

Dance Music

Exploring Rhythm, Chords and Metre in Music for Dance

The RHYTHMS of dance music always match the STEPS of the dance: the two are inter-related. Dance music is based on CHORD PATTERNS: mainly PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V(7)) and has a clear MELODY with an ACCOMPANIMENT (HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE). Different dances and their music use different METRES/TIME SIGNATURES.



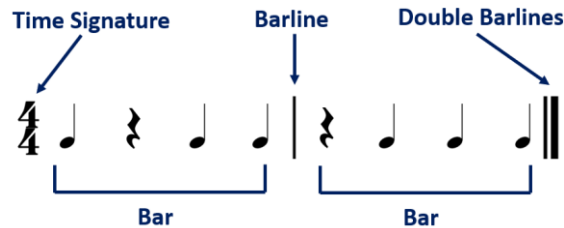
A. Pulse, Time and Metre in Dance Music

The **BEAT** or **PULSE** of dance music is always **REGULAR**. Here is a regular crotchet pulse of 12 beats:



A single **BEAT** is a basic unit of musical time. In dance music, beats are grouped together to make a repeating pattern – normally made up of either two, three or four.

The repeating pattern of beats gives us the **METRE** or the **TIME** of the music, shown by the **TIME SIGNATURE** at the start of a piece of music. Each repetition of the beat-pattern is called a **BAR** and bars are separated by vertical lines called **BARLINES**. A **DOUBLE BARLINE** always comes at the end of a piece of music or section of music.



The **TOP NUMBER** of a time signature tells you how many beats there are in each bar. The **BOTTOM NUMBER** tells you what types or note values these beats are (as divisions of a semibreve = 1):

- 1 = Semibreve
- 2 = Minim
- 4 = Crotchet
- 8 = Quaver
- 16 = Semiquaver

4/4 can also be shown by a "C" meaning COMMON TIME



B. Simple Time in Dance Music

SIMPLE DUPLÉ METRE: Two beats to a bar



Dance music such as **MARCHES**, the **TANGO** and **IRISH REEL** often use simple duplé metre.

SIMPLE TRIPLE METRE: Three beats to a bar



Dance music such as **WALTZES** and the **MINUET**, **COURANTE** and **SARABANDE** from the Baroque Dance Suite often use simple triple metre.

SIMPLE QUADRUPLE METRE: Four beats to a bar



Dance music such as the **TANGO**, the **IRISH REEL**, the **ALLEMANDE** from The Baroque Dance Suite, **AMERICAN LINE DANCE MUSIC** (Country and Western), **DISCO** and **CLUB DANCE** often use simple quadruple metre.

C. Simple and Compound Time

	Simple Time Signatures			Compound Time Signatures		
Duple Metre	2/4	3/2	3/8	6/8	6/4	6/16
Triple Metre	3/4	3/8	3/16	9/8	9/4	9/16
Quadruple Metre	4/4	4/2	4/8	12/8	12/4	12/16

Dance music such as the **IRISH JIG** and the **GIGUE** from the Baroque Dance Suite often use compound duple metre (6/8) with a "ONE and a TWO and a" feel to the music.

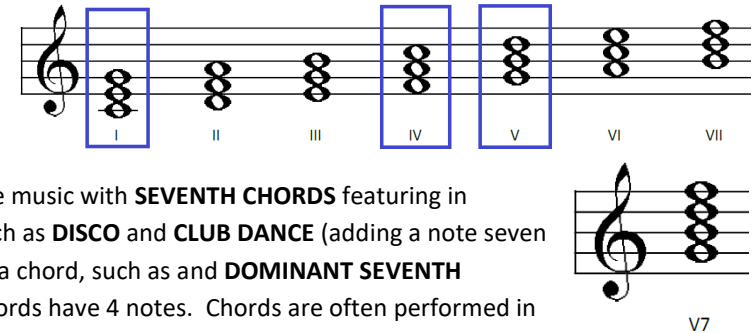
D. Chords in Dance Music

Dance music is based on **CHORD PATTERNS**.

PRIMARY CHORDS: CHORD I, CHORD IV

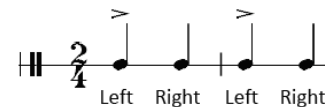
and **CHORD V** are most

commonly used in dance music with **SEVENTH CHORDS** featuring in popular dance music such as **DISCO** and **CLUB DANCE** (adding a note seven notes above the root of a chord, such as and **DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORD**). All seventh chords have 4 notes. Chords are often performed in different ways as an **ACCOMPANIMENT** in dance music.

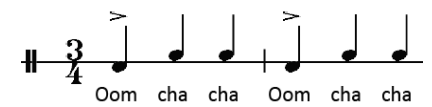


E. Characteristic Rhythms in Dance Music

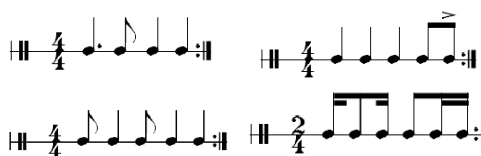
The **MARCH** has a strong **LEFT**, right, **LEFT**, right rhythm:



The **WALTZ** has a strong **OOM**-cha-cha, **OOM**-cha-cha rhythm:











The **TANGO** has several rhythms:



FOUR-ON-THE-FLOOR is a common rhythm in **DISCO** and more modern dance music:

Count	1	and a	2	and a	3	and a	4	and a
Bass Drum	●		●		●		●	
Snare Drum or Hand Claps			●				●	
Hi-Hat Cymbal		●●		●●		●●		●●

<p>F. Marches</p>  <p>Often with military connections or performed at ceremonies by large groups together.</p> <p>SIMPLE DUPLÉ METRE (2/4 time signature), although some marches can be in 4/4). Strong emphasis on the first beat of the bar (LEFT, right, LEFT, right). Clear MELODY and ACCOMPANIMENT (HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE). Uses mainly PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V). Often performed by MARCHING BANDS featuring BRASS, DRUMS and PERCUSSION.</p>	<p>G. The Waltz</p>  <p>A PAIRED DANCE with couples close, arms around and facing each other. Popular in Vienna and became a fashionable</p> <p>BALLROOM DANCE.</p> <p>SIMPLE TRIPLE METRE (3/4 time signature). Emphasis on first beat of the bar. Clear OOM-cha-cha, OOM-cha-cha rhythm. Clear MELODY and ACCOMPANIMENT (HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE). REGULAR 4-BAR PHRASES. Slow HARMONIC RHYTHM using PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V). Performed by ORCHESTRAS. STRINGS (occasionally WOODWIND) normally have the MELODY LINE.</p>	<p>H. Latin Dance: The Tango</p>  <p>Originated in Argentina and became a popular LATIN BALLROOM DANCE. A dramatic and sensual PAIRED DANCE with close contact, serious expressions, and quick, jerky movements. Characteristic crisp “TANGO RHYTHMS” (see E.) often DOTTED/SYNCOPATED RHYTHMS. SIMPLE DUPLÉ METRE (2/4) or SIMPLE QUADRUPLE METRE (4/4). Often MINOR TONALITY (sometimes MAJOR for contrast). Clear MELODY and ACCOMPANIMENT (HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE). Uses mainly PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V). Instruments such as BANDONEON, VIOLIN, CELLO, DOUBLE BASS (often plucked – PIZZICATO), SPANISH/ACOUSTIC GUITAR, PIANO.</p>	<p>I. The Baroque Dance Suite</p>  <p>Popular between 1600-1750, a collection of shorter dances (MOVEMENTS) grouped together to form a SUITE. Dances included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALLEMANDE (German, 4/4, Stately) • COURANGE (French, 3/4, Lively, Dotted Rhythms and Disjunct melody) • SARABANDE (Spanish, 3/2, Slow and Stately, emphasis on 2nd beat of bar) • MINUET (3/4, Elegant, Stately) • GIGUE (6/8, Fast, Lively, Triplet Rhythms) <p>All dances in BINARY FORM (AB) with each section repeated (AABB). Performed by a group of instruments such as HARPSICHORD, LUTE, VIOLIN, CELLO, OBOE, RECORDER, FLUTE.</p>
<p>J. American Line Dance</p>  <p>GROUP SYNCHRONISED DANCE. All dancers face same way standing in lines performing steps at the same time without touching. Accompanied by COUNTRY AND WESTERN MUSIC: CATCHY MELODY, CROTCHET BASS LINE, SIMPLE HARMONY (CHORDS I & V) in crotchets. SIMPLE QUADRUPLE METRE (4/4) POPULAR SONG FORM MAJOR TONALITY Instruments such as GUITARS (Electric and Acoustic), STEEL GUITAR, DRUMS, BANJO, FIDDLE, HARMONICA, ACCORDION.</p>	<p>K. Irish Jig and Reel</p>  <p>Traditional FOLK DANCES from Ireland with intricate footwork and arms by sides. REEL: COMPOUND TIME (6/8); JIG: SIMPLE TIME (2/4 or 4/4) both with “two in a bar” feel, continuous bouncy quaver or semiquaver rhythms, fast tempo and DECORATED melodies. BINARY FORM. MAJOR/MINOR or MODAL. Folk Instruments include: FIDDLE, FLUTE, TIN WHISTLE, ACCORDION, BODHRAN, UILLEANN PIPES, HARP.</p>	<p>L. Disco</p>  <p>Appeared in 1970’s as an individual, IMPROVISED DANCE in clubs from a mix of jazz, funk and soul.</p> <p>SIMPLE QUADRUPLE METRE (4/4) FAST TEMPO (around 120 BPM) FOUR-ON-THE-FLOOR RHYTHM (see E.) SYNCOPATED bass line parts. Simple CHORD PATTERNS using CHORDS I and V and SEVENTH CHORDS. POPULAR SONG FORM with a strong GROOVE (long repeated rhythm section) and fade out endings, and catchy HOOKS/RIFFS. GUITARS, VOCALS, DRUMS, STRING/BRASS SOUNDS, SYNTHESISERS, SAMPLES.</p>	<p>M. Club Dance</p>  <p>Influenced by MUSIC TECHNOLOGY: samplers, synthesisers, sequencers and drum machines. Various genres: House, Techno, Drum and Bass, Garage, Trance, Ambient. Dancing in individual and IMPROVISED on one spot. SIMPLE QUADRUPLE METRE (4/4). Use of ELECTRONIC SOUNDS. A STRONG BEAT emphasised by the DRUM and STRONG BASS LINES. SHORT PHRASES and REPETITIVE SECTIONS. FAST TEMPO (Ambient is slower/chilled) Complex, layered drum patterns. Inclusion of SAMPLES.</p>