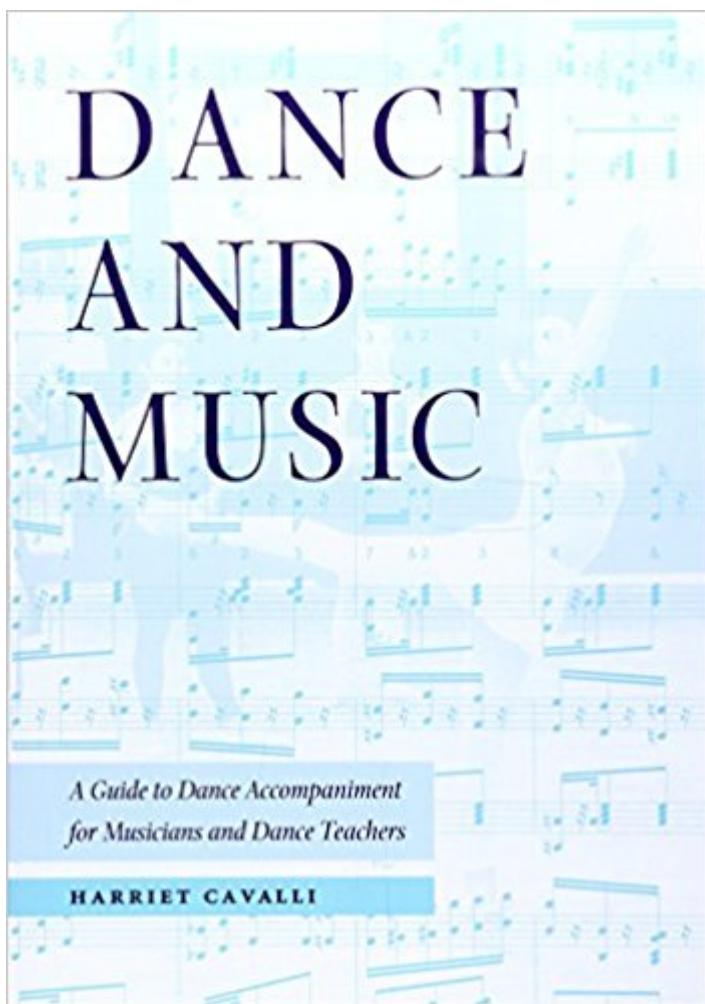


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# Dance And Music: A Guide To Dance Accompaniment For Musicians And Dance Teachers



## Synopsis

"Harriet Cavalli has been a great influence on me and my work with music. She understands dance accompaniment better than anyone and explains how and why in her book."-- Mark Morris, artistic director, Mark Morris Dance Group"An insightful and detailed guide that will help novice dance musicians to navigate the demanding and often unstated expectations of the dance class, providing an invaluable resource for both dance teachers and dance musicians."-- Kathryn Daniels, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle"All dance accompanists and teachers must own this publication."-- Ruth C. Petrinovic, consultant, Alabama Ballet School, BirminghamHarriet Cavalli, internationally recognized as one of the most talented and experienced specialists in the art of music for dancers and dance teachers, presents here the definitive book on accompaniment, as well as her personal--often humorous--look behind the scenes at the world of dance. The text is enhanced by diagrams and 83 complete musical examples, providing a wealth of repertoire choices. One of the most comprehensive books to acknowledge the intimate link between music and ballet technique, *Dance and Music* emphasizes the necessity of effective communication between dance teachers and their accompanists. Cavalli lays the groundwork with descriptions of most musical forms used in the dance classroom and stresses the need for teachers to make music a living part of their classes. For the inexperienced accompanist, she describes the pianistic demands of the profession, as well as the qualities of dance steps and movements that will facilitate the identification of suitable music. She also discusses the kinds of dance classes an accompanist may work in and offers a lengthy section on the functions of a pianist in a dance company. With forty years in the field, and firsthand knowledge of what dancing feels like and how to re-create that feeling, Cavalli invites musicians to move gracefully into the special, sometimes intimidating world of dance accompaniment. Harriet Cavalli is the company pianist for Martin Schlapfer's BallettMainz at the Mainz State Theater in Germany. She has worked for most of the major dance institutions in New York, such as the Joffrey and Harkness Ballets and American Ballet Theater, and with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, First Chamber Dance Company in Seattle, Zurich Opera Ballet, Basel Ballet, and Bern Ballet. In addition, she has studied ballet with Perry Brunson, Maria Swoboda, Flemming Halby, Donna Silva, and Martin Schlapfer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Currently the company pianist for the BallettMainz at the Mainz State Theater, Cavalli drew on 40-plus years' experience to write this one-of-a-kind manual. In straightforward, no-nonsense prose, she spells out ways for the teacher and the accompanist to make the rehearsal a success. She says, for example, that dance teachers must learn to count correctly and treat the accompanist with respect. Not surprisingly, Cavalli's real forte is explaining accompaniment. Beginning accompanists will especially benefit from her advice on selecting the proper music and defining their role in a dance company. By far the most thorough treatise on the subject in print, this work also discusses classroom etiquette, dance class structure, how teachers demonstrate, and steps and movements. A glossary of dance steps, movements, and positions and over 150 pages of musical examples are included. Highly recommended for academic libraries with strong dance/music programs, conservatories, and large public libraries. Janet Brewer, Murray State Univ. Lib., KY Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Harriet Cavalli has been a great influence on me and my work with music. She understands dance accompaniment better than anyone and explains how and why in her book." - Mark Morris, artistic director, Mark Morris Dance Group; "All dance accompanists and teachers must own this publication." - Ruth C. Petrinovic, consultant, Alabama Ballet School, Birmingham"

A very helpful and useful text for both dance accompanist and teacher alike that delves into the mysterious world of dance accompaniment. I accompany ballet and modern dance classes as a profession, and this text has been indispensable in giving me helpful ideas and structure. Great for dance teachers looking for how to work with an accompanist.

Very good book for piano players who want to learn how to accompany a dance group. A lot of musical examples.

A wonderful book that should be read by all teachers and dance accompanists who collaborate in the dance studio. Well written and direct, the information concerning music and its use for ballet class is equally informative for the teacher and the pianist. The rewards of the often mysterious and misunderstood profession of dance pianist are clearly explained. The importance of the relationship between dance and music are communicated along with an immense respect for the tradition of classical ballet.

Explains and provides solutions to and examples of the challenges and pitfalls of dance (particularly ballet) music accompaniment, addressing the needs and concerns of instructors, dancers, and accompanists.

Book 5 stars as love the cover. The author has written in an easy to read style with references to real life examples. Love it.

I've been teaching ballet in schools and in open classes for nearly 40 years. I know all about accompanists...the good and the bad, the smart and the not-smart, the engaged and the bored, the respectful and the snotty, the artists and the fools. If you teach in a major school or big company you actually DON'T get to know all about accompanists because in those settings the bad, bored, snotty etc don't get hired and you don't have to deal with them. But if, like most of us in the business, you work small-scale studios, semi-pro companies and amateur, you do indeed get to know all about accompanists. If I knew as little about ballet as some accompanists seem to know about tempo, counting and phrase lengths I would have had a career in, perhaps, brick-laying. I have come to accept, as must all teachers who work with accompanists, that among even those accompanists who DO know about tempo etc most of them not only have no idea what ballet training is about, they have no interest in knowing; and they have no idea how the physicality of ballet technique can be undermined by their bad playing. Most accompanists (at least in the hard-knocks world of semi-pro and open class) have no idea the emotional strain they impose on dancers who are trying to ignore their bad playing, nor of the actual physical pain dancers experience in those situations. In my touring days when we'd get into a new town and I'd go find an

open class somewhere before rehearsal in the theater I can remember the heart-sink I'd feel at plies when the accompanist launched into the preparation: oh god, another one of those...Do I sound bitter? Well, let's get real: most accompanists stink, and unless you're in a big school or company, that's what you deal with, an accompanist who stinks. Even now it continues to astound me how a studio will hire a clearly and completely incompetent pianist to play for class--something absolutely unthinkable if they were hiring a dancer for the company or pick-up in a season run. I've had to fight studio managers to let me use cd's instead of having to deal with one of their in-house incompetents. But I've known good accompanists. I've worked with good ones. I've worked with great ones. When you first meet a new accompanist, you shake hands, and you start class: you set the combination, you cue the accompanist, and you hear the preparation, and then the music unfolds...and sometimes it's proof-of-heaven...sometimes you just say in your heart, "Oh, thank you!" When I work with a good accompanist (to say nothing of a great one) I ask myself again and again: how does she (or he) KNOW? Over the years I've discovered that some of the good ones have had some dance training (sometimes a lot of dance training), but most of them just seem to KNOW without themselves being dancers, and I wouldn't know where to begin asking them HOW they know. And so along comes Harriet Cavalli, and her book *Dance and Music*. Over the years I've encountered some of Ms Cavalli's class recordings, but I've never met her or heard her play for class (and of course she's retired now, as a lot of us are). A young friend of mine presented me last year with a copy of her book, and I thought, "What in the world am I going to do with this?" Read it, that's what. So I read it, and here's the thing: Cavalli isn't just writing about accompanying for the instruction of other accompanists; she's also writing about teaching for the instruction of teachers who are working with accompanists. She doesn't answer my question "How do good accompanists know how to accompany well", but her book poses questions I never thought to ask MYSELF as a teacher working with an accompanist. If teachers never read this book I hope they will somehow find their way to some of these questions (and the implicit answers): Does the teacher realize that the good accompanist is listening very carefully for the tempo of the combination when he sets it? Does the teacher realize that when he sets the combination the good accompanist is assuming that the tempo of the teacher's count is exactly what he wants her to play and so she is mentally preparing herself to play music in exactly that tempo? Does the teacher realize that the tone and manner of his voice in setting the combination conveys to the good accompanist the spirit and character of the combination, and that she will try to match the spirit and character musically? Does the teacher realize that the good accompanist counts the number of phrases of 8 when he's setting the combination and so she will provide that much music so as to end when the combination ends?

Does the teacher realize that if he decides to extend or shorten the combination during execution he needs to communicate that to the accompanist? Does the teacher realize how much the good accompanist relies on communication from him? Does the teacher realize how much simple communication is simply a matter of simple courtesy? And failure to communicate is simply rudeness? I look back now and hope I've not been rude. I hope I've not offended the good accompanists I've worked with, because if I HAVEN'T offended them it's only by instinct, not tactic, not thought-out analysis. Until I read Ms Cavalli's book I'd never thought very deeply about the accompanist's point of view vis a vis the teacher. I'd never realized what huge problems a thoughtless teacher can make for the good accompanist. This is a book for teachers to read. There are many, many observations new to me that Cavalli makes comparing dancers and musicians (specifically pianists). Here's a tiny one that sticks with me for some reason: she points out that a pianist can practice a passage many dozens of times over and over again in a single session, getting it perfect, but a dancer can do a step only so many times in class or rehearsal before he must stop and recover so as not to injure himself. Let me add that for the dancer getting-it-perfect is a long-term negotiation with his body, and his body every day becomes an increment less willing to negotiate. This is a book by somebody who KNOWS, and I have no idea how she knows.

There are a number of Dance/Music Educators in the field (oh yeah, I'm one of them), many of them are quite nice, but an even greater number are fairly dim and very limited in understanding the scope of the field. They often feel you can teach repertoire and through that, a musician can learn how to become a good dance musician. In truth, this is blinkered and teaches nothing of real value. Cavalli is one of the better ones in the field. She provides a road map as to the basics that allow the more intelligent musician to figure their way around any manner of class/teacher.

As a teacher of ballet and not a musician I think we teachers acquire an understanding of the particular needs of accompanists very much the way they acquire an understanding of our needs, mainly by playing for class, and of course that means starting out there can often be little understanding so that it is only after some time that we teachers know how important setting a tempo for the pianist is, etc. and the pianist may come to learn how important it is to have a sense of the length and structure of the combination and not to speed up or slow down. I found this book in our studio and began to read it out of curiosity and I was very struck by Ms Cavalli's awareness of the teacher's needs, not just the pianists. I think it is a very good resource for both teachers and accompanists.

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