

Choreomusical Analogies in the Symphonic Minuet

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ABSTRACT: Eighteenth-century composers and their audiences knew how to dance the minuet. As Joseph Fort (2025) and others have argued, this shared, somatic knowledge informed compositional practice and historical perception of minuet music, even when not written for dancing. This article explores, through corpus analysis and close readings, common manipulations of hypermeter and phrase structure in symphonic minuets and the embodied meanings that they might have communicated to historical listeners. Certain compositional strategies—more frequent in symphonic minuets than in those written for the ballroom or the chamber—seem to imitate steps of the minuet’s choreography, evoking experiences of dancing and watching others dance. I identify three such mimetic devices, operating at different levels of hypermetrical structure. (1) Duple hypermeter is required to coordinate minuet steps with music, but numerous symphonic minuets exaggerate the alternation of weak and strong measures, as if “painting” steps with sound. (2) Minuet music tends to unfold in four-measure units, but two-measure echoes that frustrate quadruple hypermeter are common in symphonies. These phrase extensions, which I call *courtesy Anhangs*, provide sonic representations of bowing gestures. (3) The 4 + 4 + 4 phrase, a structure that deviates from the eight-measure norm, imitates the tripartite shape of the *Z-figures* that minuet dancers drew on the floor. These three *choreomusical analogies* amplify similarities between music and (imagined) movement, facilitating kinesthetic engagement for those familiar with the minuet steps. I interpret these musical structures as invitations to a virtual dance and consider them communicative strategies characteristic of the symphonic genre.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Georg Joseph Vogler noticed, in the minuet of a piano sonata, “a rhythm of five bars, within which the regular movement of the feet cannot settle into their prescribed steps” (1778–79, 380, quoted and translated in Wheelock 1992, 56). Vogler’s familiarity with the minuet’s choreography, acquired through repeated performance of the dance steps, shaped his perception of the music.

Even outside the ballroom, sound has the power to activate motor imagery and evoke the physical aspect of dancing. This example of embodied music cognition may well represent a typical response from the intended listeners of the classical symphony.⁽¹⁾ As Joseph Fort argues:

[T]here was considerable crossover between audiences at the public concerts in Vienna and the same people who attended the city's public balls; as such, the minuet held an array of kinesthetic associations and expectations for these audiences. Whether engaging with the minuet as a dancer or a seated listener, these audiences did so in bodies that knew the steps and movements of the dance. (2025, 177)

This article explores how kinesthetic knowledge of the danced minuet might have informed compositional strategies and historical perception of minuet music that was not written for dancing with a focus on hypermeter and phrase structure in symphonic minuets. When hearing dance-like music in the movement of a symphony, historical listeners likely expected certain metric regularities and were attuned to phrase structures “closely allied” to the actual dance (Neumeyer 2006, [2]). My starting premise is that this nonfunctional dance music would have triggered memories in the audience, activating patterns of motor behavior and inviting listeners to remember and virtually reenact previous experiences dancing and watching others dance.⁽²⁾ Intimacy with the danced minuet, as a repository of embodied schemas shared by composers and their audiences, provided a common ground that enabled the creation of such choreomusical meanings.⁽³⁾ By examining dance-music relations in and outside the ballroom, I will show how minuets written for symphonies facilitate embodied response, compromise it, or engage it in playful ways. My hope is to invite today's listeners to dance along, albeit virtually, and to hear some familiar movements anew.

[1.2] This approach is not entirely novel. Gretchen Wheelock finds deviations from “gestures and patterned steps of the dance” as a source of humor in Joseph Haydn's symphonic minuets (1992). In a similar spirit, Jennifer Salamone examines hypermeter in “misbehaving” minuets from the String Quartets op. 76 and 77 (2017). Melanie Lowe (2007, 87) and Danuta Mirka (2009, 297) recreate hypothetical responses of listeners familiar with the danced minuet when listening to symphonies and string quartets respectively. Eric McKee has studied music-dance relations in the minuets that W. A. Mozart wrote for the ballroom (2012) and extended his findings to explain the expressive implications of the minuet as a musical topic (2014). Fort has undertaken a detailed study of the danced minuet in late eighteenth-century Vienna—including its choreography, performance practice, and unpublished musical sources. This article responds to his appeal for a “somatic enquiry” into the concert minuet (2025, 177–209) and is highly indebted to his work. By including dancing bodies in the hypothetical reconstruction of hypothetical listeners, I follow the steps of these scholars. However, my approach diverges from and expands these studies in significant respects.⁽⁴⁾ My discussion of potential connections between music and (virtual) dance incorporates observations about statistical regularities found in a corpus of minuets. I identify frequent structures that evoke the formations, footsteps, and gestures performed by dancers—sonic imitations of bodily movements that I term *choreomusical analogies*. This study draws insights from trends in the corpus to categorize compositional procedures that vary across composers, time periods, and most importantly genres. Although my analyses engage minuets from different genres for comparison, I have placed the symphonic minuet—an oft-neglected genre in comparison to its chamber counterpart—at the center of this study.⁽⁵⁾

[1.3] Although the minuet was still danced by the end of the eighteenth century, its sociocultural associations did not derive exclusively from contemporary dance practice.⁽⁶⁾ Erica Buurman argues that “social dances derived meaning from a network of reciprocal relationships between different areas of Viennese cultural life” (2021, 8). In this network of signification, the theater provides a node as important as the ballroom. The middle class danced minuets in public ballrooms, yet the minuet functioned as “the archetypal signifier of nobility” (9). McKee suggests that dance topics evoke different meanings depending on whether they are still practiced: current dances encouraged “spontaneous, mimetic bodily participation,” whereas historical dances would conjure up “idealized pasts, locations, and bodily emotions” (2014, 165). In the late eighteenth century, the minuet existed as both a current and a historical dance.⁽⁷⁾ The listeners of the classical symphony

might have either imagined idealized scenes of royalty dancing in palaces or visualized themselves dancing in public ballrooms. I treat these modes of engagement as equivalent throughout the essay, and I believe them to be similar, but they are certainly not the same.

[1.4] A critical implication of the embodied meanings and modes of listening described above involves whether music facilitates the execution—real or imagined—of the basic minuet step, which requires six beats of music (i.e. two measures) and which I address in more detail in the following section. Consider for example the two minuet phrases by Mozart reproduced as **Example 1** and **Example 2**. The openings of these minuets share multiple features: the dotted anacrusis in repeated notes, four measures of tonic harmony, and a gradual melodic ascent over scale degrees $\hat{1}$, $\hat{3}$, and $\hat{5}$. Example 1 belongs to one of the sets of danceable minuets that Mozart composed for the ballroom. Melodic parallelism creates two-measure units and basses reinforce a clear alternation between strong and weak measures. Here, each duple hypermeasure corresponds to one minuet step. For those dancing to this music, the energetic upbeat repeated every other measure would provide a convenient sonic invitation to launch every new step.⁽⁸⁾

[1.5] Despite Mozart's use of a similar motive in the minuet from the String Quartet in D minor K. 421 (Example 2), dancing to this music would present challenges. Listeners hoping to align music with minuet steps—executed or imagined—would perceive conflicting cues about the placement of hypermetrical downbeats. The first violin opens with a typical minuet rhythm, providing an invitation to open the dance.⁽⁹⁾ If performers mentally recreated dance steps while playing, the silent and still second violin and viola could hardly envision the onset of a minuet step at m. 1. Echoing the dotted anacrusis one measure later, they begin to “dance” on m. 2. This hint of (hypermetrical) *imitatio per arsin et thesin*, a technique that Edward Klorman interprets as an indicator of multiple agency (2016, 210–21), creates a hypermetrical displacement dissonance.⁽¹⁰⁾ The cello seems undecided as to whom to follow: it first supports the first violin, then joins forces with second violin and viola in m. 3. This anacrusis of the lower parts, paired with the ensuing harmonic change, creates the possibility of hearing m. 4 as the beginning of a new hypermeasure. Two hypermetrical hearings compete in mm. 3–8: while the first violin continues projecting hypermetrical downbeats on odd measures through melodic parallelism, the rest of the ensemble suggests that even-numbered measures might be considered strong instead.⁽¹¹⁾ The end of the phrase clarifies that the first violin was “right” all along: the alternative hypermeter is not viable because virtually all minuet cadences fall on weak measures. Performers—the intended listeners of this music—may understand this lack of coordination as tense or humorous, perhaps enacting a musical argument between the members of the quartet. Whose lead are we supposed to follow in this dance?

[1.6] The contrast of dance-music relations between these two minuets is hardly surprising. On the dance floor, sound and movement align. The minuets that Mozart and his contemporaries wrote for Viennese ballrooms feature regular rhythms and a clear duple hypermeter, facilitating the coordination of minuet steps with the music.⁽¹²⁾ Chamber minuets, on the other hand, do not require such regularities. Free from choreographic requirements, minuets not composed for dancing include manipulations of hypermeter and phrase structure that arguably contribute to their aesthetic merits. Deviations from the regular metrical framework of the minuet—such as the one described by Vogler—abound in string quartets. In a genre that epitomizes composition for connoisseurs, chamber minuets often frustrate expectations and disrupt meter, engaging in sophisticated play with convention and perception.⁽¹³⁾ Disruptions and ambiguities of this kind offer sources of delight and amusement for expert, attentive listeners—past and present—and have received much analytical attention (Love 2015, McClelland 2006, Mirka 2009 and 2021). This article challenges the assumption that choreographic constraints hinder creative expression and that concert minuets allow such creativity because they are not bound by this type of limitation.

[1.7] In terms of hypermeter and phrase structure, symphonic minuets occupy a space between the simplicity of the minuets written for dancing and the complex metrical strategies that Haydn and Mozart often deployed in their string quartets. As I will show, the relationship between the symphonic minuet and these two poles is not merely one of degree. Minuets written for symphonies, though less metrically intricate than those written for the chamber, display unique

techniques that engage the embodied knowledge of dance in sophisticated ways. By highlighting these compositional devices, I hope to complicate the paradigm that equates the artfulness of the concert minuet with metrical disruptions and deviations from dance requirements.⁽¹⁴⁾ Minuets written as symphonic movements need not meet any choreographic restrictions, but this freedom materializes differently than in the chamber minuet. The public nature of the symphony demanded communicative strategies distinct from those of music written for friends and connoisseurs. I argue, drawing on Lawrence Zbikowski's concept of music as a "sonic analogue" of dance (2008), that manipulations of hypermeter and phrase structure in the symphonic minuet tend to imitate—rather than contradict—certain movements associated with the danced minuet. These mimetic procedures, which I consider characteristic of the symphonic genre, rarely occur in danced minuets. Unlike ballet and other strictly choreographed forms of dance, the ballroom minuet required minimal alignment between music and movement (I will return to this point in due course). Outside the ballroom, composers imitated with music bodily motions associated with the danced minuet, engaging in choreomusical analogies—a kind of "movement painting"—that would invite audiences to virtually recreate their previous experiences on the dance floor.

[1.8] To investigate these generic differences, I assembled a corpus of a symphonic minuets and another of minuets from string quartets. These samples, while inevitably biased, represent an honest effort to capture the musical style of the Viennese minuet of the late eighteenth-century. At the center of the corpus, and overrepresented by design, stand the minuets that Haydn and Mozart wrote in their symphonies (84 and 29 minuets respectively) and—for comparison—their string quartets (27 and 18). To reach beyond the idiosyncratic traits of two canonical composers and arrive at a broader understanding of the minuet in a given time and place, I included minuets in the same genres written between 1760–1800 by other composers active in the Viennese sphere. These additions rendered a total of 195 minuets from symphonies and 105 from string quartets (listed in the [Appendix](#)) by 14 composers.⁽¹⁵⁾ Although no composer or listener would have heard all and only these minuets, I take them to fairly represent the conception of the concert minuet held by Haydn, Mozart, and their contemporaries. Drawing on this corpus, I offer an overview of typical strategies as well as composer- and genre-specific traits found in the classical minuet, specifically in their first sections. For second sections, I only gathered data on total number of measures. Trios have not been included in the study. These choices partly respond to practical purposes and time constraints, but I also believe that A sections play especially important aesthetic and communicative roles. The first few seconds of the movement set the tone and expectations, and prompt listeners to categorize the music into a genre.

[1.9] The remainder of this essay is organized in three parts addressing issues of hypermeter and phrase structure at the two-, four-, and eight-measure levels respectively, followed by conclusions. Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff consider that the metrical structure of tonal music includes "regularities of two, four, and even eight measures" (1983, 99).⁽¹⁶⁾ Although I discuss these layers separately, they obviously interact with one another in complex, hierarchical ways (Yeston 1974). Each of the following sections combines analyses of short passages of music with quantitative data drawn from the corpus.⁽¹⁷⁾ Each section will also include basic training in the danced minuet, reveal a counterintuitive musical phenomenon, and provide an explanation based on a choreomusical analogy.

2. The two-measure level: right, left, right, left

Dance fact: Duple hypermeter is essential for minuet dancing.

Intuitive music fact: Symphonic minuets disrupt duple hypermeter less frequently than those in string quartets.

Counterintuitive music fact: Symphonic minuets sometimes emphasize duple hypermeter more strongly than those written for the ballroom.

Proposition: A compositional strategy typical of symphonic minuets is to not only enable but also to imitate the movements of the dance.

[2.1] The basic minuet step combines four changes of body weight over six beats of music. The preferred variant in the eighteenth century (Cobau 1984, 14–15) consists of two *demi-coupés*—steps initiated with a bend of the knees, then rising and placing one foot forward—followed by two tiny, less energetic steps that resemble walking.⁽¹⁸⁾ This *pas de menuet* admitted multiple variants regarding timing and details of execution, always starting with the right foot. One possible correspondence between steps and beats, according to C. J. von Feldtstein’s *Erweiterung der Kunst nach der Chorographie zu tanzen* (1772), appears in **Example 3**.⁽¹⁹⁾ Nuanced variations between diverse minuet steps are less relevant for my argument than their common denominator: odd and even measures feel different from one another, and they pair to create hypermetrical units. **Video Example 1** shows a performance of four minuet steps, two forwards and two backwards. This combination of steps serves pedagogical purposes: dancers used the minuet step to move in different directions (including sideways), creating a variety of figures with their partners on the floor.⁽²⁰⁾

[2.2] Duple hypermeter is fundamental to minuet music. Dance masters initiated their students into the minuet by teaching them to hear the alternation of strong and weak measures. For example, in one of the first lessons of his dance manual, S. J. Gardiner teaches students how to properly “beat time”:

LADY: In what manner do you teach them?

DANCE MASTER: I teach them to beat every note that is in a bar of Minuet-Time, next to every bar, and lastly to every two bars of the Music. (1786, viii)

Alexis Bacquoy-Guédon also emphasized the importance of entraining to the hypermetrical structure of the minuet, to its cadence, before learning dance steps.⁽²¹⁾ His method to “exercise the ear” distinguishes between “good” (*bonne*) and “false” (*fausse*) measures in minuet music. Students are instructed to touch their knees as they raise their heels to mark strong, “good” measures, then lower the heels and raise hands on each side body for weak, “false” measures (1785, 15–16). Notational practices in dance treatises echo the alternation of weak and strong measures as an essential feature of minuet music, often written in $\frac{6}{4}$ or with dotted measure lines within each two-measure unit, as seen in **Example 4**. Minuet music bears the imprint of this strong choreographical constraint, even when not meant to be danced. As Joseph Riepel states in his famous rules for minuet writing, “a composition, and especially a minuet, should always consist of an even number of measures” (1752, 4, my emphasis).⁽²²⁾ In the case of the minuet, this rule results from choreographic necessity, not from an abstract search for symmetry or an ideal, quadratic framework. Without this hypermetrical trait, a minuet would lose its danceable quality and minuet music could hardly be heard and understood as such, regardless of its title.⁽²³⁾

[2.3] Overall, minuets tend to project the two-measure hypermeter required to execute the minuet step even when they were not intended for dancing, thus enabling listeners to imagine themselves moving to the music. Fort eloquently describes how an eighteenth-century listener might have engaged in such manner with the minuet from Haydn’s Symphony no. 102 in B-flat:

The music gives such a lift to the beginning of each felt step [downbeats of bars 1, 3, 5, and 7] that, even seated, her body feels buoyed by the felt sensations of the steps. The opening phrase [bars 1–8] cements a comfortable connection between the step and the music, and her body is infused with a sense of momentum. (2025, 188)

Later, the same listener encounters a passage where Haydn disrupts the two-measure hypermeter of the minuet and “the music stutters, shattering the comfortable kinesthetic-sonic relationship” (188).

[2.4] Movements, phrases, and sections with an even number of measures are necessary although not sufficient conditions to hear minuet music in $\frac{6}{4}$. Unsurprisingly, almost all symphonic minuets from my corpus begin with a reprise containing an even number of measures. One rare exception occurs in Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf’s Symphony in G, *Transformation of Actaeon into a Stag*, from the series inspired by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.⁽²⁴⁾ The minuet, which begins with an unusual 15-measure phrase (**Example 5**), corresponds to the moment when the hunter accidentally discovers goddess Diana bathing in the river with her nymphs.⁽²⁵⁾ The irregular length of the section results from a written-out *ritardando* and *fermata* in m. 14, which adds an extra measure to an underlying 6 + 8 structure. One could argue that the phrase extension provides a tranquil, lingering feel quite suitable for the pastoral scene as if the orchestra took a brief pause before the repeat. The cadence feels particularly sedate, as basses stop articulating second and third beats.

[2.5] A listener hoping to entrain to the minuet step would have encountered a less placid experience when hearing this music. This hypothetical, historical listener could have started tapping her feet to the minuet step, encouraged by the buoyant ascent in mm. 1–2, which makes the second measure feel lighter. The anacrustic melodic gesture that follows would provide fitting musical support to the *plié* (bending of the knees) of the next minuet step.⁽²⁶⁾ In mm. 1–4, one can clearly feel the alternation of strong and weak measures expected of minuet music. However, soon after establishing the proper minuet *cadence*, synchronization between music and imagined movement is compromised. The exact repetition of m. 4, which is hypermetrically weak, contradicts the rule of metric preference “first occurrence strong” (Temperley 2008, 306). Harmonic stasis and the literal melodic repetition of three downbeats bring the motion of virtual dancers to a halt, as the phrase seems unable to move forward (mm. 4–6).⁽²⁷⁾ The music freezes, just as Actaeon paralyzed in perplexity.

[2.6] An assertive repetition of the opening ascent resumes the virtual dance in m. 7, but further hypermetrical complications await. The onset of the basses and the beginning of a new idea in m. 10 contradict the expectation for a weak measure. Chord changes on second beats create harmonic syncopation and undermine the metric steadiness of mm. 10–12. Despite these instabilities, one could dance through the first section of the minuet without major difficulties, just as Andrew Imbrie’s “conservative listeners” maintain the established (hyper)meter even in the face of conflicting cues (1973, 45–66). The final challenge proves harder to overcome: the uneven phrase length created by the added m. 15 would force a misalignment between steps and music at the repeat. I read Dittersdorf’s aberrant reprise as a calculated expressive strategy that communicates the underlying tension in the scene. According to the myth, the encounter between Actaeon and Diana begins with idyllic images of nature, but it eventually triggers tragic events. The goddess punishes the hunter’s indiscretion by transforming him into a stag and slaughtering him with her hunting dogs.

[2.7] As one might expect, the proportion of odd-numbered sections is slightly higher in string quartets than in symphonies, and more frequent in second sections, since they include unstable contrasting middles.⁽²⁸⁾ The percentages of sections with an odd-number of measures in these genres are presented for comparison in **Example 6**. We can observe hypermetric instability in the contrasting middle of Mozart’s only odd-numbered minuet section, written for the “Jupiter” Symphony, K. 551. The beginning of the second section is reproduced as **Example 7**, annotated with conventions developed in Mirka 2021 to indicate hypermetrical hearing. The *Menuetto* begins *piano* and *legato*, with a thin texture and a flowing, undulating accompaniment. The character of the theme resembles the type of music that Mozart usually reserved for his Trios, which McKee finds particularly evocative of the movements of dancers in the ballroom (2012, 82).⁽²⁹⁾ The beginning of the second section echoes the chromatic descent of the opening theme, this time embellished with suspensions. This hint of learned style (associated with the church, not the ballroom) could indicate that the dance ought to be suspended: the onset of a new accompanimental pattern at m. 22 slightly suggests a potential shift of the hypermetrical downbeat. The *forte* motive uttered by the strings

and then echoed by winds dismisses the possibility of an alternative hypermeter, but only until the theme unequivocally confirms a shift of the hypermetrical downbeat by returning one measure too early. Retrospectively, mm. 25–27 remain an isolated three-measure unit that would force virtual dancers to readjust their steps and lose their composure. Riepel recommends repeating irregular groups twice so that they add up to an even number of measures, thus automatically correcting the imbalance between music and movement after a few steps.⁽³⁰⁾ Mozart's disruption is never reabsorbed in such fashion, blatantly violating Riepel's first rule for novice composers and the basic requirements of minuet music. Sections with an odd number of measures, such as the ones found in the *Actaeon* and "Jupiter" symphonies, are the exception that confirms the rule.

[2.8] Obviously, an even number of measures does not equal the projection of duple hypermeter. Minuets may contain three- and five-measure units (termed by Riepel *Dreyer* and *Fünfer*), which challenge duple hypermeter but tend to combine into even-numbered phrases. Haydn used such irregular phrasing in the Symphonies nos. 3 in G (5 + 5), 9 in C (3 + 3 + 2), and 11 in E-flat (4 + 3 + 5). Mozart started the minuet of K. 550 with a notoriously irregular (Cohn 1992) 3 + 3 phrase. Dancing to these minuets would create a temporary lack of alignment between steps and music that would self-correct at the end of the phrase. Early danceable minuets featured prominently such flexible dance-music relations, which virtually disappeared from the ballroom minuets of the late eighteenth century (Russell 1999). The first sections of the symphonic minuets from my corpus rarely contain *Dreyer* or *Fünfer*—except for a handful of examples by Dittersdorf, Haydn, and Pleyel. These exceptional minuets are more frequent than the ones with an odd-numbered section, but they add up to only 3% in symphonies, compared to 15% in the first section of string quartets.

[2.9] Not even minuets that unfold in four-measure phrases guarantee the proper minuet *cadence*. In Haydn's Symphony no. 64 in C, "*Tempora mutantur*" (times change),⁽³¹⁾ the minuet begins with an eight-measure phrase, shown in **Example 8**, that complicates the perception of duple hypermeter. As discussed by Ryan McClelland, unharmonized beginnings "suggest[s] the presence of an extended upbeat" (2006, 25). This technique, which McClelland locates in some concert minuets of the late-eighteenth century, "works against the clear projection of two-measure hypermeter that is central to the functional minuet" (24). As with Example 2, this minuet gives ambiguous signals as to when to initiate the minuet step. The absence of accompaniment in m. 1 invites one to hear it as a hypermetrical upbeat. A listener expecting to hear dance movements in the music might need stronger metrical cues before initiating the first virtual minuet step. The echo of m. 3 is consistent with a potential hyper-downbeat on m. 2, but the threefold repetition "freezes" hypermeter, as in the *Actaeon* minuet. "Good" and "false" measures should feel fundamentally different, but here they sound exactly the same. Although two four-measure groups clearly divide the phrase in symmetrical halves, the placement of hyper-downbeats is by no means clear at least in a first listening.⁽³²⁾ Minuets that fail to create unequivocal metrical strength on odd-numbered measures might be somatically unsettling for listeners attuned to the conventions of the danced minuet. Elaine Sisman (2015) and Danuta Mirka (2012) have discussed the meaning of the epigram "Times change" in relation to the slow movement of this symphony. If we understand (hyper)meter as a musical metaphor for Time, the maxim applies to the minuet as well.

[2.10] Unlike Example 8, symphonic minuets tend to clearly project duple hypermeter, facilitating a potential alignment with minuet steps—even though not conceived for this purpose. I will now begin to unfold a stronger version of this claim: numerous symphonic minuets do not only *enable* dance, imagined or real, but they *encourage* mimetic participation from their audiences. They invite us to dance, sometimes even more emphatically than their functional counterparts. Composers deployed a variety of strategies to facilitate the projection of two-measure hypermeter, thereby urging kinesthetic engagement with symphonic minuets. A common phrase type for symphonic minuets as well as those written for the ballroom was the sentence, since the 2 + 2 opening structure provides an ideal musical accompaniment to the minuet step.⁽³³⁾ Bass lines also play a key role in establishing the alternation of strong and weak measures. Rests, register, and relatively unstable harmonies and scale degrees contribute to minimize metrical stress on even-numbered measures, as shown in **Example 9**. It is in the symphony, not the ballroom, where composers relied more heavily on these bass-line techniques to clearly communicate duple hypermeter from the very onset of minuets. For example, Haydn's minuets for the ballroom do not exhibit silent downbeats

as the ones in the minuet from Symphony 60 included in Example 9 and Video Example 1 (where I chose it as a particularly clear manifestation of the minuet's hypermeter). Mozart favored an arpeggiated ascent of an octave or more, like the one in Haydn's Symphony no. 61 or Dittersdorf's Example 5, at the onset of his symphonic minuets (see K. 385, K. 543). These opening gestures ground the first measure and provide a sense of lightness on the second. Minuets that begin in this fashion invite listeners to hear dance steps *in* the music. Mozart frequently started his danceable minuets with rising arpeggios as well, but they cover narrower distances than symphonic minuets and bass lines often descend into the second measure instead of continuing the ascent (see K. 461, nos. 2, 3, and 4, K. 585, nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 12, or K. 568, nos. 4, 7, 8, 11). In the symphony, we find second measures that sound even more buoyant than in ballroom minuets.

[2.11] One possible explanation for these differences is that creating mental associations between sound and movement requires more effort outside the dance floor. Zbikowski proposes a similar argument (regarding a bourrée by J. S. Bach), suggesting that the "dance owes its rhythmic regularity to the fact that it was not intended for dancing" but "was instead meant to evoke, through a single medium, the multimedia of music and dance" (2008, 296). McKee finds the same characteristic in the minuets from Bach's *French Suites* for keyboard: "For minuet music *sans* dancing to be immediately recognized as minuet music, Bach and other composers needed to instill in it a well-defined perhaps even exaggerated sense of 'minuetness'" (2012, 29). Minuets like the ones from Example 9 highlight duple hypermeter even more strongly than those composed for the ballroom. They exaggerate the alternation between hypermetrical thesis and arsis, creating a clear impression of the *pas de menuet* in the listener's mind.

[2.12] By the final decades of the eighteenth century, the minuet earned a stable position within the sonata cycle, and composers might have felt somewhat freed from the need to communicate "minuetness." Given the standard layout of instrumental works, a minuet movement would be expected; because of this expectation, unconventional minuets could still be identified as such, and deviations from the norm could be understood as expressive, surprising, or humorous. This type of play with expectations is characteristic of string quartets.⁽³⁴⁾ I suggest that the default mode of expression of the symphonic minuet is not disruption but rather over-compliance.⁽³⁵⁾ Instead of interfering with the enactment of dance steps, symphonic minuets facilitate virtual dancing. Minuets such as the ones in Example 9 go beyond the requirements of dance to paint with sound the movements of dancers—they display choreomusical analogies. In the symphony, minuet music is not only congruent with dance; it is frequently hyper-congruent because it supports and even imitates movement beyond what was expected in the ballroom. The next sections present choreomusical analogies that cause musical irregularities at the four- and eight-measure levels while creating perfectly appropriate musical representations of the minuet's choreography.

3. *The four-measure level: Courtesy Anhangs*

Dance fact: Before the beginning of the minuet proper, dancers performed ceremonial reverences.

Intuitive music fact: Four-measure phrases are common, but exceptions abound in the concert minuet.

Counterintuitive music fact: Minuet sections with a number of measures *not* divisible by four occur more frequently in symphonies than in string quartets.

Proposition: In some 10- and 14-measure sections, two-measure suffixes provide a choreomusical analogy of a reverence.

[3.1] In the ballroom minuet, coordination between music and movement begins and ends at the two-measure level.⁽³⁶⁾ At the phrase level, alignment "could have come about only seldom and quite by chance" (Russell 1992, 125–26). As Kellom Tomlinson explains in *The Art of Dancing*, the dance could start "upon the first Time that offers" (1735, 124) and end "upon the End of the first Strain, the Second, or in the Middle of either of them, provided it be in Time to the Music" (137). Dancers should move "in Time," adjusting steps to duple hypermeter, but they paid little attention

to phrases or large-scale structure.⁽³⁷⁾ Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne find that dance and musical phrases “often fail to coincide” and that the lack of alignment between movement and music creates a “pleasant tension” ([1991] 2001, 65) that defines the experience of the danced minuet. To the best of our knowledge, there is no choreographic basis for quadruple hypermeter in minuet music.

[3.2] To be sure, the four-measure unit is an essential building block of eighteenth-century music, and hypermetric regularities tend to be more pronounced in dance genres (Neumeyer 2006). Especially towards the end of the century, quadruple hypermeter is so common in minuets that it is tempting to assume it by default. Although the danced minuet did not seem to require music articulated in four-measure units, compositional practice confirms them as the norm. Abundant sources (historical and current) present a rather rigid conception of phrase structure in the danced minuet. In his seventh and last rule for minuet writing, Riepel emphasized the importance of clearly differentiating the fourth measure from the fifth (1752, 2), thus encouraging apprentice composers to segment the musical surface in four-measure phrases or *Vierer*. Bacquoy-Guédon went as far as to deem “vicious” [*vicieux*] those minuets in which the number of measures of each section is not divisible by four (1785, 51). Stefan Love claims that eighteenth-century listeners expected “two- and four-measure hypermeter from the moment a minuet begins” and that “this expectation remains in the perceptual background for the entire minuet” (2015, [2.4]). McClelland (2006) and Mirka (2021) have systematically applied quadruple hypermeter in their analyses of minuets. Minuets written for the Viennese ballrooms in the late eighteenth-century frequently begin with an eight-measure section symmetrically divided in halves.⁽³⁸⁾

[3.3] Outside the dance floor, composers disrupted *Vierer* much more frequently than in dance minuets, and more often than they deviated from *Zweyer*. Six-measure phrases or *Sechser*—which prevent establishing quadruple hypermeter without necessarily compromising the (imagined) execution of minuet steps—appear fairly often in symphonic minuets.⁽³⁹⁾ In Haydn’s symphonies, for example, 20% of minuets start with a section whose number of measures is *not* divisible by four, with 10 and 14 as the most common alternatives. The proportion is similar for string quartets, and both numbers replicate tendencies found in minuets by other composers included in the corpus. Mozart had a particular penchant for minuets starting with a 10- or 14-measure section and turned to these structures slightly more often in his symphonic minuets (40%) than in string quartets (36%). As shown in **Example 10**, the proportion of minuets with 10, 12, or 14 measures in the first section is larger in symphonies than in string quartets.⁽⁴⁰⁾ These differences contradict generic expectations: one might assume deviations from the norm to occur more often in chamber music, where metric manipulations abound.⁽⁴¹⁾ Later I will revisit, with stronger empirical evidence, the counterintuitive claim that symphonic minuets depart from certain conventions more often than their chamber counterparts.

[3.4] “Vicious” minuets, in Bacquoy-Guédon’s terms, often relate back to more regular models, following processes of phrase expansion and compression described by eighteenth-century theorists and recently reformulated by William Rothstein (1989) and Danuta Mirka (2021). Sections with 10 or 14 measures can frequently be understood as 8- or 12-measure phrases internally expanded through the insertion of a two-measure unit.⁽⁴²⁾ These additional measures may consist of an immediate repetition of melodic material, as observed by Koch ([1793] 1983, 42–43) and illustrated by **Example 11** and **Example 12**. The drop in dynamics associated with these echoes contributes to further differentiate the inserted two-measure unit from the preceding and ensuing music. Symphonic minuets display abundant, uncomplicated instances of such “internal phrase expansions by repetition” (Rothstein 1989, 74). This type of melodic addendum, dubbed *suffix* by Rothstein and *Anhang* by Koch, is formally superfluous. In the minuets by Mozart and Haydn mentioned above (Examples 11 and 12), a half-cadence arrives at m. 4 and the consequent of a parallel period begins on m. 7. Eliminating mm. 5 and 6 would leave phrase structure fundamentally unaltered.⁽⁴³⁾ Yet the presence of the two-measure unit has critical consequences for hypermeter. “Vicious” minuets prevent, or at the very least suspend, the projection of metrical regularity at the four-measure level. One can entrain to the two-measure regularities of the minuet step, but these minuets thwart quadruple hypermeter.

[3.5] Although techniques of phrase expansion have received ample scholarly attention, little is said about the variation of these compositional strategies across genres. Rothstein 1989 and Mirka 2021 have thoroughly investigated—drawing on Kirnberger, Riepel, and Koch—*how* composers crafted and altered hypermeter and phrase structures. Here I deal with some considerations regarding *where* those alterations took place: compositional practice suggests that preferred strategies for expanding minuet phrases varied between the symphony and the string quartet. The two-measure *Anhang* finds itself at home in minuets, and more specifically symphonic ones.⁽⁴⁴⁾ **Example 13** shows the proportion of minuets with a two-measure repetition in the first reprise for each genre. Both Haydn and Mozart used this technique much more frequently in the symphony.⁽⁴⁵⁾ When Haydn wrote a 10- or 14-measure phrase at the beginning of a symphonic minuet, he tended to include a repeated two-measure unit; his string quartets exhibit these phrase lengths just as frequently (as mentioned above) but without the melodic repetition. Phrase expansions of this kind make symphonic minuets unruly regarding quadruple hypermeter. I will argue below—returning to the notion of choreomusical analogies—that there is nothing “vicious” in these hypermetrical disruptions. On the contrary, they are exquisitely well-behaved.

[3.6] In the danced minuet, couples completed a series of ceremonial reverences before starting the actual dance. If a high-rank person was present in the room, the first bows would be dedicated to the so-called “Honors to the Presence” (Gardiner 1786). After the bows, dancers moved towards their starting positions to begin the execution of several figures (I describe these elements of the dance in the next section). Tomlinson’s *The Art of Dancing* (1735) choreographs the opening reverences to introductory musical material distinct from the minuet proper. **Example 14** reproduces the plate corresponding to the end of “The Music or Flourish to the Ceremony” and the beginning of the dance. But the minuets learned in lessons are not the same as those danced at balls (Russell 1999, 387). Ballroom minuets lack the sort of musical introduction provided by Tomlinson. It follows that dancers would need to execute their reverences either without music or moving to the same music composed for the rest of the dance. In the latter, most likely case, the beginning of the first section would be dedicated to bowing gestures (Fort 2025, 116–19).

[3.7] Minuets such as the ones in Examples 11 and 12 provide an exceedingly fitting musical accompaniment to this element of the choreography. In **Video Example 2**, Sarah Edgar performs the Honors to the Presence according to a choreography by Ken Peirce to the music of the minuet from Haydn’s Symphony no. 70.⁽⁴⁶⁾

[3.8] Phrase expansion, by addition of a suffix, creates a choreomusical analogy of the bowing gestures performed at the beginning of the dance. I call the two-measure addendum of minuet phrases a *courtesy Anhang*, a term that honors both its embodied meaning and form-functional role. Dancers move constantly across the dance floor, but they stay in place to bow or curtsy—just as the two-measure echo does not contribute to the phrase “moving” forward. The repetition of musical material makes the incise particularly static, while restrained dynamics mirror the humble character of a reverence. An abstract device in hypermetrical theories, the two-measure expansion by repetition here acquires specific meaning in relation to the danced minuet. *Courtesy Anhangs* disrupt quadruple hypermeter, but for listeners acquainted with the minuet dance, such disruptions do not interfere with the performance (physical or imagined) of the dance. They facilitate dancing, imitating bodily movements with sound.

[3.9] This stereotyped, musical sign of decorum was apparently so familiar and predictable as to provide a source of humor. In the String Quartet op. 33, no. 2, “The Joke,” Haydn turns the polite *courtesy Anhang* into an irreverent gesture. Although the movement is entitled Scherzo, one can hear multiple echoes of minuet music.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The opening phrase, shown in **Example 15**, resembles the $(4 + 2) + 4$ structure of Haydn’s symphonic minuet from Example 12. These two themes also share the repeated quarter notes and the pair of eighth notes on third beats followed by a melodic descent, but the customary elegance of the minuet is missing in the quartet. Melody and bass line also present close similarities with the minuet Hob. IX: 8, no. 8, shown in **Example 16**, which Haydn composed for dancing. In the minuet-like example from “The Joke,” abrupt downward leaps land rather ungracefully onto downbeats. The repeated notes sound in an unusually low register for the first violin, perhaps evoking hopping or stomping feet rather than refined dance

steps. Instead of the humble echoes from symphonic minuets, mm. 5–6 provide a caricature thereof.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Accented dissonances taint a two-measure suffix that creates an absurd nine-note repetition in the first violin. The musical bow becomes a mocking taunt.⁽⁴⁹⁾

[3.10] Haydn’s approach to dance-music relations in Examples 12, 15, and 16 illustrates the difference between genres that I present in this study. One could choreograph the reverences shown in Video Example 2 to each of these three musical phrases and the bow would coincide every time with the two-measure repetition in mm. 5–6. In the ballroom minuet, pairing the reverence with a melodic repetition would be a suitable yet not expected coincidence. The *Anhang* of Example 16 blends smoothly into m. 7 and coexists with an eight-measure phrase divided in halves. In the symphonic minuet, mm. 5–6 are clearly detached from the preceding and following *Vierer*, and the inserted material thwarts phrase symmetry. For this suffix, Haydn changes dynamics and instrumentation, and even makes the walking bass stop. The courtesy *Anhang* of Example 12 thus brings attention to itself and exaggerates analogies between sound and (imagined) movement, inviting listeners to engage in mimetic participation. In the string quartet, the conventional echo provides the necessary background to showcase transgressive behavior. Music invites listeners to dance a warped minuet that lacks proper decorum.

[3.11] The expressive, embodied effects of hypermetric manipulations vary across metrical levels. Manipulating duple hypermeter gives the impression that “feet cannot settle into their prescribed steps,” as elaborated in the previous section. On the other hand, denying quadruple hypermeter with an added *Zweyer* perfectly accommodates opening reverences—even though this level of coordination did not seem to occur in ballroom dances. Not only can these minuet phrases be danced to: they imitate movement so overtly that one can hear bows and curtsies in the music. The courtesy *Anhang* is another example of how certain symphonic minuets overemphasize coordination between music and movement—movement as imagined, felt, and communicated, though not physically enacted.

4. The eight-measure level: Z-figures

Dance fact: An important component of the danced minuet, the Z-figure, required 12 bars of music.

Familiar music fact: In the late eighteenth century, danceable minuets tend to unfold in 8-bar phrases.

Counterintuitive music fact: 8-bar phrases are more common in string quartets than in symphonies.

Proposition: Twelve-bar minuet phrases, commonly found in symphonies, provide a choreomusical analogy of the Z-figure.

[4.1] Most minuets written for the Viennese ballrooms of the late eighteenth century begin with an eight-measure phrase (Fort 2025, 111).⁽⁵⁰⁾ Composition treatises present this prototypical structure as a requirement of minuet music (see Kirnberger 1787, 316 or Koch [1793] 1983, 79), and practice confirms the rule. Despite the theoretical and practical prevalence of the eight-measure phrase in danceable minuets, choreographic foundations of the norm are unclear. In other ballroom dances, such as the contredanse, couples coordinate with one another to create geometrical patterns on the dance floor (Stevens 2021). Contredanses are clearly parsed in four- and eight-measure units to help dancers synchronize their movements both with their partner and other couples. The minuet similarly includes a series of floor patterns, but these figures involve only the dancing couple, not a larger group. Whereas contredanses rely on quadratic structures (Neumeyer 2006), minuets present more fluid relations between music and movement, and dance figures need not coincide with music phrases. Russell insists that there were no standardized choreographies or phrase lengths for minuet music. Still, music theorists considered eight-measure phrases essential to danceable minuets (see Fort 2025, 108–11). For Koch, minuets “arranged for dancing . . . must consist of two sections or reprises, each containing no more than eight measures” ([1793] 1983, 79). Haydn adapted some of his own minuets in this fashion, shortening the B section to fit the 8 + 8 prototype (Fort 2025, 114; Thomas 1982, 144–45).⁽⁵¹⁾

[4.2] When writing minuets as movements within symphonies and string quartets, composers frequently deviated from this convention: only 56% of symphonies and 68% of string quartets begin their minuets with an eight-measure phrase (see Example 10). Sections consisting of eight-measure phrases are more common in minuets written for the ballroom than in concert ones—just as one would expect. What is remarkable is how the deviations of nonfunctional minuets differ across genres. Specifically, the fact that string quartets feature eight-measure phrases more frequently than symphonies is counterintuitive. The string quartet provides the quintessential arena to playfully subvert norms and frustrate the expectations of *Kenner*. Studies on hypermeter, such as those by Love (2015), Mirka (2021), and McClelland (2006), tend to focus on chamber minuets because they present more abundant and sophisticated manipulations than symphonic ones, making them arguably more interesting for analysts and expert listeners alike. One could thus reasonably expect to find deviations from the prototype more frequently in the string quartet than in the symphony.

[4.3] With the eight-measure reprise providing a theoretical norm and practical standard, phrases of different lengths represent deviations from convention—unusual in the ballroom but frequent in nonfunctional minuets. These concert minuets feature, in addition to standard eight-measure phrases, frequent phrase-expansion techniques resulting in reprises of 10, 12, or 14 measures (all of which are more frequent, at least slightly, in symphonies than in quartets). Among these theoretically irregular yet not uncommon phrase lengths, 10- and 14-measure reprises challenge quadruple hypermeter. As discussed in the previous section, when these phrase structures occur in the symphonic minuet, they may include the choreomusical analogy I have dubbed *courtesy Anhang*. The 12-measure reprise presents a special case: it potentially accommodates four-measure hypermeter while denying regularity at the eight-measure level. This structure appears over twice as frequently in the symphony (16%) than in the chamber (7%) or the ballroom.⁽⁵²⁾ Especially for Haydn and Mozart, the 12-measure minuet section—neither symmetrical nor “vicious”—stands out as one of their favorite structures to begin symphonic minuets, appearing in 25% of symphonies. The 12-measure reprise is second only to the eight-measure model (found in 40% of Haydn symphonies and 33% of Mozart’s). In their string quartets, on the other hand, the 12-measure reprise occurs less frequently (10% for Haydn and 12% for Mozart). The frequency of choice of the 12-measure reprise suggests an underlying compositional preference: an approach to phrase structure that varied from genre to genre. I attribute this phenomenon to the influence of dance and explain it, once more, with a choreomusical analogy.

[4.4] The *Menuetto* of Mozart’s Symphony in G minor, K. 183 (Example 17) presents a paradigmatic example of the 12-measure section. Dynamics, instrumentation, and register clearly delimit the boundaries of three quadruple hypermeasures. At the end of the first *Vierer*, bare octaves create a half-cadence effect. Measures 5–8 display all the compositional devices that William Caplin lists as characteristic of continuation function: “(1) phrase-structural fragmentation, (2) acceleration in the rate of harmonic change, (3) increase in surface’s rhythmic activity, and (4) sequential harmonies” (1998, 40). The return of *forte* dynamics marks the onset of the prototypical cadential progression that unfolds in the last four measures. In Caplin’s theory of formal functions, continuation and cadential functions are typically fused in the four measures of a standard continuation. The 12-measure minuet phrase, on the other hand, presents each function separately, neatly parsed in distinct groups: four-measure antecedent, four-measure continuation, four-measure cadential.

[4.5] Phrases, in minuets and elsewhere, tend to be divided in halves rather than thirds.⁽⁵³⁾ In the symphonies of composers such as Dittersdorf, Haydn, or Mozart, the presence of minuet sections clearly divided in thirds defies expectations of phrase balance, inviting speculation about the compositional motivation and expressive effect of such asymmetries. For composers and listeners who danced minuets, these tripartite structures could have inspired another type of choreomusical analogy. A fundamental component of the danced minuet was the so-called *Z-figure*, in which dancers travelled along the lines of an imaginary Z on the floor, starting and ending on opposite sides. The complete minuet dance consisted of several repetitions of this figure, alternated with other figures such as the “Presentation of the Hands.” The most common description of the Z-figure indicates that each segment of the Z required two minuet steps: two steps to the left, two steps forward to cross, two to the right on the other side. Example 18 shows three choreographic

representations of the Z-figure in six minuet steps, which correspond to twelve measures of music.⁽⁵⁴⁾ **Video Example 3** shows Edgar performing the Z-figure to the minuet of Mozart's Symphony K. 183 (Example 17), and **Video Example 4** provides a schematic view of the paths followed by the dancing couple.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Three-fold musical phrases provide an ideal soundtrack to the ternary geometry of this figure.

[4.6] Haydn achieves a similar effect through different means in the minuet from Symphony no. 59 in A (**Example 19**). In this overly articulated phrase, each four-measure unit begins with an anacrusis—a sonic analogue of the *plié* that launches each minuet step. The first *Vierer* stops at an unharmonized $\hat{5}$, potentially heard as a weakly articulated half-cadence (m. 4). The *Vierer* that follows arrives at a strong, tonicized half-cadence (m. 8). The third *Vierer* rewrites the arrival at the E major chord from a half cadence into an authentic one (m. 12). Harmonically, the difference is significant; melodically, this final *Vierer* does not have much to add. In the first and third four-measure groups, melodic unisons and root-position chords respectively provide a solid, static musical accompaniment to the imaginary lines travelled within the individual space of each dancer. If one paired this phrase with a Z-figure, the measures where dancers remain on their respective sides of the floor would coincide with moments where harmony barely progresses. The middle unit accompanies dancers' crossing motion with unstable, forward-moving harmonies. Although such destabilizing devices characterize continuation function regardless of genre, the danced minuet provides a context that endows this formal function with a truly embodied meaning. In mm. 5–8 of these examples, the phrase moves away, quite literally, from its starting point. Continuation function, or the sense of "being in the middle" (Caplin 1998), is not just a matter of musical form but a physical reality. Even the contrary, stepwise motion in m. 5, closing the distance between melody and bass, seems to imitate the onset of the opposite diagonal trajectories of the dancing couple.⁽⁵⁶⁾ These minuet continuations do not only initiate the approach to a cadence: they accompany dancers as they leave their separate, individual spaces and physically approach their partner.

[4.7] The first minuet section from Dittersdorf's Symphony *The Fall of Phaeton* (**Example 20**) also follows one of these tripartite structures. It shares with K. 183 the clear separation between the first and second *Vierer* with a rest, as well as the repeated two-measure motive at the beginning of the continuation. As in Examples 17 and 18, harmony contributes to and collaborates with hypermeter to represent the movements of the dancing couple across the floor. After dancing on their respective sides for four measures, dancers must approach one another to cross to the other side. In mm. 5–8, chords in first inversion fittingly provide a sense of instability and mobility. Furthermore, a *Fenaroli* schema (Gjerdingen 2007, 462), with its characteristic contrary motion and voice exchange, provides a choreomusical analogy of the dancers swapping positions on the floor during the diagonal of the Z-figure. Dittersdorf's minuet is especially majestic and pompous, with predominantly strong dynamics and poised rhythmic behavior. The opening octaves and the insistent repeated notes ring with authoritarian scolding, and the augmented sixth, often reserved for signaling structurally important arrivals, hammers a premature half cadence. Dittersdorf exaggerates the two-measure grouping at the beginning with a registral ascent like the ones described in Example 9, followed by a drastic drop in register. Dynamics highlight the grouping of *Zweyer*, while the augmented sixth signals the end of a *Vierer*. The phrase eventually unfolds as a musical imitation of the venerable Z-figure. This is not merely music in the style of minuets; it is music that represents "minuet-ness." The minuet, aristocratic dance *par excellence* presented here in its most regal fashion, stands conveniently as a symbol of high class, and by extension the realm of the gods.⁽⁵⁷⁾

[4.8] As with other choreomusical analogies discussed through sections 2–4, this level of alignment between music and dance did not seem to occur in the ballroom. To elucidate possible large-scale correspondences between sound and movement, Fort aligns a choreography by Georg Link (1796) with the music of a Minuet-Trio composed of eight-measure sections (2025, 117). According to this hypothetical reconstruction, Z-figures start in the middle of sections and include the transition between Minuet and Trio—a very different and much looser level of coordination than the one I suggest for the symphonic minuets of the previous examples. Dancers allegedly ignored phrase structure, making 4 + 4 + 4 structures unnecessary, perhaps redundant, for danceable minuets. In

symphonic minuets, on the other hand, three-part phrases create sonic imitations of the Z-figure. The beginning of each unit has the power to evoke a physical change of direction in the minds of listeners familiar with the choreography. Music facilitates envisioning dance figures, providing listeners with cues to remember or even feel how dancing bodies move across the floor. Minuets of this kind are not just suitable for dancing: they emphatically invite us to dance without leaving our seats.

5. Conclusions: Rise and fall of the minuet (and the choreomusical analogies)

[5.1] I have focused on a short chapter in the history of the minuet: Vienna and its area of influence circa 1760–1800. Despite my relatively narrow focus on the minuets of given time and place, the phenomena discussed here undergo historical transformation. I have noticed changes spanning these four decades concerning phrase length and structure. Overall, the presence of choreomusical analogies seems to decline as the eighteenth century draws to a close. Haydn favored the twelve-measure first section during his tenure at Esterháza and then completely abandoned it after 1790.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Minuets written for the public concerts in London required different communicative strategies than those intended for the court. In Salzburg, a young Mozart preferred starting his symphonic minuets with 10-, 12- or 14-measure sections—which I take to represent reverences and/or Z-figures. For his late symphonies, he turned to the more regular (4 + 4) + (4 + 4) pattern instead.⁽⁵⁹⁾ The “minuetness” of some late symphonic minuets starts and ends with their name. The title *Menuetto* occasionally introduces music that sounds more like a *Deutscher* than a prototypical minuet.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Although I lack the data to provide a true diachronic view of the evolution of the genre, my intuition is that musical imitations of dance movement went out of fashion as the popularity of the minuet declined.

[5.2] The life cycle of the danced minuet underwent significant changes throughout the eighteenth-century. In its courtly origins, it was danced by one couple at a time. At this stage the minuet was an aristocratic affair. The dance was considered difficult, and the stakes were quite high: the dancing couple displayed their skill and grace in front of a scrutinizing audience. By the end of the century, with the development of public balls, multiple couples danced minuets simultaneously. Minuets opened the dance—a formality that preceded the more fashionable and arguable exciting contredanses and *Deutscher*. The minuet had become accessible to the middle classes, and the choreography had been simplified (Fort 2025, 70–71).⁽⁶¹⁾ It is possible that these changes brought about a higher degree of synchronization between figures and phrase structure, although we do not know exactly how minuets were danced in which contexts. Gardiner’s description of the Z-figure includes 16 measures of music (3 steps on one side, 2 to cross, and 3 on the other side), instead of the more balanced, earlier Z (1786, 29). This type of choreography would make figures last as long as the typical eight-measure reprises of danceable minuets written in the late eighteenth-century. Arguably, the fluidity of cross-rhythms in the earlier minuet could have been sacrificed in favor of an easier performance.

[5.3] It is also possible that the choreomusical analogies I describe evoke an archaic type minuet rather than the one practiced by the middle classes at the end of the century. For Buurman, the opening reverences represent “an overt celebration of the aristocratic status” (2021, 57) of French court balls. Feldtenstein suggests that when multiple couples danced at the same time, as occurred in public ballrooms, they should move in rows or circles to avoid collisions (1772, 80–81, quoted in Fort 2015, 27–28). If certain elements of the choreography were no longer practiced in the ballroom, their musical imitations from symphonic minuets could have only been familiar through theatrical minuets, or perhaps only accessible for listeners who had experienced the minuet at court.⁽⁶²⁾ This could explain why these choreomusical analogies appear more frequently in the symphony than in the string quartet. The aesthetics of the symphony required a magnificence that was not expected of other genres: it would make sense that symphonic minuets evoke the grandeur of the older aristocratic minuet, an idealized dance slipping into the past but still present in the collective imagination.

[5.4] During the reign of the “queen of dances” (Feldtstein 1772, 73), choreomusical analogies such as the courtesy *Anhang* and the Z-figure proliferated in symphonic minuets, imitating dance steps with music. Manipulations of hypermeter and phrase structure affect virtual alignment between music and bodily movement, and these compositional strategies varied across genres. Certain hypermetric manipulations are more common in string quartets. This is not surprising, given the sophistication and complexity of the genre. What is noteworthy is that certain types of hypermetric deviations from four- and eight-measure structures happen more frequently in the symphony. To be sure, not all symphonic minuets imitate choreography. The ones that have received more analytical attention are those that challenge the conventions of the genre. Richard Cohn chooses the *Menuetto* of Mozart’s Symphony in G minor, K. 550 as a case study of hypermetric dissonance (1992), Wheelock finds humor in Haydn’s unruly symphonic minuets (1992), and Lowe identifies topics with low-class associations that make the aristocratic minuet “fall from grace” (2002). My analysis of a corpus of symphonic minuets reveals that expressive strategies of this kind, while remarkable, are not characteristic of the genre. Rather than frustrating expectations of meter and choreography, symphonies rely on conventional aspects of the danced minuet and derive expressive potential from these conventions.

[5.5] Danceable minuets did not require coordination between choreography and phrase structure, making analogies between movement and music neither necessary nor (perhaps) desirable. Irreverent minuets abound in string quartets and occasionally appear in symphonies, delighting listeners in subtle games of misaligning and realigning imaginary dance steps. A more typical communicative strategy for symphonic minuets is to play with the embodied knowledge of their listeners in a different, unique way. They become expressive by virtue of being overly well-behaved, imitating choreography to convey through music the embodied, multimodal experience of social dance.

[5.6] I would be remiss not to mention that I have showed these imitations of dance movements in rather scattered fashion: a minuet step here, a reverence there, a Z-figure elsewhere. No symphonic minuet presents a musical analogy of a complete minuet choreography. Such an exact mapping could be hardly achieved: the mandatory binary structure of minuet music does not align with any choreographic counterpart.⁽⁶³⁾ Instead, these moments of movement-painting come and go, inviting motor imagery for a moment to then proceed to prioritize musical processes of a different nature. These fleeting, flickering images resemble Kofi Agawu’s understanding of topical signification as “intermittent intertextual signaling” (2014, 476). Choreomusical analogies facilitate the emergence of meaning, but they signify in discontinuous fashion. They invite listeners to discover, rather than sustain, analogies between music and movement.

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Appendix

Example A below enumerates all minuets in the corpus by composer (row) and genre (column; either symphony or string quartet).

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Footnotes

1. All human cognition is literally embodied; the term describes an approach to psychology that emphasizes the importance of motor behavior. Embodied music cognition has been discussed at length; see for example [Cox 2016](#), [Leman 2007](#), [Leman et al. 2018](#), and [Kozak 2020](#).

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2. I use the term nonfunctional to describe music that follows the convention of dance but was not composed for dancing. Hereafter, I use nonfunctional minuet and concert minuet interchangeably, as opposed to “functional” or dance minuet, or ballroom minuet. This terminology implies neither value judgments nor opposition between the functional and the “artful” or the “dysfunctional.”

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3. The knowledge structures that I discuss here resemble Mark Johnson’s “image schemata,” the recurring patterns that emerge from physical experiences of bodies moving through space (1990). This use of the term differs from its typical use in music-theoretic discourse, popularized by [Gjerdingen 2007](#), as cognitive patterns resulting from statistical regularities in the music. Stefan Love (2015) relies on the notion of a cognitive schema to suggest how a hypothetical eighteenth-century listener would have perceived hypermeter in minuets, but his schemata do not have an explicit embodied component.

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4. Tilden Russell’s seminal work on the minuet (1983, 1992, 1999, 2006), although less analytical in nature, remains an essential source for the study of music-dance relations. His observations and quantitative analyses on the irregular phrase structures present in danceable minuets will provide an important background to the third and fourth sections of this article.

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5. Ryan McClelland’s study on extended upbeats in the minuet focuses on chamber music, with one single example from a symphony by Haydn (2006). Stefan Love illustrates his model of historical perception of hypermeter in the minuet exclusively with string quartets (2015). Mirka’s studies of Haydn’s and Mozart’s chamber music for strings (2009, 2021) are seminal references on metrical manipulations in the classical style; these include multiple analyses of minuets. A notable exception to the analytical focus on chamber minuets is [Wheelock 1992](#).

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6. On the importance of ballroom culture in late eighteenth-century Vienna, and the social practice of minuet dancing, see [Fort 2025](#) and [Buurman 2021](#). I thank Dorian Bandy for pointing me at Buurman’s work.

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7. Fort suggests that “the minuet may have retained its earlier, courtly forms in the *house ball*” (2015, 150), my emphasis, as opposed to the newer forms practiced in public balls.

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8. Starting with an anacrusis is common, but not required, in minuets written for the ballroom. From the twelve minuets of this set, half begin on the downbeat. As I further elaborate in subsequent sections, the movements of dancers in the public ballrooms—unlike those dancing strictly choreographed minuets for the stage—did not need to align with musical phrases ([Russell 1983](#), 60–64). Dancers could have waited to hear a few measures of music before starting the dance (see [3.1] below).

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9. Of 108 minuets composed for the balls of the Viennese public ballrooms between 1792–99, 21% begin with a dotted anacrusis. Incipits of this corpus appear in [Fort 2015](#), 281–300.

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10. Following the terminology introduced in [Krebs 1999](#), 54–56.

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11. In addition to the dotted anacruses in mm. 1, 3, and 5, harmony provides other cues for this potential hypermetrical conflict or shift. Not only does the first harmonic change (a common sign for a new downbeat) occur in m. 4, but the changes in mm. 4 and 6 carry more weight than those in mm. 5 and 7. In the lament bass, chromatic tones typically occupy stronger metrical positions than diatonic ones (see [IJzerman 2018](#), 224–26). The diatonic version of the descending tetrachord appears in the opening measures of the first movement of K. 421.

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12. This is not at all the case for earlier dance minuets. According to Russell, “the notion of linking regular periodicity to the dance minuet is fallacious and has led to manifold problems of our understanding of minuets and ultimately of Classic phrase morphology itself” ([1992](#), 118).

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13. The distinction between Kenner and Liebhaber, connoisseur and amateur listeners, was common in German music criticism. See, for example, [Bonds 2008](#).

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14. Wheelock claims that danced minuets “provide a measure of the functional against which to judge the ‘dysfunctional’ deviations that distinguish the artful minuet from its danced counterpart” ([1992](#), 57). For a critique of this position, see [Fort 2025](#), 195–96.

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15. Dittersdorf, Pleyel, Anton and Paul Wranitzky, Eberl, Reicha, Krommer, Süßmayr, Gyrowetz, Gassman, Rosetti, and Hoffstetter. The corpus is limited to works that were available on IMSLP and the University of Chicago Library in 2018.

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16. Cognitive thresholds for entrainment challenge the possibility of eight-measure hypermeter in minuets. With a reasonable minuet tempo of 112 bpm, eight measures of music take more than 12 seconds, falling outside the upper limit of 5–6 seconds for meter perception ([London 2004](#), 27). Thus, technically, section 2 deals mostly with hypermeter, section 3 with both hypermeter and phrase structure, and section 4 with phrase structure rather than hypermeter.

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17. The empirical component draws on a rather brute measure-counting process, which provides evidence for claims about typicality that I incorporate into more nuanced analyses. As William Rothstein put it, “a phrase cannot be defined by some a priori measure count. Yet counting measures is not completely irrelevant, either” ([1989](#), 7).

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18. Dance treatises refer to this variant, which enjoyed increasing favor over the eighteenth century, as *pas de menuet en fleuret*, New Minuet Step, French Minuet Step, and Court Step ([Cobau 1984](#), 14).

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19. The example is adapted from [Fort 2025](#), 73. Fort provides a comprehensive description of the step as described in four German treatises of the late eighteenth century ([72–78](#)).

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20. I asked the dancer, Sarah Edgar, to start dancing at the repeat of the first section, aligning her first step with the beginning of the musical phrase. This type of tight coordination was not expected in the ballroom, where dancers might have started dancing at a different point. For a summary of coordination (and lack thereof) between music and movement in the minuet, see

McKee 2012, 16–23.

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21. Bacquoy-Guédon asks the reader to consult J. J. Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de Musique* regarding *cadence*. The term is defined there as the "conformance of the steps of the dancer to the meter indicated by the music." The next entry indicates that music is *bien cadencée* when it "makes possible to feel the movement" (Rousseau 1768, 68).

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22. As a counterexample, Riepel shows a minuet by a fictional student where the second section lasts for 13 measures. It should be noted that the requirement for an even number of measures does not take the repetition into account.

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23. Obviously, an even number of measures is not sufficient to convey duple hypermeter. I address below how measures pair to create duple hypermeasures.

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24. The only other exception found in the first section from the corpus of symphonic minuets occurs in Pleyel's Symphony no. 146.

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25. Each movement includes a quotation from Ovid. For the minuet, the words *Ecce nepos Cadmi* [Look, the grandson of Cadmus] point at the passage where Actaeon is walking in the grove, right before the encounter with the goddess.

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26. Pickups are the most common beginning for danceable minuets in late-eighteenth-century Vienna: 75% of minuets written for the balls organized by the *Gesellschaft Bildender Künstler* begin with a pickup (Sánchez-Kisielewska 2023, 7, after Fort 2015).

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27. Echoes are common in minuet music (and I turn to them in the next section), but this echo repeats three times a weak measure instead of the standard repetition of a strong-weak pair.

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28. Dittersdorf stands out for his penchant for odd-numbered sections: four of his 22 symphonies included in the corpus have an odd number of measures in the second section.

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29. McKee argues that Mozart's danceable minuets typically present loud and majestic music for the minuet proper and a softer style for the trios, characterized by "rhythmic ease" and "murmuring accompaniments" (2012, 62–63). Elaine Sisman observes that the beginning of the minuet of K. 551 "appears to deliberately contravene the various kinds of *pas de minuet*" (1993, 64).

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30. According to Riepel, the main building blocks of the minuet should be two and four-measure units but the inclusion of units with an odd number of measures is acceptable under certain conditions. His requirement to group irregular units to achieve regularity at a larger level does not rely on repeat signs.

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31. The nickname of the symphony is attributed to Haydn, who wrote "Tempura mutantur etc." on the orchestral parts, referring to the Latin proverb *Tempura mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis* (The times change, and we change with them).

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32. An analysis in terms of quadruple hypermeter is also possible, but not relevant for this section. Parallelism contributes to create two quadruple hypermeasures, which would retrospectively make

m. 1 what McClelland calls a “gestural, but no hypermetric extended upbeat” (2006, 25).

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33. For example, eight of the twelve “Wiener Hofball” minuets Hob. IX:11 by Haydn begin with the repetition, literal or varied, of a two-measure unit. The symphonic minuets that Haydn composed during the 1770s replicate the proportion: two thirds follow a sentential structure. Mozart did not share this predisposition. On the importance of the sentence in minuet music, see [McKee 2012](#), 200–201.

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34. Mirka has discussed instances of counter-generic behavior in Mozart’s late chamber music. She finds that the beginning of the minuet from the String Quintet in C, K. 515 “was designed by Mozart to mislead the listener into believing that she is hearing the beginning of a slow movement” (2009, 64), or that the first measures from the minuet of the String Quintet in E-flat major, K. 614 “fake” the rhythm of a march. In both openings, surface features do not contribute to establish a clear triple meter—let alone two-measure hypermeter—and texture, articulation, and dynamics contribute to the ambiguous character of the first minuet phrase.

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35. Notable exceptions in symphonic minuets by Haydn are discussed in [Wheelock 1992](#) (55–89) and [Lowe 2002](#). Unlike Wheelock and Lowe, my interest here is on the typical rather than the exceptional.

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36. This is the position taken by McKee (2012), following Little and Jenne ([1991] 2001) and others, but there is no complete agreement on the issue. Minuets for the stage were choreographed in detail and pursue exact coordination between music and movement, but this did not seem to be the case for minuets performed in public ballrooms. For more on the relation between choreography and music see [McKee 2012](#), 47–48, and (with an emphasis on the Viennese public ballrooms of the late eighteenth century) [Fort 2015](#), 136–46.

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37. For Russell, “the notion of linking regular periodicity to the danced minuet is fallacious” (1992, 118).

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38. From the 170 minuets written for the *Gesellschaft bildender Künstler*, all but four begin with an eight-measure reprise ([Fort 2015](#), 119). In the 36 minuets Mozart wrote for the Viennese ballrooms (K. 568, 585, 599, 601, and 604) all the first sections have 8 measures of music (10 of them are structured as 2 + 2 + 4 sentences, 14 are 4 + 4 periods, and 9 display hybrid 4 + 4 structures). Earlier minuets exhibit more varied and irregular structures. [Russell 1999](#) sees the simplification of phrase structure towards the end of the century as an influence of the nonfunctional minuet.

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39. 22% of all the symphonic minuets from the corpus contain a *Sechser* in the first section, while less than 3% include *Dreier* or *Fünfer* (in other words, 6-measure units tend to be organized as 2+4 or 4+2). From the 10- and 14-measure sections, over 70% include a *Sechser*.

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40. The 12-measure reprise does not necessarily compromise quadruple hypermeter and will be discussed in the next section.

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41. Obviously, phrases whose length is a multiple of four measures do not necessarily exhibit four-measure hypermeter. I take this number only as a first indicator of potential hypermetrical conflict. Mirka’s study of hypermetric irregularities includes multiple examples from minuets (2021, especially chapters 5, 6, and 8).

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42. For additional details on *Sechser* as the result of phrase expansion in eighteenth-century theory and practice, see [Mirka 2021](#), 92–93, 108–9, and 198–213.

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43. As Koch puts it, “such a four-measure phrase, which has been extended to six measures by the repetition of two, is always considered a four-measure unit with respect to the rhythmic relation of phrases” ([1793] 1983, 43).

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44. It is noteworthy that when Koch discusses “the extension of a basic phrase through the repetition of two measures which form an incise,” he provides only melodies in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter. Other types of phrase expansions are illustrated in the *Versuch* with examples in both triple and duple meter ([1793] 1983, 42–43).

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45. Mozart’s quartets K. 172 and K. 387 include related phrase extensions, although without the literal repetition of the *Anhangs* I discuss here. Haydn and Mozart because they started their symphonic minuets with a 10 or 14-measure reprise more frequently than the other composers included in the corpus.

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46. I learned these bows in a minuet workshop led by Peirce and organized by Joseph Fort during the Annual Meeting of the Mozart Society of America (Tufts University, 2015). Edgar performs both parts, the lady’s on the left and the gentleman’s on the right. There was no consistent approach to the choreography of the reverences, and the number of steps before and after the bows varied. In a more complex version of the “Honors to the Presence,” Georg Link divides it in several components (bows, steps, and pauses), alternating four and two measures of music (1796, quoted in [Fort 2025](#), 116–19).

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47. Movements labelled Scherzo were not included in the corpus of this study.

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48. Since the Symphony no. 70 premiered in 1779 and the String Quartets op. 33 were published in 1781, Haydn might have had the former in mind when writing the latter. The minuets Hob. IX: 8 were published as piano reduction by Artaria in 1785.

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49. I thank Yoel Greenberg for bringing this example to my attention.

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50. According to Fort’s study of 319 minuets and trios composed in Vienna for the charity balls of the *Gesellschaft bildender Künstler* (1792–1804), almost 90% “consist exclusively of eight-measure sections.” All but one begin with an eight-measure phrase for the A section ([2025](#), 113).

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51. Günther Thomas separates composers in two categories: those who “more or less often” deviated from the eight-measure norm in their dance music—Holzbauer, Haydn, Ordóñez, Phillip von Dittersdorf, Mozart, Eybler, and Molitor—and those who systematically followed the rule—Kozeluch, Teyber, Eberl, Süßmayr, Beethoven, and Lipavsky ([1982](#), 146).

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52. The difference between 12-measure sections in Example 10 is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that the discrepancy reflects actual differences between genres beyond the chosen samples. Differences between other phrase lengths did not reach statistical significance. My corpus analysis includes only symphonies and string quartets. For ballroom minuets, I take [Fort 2015](#) as a reference. Although his study does not specifically address 12-measure sections, he observes that in the 30% of minuets that contain some sections longer than eight measures, the majority of these

sections consist of sixteen-measure B sections (118).

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53. Lerdahl and Jackendoff's grouping preference rule GPR 5 (Symmetry), reflects the preference: "Prefer grouping analyses that most closely approach the ideal subdivision of groups into two parts of equal length" (1983, 49).

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54. As with the basic minuet step, there is no conclusive evidence of how minuets were danced in the ballrooms of late eighteenth-century Vienna. Other sources offer more flexibility regarding the number of steps involved in the Z. For example, Pierre Rameau lists a variation with three steps forward instead of two, for a total of 14 measures of music (1997, 299).

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55. The animation is meant to emphasize the ternary geometry of the figure. In practice, changes of direction were curved rather than angular. The diagonal took a winding shape, and dancers moved forward rather than to the right, but I chose to represent it with a sideway motion to emphasize eye contact and the direction of the head.

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56. I thank Cora Palfy for this metaphor.

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57. The excerpt from the *Metamorphoses* quoted in this movement reads "*Paenituit jurasse patrem*" (his father regretted his oath). Dittersdorf's pioneering programmatic symphonies follow the Greek myths only loosely: much music does not correspond to any element of the text. Yet I argue one can find such a correspondence in this minuet. Helios laments granting his son the favor of riding the Sun chariot, framing the problem with a juxtaposition: "Your fate is mortal: it is not mortal what you ask. Unknowingly you aspire to more than the gods can share." The distinction between Olympians and mortals, and the risks of their transgression, is a recurring theme in Greek mythology. The passage centers the concept of immortality and the powers and privileges exclusive of the gods. In the context of eighteenth-century culture, the separation between mortals and gods can be allegorically translated into class distinction: the low-born should not aspire nor ask for the privileges of nobility.

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58. From the symphonies composed between 1761 and 1784, 23% minuets begin with a 12-measure section. Between 1761 and 1774, the 12-measure section slightly surpassed the eight-measure section in Haydn's symphonic minuets.

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59. From the symphonies composed in Salzburg in the 1770s, K. 124 begins with a 10-measure section, K. 133, 134, 183, and 201 with 12 measures, and K. 132, 200, and 202 with 14. From the late symphonies, composed in Vienna in 1788, the minuets of K. 543 and 551 begin with a 16-measure section.

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60. The *Menuetto* of K. 551 might have not even registered as a true minuet in the first place. The theme is a 16-measure sentence with a four-measure basic idea: although sentences appear in countless minuets, danceable and otherwise, ballroom minuets feature only 2-measure basic ideas, corresponding to one minuet step. Similarly, the minuets of Haydn's Symphonies 95 and 98 lack the walking basses that characterized earlier minuets and feature slow harmonic rhythm, with 2 or 4 measures without harmonic change. For a study on Haydn's experimentation with topics in minuet movements see [Lowe 2002](#). The movements written towards the end of the century, may still be understood as members of the minuet category, but they are often quite atypical minuets. On the role of atypical category members in music perception and historical listening, see [Sánchez-Kisielewska 2023](#).

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61. Fort argues against the previous assumption that only the nobility danced the minuet (see [Lowe 2007](#), 80–97).

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62. Lowe has described two contrasting historical hearings of a symphonic minuet by Haydn along similar lines ([2007](#), 80–92).

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63. A complete minuet dance would require more than 100 mm. of music ([Little and Jenne \[1991\] 2001](#), 65). It was likely that the performance of a figure would, for example, start in the minuet and continue into the trio ([2025](#), 117–18).

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