive passion, confidence, thirst for activity; Finale death—result of collapse—Second movement love, the third is disappointment..."<sup>23</sup>

Throughout his life, Tchaikovsky wrote lyrical, joyous waltzes in 3/4. That the waltz is associated, generally and for this composer as well, with love is indisputable. And Tchaikovsky himself tells us that the second movement of the *Pathétique*, a waltz, is "about" love. But what a difficult, painful love, and how expertly the composer has, once again, manipulated the meter to tell his listeners about a critical element of plot and character—in this case, the "plot" of his life and his own character. Passion leads to love; love leads to disappointment; and disappointment gives way to death.

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<sup>23</sup> Antony Holden, *Tchaikovsky: a Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 344.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Waltz as a Subject: Waltzes about the Waltz

We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.

—T.S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

By the turn of the century, the waltz as a social dance was on the wane. As the 19th century came to a close, functional tonality ceased to be the only compositional language. Recognizable functional harmonies and progressions no longer appeared in the music of some composers. But if the original era of the Viennese waltz, like the society that gave rise to it, was coming to an end, the popularity of the genre persisted. And, despite the change in musical language, composers have continued to write waltzes ever since. Twentieth-century waltzes come in many guises. Some are nostalgic and unsophisticatedly imitative, using purely tonal language to evoke the romantic 19th-century waltz idea. Others are truly reductive, the wallpaper music associated with carnivals and carousels. Still others are scarcely recognizable as waltzes, though their composers have identified them as such. Contemporary waltzes such as *Minute Waltz*-or  $3/4 \pm 1/8$  by Milton Babbitt, *Modern Love Waltz*, by Philip Glass, or *49*

*Waltzes for the Five Boroughs* of John Cage, composed in atonal language, bear no obvious trace of the 19th-century conventions.<sup>1</sup>

My concern here is a fourth category of 20th-century waltz, composed either to pay homage to the Viennese waltz and its creators, or to make reference to and evoke the spirit of that earlier period. In these waltzes, the composers' intention is not merely to reproduce another waltz in the style of Johann Strauss, but to use that idiom as a topic within their own musical language. Whether they are said to *represent*, *depict*, or *portray*, these waltzes take as their subject matter the waltz itself. In the compositions such as *La Valse* or *Wozzeck*, Ravel and Berg make self-conscious references to the Viennese Waltz without yielding their own musical language and identity to its conventions.

Ravel—a composer whose admiration for the Viennese waltz is evident in both his compositions and his writing—himself clearly believed in the capacity of music to be representational. In a letter to Roland-Manuel, his close friend, he explains:

I have never felt the need to formulate, either for the benefit of others or for myself, the principles of my aesthetic. If I were called upon to do so, I would ask to be allowed to identify myself with the simple pronouncements made by Mozart on this subject. He confined himself to saying that there is nothing that music can not undertake to do, or dare, or *portray*, provided it continues to charm and always remain music.<sup>2</sup>

Quite apart from any question of depiction, music is a form of communication and, like all others, depends for its success upon a set of experiences and assumptions held in common by the composer and the listener.

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Waltz Project: 17 Contemporary Waltzes for Piano* (Los Angeles: Nonesuch, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Roland-Manuel, "Lettres de Maurice Ravel et documents inédits," *Revue de musicologie*, 38 (July 1956), p. 53; translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. The word *portray* (italics mine) renders the French *peindre*.

When a composer makes reference to other music—whether to a specific piece, a genre, or a musical language—he relies on the audience’s recognition of that reference. In the case of the waltz, because it so dominated the music and society of the 19th century, the audience could be expected not only to recognize the essential features of the genre, but also—and importantly—to have powerful associations with it and equally strong expectations about what a composer would use it to convey. By first reminding their audiences of those associations and setting up certain expectations, and then—dramatically, in the case of *Wozzeck*—undercutting them, Ravel and Berg enter into a complex musical dialogue.

#### LA VALSE

Ravel twice paid musical homage to the Viennese waltz, first in 1911 with his *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, a chain of short waltzes for piano, with Schubert as model, and, nine years later, with *La Valse*. Although it is the latter that I will scrutinize closely in this chapter, it is worth briefly examining Ravel’s Schubertian piece first, because, curiously, it demonstrates the powerful hold Johann Strauss had on Ravel’s musical imagination.

Schubert adapted the Viennese waltz of the ballroom and transformed its meaning by creating waltzes as concert pieces for the piano. Among these are his thirty-four *Valses sentimentales* and twelve *Valses nobles*, to which Ravel’s homage is explicit, as he explains in his autobiography: “The title *Valses nobles et sentimentales* sufficiently indicates my intention of composing a series of waltzes

in imitation of Schubert.”<sup>3</sup> Ravel’s use of the word “imitation”<sup>4</sup> is not casual; in a letter to his friend Ildebrando Pizzetti, he expresses his belief that

a composer had only to place himself in front of a masterpiece like a copyist in the Louvre in front of a Titian or, to be less severe, a landscape painter in front of a clump of trees...if you have nothing to say, you cannot do better, while waiting for the ultimate silence, than repeat what has been well said. If you do have something to say, that something will never be more clearly seen than in your unwitting infidelity to the model.<sup>5</sup>

Infidelity of imitation is, in fact, a singularly apt description of Ravel’s *Valses nobles et sentimentales*. His model is the Schubertian waltz, with its balanced phrases, harmonic subtleties, and straightforward form. But rather than being simply an imitation of Schubert, Ravel’s piano waltzes betray his fascination with the Straussian waltz, to the point that it distracts him from his stated purpose and leads him to an ending that pays homage not to Schubert, but to another Viennese waltz composer, Strauss himself.

In the eighth and last waltz of Ravel’s *Valses noble et sentimentales*, entitled *Epilogue*, the rhythmically varied fragments of the preceding waltzes—namely, first, third, fourth, and sixth—are heard. Schubert wrote more than a dozen chains of waltzes for piano, none of which, including his *Valse sentimentales* and *Valse nobles*, ends with an epilogue, or a coda, that recalls the earlier waltzes in their exact or varied form. It is very typical, however, for Viennese composers who wrote orchestral waltzes for the ballrooms to conclude with a coda that includes partial repetitions of the earlier waltzes. Ravel here integrates the

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<sup>3</sup> Roland-Manuel, “Une Esquisse autobiographique de Maurice Ravel,” *La Revue musicale* (December 1938), pp. 17-23.

<sup>4</sup> The original expression is *à l'exemple de Schubert*.

<sup>5</sup> Ildebrando Pizzetti, “Souvenir de Maurice Ravel,” in *Hommage à Maurice Ravel, Numéro Spécial de la Revue musicale* (Dec. 1938), pp. 438-440.

Schubertian waltz form, a chain of simple and short waltzes, with a grandiose Straussian ending.

If Ravel's imitation of Schubert leads him, in a sense, to Strauss, his homage in *La Valse* to the great waltz master and to "the wonderful rhythms of the Viennese Waltz," as he writes in a February 1906 letter to Jean Marnold, is unalloyed.<sup>6</sup> He describes the work, completed in 1920, as "a sort of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz... the impression of a fantastic, fatal whirling."<sup>7</sup>

Evidently, it was also—in the mind of at least one listener—a depiction or portrayal, as we learn from one contemporary account. One afternoon in 1920, Francis Poulenc witnessed an historic scene in the apartment of Misia Sert, a close friend of Ravel. The occasion was Ravel's first presentation of *La Valse* on the piano to introduce the piece to the choreographer Diaghilev, who was to stage *La Valse* with the Ballets Russes. Poulenc observed Diaghilev very closely during the performance: "I saw the false teeth begin to move, then the monocle, I saw he was embarrassed, I saw he did not like it and was going to say 'no'. When Ravel came to the end, Diaghilev said something which I think is very true. He said 'Ravel, it's a masterpiece...but it's not a ballet...it's a portrait of a ballet...It's a painting of a ballet'."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Ravel had an entire *mise en scene* in mind, as his subtitle, "Poème Chorégraphique," suggests. In fashioning the composition as ballet, Ravel expressed his desire that *La Valse* be danced in a balletic fashion; yet his

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<sup>6</sup> Arbie Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Roland-Manuel, "Une Esquisse autobiographique..." p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Poulenc, *Moi et mes amis* (Paris: Seghers, 1963), pp. 177-9.

accompanying choreographic argument identifies the setting as a ballroom with waltzing couples. In his instructions, Ravel describes his choreographic vision:

Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually disperse: one sees at letter A (in the score) an enormous hall filled with swirling crowd. The stage is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers reaches its peak at the fortissimo(at letter B). An Imperial court, about 1855.

No wonder that Diaghilev, presented with a fully-detailed portrait of ballroom dancing, saw it as a painting and declined to use it.

*La Valse* is about the Viennese waltz: allusions to the style of Johann Strauss are made self-consciously and are markedly distinguishable from Ravel's own musical language. Here, then, two questions arise: first, what are the characteristics of Strauss's music that constitute the subject of *La Valse*?; and, second, what are the characteristics of Ravel's style that constitute the musical medium?

I have discussed the characteristics of the Viennese Waltz music in Chapter 2. These characteristics, naturally, apply to Strauss's waltzes. Although he wrote hundreds of waltzes for Viennese ballrooms during the second half of the 19th century, I believe, for several reasons, that *La Valse* is about just one of those waltzes, namely, *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*. The first reason has to do with reception: *The Blue Danube* has been revered by several masters, who regarded it with admiration and envy. In conversation with Manuel Rosenthal,<sup>9</sup> Ravel claimed that all composers desired to succeed in writing a very good

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<sup>9</sup> The pseudonym of Alexis Manuel Lévy (1891-1966), French musicologist, composer, and critic. He studied composition with Ravel and soon became one of his closest friends.

waltz. He reminded his friend of the anecdote about Brahms<sup>10</sup>, and added, “[Y]ou see, we all try to write a waltz as good as that.”<sup>11</sup>

Second, Ravel’s *La Valse* shares a number of characteristic features with the *Blue Danube*, including the key of D major and its overall form, suggesting that the *Blue Danube* in particular served as a model for Ravel during the creation of *La Valse*, especially in light of Ravel’s expressed reverence for the piece.

Finally, and perhaps most important, Strauss’s style was unwaveringly homogeneous during his 40 years of composing. The *Blue Danube* exhibits practically all of the main characteristics of Strauss waltzes in general. Thus, even if the *Blue Danube* is not the specific piece that *La Valse* depicts, it is absolutely representative of Strauss’ style.

In the analysis that follows, I do not intend to compare *La Valse* with the *Blue Danube* in such a way as to demonstrate resemblances and differences. Rather, my purpose is to show how Ravel manipulates the musical features of the Straussian waltz idiom through his unique musical language, while retaining the waltz’s conventional attributes.

The musical features on which I will concentrate are form, harmony, and the two most identifiable characteristics of any waltz: the um-pah-pah accompaniment and repetition. Although I will take up these features in this order, I will touch on form only briefly now, so as to establish the framework for my discussion. I shall return to it later and in greater detail, for it is a particular aspect of the form—specifically the *Eingang* sections—in which we find the

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1 for the Brahms anecdote and more on the reception of the waltz.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Nichols, *Ravel Remembered* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), p. 62.

exception to waltz convention and the expression of Ravel's struggle to distinguish himself from Strauss.

With respect to its form, *The Blue Danube* consists of (1) an introduction that foreshadows the theme of the first waltz, (2) five waltzes, each in binary form with repeats, and (3) a coda within which themes from several of the waltzes are cited in exact or varied forms. Each of these seven large sections is labeled by the composer in the orchestral score.

*La Valse* has essentially the same formal outline: an introduction that presents segments of the theme of the first waltz; a chain of five waltzes; and a coda that restates several themes of various waltzes. Each of Ravel's five waltzes has a theme with a distinct character, and ends with an emphatic authentic cadence. Unlike Strauss, however, Ravel does not number the waltzes in the score; nor does he identify the coda as such. Nevertheless, it is not difficult—especially for those familiar with Strauss's customary procedure—to distinguish one waltz from another (see Example 5/1 for the incipits of each waltz).

Example 5/1: Ravel, *La Valse*, incipits of the five waltzes.

(a) Waltz 1

## (b) Waltz 2

106

Musical score for Waltz 2, measures 106-110. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. The treble clef part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bass clef part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

## (c) Waltz 3

146

Musical score for Waltz 3, measures 146-150. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. The treble clef part has a melodic line with a long slur over measures 147-150. The bass clef part features a steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

## (d) Waltz 4

243

Musical score for Waltz 4, measures 243-247. The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The treble clef part has a melodic line with a long slur over measures 243-247. The bass clef part features a steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

## (e) Waltz 5

The resemblance of the form of *La Valse* to that of the *Blue Danube*, however, in no way implies that it is simply a reproduction of that or any other Viennese waltz. Moreover, *La Valse* does not contain any direct quotation from any Strauss waltz; nor is it in any way limited to Strauss's musical language. On the contrary: Ravel's representation of Strauss—his "portrait" of a Straussian waltz—is very subtle and, ultimately, entirely Ravelian.

By way of illustration here, I will turn to Ravel's first Waltz (see Example 5/2). The opening tonic, D Major, moves to the dominant at the end of the antecedent phrase, at m. 76, and the consequent phrase starting on the dominant brings the harmony back to the tonic at m. 85, exactly as in the first waltz of the *Blue Danube*. This, of course, is a typical periodic structure. A repetition of the first phrase is then followed by a cadential phrase that modulates to A major, the key of the next waltz.

Example 5/2: Ravel, *La Valse*, Waltz 1, mm. 67-105.

67

71

75

80

*pp*

The image displays a musical score for three systems of music, measures 85-99. The first three systems (measures 85-93) are written in bass clef. The fourth system (measures 94-99) is written in treble clef. The score is characterized by complex harmonic structures, including many non-harmonic notes and dynamic markings such as *p* and *pp*. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and articulation marks.

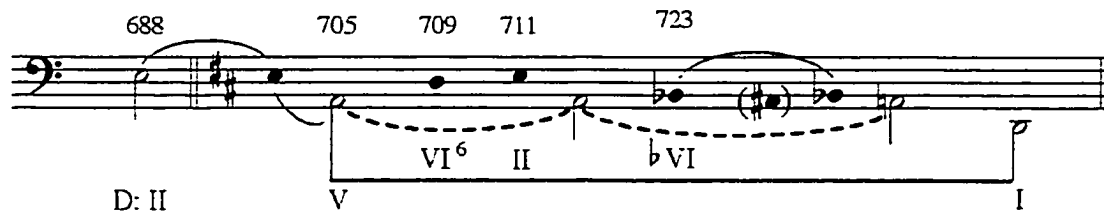
This simple harmonic structure, so typical of Strauss, is modified by the addition of non-harmonic notes to the chords. Indeed, until the very last dominant chord, there is no single tonic, dominant triad, or dominant seventh

chord that does not have a “foreign” note (see Example 5/3). Thus, Ravel enriches the effect of the tonic triads by added sixths and augmented fourths at mm. 69, 71 and 73. At m. 70, the second inversion of the tonic triad contains three foreign notes: B-natural, an added 6th; B-flat as flat 6th; and C#, the leading tone. When the second inversion of the tonic triad reappears at m. 74, this time, D# in the melody creates a chromatic clash with the tonic D, followed by the second inversion of the dominant-seventh chord, presenting again a chromatic clash between G, the seventh of the chord, and G#.

Example 5/3: Ravel, *La Valse*, Waltz 1, “altered” chords.



Example 5/4: Ravel, *La Valse*, large-scale harmonic organization, mm. 688 to end.



In addition to augmented 4ths, added 6ths, augmented octaves and chromatic clashes, Ravel also uses augmented 5ths throughout the piece. The most significant example of this effect appears in the third waltz, which is in D major (see Example 5/1). At m. 146, the anacrusis already foreshadows the A/A# conflict that is immediately dispersed throughout the melody. Moreover, A#, as an augmented 5th, is kept in the tonic harmony at m. 149 along with E/E# chromatic clash in the melody.

The choice of the foreign intervals is not random, for they are evident in the larger-scale organization (see Example 5/4). At m. 688, the II of D appears where the final cadential progression of the piece starts, occupying 63 measures

with several evasions. First, the cadence is evaded when the dominant progresses to the first inversion of VI. When, at m. 711, Ravel states the II again, he also prepares us for what is to come by quoting himself. Here, the beginning of the Waltz 3 theme with A, the fifth of D, clashing with A#, reappears with no accompanying chords. At measure 723, the cadence is evaded once again, when the dominant moves to flat VI. However, Ravel immediately respells B-flat as A# for the dominant prolongation for 24 measures. Only at the end, at the penultimate measure, is A# respelled as B-flat which resolves to A, the final dominant of the piece.<sup>12</sup>

Having established *La Valse's* relationship to the familiar form, and Ravel's manipulations of the harmony, we might now look at his treatment of the best known feature of the waltz: the continual um-pah-pah accompaniment. The very recognizability of this feature, and its function as an identifier for the waltz, make it the most difficult for Ravel to manipulate: if it were too obviously present, *La Valse* might sound overly Straussian; but if *La Valse* is a depiction of a Strauss waltz, the picture would not be complete without this accompaniment.

In Waltz I, illustrated at Example 5/2, Ravel does not employ the accompaniment pattern continually. Rather, he distorts the pattern in several ways. When one looks at the score, a pattern in the accompaniment becomes evident beginning at m.69: instead of the constant *upp* (um-pah-pah), Ravel notates this 4-bar pattern: u, up, upp, up, which is stated 4 times throughout the first 16-bar period. The second period adds more pah's to the pattern: first, upp, up, upp, up, and then, to lead up to the cadence, the upp pattern at last becomes constant: upp, upp, upp, upp.

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<sup>12</sup> It should also be noted that B-flat major (flat sixth, or enharmonic augmented 5th), F major (flat III), D-flat major (enharmonic leading tone) are the most frequently occurring key areas throughout the piece.

While this pattern is visible on the page, however, the pah's are hardly audible, and the pattern is obscured by the extraordinarily low register of both the accompaniment and the melody combined with an apparently intentional mismatch between the *arco* basses' um's and the *pizzicato* cellos' pah's. Ravel further blurs the rhythmic texture by adding octuplets to every measure of Waltz I, thus playing duple and triple layers off against one another. In the end, all Ravel allows us to latch onto is the relentless, rocking um's.

Another kind of distortion is evident in the second waltz (see Example 5/1). While here the accompaniment pattern is constant, the theme opens with a series of dotted quarter notes so that the metric division of the measure once again features the play of two against three. However, Ravel again clarifies the triple rhythmic pattern and recovers the characteristic accompaniment in preparation for second waltz's final cadence.

I shall now turn to the last of the characteristics that I mentioned earlier: repeated rhythmic patterns. As I established in Chapter 2, the waltz, as a dance, has two simultaneous circular movements. First, each couple turns on itself, in a small circle, around its own center; this is performed in two-times three steps, and forms the basic motif of the dance. The second circular motion is traced as the couple simultaneously spirals in these continuous turns around the ballroom until it reaches its starting place and the larger circle is closed. Thus, in a successful composition, the repetitive and circular characteristic of the dance patterns are reflected in the music. Phrases, motives within the phrases, whole sections, themes, and so on, are all repeated.

*On the Beautiful Blue Danube* exemplifies this convention on both large and small scales of organization. On a small scale, Waltz I of the *Blue Danube* begins with a half dozen nearly literal statements of the principal motive set over tonic and dominant harmonies (see Example 5/5). On a larger scale, if one

follows the numerous repeat signs in the score, there is no single section within the five waltzes of the *Blue Danube* that is presented in its entirety less than twice.

Example 5/5: Strauss, *Blue Danube*, Waltz 1, mm. 67-92.

The image shows a musical score for Strauss's *Blue Danube*, Waltz 1, measures 67-92. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. It consists of five systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 67, 72, 77, 82, and 87 are indicated at the start of each system. The music features a melodic line in the treble clef and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass clef, with various rests and articulation marks.

Although *La Valse* displays no repetition of large sections, there are periodic phrase structures, motivic repetitions, and sequences. What is most pertinent to my purpose here, however, is Ravel's near exhaustion of the

technique of repetition in Waltz 5 and in the coda. The first 16-bar phrase of Waltz 5, in D major, reveals the simplest structure: two 8-bar sub-phrases in 4-bar segments. Example 5/1e shows the single motive from which this phrase is generated. It is stated 4 times in the first 4 measures, 7 times in 8 measures, and 10 times by the 12th measure. The last 4 measures of this 16-measure phrase form a cadence and are free of the motive. The second 16-bar phrase, slightly varied in F Major, consists of 14 more statements of the same motive, while another 7 statements in the final 8-bar cadential phrase suffice to return the harmony to the tonic D major. This comes to a total of 31 repetitions of the motive in 38 measures.

Yet Ravel is far from finished with this motive. At m. 371, with the tempo marking *un peu plus modéré*, there begins a new section that further develops the waltz-5 motive and that leads into the coda where the motive returns for another 84 measures. The reappearance of the waltz-5 motive in the coda is notable not only because it has already been repeated to an overwhelming degree in the course of the 5th waltz, but also because it brings the piece to its peak. At m. 579, with the tempo marking *Un peu plus vif et en accelerant*, every musical element is on the increase: the overall register rises, accompanied by a crescendo and acceleration, and, finally, a chromatic ascent in the bass line, doubled by clarinets, bassoons, and trumpets. In the course of this 61-measure intensification, the motive is stated, almost circularly, 49 times. During the last 8-bar phrase of this section (Example 5/6), the motivic repetition impatiently accelerates to every two beats until the motion finally dissolves completely into a frenzy of eighth notes.

Example 5/6: Ravel. *La Valse*, Waltz 5, mm. 634-649.

The image displays a musical score for Ravel's *La Valse*, specifically Waltz 5, measures 634 through 649. The score is presented in four systems, each containing three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The first system (measures 634-637) shows a complex texture with many accidentals. The second system (measures 638-641) continues this complexity. The third system (measures 642-645) features a more rhythmic and melodic line in the upper staves. The fourth system (measures 646-649) concludes the passage with sustained chords and a final melodic flourish.

In the 5th waltz and coda, the convention of repetition is exaggerated at every level far beyond what Strauss might have done. Indeed, Ravel seems to have composed the last waltz *about* the idea of repetition.

If thus far we have been concerned with Ravel's complex and sophisticated portraiture, we have seen this homage to Strauss revealed in Ravel's manipulation of the waltz itself. The struggle to which I referred earlier in this chapter, Ravel's effort at self-expression, is found elsewhere: namely, in the *Eingang* sections.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the term *Eingang* was applied to a brief passage in improvisatory style that was intended as a transition between sections of a work. In its improvised form, the *Eingang* is indicated with a fermata over a dominant 7th chord, signaling the performer to provide virtuoso figuration. In the *Blue Danube*, there are two *Eingang* sections, preceding Waltzes 4 and 5, respectively. The first, preceding Waltz 4, comprises only 4 measures, during which there occurs a harmonic transition from the key of Waltz 3, G major, to the key of Waltz 4, F Major. The texture of these four measures differs from the prevailing waltz texture, since both melody and the accompaniment are absent. The second *Eingang*, leading to Waltz 5, is longer, occupying 10 measures. Again, the waltz texture disappears and a fragmentary variation of the theme of Waltz 4 ensues without an accompaniment. Obviously, neither of these is danceable, nor are they intended to be. Rather, in the context of the ballroom, these sections provided the dancing couples with an opportunity to catch their breath and to change partners. In other words, they are, musically speaking, unimportant interludes in the waltz tradition.

The *Eingangs* in *La Valse*, by contrast, are dramatic and essential. It is noteworthy that the *Eingangs* in Ravel's piece, preceding Waltzes 4 and 5, just as in the *Blue Danube*, are not marked by the composer. However, what are brief,



indefinable though unmistakable sense of a dance macabre, a frenetic energy which carries more than a hint of doom. He claims that “whether or not the haunt of death that hangs over it can be directly attributed to the war and its consequences, is and must remain an open question.”<sup>14</sup> For Arbie Orenstein, the concluding passages open up a fresh dimension in Ravel’s art, that of tension bordering on the breaking point. Orenstein says “it is apparent that the disorientation of World War I and the composer’s personal grief following his mother’s death have been sublimated in this fantastic and fatal whirling”<sup>15</sup>.

Ravel, however, disputed this interpretation: During an interview, he openly explained: “I did not envision a dance of death or a struggle between life and death...It is a dancing, whirling, almost hallucinatory ecstasy, an increasingly passionate and exhausting whirlwind of dancers, who are overcome and exhilarated by nothing but ‘the waltz’.”<sup>16</sup>

That others, myself included, sense in *La Valse* a struggle whereas Ravel apparently did not by no means invalidates that reaction. And the various sources to which that struggle is attributed—death, war, hallucinatory ecstasy—strike me as equally plausible. But I believe there is also another, to which I referred earlier: that Ravel’s is a struggle for autonomy from Strauss and for musical self-expression. The composer’s own words suggest this. On the one hand, Ravel intended *La Valse* as the “apotheosis” of a Viennese waltz and a tribute to the genius of Johann Strauss; in any creative artist, there is understandably a tension between the wish to honor and the drive to distinguish

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<sup>14</sup> James Burnett, *Ravel: His life and Times* (Kent: Midas, 1983), p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Orenstein, “Maurice Ravel,” *American Scholar* 64/1 (Winter/1995), p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> “The French Music Festival: An Interview with Ravel,” *De Telegraaf* (September 30, 1922). The article is initialed “C.v.W.”.

oneself from a revered predecessor. On the other hand, Ravel indicated that the exceptional difficulty of writing a Viennese waltz led him to compose, instead, a symphonic waltz—an acknowledgement of Strauss’s mastery of the genre and, if only by implication, of Ravel’s fear of not meeting the challenge.

The struggle that we hear in *La Valse* is, I believe, revealed in the tension between the waltzes and the Eingang sections. The former are Ravel’s portrayal of the Straussian waltz, the latter resist the pull of Strauss’s authority. Together, they give *La Valse* its singular sophistication and complexity.

## WOZZECK

In his book on Alban Berg, Theodor Adorno revered *Wozzeck* as a composition that brings to light the aspects of Büchner’s work that had been buried. Adorno wrote: “Given a literary work of this kind music could easily seem superfluous, mere duplication of the drama’s own underlying substance, of that which makes it a poetic work.” He continues:

In order to understand the relationship between Berg’s meticulously crafted opera and Büchner’s intentionally sketch-like fragments, it may be well to remember that one hundred years lie between drama and the composition. What Berg composed is simply what matured in Büchner during the intervening decades of obscurity.<sup>17</sup>

The substance of Adorno’s comments is central to my purpose here: that the opera, *Wozzeck*, effects an historical revision in which Büchner’s aesthetic realism is transformed by and into Berg’s work. The key questions, thus, are what was there about Büchner’s 1836 *Woyzeck* that had changed one hundred

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<sup>17</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Alban Berg, Master of the Smallest Link*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 84.

years later?; and how did Berg reflect this change in his work, preventing the opera from being, in Adorno's words, a mere duplication of the drama's own underlying substance?

Büchner's *Woyzeck*, though written some 75 years before German expressionism became an established movement, had in it many elements which expressionists regarded as anticipation of their own interests and concerns.<sup>18</sup> The play is based on a real event that took place in Leipzig: in 1821 Johann Cristian Woyzeck, an ex-soldier and barber, murdered his mistress, a Frau Woost, for being unfaithful to him. Büchner did not mechanically imitate, but rather—as in the works of the expressionists themselves—transformed reality into a heightened and distorted actuality. It is this anticipation of expressionism in *Wozzeck* that is brought to life through Berg's musical language, the effect of which is, in fact, precisely such a heightened and distorted actuality.

As in Chapter 3, I will focus my attention here on the Tavern Scene (Act II, Scene 4); but where I was concerned earlier with the association of waltzing with the character of Marie specifically, here I will examine the scene's four waltz sections in detail. These are not the opera's first waltzes: Berg introduces two brief waltz sections in the second scene of the same act. There, the captain and the doctor meet in the street, the former terrified by the latter's suggestion that he may become a case for clinical investigation. We first hear a waltz (also marked in the score) when the doctor makes his critical remarks, starting at m. 202: "And you, now! Hm! Bloated, fat, thick neck, apoplectic constitution!..." The

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<sup>18</sup> For the discussion of German expressionism and Büchner see Maurice Benn, *The Drama of Revolt: A Critical study of Georg Büchner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 41-102; Ronald Hauser, *Georg Büchner* (New York: Twayne, 1974), pp. 93-126.

waltz is interrupted at m. 215 for 16 measures until the doctor, once more, begins perversely playing on the captain's fears.

Immediately after this brief second waltz section, Wozzeck passes by quickly and salutes the two men. But the captain—who recovers from his previous misery at once—and the doctor do not let him go. Instead, they amuse themselves by taunting Wozzeck about Marie and her fondness for another man. Now Wozzeck's suspicions of his wife's infidelity are confirmed in his mind. The waltzes here associated with discomfort and fear of exposure (the captain's) and with the rage and shame of cuckoldry (Wozzeck's) foreshadow those of the Tavern Scene, where Wozzeck's eyes are fully opened to Marie's treachery.

Among the most realistic elements we find in Büchner's play are the folksongs that are liberally interspersed throughout the work. It was in and through these songs that Büchner felt he could come closest to the real life of the people, an aesthetic idea that he valued highly. Thus, the songs he favored were not the idyllic or nostalgic songs beloved of the Romantics, but those that he himself had heard on the lips of carters, artisans, soldiers, and servant women—songs suggestive of the cynicism and humor of the people with an underlying sense of tragedy.<sup>19</sup> In the Tavern Scene, Büchner indicates in the stage directions that there is dancing. He uses the word *tanz*, without specifying the kind of dance. Berg's choice of dance is the waltz, the most popular genre in 19th-century Europe, and he elaborates on Büchner's aesthetic idea of realism by drawing upon the waltz.

Berg does not quote any Viennese waltzes or other folk music of Büchner's time. Neither does he compose waltzes within the limits of his atonal language. Instead, he takes the Viennese waltz idiom and distorts its romantic

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<sup>19</sup> John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 112.

tonal musical language without distorting its identity as waltz. The music is heard as Viennese waltzes of the period in which Büchner's play is set, and yet, at the same time, it can be fully understood only in terms of Berg's atonal musical language. Thus by not abandoning his atonal language to the purely tonal quality of these early waltzes—in other words, by representing and not merely reproducing them—Berg eliminates the joyful, bright conventional meaning of the Viennese waltz, and brings to the surface the underlying sense of tragedy that was suggested by Büchner.

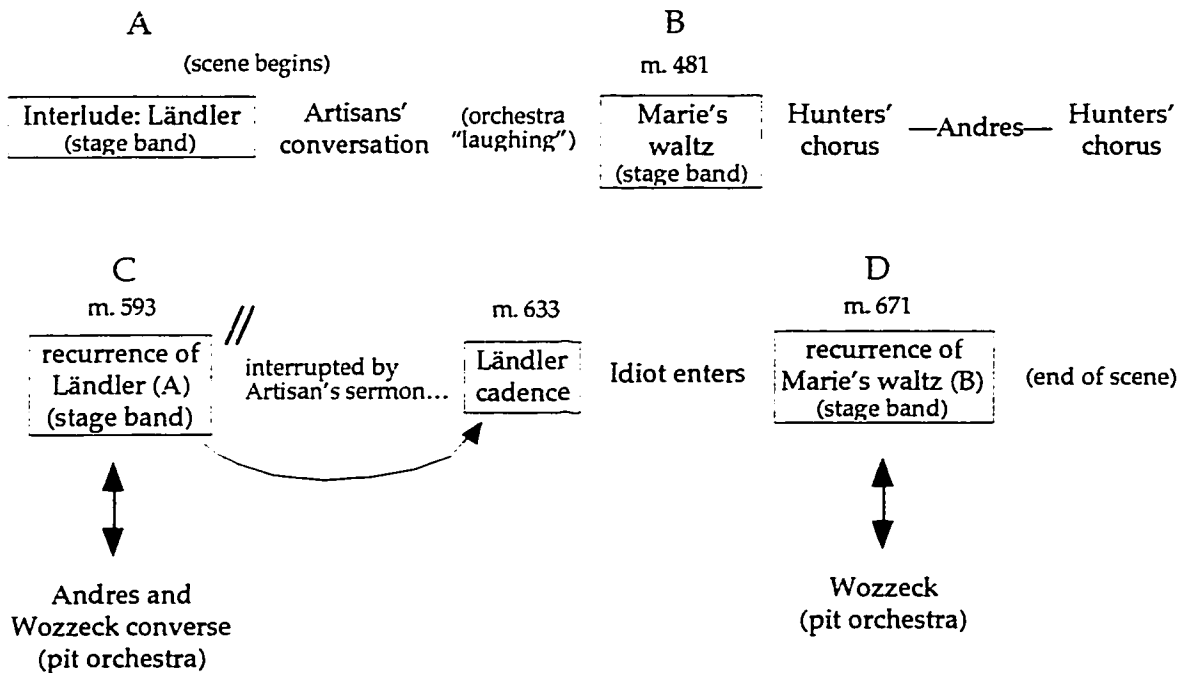
To that end, Berg uses two distinct techniques for manipulating the romantic Viennese waltz. The first is reflected in the large-scale organization of the scene. The Tavern Scene is not a complete waltz; neither is it composed of a chain of waltzes. Rather, several waltzes and their fragments are interspersed throughout the scene. Berg's waltzes alternate with non-waltz sections that have a very distinct sonority and other musical characteristics. These non-waltz sections create an effect of alienation and create a distance between the listener and the emotional, twirling music of the waltzes (See Figure 1 for the overall view of the waltz sections throughout the scene).

The second technique concerns the distortion within the waltz sections. Two musical styles co-exist simultaneously in the waltzes: on the one hand, we hear tonally centered music carrying at least the basic musical characteristics of the waltz, such as the accompaniment, and a relatively regular phrase structure; on the other, there is atonal, non-melodic music with *Sprechstimme*, which tends to obscure the listener's appreciation of the waltz's romantic associations. In the tavern, Berg's waltzes are performed on stage by a group of players called for in the score. While he is representing the waltzes of Büchner's time through the stage band, he was also able to distort them through the music played by the pit orchestra. He creates a *collage* by alternating between not only two distinct

styles, but also two different media, the stage band and the pit orchestra—an effect even more evident when they play two distinct styles simultaneously. In this way, Berg also enables his characters to sing in *Sprechstimme* style with the orchestral accompaniment without changing the ambiance of the Tavern. This technique does not apply to the Interlude where there is no singing. Instead, Berg distorts the tonal structure in the Interlude by polytonality that creates a very dissonant effect and decreases the sense of arrival.<sup>20</sup>

To return to the analysis of the Tavern Scene, I identify four musical sections that use the conventions of the waltz (see Figure 1):

Figure 1: Berg, *Wozzeck*, waltzes in the Tavern Scene.



<sup>20</sup> In a lecture on *Wozzeck*, Berg declared that he used "so called polytonality" in order to create a harmonically primitive music, such as folk songs and popular songs. Hans Redlich, *Alban Berg: Versuch einer Würdigung* (Vienna: Universal, 1957), trans. in Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: Wozzeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 161.

The scene is preceded by an orchestral interlude that functions as a transition between scenes 3 and 4 (labeled *A* in Figure 1). Berg calls this orchestral interlude a *Ländler*, a dance of Austria and southern Germany in a slow 3/4 time. It originated as a folk dance for couples, and was superseded in the 19th-century by the fashionable waltz.

The interlude displays several characteristics of the 19th-century waltz: the typical accompaniment pattern is well established throughout, the phrase structure is quite regular, and it is one of the most tonally oriented sections of the entire opera. The strong bass movement establishes the tonal sense despite the foggy harmonies. However, Berg uses polytonality, which divides the tonal center and eliminates the established tonal effect. The opening dominant up-beat to the tonic quite convincingly suggests the key of G minor. The following cadential progression, in fact, establishes the key (see Example 5/8).

Example 5/8: Berg, *Wozzeck*, Act II, Interlude to Scene 4, mm. 414-417.

The musical score for Example 5/8 is presented in four staves. The first staff is in treble clef, the second is the right-hand piano part, the third is in bass clef, and the fourth is the left-hand piano part. The time signature is 3/4. The music is in G minor, indicated by the key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The score shows a complex harmonic structure with polytonality, featuring various chords and melodic lines. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The second staff is the right-hand piano part, also in treble clef and two flats. The third staff is in bass clef and two flats. The fourth staff is the left-hand piano part, also in bass clef and two flats. The music consists of chords and melodic lines with various accidentals and dynamics. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The second staff is the right-hand piano part, also in treble clef and two flats. The third staff is in bass clef and two flats. The fourth staff is the left-hand piano part, also in bass clef and two flats. The music consists of chords and melodic lines with various accidentals and dynamics.

But the sense of tonal clarity gradually decreases as the music proceeds; one part of the orchestra stays in the tonic, while the other part leads to a cadence

on D major, the dominant, thus creating two layers of harmony: tonic and the dominant of G minor. This split becomes more obvious when, at the end of the first section, a perfect authentic cadence in G is heard simultaneously with an E-flat triad, creating an illusion of E-flat major and weakening the conclusive effect of the cadence in G (see Example 5/9).

Example 5/9: Berg, *Wozzeck*, Act II, Interlude to Scene 4, mm. 428-429.

The image shows a musical score for measures 428 and 429. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music features a complex harmonic structure with a split between D major and G minor. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, melodic lines, and dynamic markings.

A few bars later, Berg confirms the key of G minor while the curtain ascends and the stage band starts to play. As soon as an artisan stands up and starts singing in the key of G minor, we retrospectively perceive the previous *Ländler* as a prelude to this song. This effect is significant because, with all the preparation and anticipation, the entrance of the singer with a wonderfully lyric and expressive melody becomes an especially dramatic moment. Yet, before we have a chance to settle into the expected emotional state, the song is interrupted with a frenzy of triplets played by the orchestra, as though the music were laughing at the drunken singer (see Example 5/10).

Example 5/10: Berg, *Wozzeck*, Act II, Scene 4, mm. 442-447.

442

Das ist nicht  
Ich hab' ein Hemd-lein an, das ist nicht mein, \_\_\_\_\_

Stage band

445

mein...  
Und mei - ne See - le stinkt nach Brann - te - wein.

Stage band

Orchestra

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It features three systems of music. The first system (measures 442-444) shows a vocal line with lyrics 'Das ist nicht' and 'Ich hab' ein Hemd-lein an, das ist nicht mein, \_\_\_\_\_'. The piano accompaniment is for the 'Stage band'. The second system (measures 445-446) shows a vocal line with lyrics 'mein...' and 'Und mei - ne See - le stinkt nach Brann - te - wein.'. The piano accompaniment is for the 'Stage band'. The third system (measures 447) shows the 'Orchestra' part, which includes triplets in both staves.

At letter *B* of Figure 1, we hear a waltz again when the artisans, soldiers, and girls go back on the dance floor and begin to dance. Among them are Marie and the Drum-major. When the music arrives at a cadence, on E minor, Wozzeck comes rushing up and sees Marie waltzing past with the Drum-major. Wozzeck mutters with rage, "He! and she! Hell and damnation!" Dancing past him, Marie exclaims with ecstasy, "[O]n and on, on and on." Wozzeck imitates her on a higher pitch, repeating "on and on, on and on," and sinks down on a bench near the dance-floor, muttering to himself, "Turn! turn around! Why doesn't God put out the sun?" His totally free style of singing begins to blur the waltz effect. The orchestra joins the stage band on the word "sun," m. 517, and distracts the stage band's waltz with dissonant triplets, a texture that is associated with the earlier orchestral laughter that interrupted the first artisan's song. When Marie and the Drum-major waltz past Wozzeck a second time, a syncopated texture begins at m. 546, thus dissolving the waltz effect even further. The texture grows denser, and Wozzeck becomes more and more incensed. No longer able to control himself, he is about to storm onto the dance-floor when the waltz abruptly and unexpectedly ends at m. 559, this time not only for the spectator but for Wozzeck as well. The men and girls leave the dance-floor; Wozzeck gives up and sits down again.

The third waltz section occurs at letter *C* when the opening *Ländler* reappears while Andres and Wozzeck are conversing. The stage band plays the *Ländler* as the two men sing over the pit orchestra. Here the alienation effect is very powerful. First, Berg emphasizes their alienation from the tavern and its crowd by having them sing over the other medium, the pit orchestra. And the audience—which, hearing the *Ländler* and Wozzeck-Andres singing simultaneously, feels unsettled—experiences a distance from the tavern

atmosphere and thus from the waltz being played within it. Moreover, the *Ländler* is not repeated in its entirety. As Andres walks out, whistling along with the *Ländler*, the artisan begins his drunken sermon, and the stage band starts to play for him. The waltz-effect is suspended until the very last moment of the artisan's song, where he sings the cadential passage from the *Ländler* (m. 633; see Example 5/12).

Example 5/12: Berg, *Wozzeck*, Act II, Scene 4, mm. 630-634.

630

A-ber al-les ir - di-sche ist ei-tel; selbstdas Geldgeht in Ver-wesung ü-ber,

633 *Ländlertempo* *Poco allegro*

und mei - ne See-le stinkt nach Brann - te - wein.

Stage band

Orchestra

Later in the scene, at letter *D* we hear the orchestral laughter for one last time when the idiot suddenly appears and approaches Wozzeck. While the members of the band are tuning their instruments, the Idiot creeps close to Wozzeck and sings slyly, "Joyful, joyful." Wozzeck does not look at the idiot until he hears him exclaim, "[B]ut I can smell blood." By then, the tuning of the instruments is over, and the Stage Band starts to play. Marie's Waltz (letter *B*) overlaps with Wozzeck's, echoing the words "blood!, blood!" The men, girls and soldiers, Marie and Drum-major in their midst begin to dance again. While Wozzeck is screaming, "[I]t's all going red, as though they were all wallowing in blood," this last waltz (letter *D*) leads into the interlude which in turn leads into the next scene.

Berg achieves a sense of completeness in the larger structure of the Tavern Scene; but the repeated aborting of the waltz-like feeling leaves the audience perpetually unsatisfied, puzzled, and disoriented. Secure in his listeners' familiarity with the waltz and confident of the associations it has for them, Berg sets up their expectations—and then pulls the rug out from under their feet.

Ravel and Berg are only two among the many 20th-century composers who found in the Viennese waltz idiom an interesting, and perhaps also challenging, subject for their own compositions. Richard Strauss, for instance, makes reference to the waltz both in *Der Rosenkavalier*, where he uses a variant of Josef Strauss's waltz *Dynamiden*, and in *Arabella*. Wagner's enthusiasm for Johann Strauss finds its expression in the waltz of Klingsor's Flower Maidens in *Parsifal*, while Mahler introduced a grotesque version of the waltz in his Fifth Symphony. And Stravinsky quotes Lanner's *Die Schonbrunner* in *Petrushka*.

The extent and nature of the citations vary among composers: some refer to a well-known motive; others use the distinctive accompaniment figure; almost

all signal their subject matter with the triple meter. What is absolutely consistent is the recognizability of the subject within the individual style of the composers. If the composer stylizes the Viennese waltz idiom too greatly, we cannot hear, recognize, and appreciate the subject; if the subject is too dominant, the result is reductive—a poor imitation of a Viennese waltz. The sophistication of Ravel's and Berg's efforts lies at least in part in the delicate balance of the two components.

Their success, however, depends on another element as well: the audience. In my discussion of the use of the waltz in opera and ballet in Chapter 3, I pointed out that the composers of these dramatic, narrative musical pieces have recourse to knowledge, experience, and conventions that they share with the audience, and that they rely on these to communicate with the audience. So, too, with waltzes about waltzes: unless the audience is familiar with the pure Viennese waltz, with the Straussian style, listening to *La Valse* or *Petrushka*'s waltz may be aesthetically pleasing, but the composer's purpose—what the waltz means, if you will—is lost. Over the course of this study, I have examined the waltz from its inception to the early 20th century, through its considerable musical and social changes and permutations. And I emphasized its association with romance, sensuality, sexuality, and the downfall of women. Although the wild enthusiasm for the Viennese waltz, both the dance and the music, had all but disappeared by the time Ravel and Berg composed, they and their audiences still recognized and shared those associations. Their musical intent depends upon that common ground.

But what of the future of the waltz? Certainly, no dance has remained as popular for as long, or has influenced concert music as greatly, as has the waltz. Even the minuet, despite its tremendous presence in non-dance music, had a briefer stay in the limelight and enjoyed a much narrower range of expression

than did the waltz. Waltzes continue to be danced (albeit rarely if ever with the grace and abandon that made the atmosphere in a 19th-century ballroom so highly charged), and they continue to be composed.

As for what the waltz says: it appears still to retain its romantic—perhaps now more sentimental—connotation, even among audiences who know little, if anything, about the Viennese waltz tradition. However, at the close of the 20th century, the association of the waltz specifically with women is already greatly attenuated; and the eroticism the waltz connoted in the past has all but lost its stigma.

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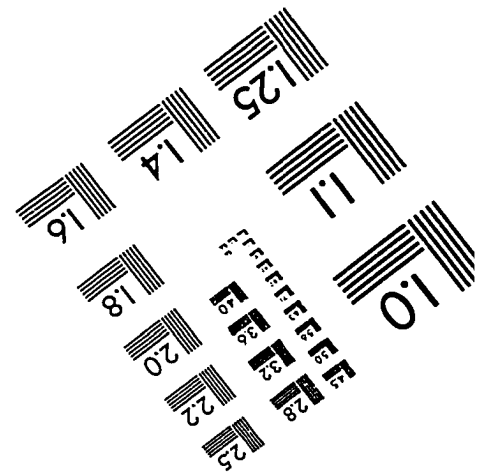
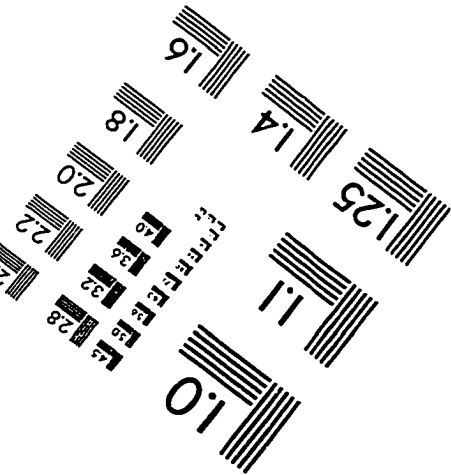
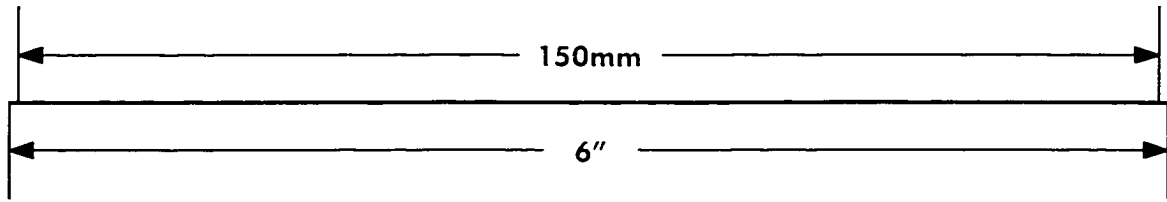
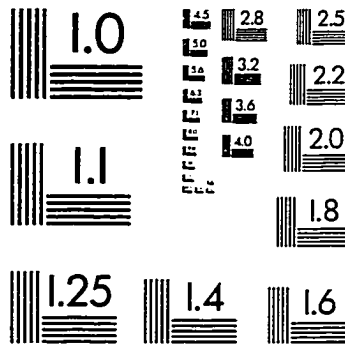
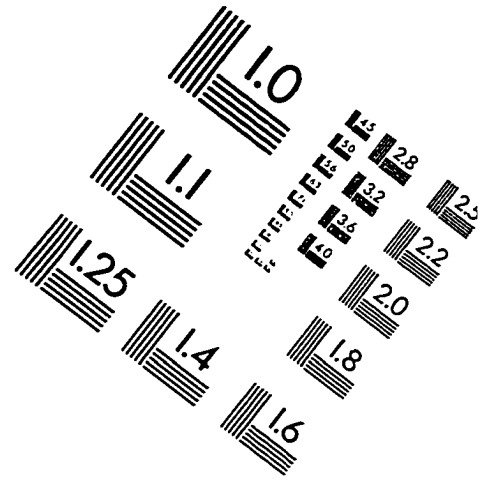
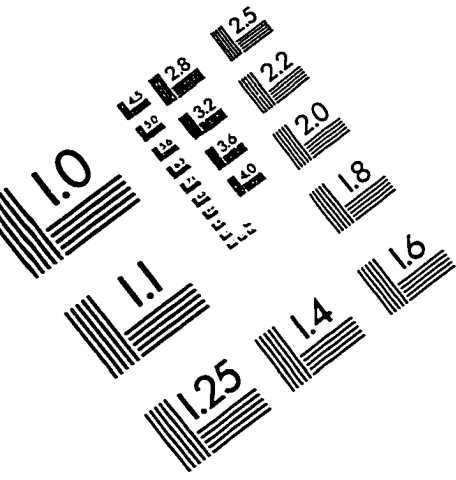
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