Mickey Mouse is Innocent
Reciprocal Exchange in the Art of Dance Accompaniment

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Abstract: *The practice of matching movement closely with music, the so-called practice of mickey-mousing, has been long denigrated as restrictive, over-literal and tautological, whereby one art form is placed in a subordinate status to the other. But a fresh view of the close alignment of music to dance leads us to examine the approach employed by dance accompanists, and their search for a musical language that can both illustrate the dancers' movement as well as create a vibrant and complementary musical environment to support that movement. It is argued that the cohesive element that binds otherwise unconnected musical gestures together is the formation of articulated musical phrases and strategic control of the ongoing phrase structure. As live music is created at the same time as the dance movement, a reciprocal exchange between dancer and musician occurs whereby both disciplines simultaneously reflect the quality of the other, and when musical phrase is finely aligned to dance phrase, dance and music become inseparably woven together evolving into a new and highly articulate language.*

Introduction

At the heart of the rapport between dance and music in choreography lies the perennial chicken and egg conundrum of which came first, the music or the dance. Underlying that question is the assumption that one of the art forms needs to take a leading role. One would like to think that the most successful collaborations between music and dance would almost certainly obviate the need for that question, with both dance and music seeming to operate as a single integrated entity. Dance nowadays, however, is very rarely created at the same time as music. In some traditional cultures, and in some explorative improvisational contexts both dance and music are still formulated and articulated

simultaneously. In these cases, dancers genuinely can "dance the music rather than dance to the music."[1] But in most cases in Western societies, dance tends to be created to music that already exists, often emanating from a sound source or a device, which allows the dancer no chance to influence the music's progression and expression, suggesting a reactive, secondary impulse and response.

There are of course scenarios in which the opposite is the case, where it is the movement that is created first with the music subsequently responding and reacting to it, a musical spin off if you like. Take, for example, dance classes accompanied by a musician located in the studio. Here, the physical movement is articulated and demonstrated by the dance teacher or ballet mistress/master. This then becomes the 'score' for the musician to follow, who will be searching for a musical equivalent to the shape, quality and dynamic expressed in that movement. It is as if the visuals act as a trigger, as a springboard for the ensuing synthesis of dance and music. So, in the dance and music 'which came first' question, could it simply be a question of *a priori*, in that chronological priority inevitably confers precedence in the creative process and dictates the overall shape of the material? In other words, in the 'who-follows-whom' dilemma, precedence is generally given to the 'I was there first' position.

When choreographing to music that already exists the choice that the dance maker has is to either go with the music or go counter to the music, and most successful dance-making would employ both strategies. When it is perceived that the visual content matches the sound in its shape, line and quality too closely, it tends to be seen as overly literal. Such an over-reliance on the music creates a form of tautology, dance and music totally parallel, whereby both are saying the same thing in the same way, leading inevitably to an accusation of mickey-mousing.

The concept of mickey-mousing originates in the early years of cinema, probably in the era of silent movies. Musical accompanists, usually pianists, would construct music that was designed to be intrinsically synchronized with the action, making the musical progression, and ultimately form, entirely contingent on the visual content of the film. This was not strictly a new development. In the silent era, composers would openly acknowledge the *leit-motif* composition technique established by Richard Wagner as a major influence in structuring their scores.[2] Musical content, from themes and motifs

1 Wayne Siegel, "Dancing the Music: Interactive Dance and Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Computer Music*, ed. Roger T. Dean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

2 Jeongwon Joe, *Wagner and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

to boings and zaps, would have a direct corelation with what was happening on the screen, proving a remarkably efficacious way of binding an often impromptu film score together, one that would be not only heard but could also be "read" by the film-goer, hearing with the eyes, one might say.

The actual term mickey-mousing came into existence in the early years of the "talkies" whereby the film studios wanted to demonstrate their mastery of synchronizing sound and action; in particular, it refers to the Walt Disney cartoon short, *Steamboat Willie* (1928), the very first film in which the iconic character of Mickey Mouse makes an appearance. In it he can be seen happily and gratuitously making music from anything and everything in the steamboat sailing down the river—the point being that the sound and the visual content were completely and perfectly synchronized. As this synchronization technique developed and expanded throughout the industry, it became clear that it works just as well both ways—music mimicking movement, as well as movement mimicking music. In dance, this would entail an overly figurative interpretation of the music, and in music created for dance, it could give rise to a music that slavishly illustrates the movement's shape and dynamic, ironically giving it a heightened cartoonish quality. The outcome would be that the music had no real existence outside its role in supporting the dance content.

It is in this sense that the idea of mickey-mousing became derogatory, epitomizing music that used an over-simplistic approach, ruthlessly following the contours of the movement, and unable to create any kind of counterpoint between the two artforms. Indeed, composer John Cage criticized this kind of parallelism to be found in the music written for dance: according to Laura Kuhn, "he didn't like the idea of one art supporting another or one art depending on another."[3] Indeed, in his collaboration with choreographer Merce Cunningham, he developed an aesthetic whereby "music and dance could exist independently within the same performance—the dancers' movements would no longer be tied to the rhythms, mood, and structure of music. Instead, all forms of art could stand alone, simply sharing a common space and time."[4] Here, then, the relationship between music and dance, which for many was interdependent and deeply entwined,[5] was to all extents and purposes dissolved. Each art form

3 Laura Kuhn, in Beth Weinstein, "The Collaborative Legacy of Merce Cunningham," in *Places Journal* (March 2011), accessed 10 January 2023, https://placesjournal.org/article/the-collaborative-legacy-of-merce-cunningham/?cn-reloaded=1.

4 Laura Kuhn, in "Four Key Discoveries: Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Fifty," in *Theater*, vol. 34, no. 2 (summer 2004): 104–11, 105.

5 Siegel, *Dancing the Music*.

would therefore exist in its own right, perceived, understood, and assessed as such.

The Relation of Music to Dance in the Art of Accompaniment

John Cage first experienced creating music for dance early in his career as a dance accompanist at the Cornish School, Seattle in 1940. It is fair to say that he was not just a standard dance accompanist. For one thing, according to dancer and choreographer, Remy Charlip, "John couldn't keep a beat and couldn't follow the phrasing of the dancing;"[6] for another, he would accompany classes using cowbells, rice bowls, car parts and temple gongs, anything he could lay his hands on, almost like Steamboat Willie! Indeed, his famous prepared piano was originally explored in the creative environment of Cornish. So, if its primary function is not keeping time, it rather brings into question the role of the dance accompanist—what is playing for dance trying to achieve?

The first fundamental point about the art of dance accompaniment is that it completely inverts the role that music generally has vis à vis dance,—ie. not dance following the music, rather music following the dance. So, it is not a combination of dance steps set according to the template of an existing piece of music, but it is rather a movement phrase that has no inherent or at least no apparent musicality—it has instead, and perhaps more acutely, a latent musicality which is given a new musical context when the musician begins to play. The result is a music whose form, sound quality and musical material is designed to be able to support either a specific movement phrase or movement quality, or to provide more generic underlying support, creating a texture and an ambience conducive to the nature of the movement.

Music as Underlying Support for Movement

In the case of the latter, music designed to create an appropriate atmosphere that sits well with the movement, which is effectively what John Cage is doing with his rice bowls and repurposed vehicle parts, the precise relationship with the movement is not in itself specific. Likewise, the music and the movement need not necessarily be synchronized. It is more about sound quality and about defining musical space, allowing for an empathetic synergy between music and

6 Sarah Kaufman, "John Cage, with Merce Cunningham, revolutionized music too," in *Washington Post*, 12 August 2012.

dance. The musical atmosphere is established, or defined as we like to say, by the initial aural impact that the music has, not only on the dancer or the listener, but on the actual physical space itself. So much happens in that opening musical gesture—it will immediately determine how much music there is, how present it should be, and it will probably go on to influence the way the music will proceed across time. Moreover, for the musician, communicating an atmosphere so that it colors the room and creates an evocative dance environment usually entails the control of crucial elements of musical construction, in particular control of volume, density and weight, which does not at all mean that, say, full movement will necessarily imply voluminous musical texture. But if we allow that a kinetic response to a particular musical texture will tend to instinctively enhance the dancer's movement, then that full movement quality will be reciprocally reflected in the volume and capacity of the music.

That opening moment, just before the onset of the dance, holds within it the nature of the dance/music relationship about to be experienced. Just before the dance starts one can sense a physical empty space, a neutral space. Likewise, music is generally preceded by a silence, an empty space, yes, but latent with potential. As the music and the dance begin, they color and define that space, and if there is a congruence between the movement's quality and that of the music, the specific character of the two art forms comes quite clearly into focus, music and dance in harmonious fusion. Because the musician is not attempting to match specific dance combinations, it is more about creating a sound world conducive to the movement and helpful for the dancer.

This will be apparent with different sorts of dance movements and styles, whether they be angular, open, narrow, lyrical, percussive, funky etc. The nature and character of the dance movement creates a series of signals to the musician who will react to them and build up a dialogue with them. It is not a question of strictly following the dancer, which could be unsatisfactory, and might even lead to a potential mickey-mouse scenario. It is rather more trying to create a satisfying counterpoint with the dance movement, and this counterpoint is subject to a precarious balance. Too much counterpoint leads to music that seems to contradict and to cancel out the dancer's movement expression, generating music that feels jarring or obtrusive, seemingly inappropriate or even a mismatch. On the other hand, too little counterpoint may provide the dancers with too few impulses and become, very quickly, quite bland.

Naturally, questions of style come into play, as certain musical styles correspond more aptly to certain dance qualities and certain dance techniques. The issue of whether particular dance styles inevitably imply distinct musical styles is somewhat beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say that cultural memory and legacy can play an enormous part. Even the very sound

of an accordion or of ethnic acoustic drums in a dance class can clearly delineate the nature of the dance movement that ensues. A pianist's choice of musical style can very forcibly condition the way the dancer moves, the recognition of a familiar style of music may immediately trigger a familiar kinetic reaction. Conversely, the movement the performer is executing may directly or indirectly prompt the musician to reference a certain style of music, both through the movement's character and weight together with any figurative stylistic allusions it may engender. Certainly, such traditional stylistic musical/dance relationships can be based on often very powerful time-honored cultural associations. The musician would therefore have the option of specifically referencing and reinforcing these stylistic associations, or to some extent counterpointing them.

Kazuko Hirabayashi, legendary teacher of the Martha Graham technique of modern dance, would distinguish between "essential" movement and "mere style"; "essential" movement was movement that came from deep within the body, whereas "mere style" was gesture and articulation applied from the outside, stylistic influences being principally derived from culturally learned responses.[7] By alluding to different musical styles that are not immediately suggested by the movement, the accompanist can arrive at an interesting perspective, whereby dance movement may be perceived afresh, movement and music complementing or even contradicting each other rather than simply offering a parallel reiteration of style by running along the same lines. The effect of such stylistic dialogue, often a co-existence of not only artistic disciplines but of culturally dissimilar languages, can be startling, but unusual juxtapositions of music and dance can cause the dancer to move in a different and unpredictable way, responding physically to perhaps an unexpected and surprising musical impulse.

When creating music as underlying support for movement the decision about how much impetus and momentum it should possess may lie with the dance teacher, or with the company in general, or it may be a choice left to the musician. Tempo and meter will tend to have a proactive effect upon the movement, whether the movement is improvised or set. The body is likely to respond naturally to the pulse in the music, whether it be ongoing and motoric, or slower and more measured. The energy provided by the impetus that music containing a pulse has can be a real catalyst for dance movement. When the music is spatial, with lots of suspension and even silence, the impulse for movement is likely to come individually from the dancer. The moment there is some kind of a beat, there is a newer, perhaps more physical response that kicks

7 Kazuko Hirabayashi, "Curso Internacional de Danza," Burgos, 2009.

in. This is surely still the case if the dancer holds back and does not go with the rhythmic injection, moving slowly to counteract the sense of pulse; even here, the body will nevertheless be feeding off the metrical impulse, which will inform and characterize the movement.

If the musician can be said to be painting aural colors on to space, defining its character and giving it a musical articulation which the dancer can respond to, then pulse and tempo will have a major impact upon the atmosphere created, and the demarcation of time that comes from that. Dance accompanists who generate their music using loop stations are able to set up an initial rhythmic pattern and can generate momentum by superimposing additional layers, overdubbing to create a multi-textured sound. Because the recurrent nature of the loop process is inherently cyclical, the music will not specifically follow the dancer's movement but will create an immersive multi-textured sound, allowing the dancers to submerge themselves in it, and to counterpoint the music with their own accents and rhythmic patterns. There is no sign of Mickey Mouse here. Dance and music rhythms are in a free counterpoint, each having an organic life of its own as well as being closely related to what else is going on, sharing the space and co-existing in time. Rather than mickey-mousing, dancer and musician are in the process of creating a communal bi-disciplinary narrative.

Music Designed to Support Specific Dance Movement

The dance accompanist's craft requires different techniques and strategies when the music is designed to support specific dance movements and specific dance phrases. This is most often the case in a ballet or contemporary dance class where the teacher sets the exercise, a sequence of dance steps designed to warm the body up in preparation for a day of dancing, as well as working on the dance technique that an elite dancer must attain. It is the musician's role to provide appropriate music as what is usually termed "accompaniment." The contribution the music makes is of course far more than that. It is not merely playing alongside the dance movement, as some kind of aural accessory, as a complementary soundtrack; rather, it is designed to provide in depth support to the movement itself and it can even impart detailed information about how the dancer should technically approach each given step set by the teacher. And in all of this, the musician is given a much stricter phrasing template in which to operate. So, for the accompanist in the studio, what does this entail?

The tempo and meter are most often pre-ordained. These are set by the teacher at the outset, usually quite specifically, at the optimum speed best

suited to fit the properties of that particular exercise, and while at the beginning of the exercise there can often be some flexibility, some re-adjustment in line with the dancers' performance of the exercise, this will normally settle down to a stable tempo after a few bars. But beyond questions of how fast to play, the music invented by the musician will be contingent upon two imperatives: to underscore the physical movement by matching both its kinetic and its poetic quality. The task will primarily be to mirror the movement in detail, in its rise and fall, in its stasis and movement, so that the music can be said to "fit" exactly. The accents in the music will parallel the accents in the dance. In this way, the quality of the music, together with its individual musical components, will correspond closely to the movement and will be best able to support the dancer's execution of the step.

The dynamic of the *grand battement*, the throwing of the leg, is the classic example. The musician will be instructed to not play anything too heavy, too grounded, as this will impede the dancer and prevent them from getting off the ground. Instead, music will be devised that has an upward trajectory, usually finishing with a staccato note and a slight suspension creating a pocket of air, giving a sense of lift off and suspension—dancers will comment that the music will actually help them do the physical step, that it is "less effort" when accompanied by the right music.

Jumps are even more a case in point. To assist the dancer's elevation, the music must contain a natural bounce, what is referred to as a sense of *ballon*. *Ballon*, a concept particularly aspired to in classical ballet, is "a term encompassing the desirable qualities of lightness, ease and rebound when jumping";[8] Elizabeth Sawyer puts it more metaphysically, describing it as "a rhythmic release from the body's earth-bound existence."[9] It certainly implies a natural and effortless co-ordination in the act of getting off the ground, and without it a jump looks laboured and uncoordinated. The quality of the music is critical. Music that is too dense in texture, or too dark or too low in its register, will seem to the dancer to be too earth-bound. The music must instead possess a natural bounce, creating the aforesaid pocket of air, that gives the dancer an innate buoyancy and a real sense of being off the ground. This is making music with holes, with space for the dance, and accents that figuratively coincide with the dancer's elevation. And the precision is meticulous and finely detailed—so much that the question of whether they are in the air on the beat or jumping

8 Gretchen Ward Warren, *Classical Ballet Technique* (Tampa, FL: University Press of Florida, 1989), 375.

9 Elizabeth Sawyer, *Dance with the Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 79.

up on the beat is critical, as it requires the lifting accent to be on the right part of the bar. Not merely playing with the dancer, the musician is breathing with the dancer.

Undoubtedly, this is both about the kinetic response to music and the perception of the dynamic in the music that not only mirrors the physical action but facilitates it. The dancer's aural response to the music becomes channelled into a physical response. The quality and dynamic in the music therefore has a direct causal relationship with the physical performance. The dancer hears the music not simply as an aural signal, but as a trigger for physical endeavour.

So, in a *grand battement* exercise each throw of the leg, each high kick, should, if we accept that one of the roles of the music is to assist in the execution of the step, be accompanied by music that accurately reproduces the physical impulse musically, shadowing the body's shape, mirroring the dynamic and matching the patterning of the exercise. Yet perhaps there is jeopardy here. Is this all becoming dangerously close to the world of Mickey Mouse, where high-pitched head notes mean *rélevé* and pointe-work, and low notes imply depth and floorwork? By playing for class sympathetically, sustaining the dancers with music that directly reflects the physicality and the shape of the movement, is the musician ultimately providing music that is so subservient that its *raison d'être* can only be as a support for the dancer rather than making very much sense as music? And if that is the case, then of its two main functions, that of matching both the physical articulation and the aesthetic poetry of dance, it offers only the former—there is no aspiration towards what pianist, John Sweeney, calls the "music for the soul."[10] And this is the point where the notion of phrasing comes in.

The Alchemical Properties of Phrasing

Phrasing, of course, is common to both dance and music. The concept, as the etymology of the word implies, is borrowed from language, and in music and dance it does the same thing as it does in language, namely it adds punctuation to a string of otherwise unconnected elements and shapes them into a unit. By combining disparate elements into a sentence, the process of phrasing enables them to hang together, thus allowing them to make sense as communication, in this case, of articulated movement or of articulated sound. In the final analysis, phrasing is about signification. In the same way as unrelated underarticulated

10 John Sweeney, Lecture at the Piano Circus, International Conference "Il Corpo nel Suono," Accademia Nazionale di Danza, Roma, 2018.

words make no sense and are simply understood as gibberish, so unphrased dance is mere body language, and music without phrasing is potentially shapeless and amorphous. Phrasing could therefore be said to be at the very heart of both communicating art forms. It acts as a conveyor of meaning.

Non-homogenous and eclectic musical elements can make clearly articulated musical sense once they exist as part of a distinct phrase structure. One of the fields in which this can be seen is in the world of loops and backing tracks. Often, especially in a music technology that embraces samples and other extraneously sourced material, these can made up of distinct individual parts, either as short unconnected musical phrases, or as separate sound gestures that may have nothing in common with the previous sound and have no aural connection with the existing musical palette. By organizing them as constituent parts in a constructed phrase unit, (often of eight count duration, but not necessarily so), they become increasingly welded into a homogenous identifiable grouping as the phrase gets reiterated and exponentially looped, repetition ultimately making audible sense of the disparate musical elements. This is also the case in dance. A movement phrase can be understood effectively as a collection of individual gestures or steps, "made up of simple elements that become meaningful purely in virtue of their combination."[11] A clearly articulated initiation gives the phrase what Jaqueline Smith-Autard calls "shape and a logical time picture."[12] It has ultimately gained an identity. Now, as part of a movement phrase, each individual dance step or gesture exists in relation to the other steps or gestures within the phrase.

The nature of the phrase is that it is essentially additive.[13] One musical phrase will give rise to another, complementing or expanding upon it, and the new phrase will be followed by another as it progresses across time. Musical compositions can then be considered the summation of a sequence of phrases. Similarly, dances could be said to be a result of the accumulation of movement phrases, each responding to and developing from the preceding phrase; effectively it is the phrase structure that delineates the shape and duration of the dance. Indeed, set dance routines are still often called "combinations," or in ballet, "variations" or "*enchainements*," emphasizing their composite make up. When dance and music co-exist in the same time bracket, their ongoing phrase patterns will necessarily proceed across time simultaneously. Musicians and

11 Frédéric Pouillaude, *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance*, trans. Anna Pakes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 204.

12 Jacqueline Smith-Autard, *Dance Composition* (London: A&C Black Ltd., 2000), 59.

13 Glenn Spring and Jere Hutcheson, *Musical Form and Analysis, Time, Pattern, Proportion* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1995), 25.

dance performers will naturally be articulating their individual phrase patterns according to the vernacular of their own discipline; the way they approach their phrasing, and the strategies they adopt will automatically be communicated to the observer/listener. But the dancer and the musician will also be responding to the phrase articulation offered to them by the other discipline. For the observer/listener there is a potent clarity when both dance and music phrasing is aligned. It is as if a blurred image has come into sharp focus, and there is one clear articulation for eyes and ears to equate. With such synchrony the music is translated into movement, and the movement is qualified by the sound–the dancer will become the music and the music will become the dance.

There are two types of phrasing a dance accompanist can use to support dance movement: phrasing that closely demarcates the movement phrase without specifically matching its constituent parts, and phrasing that meticulously mirrors the detailed articulation of the individual dance elements that make up the phrase. In the case of the former, the overall phrase patterns will respond closely to each other, their shape and duration distinctly aligned, so there is a clear demarcation of the individual phrase, and the way phrases hang together. The musical content will be of an analogous quality and feeling without it shadowing the dance elements too specifically or too literally. Because the musical phrase lengths match those of the movement phrases, with, say, the last gesture finishing on a musical cadence, the relationship between the dance and the music will feel close and needed. The dance and the music will appear to proceed together interdependently in time.

With music designed to underscore the dance movement more specifically, the accompanist will search for musical equivalents that, as we have seen, individually match a given dance step in detail, figuratively and qualitatively, whilst still taking care to tie each individual component into a well-honed musically satisfying phrase. There are two things happening here, governed by two different and often conflicting imperatives; (i) to interpret each step with the fine line of a sketching pencil, depicting the shape clearly and interpreting the physical dynamic of each movement in music; (ii) to connect these micro phrases, these sketched gestures, into musically logical and cohesive phrase patterns, whether through a unifying harmonic progression, melodic contour, rhythmic control, or indeed all of the above. To illustrate the process, I would propose a short case study, highlighting the accompanist's approach to creating a satisfactory musical structure for the *rond de jambes* exercise in a classical ballet class.

The *rond de jambes* exercise is amongst the exercises habitually present in a ballet barre, and frequently in a contemporary class. Its role within the class is

to facilitate rotary motion and to loosen up the hip.[14] Very often the exercise is structured by combining different groups of steps, all of which are functional in expanding the dancer's technique, and while they are all visually distinct, all of them can be depicted beautifully in music more or less figuratively. The potential pitfall of over-literal depiction in music, a classic case of mickey-mousing, is very apparent, but it is still possible to illustrate each individual movement so that it retains its identity while still binding them all together into a cogent musical phrase, satisfying both the aural support for the dancer engaged in executing the technique, as well as creating an aesthetically satisfying piece of music. Moreover, because it is possible to do this in many diverse ways, and of course each musician will do it with their own individual voice, there will be potentially hundreds of different interpretations of the same exercise, giving the exercise a new musical context, indeed a new identity, each time the exercise is done while always respecting and mirroring the movement phrase. This is achieved because the dance phrase structure is reflected perfectly in the musical phrase structure, whether it be the composition of its micro-phrase structure or of its macro-phrase structure.

Redemption, then, for Mickey Mouse?

Conclusion: The Case for M. Mouse's Innocence

This paper argues that it is perfectly possible and aesthetically desirable to closely match music and dance. The charge against Mickey Mouse is that the desire to create an exact audio parallel with the visual content, a musical commentary on what our eyes are seeing and, in some ways, enhancing what we are seeing, relegates the role of music to a mere supporting act, or to less than that, a series of sound effects. As John Cage suggested, one art has been placed into a subordinate status in relation to the other. But what creates the sense of anti-musicality in cartoon music is its existence outside the parameters of musical phrase structure. There was a point in composing my ballet score for Milwaukee Ballet's *Peter Pan* when I thought that the music had become too cartoonish—depicting the Lost Boys in the undergrowth by scrubbing around with twigs ingeniously provided by the percussion department, or rapid darting fairy music portraying an enraged Tinkerbell. However, choreographer Michael Pink assured me that, while there was no disputing its color and immediacy, as well as a tendency towards some kind of epic musical sonic

14 Grazioso Cecchetti, *Classical Dance*, A *Complete Manual of the Cecchetti Method*, vol. 1 (Roma: Gremese Editore, 1995), 50–1.

adventure, the score still held together as a coherent piece of music. More than that, the score provided a compelling musical narrative that supported, and indeed, drove the dramatic narrative that was taking place onstage. The idea that vividly descriptive music cannot operate within a finely wrought musical structure is clearly misguided. Indeed, Mendelssohn's fairy music in *Ein Sommernachtstraum* works well enough!

If by description we mean a movement phrase translated into words that search to depict it accurately, then this translation should not be seen as of no value, but as what it is: an attempt to articulate non-verbal expression in words. And it is the same with descriptive music. A musical representation of the movement shape, line, and dynamic has an identity defined by that movement's shape, line, and dynamic; effectively this amounts to a figurative interpretation that has undergone a cross-disciplinary translation, and surely, that in itself must be noteworthy.

But of course, it is not just that; we have not considered the fact that it is a two-way process. In dance, it is fair to say that descriptive music is likely to go beyond mere description—there will always be some reciprocity involved. The visual information that the musician receives *from* the dancer, is then returned *to* the dancer in musical form. Therefore, we should acknowledge the fact that while the musical phrase may seem on the face of it to be entirely dependent upon the dance steps and to be merely illustrative, in reality, it has the capacity to lead the dancer to execute the movement in a different way, to communicate it in a more articulated and musically eloquent manner. And the breath inherent in the musical phrasing will allow the dancer to, as it were, *sing* the movement; so rather than be restrictively figurative, the music has given musical context, color, and even meaning to the dance phrase. Herein lies the reciprocity. Music that closely follows the dance will, yes, transform the dancer's execution of the phrase, but it will also transform its meaning. It is therefore the formulation of an art expression comprising both disciplines.

Dance that is closely matched by the music need therefore not be diminished, or the music disregarded. Indeed, to the contrary, it can be transformative. The closeness of the music can color the dance, give it an entirely new meaning and a new voice. In the same way as dance is enriched by a lighting change or by a striking costume, music will show dance bathed in a different light. It will contextualize the movement, highlighting particular aspects—the warmth of a *plié*, the exquisite line of a *developpé*, the power of a jump. It can give dance movement musical definition, give harmonic depth to floorwork or melodic coherence to line, and it can give emotional intensity to specific movements. Through the alchemy of complementary phrasing neither art is subordinate, but both combine to create a heightened form of

expression, one that is not dance with music, but a fusion of dance *and* music inseparably woven together, creating a new and highly articulate language. In this hypothesis, I would argue that Mickey Mouse surely deserves clemency.