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The improvisation of structured keyboard accompaniments for the ballet class

Simon Frosi
Edith Cowan University

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*The Improvisation of Structured Keyboard
Accompaniments for the Ballet Class*

Simon Frosi

Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
Edith Cowan University

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Music Honours
2011

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the question of how a pianist can learn to improvise accompaniments for a ballet class. It aims to examine the background knowledge required in order to embark upon such a task and to provide a theoretical tool kit for pianists to use in improvising. Additionally, this dissertation makes a detailed case study of notated improvisations by Michael Brett, an expert exponent of this genre. A thematic catalogue is provided of Brett's improvisations for a forthcoming publication, examining accompaniment figurations and rhythmic structures. A more detailed harmonic and phrase analysis is then made of three complete pieces, examining the cadential and melodic structures that underpin these works. Similar to the Baroque *partimento* tradition, these phrase-level analyses can be used as templates, providing the middle ground scaffolding for the improvising pianist to embellish. They can also be treated as exemplars as to how a pianist may structure their own improvisations to suit any particular ballet exercise.

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I. INTRODUCTION

When I arrived at Perth this year, I was preparing myself to play for some ballet classes at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and didn't realise what a daunting task it is to play for class without selected music. Having worked as a sessional pianist playing for exams and workshops with the Royal Academy of Dance over the last three years I assumed it would be fairly easy as I was used to playing with set music that gave detailed directions on exactly how to play. The ballet class requires the pianist to understand dance and dance music, and to apply those detailed directions into the music when they play. This is where the idea for my thesis came. Having decided I would focus on improvisation in relation to the ballet class, I decided I would use one of Australia's leading players and improvisers in that style, Michael Brett. From this I came up with some questions:

- Firstly, what were the requirements of a ballet pianist?
- How is the accompaniment for a ballet exercise constructed in relation to phrase, harmony and cadence?
- How could one replicate this in as their own improvisation?
- How could I learn to improvise ballet exercises from observing an expert improviser in this style?

I also became interested in historical models for improvisation and composition and began to evaluate the Baroque *partimento* tradition, examining what it could teach us about how to mould and scaffold improvisations in a tonal style. The tradition of *partimento* was developed prominently in Naples throughout the 16th and 17th century. The idea was that the student would play off instructional bass lines (called *partimenti*), which were representations of a harmonic structure. Students practiced realising these bass lines in keyboard harmony, and absorbed many compositional lessons from clichéd musical patterns embedded within them. In effect, composition comprised the stringing together of a number of stock-standard patterns learnt through practicing the *partimenti*.¹ I became intrigued with whether such a way of practicing could aid me as a dance accompanist. Could templates be derived on which to form improvisations for a dance class?

¹ Aaron Berkowitz, *The Improvising Mind: Cognition and Creativity in the Musical Moment* (publication place: Oxford University Press, USA, 2010), page nr

II. A BACKGROUND TO DANCE ACCOMPANIMENT

This section describes what the expectations are for a dance accompanist in a classroom setting. The basic structure of a ballet class can be divided into three sections: barre, centre and allegro. The teacher instructs the class using French terminology and demonstrates when necessary. First, the pianist must have an understanding of ballet terminology and, by observing the dance teacher's instructions, must play something fitting to that particular exercise.²

A key concept that the dance accompaniment pianist must comprehend is that of how dancers count music, and how this fits in with an idea of musical periodicity, and particularly the prevalence of the 'eight bar phrase'. This is covered extensively in Cavalli's *Dance and Music*,³ and I expound it further in the next chapter.

Another key publication outlining the requirements of dance accompanist is *A Dance Class Anthology*, produced by the world's leading ballet examination company, the Royal Academy of Dance. This publication outlines in a nutshell what is required of the classical dance accompanist as well as providing scores to suit one or two classes' worth of music. Some of the music includes adapted movements from ballets, opera, orchestral works, and solo piano repertoire. Therefore, it is not my intention to focus on selecting and adapting repertoire for the ballet class—as this has already been done—but instead to focus on techniques that could be used to improve a pianist's improvisatory skills.

There is also a vast amount of literature that gives class outlines that include directions for the required accompaniment for certain exercises but not necessarily as a guide for the pianist. One of these that include musical scored musical examples is *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet* by Agrippina Vaganova, which teaches Russian ballet technique. A sample lesson with musical accompaniment can be found in the final chapter of this book.⁴ I am not discouraging the use of adapted repertoire, but merely suggesting that the

² Royal Academy of Dancing, *A Dance Class Anthology: The Royal Academy of Dance Guide to Ballet Class Accompaniment (R.A.D.)* (London: Royal Academy of Dance, 2005), 2-18.

³ Harriet Cavalli, *Dance and Music: A Guide to Dance Accompaniment for Musicians and Dance Teachers* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2001).

⁴ Agrippina Vaganova. Translated from the Russian by Anatole Chujoy. Incorporating all the material from the 4th Russian ed. Including Vaganova's Sample lesson with musical accompaniment and translated by John Barker, *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet: Russian Ballet Technique*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), page nr.

dance accompanist who is able to improvise will be able to play a class with much greater ease.

The job of the ballet accompanist is very demanding, not only requiring the ability to sight-read difficult orchestral reductions, learn large amounts of repertoire (whether from ballet repertoire or examination syllabi), but also to observe the instructions of the dance teacher, watch the dancers, and play in time. Not all dance accompanists have the ability to improvise, but I argue that these skills are hugely beneficial, ultimately making the job of the dance accompanist less time-consuming, and able to respond more adequately to the immediate demands of the job.

Some of the benefits of being able to improvise in the ballet class include the following:

First, as the ballet class can go for up to 30 exercises or more, usually in the space of one and a half hours (depending on the age group and/or level). The pianist may not always have time to find something in the pianist's books or memory in time for the class to start their exercise.

Second, when playing memorised music, mental blanks can be common. Being able to improvise and having a sound harmonic sense of a piece will enable the pianist to adapt the music to the dance with as little stress or trouble as possible

Third, another advantage of being able to improvise is the obvious fact that the pianist needs to know what is going on and watch the dancer as much as possible. Playing from scores diverts your visual focus on the music stand and merely using peripheral vision to follow the dancer.

Fourth, whilst the instructor is divulging information on how the dancer is going to approach a particular exercise, the pianist may give them their undivided attention focusing their energy on how their music can support what the teacher and dancer is trying to achieve instead of spending their preparation time sifting through their music.

To get an idea of how a ballet class is run I have presented I have included two examples of a ballet class. **Figure 1** is from the *A Dance Class Anthology* issued by the Royal Academy of Dancing and **Figure 2** is an example of a Russian 'Sixth Year' class from *100 Lessons in Classical Ballet* written by Vera S. Kostrovitskaya. A class may be run in many different ways depending on the students level, the teacher, and whether they are preparing for an exam or performance. But most ballet classes have a fairly similar structure. Most exercises at the bar and other diagonal exercises are played at least two

times so the dancer has the opportunity to present both the left side and the right side. On occasions, the teacher may ask something on the left side to be played slightly slower as it is generally the weaker side which needs to be accommodated.

Another requirement of the ballet accompanist is to motivate and inspire the dancers. Ballet-master and choreographer of the Bolshoi ballet, Asaf Messerer, believed that musical accompaniment for advanced dance classes should always be 'artistically varied, rich in melody, and interesting.'⁵

Figure 1. Sample class outline from *A Dance Class Anthology*⁶

BARRE		
Pliés	4/4	<i>At Parting</i> Harry Farjeon
Tendus	Gavotte	Handel/Boyce <i>Gavotte</i>
Glissés	Rhumba	<i>Tico-tico</i>
Ronds de jambe	Blues	<i>At Last</i> 16 bars + 8
Frappés	Schnellpolka	<i>Tritsch-tratsch polka</i> 32 + 8
Fondu & ronds de jambe en l'air	Habañera	RAD Advanced 2 Male syllabus p.33
Petits battements	Schnellpolka	<i>Thunder & Lightning Polka</i>
Grands battements	Strong, fast waltz	<i>The Desert Song</i> (Waltz in D major)
Adage	Waltz-aria	<i>Sieh dort den kleinen Pavilion</i> duet from <i>Merry Widow</i> Act II ("Summer House aria")
CENTRE		
Ports de bras		<i>Reverie</i> (Debussy) or <i>White Swan pas de deux</i> from <i>Swan Lake</i> Act II
Centre Practice		<i>Wedding Day at Troldhaugen</i> Grieg
Pirouettes	Waltz	<i>Finale Waltz</i> from <i>The Nutcracker</i>
Adage	Sarabande	<i>Sarabande</i> by William Croft
ALLEGRO		
Warm-up Allegro	Polka type	<i>Pizzicato Polka</i> from <i>Sylvia</i>
1 st Allegro	6/8	<i>Flower Festival at Genzano</i> male solo
2 nd Allegro	Waltz	'Stars' waltz from <i>Cinderella</i>
POINTE WORK		
Warm-up	Minuet	<i>Minuet in F</i> Handel
Grands battements	March	Homage March by Grieg
Adage	2/4 lyrical	Lyrical theme from <i>Funeral March</i> Chopin
Temps Lié	6/8	<i>Kingdom of the Shades La Bayadère</i>
Emboîtés	2/4	<i>Galop</i> from <i>Ernani</i>
Turns en diagonal	Galop	<i>Voyage dans la lune</i> Offenbach
Ports de bras & révérence	Something slow	<i>Danny boy</i>

⁵ Asaf Messerer, *Classes in Classical Ballet* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2007), pg.485.

⁶ Royal Academy of Dancing, *A Dance Class Anthology: The Royal Academy of Dance Guide to Ballet Class Accompaniment (R.A.D.)* (London: Royal Academy of Dance, 2005), 20.

Figure 2. Sample Outline from *100 Lessons in Classical Ballet*⁷

EXCERSISES AT THE BARRE	
Demi-Pliès Exercise	16 Measures in 4/4
Battements Tendus	32 Measures in 2/4
Ronds De Jambe A Terre and Grands Ronds De Jambe Jetes	12 Measures in 4/4
Battements Fondu	16 Measures in 2/4
Ronds De Jambe En L'air	8 Measures in 4/4
Petits Battements Sur Le Cou-de-pied	16 Measures in 2/4
Battements Developès	8 Measures in 4/4
Grands Battements Jetès	16 Measures in 2/4
EXCERSISES IN THE CENTER	
Small Adagio and Battements Tendus	4 Measures in 4/4
Battements Fondu	8 Measures in 4/4
Petits Battements Sur Le Cou-de-pied	8 Measures in 2/4
Grand Battements Jetès Balancès	8 Measures in 4/4
Grand Adagio	12 Measures in 4/4
ALLEGRO	
Sissonnes Fermeès and Etrechats-quatre	16 Measures in 2/4
Ballonnès in Posè Effaceè	8 Measures in 4/4
Ballottes and Assembles	(Waltz) 16 Measures in 3/4
Grand Echappes	8 Measures in 2/4
Grand Jete in attitude croisee	(Waltz) 16 Measures in 3/4
Glissades	4 Measures in 4/4
Pointe Tendu	(Waltz) 16 Measures in 3/4
Coupes	8 Measures in 2/4
Emboites	8 Measures in 2/4
Brises Dessus-Dessous	8 Measures in 2/4
Petits changements de pieds	8 Measures in 2/4
EXCERSISES ON POINTE	
Echappes	8 Measures in 2/4
Sissonnes Simples	16 Measures in 2/4
Gargouillades en Dehors, and Pas De Chat	(Polka) 16 Measures in 2/4
Jetes	8 Measures in 4/4
Tours Sur Le Cou-de-pied	(Waltz) 16 Measures in 3/4
Tours Glissade en Tournant	16 Measures in 2/4
Tours en Dehors with Degage	8 Measures in 2/4

⁷ Vera S. Kostrovitskaya, *100 Lessons in Classical Ballet*, 1st Limelight ed. (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004), page nr.

III. Required General Knowledge

1. The Rhythmic Basis of Dance

When talking dance steps and rhythm, the dancer tends to use different language than the musician. The dancer generally works in 'counts' whereas the musician thinks of beats, measures (or bars). When converting counts one must consider the time signature and the pulse. For example; if a pianist was playing in a three four time signature for a *Grand Battement* exercise, each bar would be considered a count and the tempo could be much faster, perhaps a dotted minim equals 70 beats per minute. If one was to play a *Battement Fondu* exercise in a three four tempo, each crotchet would be considered a count and would be relatively equal in tempo to a whole bar of the grand battement exercise. Therefore in the *Fondu* exercise you are playing one third of the amount of notes if the exercise shares the same music and counts.

As most dance teachers are not familiar with detailed musical analysis and use different terminology, they tend to ask for a particular type of dance as an example like a slow waltz, a polka, or a rag. This facilitates the accompanist when playing from scored music, but when improvising the musician must have an awareness of other factors, which in any case should also be considered when playing off notated music. A comprehensive understanding of how rhythm, phrase and structures work will allow the pianist to make their improvisations easily understood and better synchronised with the dancer(s).

2. Cadences: Their Relative Strength

Cadence is the best way of defining the ends of phrases, as well as tonality.⁸ Cadence in ballet can help guide the dancer through an exercise. For the musical dancer, it provides them with sub-divisions of the phrase, which if played correctly can help them with their own sense of phrasing and direction.

The imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) and perfect authentic cadence (PAC) are characterized by a dominant harmony resolving in the tonic. In the US terminology I am adopting here⁹, a *perfect* authentic cadence refers to closed voice-leading, with the soprano

⁸ William S. Rockstro, et al. "Cadence." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/04523> (accessed November 16, 2011).

⁹ Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music Workbook, Second Edition*, Workbook ed. (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 133. See also Steven G. Laitz, *The Complete Musician: an Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2012), 121-125.

ending on the tonic, and the chords being in root-position. This sounds more final, and conclusive and designates the close of a musical “period.” The *imperfect* authentic cadence refers to a V-I cadence that does not satisfy the conditions of being tonally closed (as described above). As such, the IAC designates the end of a phrase, but not a complete musical period. The third significant cadence type is the half cadence (HC), which designates any cadence closing on chord V (whether I to V, ii to V, IV to V, vi to V, and so on). The fourth significant cadence type is the deceptive cadence (DC), being where a dominant chords normal resolution to tonic is evaded by substitution of the submediant. Finally, there is the plagal cadence, which appears as a substitute for the PAC in some late Romantic repertoire. **Figure 3)** summarises these cadence types, their abbreviations, and the harmonies and voice leading they designate.

Figure 3. Cadences types

<i>Cadence Type (US terminology)</i>	<i>English terminology</i>	<i>Progression</i>	<i>Voice-leading</i>
Perfect authentic cadence (PAC)	Perfect cadence with closed voice-leading	Dominant to Tonic	Soprano moves either 7 - 8 or 2 - 1 while the bass moves 5 - 1
Imperfect authentic cadence (AC)	Perfect cadence with open voice-leading	Dominant to Tonic	Soprano closes on 5 or 3
Half cadence (HC)	Imperfect cadence	Anything going to the Dominant	
Deceptive cadence (DC)	Interrupted cadence	Dominant to Submediant	
Plagal cadence	Plagal cadence	Sub-dominant to tonic	

3. Constructing Phrases and Periods

When assessing how many measures one would play to fit a dance exercise, it is necessary to feel the music in phrases and periods. It is also vital to the dancer that the music is felt in phrases rather than individual counts, as the dancer needs to feel the direction of the music and have a natural flow in order to give an organic performance. When discussing how phrases are to be divided and the musical impression they give, it is useful to label them by their technical names.

If a dance exercise is played on two sides, this would normally comprise two periods, each constructed in turn of two distinct phrases, one an antecedent and one a consequent.

The antecedent and the consequent phrase both combined provide ‘tonal fulfilment.’¹⁰ The antecedent phrase precedes the consequent phrase, which is usually left tonally open defined by a cadence on the dominant (or an imperfect authentic cadence). The consequent is tonally closed, that is having a PAC, therefore providing tonal fulfilment.¹¹ It is also useful to recall that the plagal cadence may be employed to end a phrase, although this is less common.¹²

Therefore, in constructing a dance improvisation, an accompanist must normally choose the four cadences to be played and their relative strengths. Possible outlines are given below in **Figure 4**:

Figure 4. Two possible tonal plans (with cadences) for a dance improvisation

	<i>Period One</i>		<i>Period Two</i>	
	<i>Antecedent</i>	<i>Consequent</i>	<i>Antecedent</i>	<i>Consequent</i>
Plan A	Ends with HC in tonic, or IAC in tonic	Ends with PAC in tonic	Ends with HC in tonic, or IAC in tonic	Ends with PAC in tonic

	<i>Period One (Modulates to dominant key)</i>		<i>Period Two (modulates back to tonic)</i>	
	<i>Antecedent</i>	<i>Consequent</i>	<i>Antecedent</i>	<i>Consequent</i>
Plan B	Ends with HC in tonic, or IAC in tonic	Ends with PAC on dominant (or other closely related key)	Multiple options...	Ends with PAC in tonic

Understanding how a period is constructed, and being able to replicate this as the dance or exercise warrants, will ensure the harmonic structure and to some degree melodic design will support the dancers in a satisfying way.

Another consideration in constructing periods is motivic repetition. It is very common for the consequent phrase to imitate or repeat melodic ideas from the antecedent

¹⁰ Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music Workbook, Second Edition, Workbook ed.* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), page 181.

¹¹ ¹¹ Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music Workbook, Second Edition, Workbook ed.* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), page 181.

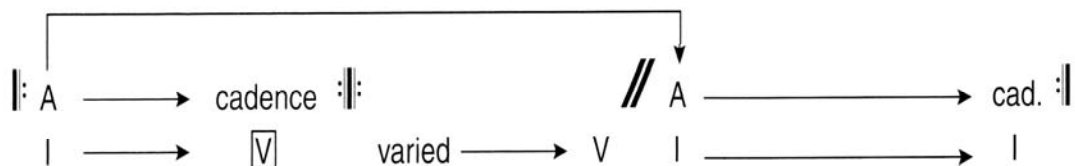
¹² Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music Workbook, Second Edition, Workbook ed.* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), page 134.

phrase. A period constructed in such a way is called a “parallel” period. If no such repetition is employed, it is called a “contrasting period.”¹³

In constructing a pair of periods in this way, a dance improvisation may sometimes also become a recognizable musical form such as rounded binary, one of classical music’s most common formal types. Developed in the Baroque, rounded binary eventually grew into sonata form in the latter eighteenth century but persisted as the formal model for minuets, trios, as well as embedded in miniature within rondo themes and other piano forms such as mazurka.

Also known as two-reprise form, rounded binary is illustrated in **Figure 5** below.

Figure 5. Rounded Binary Form as Illustrated in Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music 14*



The first section (A) is constructed of a progressive period, the consequent phrases modulating to the dominant. The second section (B) is double the length of the first section which consists of a small development (often consisting of sequential material), and closing with a reprise of the A section that is altered such that the consequent phrase now stays on the tonic. It is easy to see that rounded binary form is like an incipient sonata form, contain some qualities of a ternary form. In adapting rounded binary for a dance class, the repeat of the B section is omitted such that the two halves are precisely equal in length.

¹³ Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music Workbook, Second Edition, Workbook ed.* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), page 183.

¹⁴ Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music Workbook, Second Edition, Workbook ed.* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), page 427.

IV. THE PARTIMENTO TRADITION AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO STRUCTURING IMROVISATIONS FOR THE BALLET CLASS

“A new type of improvisatory piece called a *partimento* arose in the Baroque period with the inception of the thoroughbass.”¹⁵ This method was developed and practiced in Naples from the 17th century. The principal of the *partimento* tradition is that the keyboard player would practice small realizations/patterns until they are well ingrained and then practice applying these over a figured bass score in a variety of ways in many different keys. The idea was that the novice would have to build up a large memory of stored material then learn to harbour it in such a way that they can perform structured improvisations.¹⁶ Proficient *partimenti* players could have more than 1,000 different patterns memorized, which they could apply when needed.¹⁷ The result was a style of free improvised performance that could be used for compositional purposes or for the performer themselves. **Figure 6** is an example is a partimento bass pattern '*partimenti numerati*' by Francesco Durante. These are catalogued online by North Western University.

How is this applicable to dance accompaniment? Of course it wouldn't be expected that someone would have to knuckle down and learn over a thousand realizations in all the keys and be able to apply it in many different ways. 'Good' improvisation is borne of logic and formal order and these things have to be learnt. It is a craft as much as an art. Developing a strategy and method of how you would practice dance accompaniment improvisations and having a solid structural foundation will provide the pianist with a repertoire of stock-standard phrases under their fingers, adding fluency and confidence to their improvisations.

¹⁵ Bruno Nettl, et al. "Improvisation." In *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/13738pg2> (accessed September 29, 2011).

¹⁶ Robert O. Gjerdingen, "Gebrauchs-formulas," *Music Theory Spectrum* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 191

¹⁷ Francesco Durante, "Partimenti Siminuiti (embellished Basses)," *Monuments of Partimenti*, <http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/music/gjerdingen/partimenti/collections/Durante/diminuiti/index.htm> (accessed June 16, 2011). Francesco Durante, "Partimenti Siminuiti (embellished Basses)," *Monuments of Partimenti*, <http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/music/gjerdingen/partimenti/collections/Durante/diminuiti/index.htm> (accessed June 16, 2011).

Figure 6. A partimento exercise by Francesco Durante¹⁸



Moreover, the way in which *partimenti* were constructed is of great interest. Firstly there is a figured bass template, which provides the structure, both the harmonic structure and phrase structure. The pianist playing off these ‘realizations’ could play the progression in any different key. The *partimento* practice can be adapted to not only to memorise certain harmonic progressions suited to the eight bar phrase, but also for the practice of different patterns to suit the exercise. Example; for an exercise you could play in a 2/4 meter with a repeated left hand vamp style accompaniment, or using the same harmonic outline use a 6/8 meter arpeggiated accompaniment, or even a 3/4 vamp style like a waltz. These are different styles of playing they are utilizing the same harmonic structure and outline and it is up to the pianist to be creative with the textures and motivic material.

How does one do this exactly? Obviously, memorising many harmonic patterns can take a lifetime. But the idea of a *partimento* as a harmonic template is also a useful concept. A harmonic template can be used to create a scaffolding for embellishment through improvisation. Firstly, the structure must be set in even eight bar phrases. Depending on the length of the exercise, the pianist may easily adapt the music by simply selecting which phrases to use, or repeating phrases.

¹⁸ Francesco Durante, “Partimenti Numerati (figured Bases),” *Monuments of Partimenti*, <http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/music/gierdingen/partimenti/collections/Durante/numerati/index.htm> (accessed November 17, 2011).

V. THE ANALYSIS OF FREE IMPROVISATION FOR THE BALLET USING MICHAEL BRETT AS AN EXEMPLAR

Mr. Brett has almost 30 years experience playing for professional ballet classes having worked in Germany for the Stuttgart Ballet and Hamburg Ballet; in Australia for the West Australian Ballet; and in New Zealand for the New Zealand School of Dance. He was the music director for the Royal Academy of Dance in Australia and is now the chief accompanist for the dance department at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He is also in demand as an accompanist for visiting ballet companies, ballet master classes, examinations and continues to assist dance teachers in the musical aspects of their training. Most of the work Mr. Brett does (syllabus and repertoire work aside) is improvised. However, he also extemporizes from memory or scores. This is a skill he has developed by playing in groups and ensembles when he was younger, where he has had to improvise over simple chord progressions and play a large amount of commercial music, which over the years has been ingrained into his memory—similar to Partimenti patterns. Now he has the ability to access this information anytime he needs.

A. My Observations

When observing Mr Brett the first thing I noticed was his choice of repertoire. He tended to avoid using material from piano repertoire and use themes from either well know pieces or ballets and improvised around them. It seems to make sense as they are avoiding rhythmic repetition or metric predictability, which is vital for the ballet dancer to follow, which does against what the great masters were trying to achieve.¹⁹

Mr Brett's style of music was also varied depending on the class. The class itself follows a specific structure in which the dancer is working their way from some basic stretches and exercises gradually building up till they are performing great leaps and jumps. The music therefore has a sense of doing this and Michael improvises in different styles and dynamic/intensity to support the dancers.

Mr Brett's opening gambits create an introduction to the dance, providing a clear rhythmic character to the dancers, giving them the opportunity to hear what style and pulse

¹⁹ Wallis, Lynn et al., *A Dance Class Anthology: The Royal Academy of Dance Guide to Ballet Class Accompaniment*, ed. Jonathan Still, Melanie Adams and Sabrina Avellini (London: Royal Academy of Dance Enterprises Ltd, n.d.), 12.

they must follow. Generally he would play a four or eight count introduction allowing enough time for the dancer to 'catch' on. The amount of bars that would be would depend on the meter and the pulse of the music.

B. CATALOGUE AND ANALYSIS OF MICHAEL BRETT'S SCORED IMPROVISATIONS

Improvisation is defined by Bruno Nettl as follows:

The creation of a musical work, or the final form of a musical work, as it is being performed. It may involve the work's immediate composition by its performers, or the elaboration or adjustment of an existing framework, or anything in between.²⁰

In this section I have catalogued the improvisations of Michael Brett, which are going to be published in an examination syllabus some time in 2012. These were constructed using a Disk Clavier piano linked to a computer, which transcribed what he was playing into scored music. As well as cataloguing these transcriptions, I have also analysed and constructed templates of a select few, which demonstrate clear harmonic and phrase structures. These structures can be embellished to create new works in a similar fashion to the *partimento* tradition.

²⁰ Bruno Nettl, et al. "Improvisation." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/13738> (accessed November 2, 2011).

1. BARRE

PLIES

E Flat Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4Count Introduction

Dolce



Broken chord accompaniment with simple melody mostly consisting of crotchets. Gives a flowing feel with long musical line.

BATTMENTS TENDU AND GLISSÉS

G Minor

$\frac{2}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/8 Count Introduction

Allegretto



Non legato alberti bass pattern with a staccato melody constructed with small motifs accentuating the beat. The result is a light/snappy feeling, which can help the dancer, articulate their movements.

RONDS DE JAMBE A TERRE AND ASSEMBLÉS SOUTENUS

C major

$\frac{4}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Piangevole



RONDS DE JAMBE A TERRE AND ASSEMBLÉS SOUTENUS

C major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Piangevole



This exercise has a flowing quaver, broken chord left hand pattern. Mr Brett purposely phrased the left hand quavers in groups of four to give a sense of two counts in a bar, which the dancer will be following.

GRAND BATTEMENTS EN CROIX AND RETIRÉS

B Flat Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Alla marcia (not heavy)



BATTEMENTS FRAPPÉS

E Flat Major

2/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Giocoso



PETITS BATTMENTS

D Minor

2/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

4 Bar/8 Count Introduction

Agitato

BATTMENTS FONDUS EN CROIX AND RONDS DE JAMBE EN L'AIR

C minor

4/4 Time Signature

8 Bar Setting

2 Bar/Four Count Introduction

Cantabile

DÉVELOPPÉS AND DEMI-GRANDS RONDS DE JAMBE

A Flat Major

6/8 Time Signature

9 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Piacevole

EXERCISE FOR ATTITUDE AND ARABESQUE

A Minor

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Sarabande

The musical score for 'Sarabande' is written for piano in A minor and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* and features a melodic line in the right hand with a long slur over the first four bars, and a bass line with chords. The second system continues the piece with a similar melodic and harmonic structure, also marked *mp*.

GRAND BATTMENTS EN CLOCHE

Quick Waltz

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

20 Bar Setting (4 Bar Coda)

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Quick waltz

The musical score for 'Grand Battments en Cloche' is written for piano in A minor and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a melodic line in the right hand with eighth notes and a bass line with chords. The second system continues the piece with a similar melodic and harmonic structure, also marked *mp*.

2. DEMI-POINT

RISES

A Flat Major

4/4 Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

2 Bar/8 Count Introduction

Soave

mp

simile

RELEVÉS

E Flat Major

2/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Giacoso

f

8va-1

ECHAPPÉS RELEVÉS AND RELEVÉS

A Minor

6/8 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Alla tarantella

f

3. CENTRE

1ST PORT DE BRAS

C Major

6/8 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Affetuoso

2nd PORT DE BRAS

G minor

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Adagio e poco patetico

SET EXERCISE

F Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Quick march

4. ADAGE

EXCERSISE FOR ARABESQUE

D Flat Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Adagio e poco drammatico

Musical score for Exercise for Arabesque, D Flat Major, 4/4 time signature. The score consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) and is marked *Adagio e poco drammatico*. The piece begins with a 2-bar/4-count introduction. The main body of the exercise is 16 bars long. The melody in the treble clef features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often with slurs. The bass clef accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. The dynamic marking *mf* is present at the beginning.

EXCERSISE FOR ATTITUDES

E Flat Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Amabile

Musical score for Exercise for Attitudes, E Flat Major, 4/4 time signature. The score consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) and is marked *Amabile*. The piece begins with a 2-bar/4-count introduction. The main body of the exercise is 16 bars long. The melody in the treble clef features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often with slurs. The bass clef accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. The dynamic marking *mp* is present at the beginning. The word *simile* is written at the end of the score.

TEMPS LIÉS EN AVANT AND EN ARRIÈRE

F Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Adagietto

Musical score for Temps liés en avant and en arrière, F Major, 4/4 time signature. The score consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) and is marked *Adagietto*. The piece begins with a 2-bar/4-count introduction. The main body of the exercise is 16 bars long. The melody in the treble clef features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often with slurs. The bass clef accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. The dynamic marking *mf* is present at the beginning. The word *simile* is written at the end of the score.

1ST ADAGE

G Minor (Tierce De Picadi Ending)

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Moderato con movimento



2ND ADAGE

A Flat Major

4/4 Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

2 Bar/ Four Count Introduction

Andante e poco appassionato



UNSEEN ADAGE ENCHAÎNEMENT: 6/8

C Major

6/8 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Barcarolle



UNSEEN ADAGE ENCHAÎNEMENT –3/4

B Flat Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Tranquillo

The musical score is for a 16-bar setting in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It begins with a 4-bar introduction. The tempo is marked 'Tranquillo'. The right hand features a melodic line with a long slur over the first four bars, followed by a more active line. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of chords, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic.

UNSEEN ADAGE ENCHAÎNEMENT – 4/4

I. F minor

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Csárdás (lassú) - con espressione

The musical score is for a 16-bar setting in F minor and 4/4 time. It begins with a 2-bar introduction. The tempo is marked 'Csárdás (lassú) - con espressione'. The right hand features a melodic line with a long slur over the first four bars, followed by a more active line. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of chords, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

5. PIROUETTES

PIROUETTES EN DEHORS

D Minor

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Tango con bravura

PIROUETTES EN DEDANS

E Flat Major, Modulating to A Flat Major at mid-point

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Viennese waltz

EMBOÎTÈS RELEVÈS AND POSÈ PIROUETTES BY HALF TURN

A Minor

4/4 Time Signature

32 or 64 Bar Setting, depending on repeats

Alla gavotte

UNSEEN PIROUETTES ENCHAÍMENT – MALE

B Flat Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Marziale

A musical score for a 16-bar setting in B-flat major, 4/4 time. The piece is marked 'Marziale'. It begins with a 2-bar/4-count introduction. The notation is for piano, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The melody in the treble clef starts with a half rest in the first bar, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef part consists of a steady accompaniment of chords and single notes.

TOURS EN L’AIR – MALE

I. C Major

3/8 Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Spanish waltz con brio

A musical score for a 32-bar setting in C major, 3/8 time. The piece is marked 'Spanish waltz con brio'. It begins with a 4-bar/4-count introduction. The notation is for piano, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The melody in the treble clef is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a waltz. The bass clef part features a rhythmic accompaniment of chords and single notes.

6. ALLEGRO

WARM-UP ENCHAÎNEMENT

G Major

6/8 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Capriccioso



1ST ALLEGRO

E Flat Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Grand waltz



2ND ALLEGRO

F Major

2/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Gincosa



3RD ALLEGRO

Tempo di polka-mazurka

E Flat Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/6 Count Introduction

BATTERIE ENCHAÎNEMENT – FEMALE

Same music as immediately subsequent...

BATTERIE ENCHAÎNEMENT – MALE

(Male-meno mosso con bravura)

D Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/6 Count Introduction

Tempo di polka-mazurka

UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.1 – POLKA

C Major

$\frac{2}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Leggiero

UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.2 – GIGUE

A Minor

6/8 Time Signature

16 Bar Introduction

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Alla spiccato

UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.3 – MAZURKA

B Flat Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Tempo di polka-mazurka

UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.4 – SCHOTTISCHE

D Major

4/4 Time Signature

8 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Andante

UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.5 – 2/4

G Minor

2/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Scherzoso



UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.6 VIENNESE WALTZ

G Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Tempo do waltz



UNSEEN ALLEGRO NO.7 – LYRICAL WALTZ

F Major

$\frac{3}{4}$ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Moderato



7. POINTE

RISES

C Minor

4/4 Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Misterioso ✂ 2nd time with octaves



RELEVÈS

C Major

4/4 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Rag



ECHAPPÈS RELEVÈS AND RELEVÈS

B Flat Major

6/8 Time Signature

16 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Volante



UNSEEN POINTE NO.1 – 4/4

F Major

4/4 Time Signature

8 Bar Setting

2 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Alla marcia ma delicato



UNSEEN POINTE NO.2 – ¾

C Minor

¾ Time Signature

30 BAR SETTING

4 Bar/4 Count Introduction

Tenerzza



POINTE ENCHAÎNEMENT

E Flat Major

¾ Time Signature

32 Bar Setting

4 Bar/ 4 Count Introduction

Tempo di waltz



RÈVÈRANCE

Affetuoso

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The upper staff features a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. A *rit.* (ritardando) marking is present in the third measure of the lower staff.

The second system of musical notation also consists of two staves in treble and bass clefs. It continues the piece with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking in the lower staff. The upper staff continues the melodic line with a long slur spanning across the first three measures. The lower staff continues the accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The system concludes with a double bar line.

C. ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

1. Accompaniment Patterns

This next table (see **Figure 7**) is a tally of different left hand patterns/styles, which Mr Brett employed in his transcribed improvisations. When learning to improvise, it would prove useful to practice the patterns Mr Brett uses in the ratio of this set of pieces. As is an overall representative of how he accompanies a ballet class.

Figure 7. An Analysis of the Different Left-Hand Accompaniment Patterns

Accompaniment Pattern	No of Uses	Comment
Alberti Bass Pattern	1	
Broken-chord pattern in 4/4 or 2/4	6	
Broken-chord figuration in 6/8	1	
Arpeggio pattern in 6/8	2	
Arpeggio pattern in 3/4	1	
Simple chordal accompaniment in 3/4	2	
Simple chordal accompaniment in 4/4	5	
Simple chordal accompaniment in 6/8	1	
Bass and repeated chord pattern in 3/4	2	
Bass and repeated chord pattern in 4/4	1	
Vamp style bass and chord in 4/4 and 2/4	11	Adds emphasis on the 'two in a bar' feel as the bass falls on every second beat.
Vamp style bass and chord in 3/4	10	
Vamp style bass and chord in 6/8	3	
'Barcarolle' arpeggio followed by chord pattern in 6/8	1	Gives the music a lilted feeling. "Depicting the movement of a boat", is a description in the New Grove Dictionary. ²¹

²¹ Maurice J.E. Brown and Kenneth L. Hamilton. "Barcarolle." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/02021> (accessed November 14, 2011).

2. Development of Motivic Ideas

From my observations of Michael Brett's playing and his transcriptions, he usually has a theme or motive which he plays around with throughout the exercise. For example, exercise 3 (**Figure 7**) employs a rhythmic motive of a dotted quaver followed by a semi-quaver that gives the melody a lilted feel. This motive is repeated fifteen times. A motive is simply a short musical idea, whether harmonic, melodic, rhythmic or any combination of them.²² When improvising it would prove useful to have some sort of theme or idea in mind and develop it in as many different ways as possible. Repetition creates a sense of musical cohesion and is necessary to any successful improvisation. However, repetition should not be overdone: repetition and contrast must always be kept in a delicate balance.

3. Harmonic Templates Derived from Michael Brett's Ballet Improvisations

Figure 8 through **Figure 12** are harmonic analyses of Michael Brett's transcriptions. I have written them in figured bass so one could read off them like you would read off a *partimenti* bass pattern. Rather than dividing each harmony from each bar, I have structured them in counts to make it easier for the pianist to have an understanding of the dancers phrase and beat as opposed to the musical one. So if there are two or more harmonic progressions in the one count, then they will be written in the one square. It is then the prerogative of the pianist how they will divide and give value to each of these harmonies. In most cases there is either one or two counts in a bar.

Of the three tables in these templates, the first row in the top left corner is the opening gambit. The second is the first half of the exercise, and the third row is the second half of the exercise. I have marked in the pivotal cadential points and phrase names, as they provide the underlying structure of the music. For the musical dancer, structure is key to a successful improvisation, providing harmonic and rhythmic direction and stability. An awareness of these structures when practicing will help the pianist create their own structured improvisations. All good improvisations for ballet class are borne of logic and formal order.

²² William Drabkin. "Motif." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/19221> (accessed November 18, 2011).

Figure 8. A analysis of EXERCISE 1: PLIÈS

Opening Gambit

I ₄ ⁶	CT ^{o7}	V ⁷	V ⁷
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ANTECEDENT PHRASE

CONSEQUENT PHRASE



E Flat Major

PAC T& / Q

I	I ⁶	V ₃ ⁴	V ⁷	I	vii ^{o6} ₄	V ₅ ⁶	V ₅ ⁶ and vii ^o /ii	ii ⁶ ₄	CT ^{o7}	I ₄ ⁶	ii ₃ ⁴	I ₄ ⁶	V ⁷	I	I iii
---	----------------	-----------------------------	----------------	---	--------------------------------	-----------------------------	--	------------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------	---	--------



C Minor

E Flat major

PAC V⁷ / I

i	i	V ₃ ⁴	V ⁷	i ⁶	CT ^{o7}	I ₄ ⁶	V ^{b9} ii	ii	CT ^{o7}	I ⁶	CT ^{o7}	I ₄ ⁶	V ⁷	I	I
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Figure 9. The Music of EXERCISE 1: PLIÈS by Michael Brett²³

I. Pliés

Michael J. Brett

Dolce

The musical score for "I. Pliés" is presented in six systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo and mood are indicated as "Dolce". The score begins with a piano (*mp*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with various articulations, including slurs and accents, while the left hand provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the right hand.

²³ Michael Brett, forthcoming publication.

Figure 10. An analysis of EXERCISE 2: BATTEMENT TENDUS AND GLISSÈS

Opening Gambit

i	i ⁶ ₄	i	i ⁶ ₄
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ANTECEDENT PHRASE



CONSEQUENT PHRASE



HC i – V⁷

HC III – V⁴₃

i	i ⁶	iv	ii ^{o6} ₄	V ⁷	V ⁶ ₅	i	V ⁷	i	i ⁶	iv	iv ₆	V ⁶ ₅	ii ^o	III	V ⁴ ₃
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ANTECEDENT PHRASE



CONSEQUENT PHRASE



AC V⁶₅ - i

PAC V⁷ - i

i	iv	V ⁶ ₅ III	III	VI ⁶	v V	V ⁶ ₅	i	ii ^v	V ⁶ ₅ III	III	VI ⁶	v V	v	i & V ⁷	i
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Figure 11. The Music of EXERCISE 2: BATTEMENT TENDUS AND GLISSÉS by Michael Brett²⁴

2. Battements tendus and glissés

Michael I. Brett

Allegretto

mf

simile

simile

simile

²⁴ Michael Brett, forthcoming publication.

Figure 12. An analysis of EXERCISE 3: RONDS DE JAMBE Á TERRE AND ASSEMBLÈS SOUTENUS

Opening Gambit

I^6_4	I^6 & I^{6b3}	ii	V
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ANTECEDENT PHRASE

CONSEQUENT PHRASE



HC $V^7 - iii^{o7}$ (OPEN)

v

PAC $V^7 - I$

I	I	IV^{b3}	IV^{b3}	I	I	$vii^{o4}_3 \text{ } \overline{V}$	V^7	iii^{o7}	i^{6b3}	$V^7 \text{ } \overline{V}$	vii^{o4}_2	I	vi	V	V^7
---	---	-----------	-----------	---	---	------------------------------------	-------	------------	-----------	-----------------------------	--------------	---	----	---	-------

ANTECEDENT PHRASE

CONSEQUENT PHRASE



PLAGAL CADENCE $IV^{b3} - I^6$

PLAGAL CADENCE IV^{b3}

- I

I	vi	ii	V	I^6	C/T^{o7}	ii	IV^{b3}	I^6	vii^{o4}_3	ii	V^7/vi	IV^{b3}	IV^{b3}	I	I
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Figure 13. The Music of EXERCISE 3: RONDS DE JAMBE Á TERRE AND ASSEMBLÉS SOUTENUS by Michael Brett²⁵

3. Ronds de jambe à terre and assemblés soutenus

Michael J. Brett

Piangevole

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked *Piangevole* and *mp*. The second system features a '7' marking in the bass staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth system.

²⁵ Michael Brett, forthcoming publication.

4. Improvising from a Template

Similar to that of the baroque *partimenti* bass patterns, this harmonic analysis can be used as the basis of improvisation for ballet exercises. It would be a good idea to work through the template practicing the chords in some different keys. I noticed from my observations of Michael Brett that he would use mostly keys with up to four flats or sharps. He would generally use keys with flats and not more than four flats, but it is up to the pianist on which keys they will be utilizing, as long as there is variety with different exercises. Perhaps, one could practice between each chord two at a time to ensure continuity. Once the pianist is comfortable with playing these chords and doesn't have to make much of a conscious effort to perform the template beginning to end it is time to start applying different accompaniment patterns and motivic textures.

If one wants some suggested basic harmonic patterns to practice they could start by referring to the catalogue of works and practice applying the different left hand patterns to the template the pianist is working on. One could also practice stock-standard tonal progressions, such as the cycle of fifths, or similar key progressions (I-vi-ii6-V-I or the similar). It is important that the pianist practices the left hand separately to start of with to ensure that the right harmonies are being employed in the accompaniment pattern.

As far as the melody, theme and/or motivic material is concerned I can offer some suggestions of how to start practicing these, but it is really trial and error as well as listening. A good start would be practicing small sections of simple of simple melodies or motives. An example: the first two bars of J.S. Bach's *Minuet in G major From Anna Magdalena notebook*. Play these first two bars in every harmony suggested by the template (one at a time). Make sure to use the notes of each chord, and notes not found in the harmony in the chord should be that of the scale from the key of music. Make sure modulations are taken into consideration, and that if one is playing in a minor key they should also consider employing the melodic minor scale to avoid the dissonance between the flat sixth and raised seventh, unless it is desired by the player. These are not a guarantee of a good sounding melody but merely some suggestions of how one could practice improvising a melody. The most key is listening and making sure the contour of the melody reflects that of the phrase structure and harmonic structure.

5. Steps to Creating your Own Improvisation

In order to create one's own improvisation, apart from a complete template, the pianist needs to consider many factors. The logical order of steps is outlined below in **Figure 14**.

Figure 14. Logical Steps to Creating an Improvisation

- Step 1: work out the counting, metre, and number of bars required for the particular exercise
- Step 2: choose a key and create phrase structures and cadential/tonal goals
- Step 3: find a suitable accompaniment pattern
- Step 4: have a motivic/melodic germ to develop

VI. CONCLUSION

When I set out on my study for this dissertation, my main goal was to see how I could become a better improviser for the ballet class. The key question I was seeking to answer was what exactly is required in order to learn to improvise for a ballet class. First, I found that I needed to have a strong understanding of how a ballet class is structured, and what was expected of the pianist. Second, I then realised I needed to learn more about tonal harmony in order to structure an effective improvisation. I thus read extensively from theory texts on the ways that phrases and periods are constructed in tonal music. Third, I was also intrigued by the Baroque *partimento* method and its apparent historical success in facilitating structure improvisations in a known musical style. My goal was to develop my own templates to be used in similar fashion to the *partimento* tradition. Fourth, I wanted to learn as much as possible from the improvisations of Michael Brett. For the last year, I have effectively been his apprentice. I have attempted to use my new-found theoretical knowledge to analyse some of his compositions and apply them as templates in my own improvisatory practice. I have found that this project has given me enough tools to commence rudimentary improvisations. Indeed, it has laid bare the previously hidden structure underlying much tonal repertoire. In essence, theory has taught me how to structure an improvisation. But observation of Michael Brett has taught me the styles and types of accompaniment patterns needed, and the ways to develop musical motives. This has been a richly rewarding musical journey, one in which I have come far, but one presenting many further musical challenges and potentially a lifetime to master.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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