The Performance of Ballet Accompanists
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Ballet accompanists are pianists who play the piano in ballet classes but not on stage. To be a ballet accompanist requires a great deal of experience, flexibility and special ability to sense movement musically. The purpose of this paper is to examine their unique performances.

In a ballet class, it is common for a teacher to have students dance to music played by an accompanist. The accompanist plays the piano in a specific way, in terms of tempi, atmosphere, number of measures and so on, in order to make it easy for the students to dance or to stimulate them. Interestingly, the performance required to ballet accompanists is quite different from that of pianists who play in concert halls but not in dance studios.

The difference seems to be rooted in the requirements of the dance. Therefore to examine the features of the accompanists’ musical performance helps us understand the basic relationship between dance and music in classical ballet.

Some distinct features are seen in accent, ornamentation, and articulation. In comparison with the dancer’s motion, it becomes clear that such features relates not only to the way of motion, but also to the dancer’s feeling. In classical ballet, the movement from one position to another is extremely important. Ballet accompanist’s performance enables the dancer to sense how he/she should trace such movements. In this respect, a ballet accompanist is more of a dance teacher than a mere “accompanist”.