

Music and Movement in 3



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The first meter we are going to dive into is 3. To count movement in 3, the beats in the phrase follow this pattern: 1...2...3...1...2...3...1...2...3 and so on. Every 3 beats equals a measure. If the meter is in 4, 4 beats will equal a measure. If the meter is in 9, every 9 beats equals a single measure. Knowing what a measure is, is not that important. In some movement techniques that use counts, measures can be described like, "This phrase has seven 3's on the right side and seven 3's on the left.", meaning 7 measures in the meter of 3 on the right and 7 measures in 3 on the left. Sometimes we will say, "This phrase is in 8's", and we will still be counting in 3's...meaning 8 measures, with a meter of 3.

We could go much more in depth with all of the rhythmic nuances that occur when a meter is in 3, but we will save that for another course. Remember, there is absolutely nothing wrong with knowing or not knowing rhythmic theory in depth. This information does not make a better or worse artist. My hope is to blur that binary boundary and get folks acquainted with a simple and clear way of approaching counting if needed.

The meter of 3 is used most often as a waltz in dance. I will leave it to dance educators to describe how style plays into the waltz and other forms in dance. We want to focus here on the meter as a "container" for counted movement. There are very different uses for different meters in dance, but at the core of it...the only difference between a measure in 3 and a measure in 4, is that a measure of 4 has one more beat than a measure of 3. Simple right?...Let's keep it that way. For most of the situations that I find myself

in, it is really not any more complicated than that.

Other moments that a meter of 3 is used in dance: - 1. Slow plies - 2. Adagios - 3. Fast swings...legs, arms, full body... - 4. Quick “triplets” across the floor, usually a fast walking pattern like, “Down, Up, Up, Down, Up, Up...” - 5. Battements across the floor

Music Practice

Prepare three different tracks with a meter of 3. Take time to count each of the tracks together as a class. Check in with everyone and make sure each student feels comfortable finding the pulse, clapping or tapping the beat, counting the meter and deciding if the tempo is fast, medium or slow. Then ask the students to briefly improvise some movement to the music while keeping the count of 3 top-of-mind.

With the remaining time, ask each student to put in their headphones, find a piece of music in 3 and to make a short teachable phrase to that music. We are going to do this exercise at the end of each class, for each of the other meters.