



PUTTING THE LILT INTO DANCE MUSIC

Humans seem to have always enjoyed dancing to music. The old traditional (ear) players played with a liveliness and "lift" - which was the way the tunes had been passed down..

Rob Willis' video of Bert Jamieson in old age playing mouth organ while sitting on his bed is a good example of playing with a great dance rhythm. <https://youtu.be/ltMaOMvLDps>

There aren't any rules about how dance music HAS to be played. If it sounds right, then that's all that matters! But there are techniques you can use to help a tune 'get under the dancer's feet'.

There's more to a tune than just the dots

Most of the old bush players didn't read music - and they played with lots of subtle variations that are missing from the sheet music. So feel free to add your own 'flavour' to the tunes as you play.

Feel the rhythm - accent the beat

Remember the feel of the dance when you're playing. Think about the rhythm and try accenting the "strong" notes in the tune, e.g. the first note of each 3/8 in 6/8 jigs; the second beat (off beat) in 4/4 polkas and schottisches; the first and third beat in 3/4 mazurkas.

Varying the tune - lengthening, shortening & ornamenting notes

Holding onto some notes and cutting other notes short can emphasise the rhythm and add some 'life' to a dance tune. Try playing different little variations each time through.

Herb's Jig



Play lead-in note(s) "grace notes". Feel each phrase in the tune.

Connaught Man's Rambles



Accent the first note in each group of 3/8 - play as a crotchet and quaver. Add staccato.

Clare Jig (The Old Favourite)



Varying long notes and 3/8 note lengths. Playing 'runs' to give the tune 'swing'.

