MUSIC FOR DANCERS/CHOREOGRAPHERS

Why do we need to know about the components of music?
The music tells us which dance to do, how fast to do it, what style of dance is fitting, and how to arrange our choreography. The music and lyrics inform the emotion we should display with our dancing.

Time Signature (meter) - Regular pattern of strong and weak beats of equal duration. The top number tells the number of beats per measure and the bottom tells the type of note getting the whole beat. The bottom number is usually a 4 meaning a quarter note.

The letter C in the time signature stands for common time and is exactly the same as 4/4.

Common time signatures:
4/4 (Two step, Cha-Cha, Swing) *Achy Break Heart by Billy Ray Cyrus*
3/4 (Waltz) *What the World Needs Now by Missi Hale*

Measure (bars) - Space between two bars of music containing lines and spaces where musical notes are found

Note - Written symbol indicating pitch and length of a sound

Beat - Basic unit of sound in time

Downbeat - We begin most dances on the down beat. It's the strongest part of the beat.

Tempo (BPM) - The speed of the music or **beats per minute.** You can determine BPM by using an app, google, or counting the beats for 15 seconds and multiplying by 4.

Rhythm - Steady repeating patterns of sounds and silence usually in the bass clef (listen for bass guitar)

Lyrics - Words that tell the story of the song

Vocals - How the singer interprets the lyrics

Melody - Stands out as the part of the music we might hum.

Phrase - Typically 8 measures or 32 beats, is like a sentence in a paragraph with each 8 count usually completing a thought in the song.

Accent - The strong beat in the music. The music's accents cue dance style.

Dance accents	Dance
Counts 1, 3	Two Step or Nightclub
Counts 2&, 5&	Waltz
Counts 2, 4, 6, 8	Polka, East Coast Swing, West Coast Swing
Counts 1, 5	Cha-Cha

BPM > slow > to > fast >
Nightclub > Waltz > WC Swing > Cha Cha > Polka > EC Swing > Tango > Samba
"At Night we Waltz to the West Coast with Cha and PETS"

The Basic Parts of a Song

Introduction - Preparatory piece of the song at the beginning. The intro is commonly 8, 16, or 32 beats for songs written in 4/4 time.

Verse (Stanza) - Between the intro and the chorus. This section tells the story.

Chorus - The melody of a song often repeated after each verse. The lyrics usually stay the same with each repetition. Usually 32 counts in 4/4 time music.

Bridge - Optional piece used to connect two themes in a musical composition often containing fewer beats than verse or chorus. Bridges often throw a song out of perfect phrasing for dancers and requires the addition of extra steps in the form of a **Tag***.

Conclusion (Coda) - The ending piece of the song.

Resolve - A change in the music indicating something is going to happen, either a rest or a new phrase. Dancers learn to hear these and prepare for a Tag or Restart.

Restart - We restart a dance when the music of a song starts a new verse or chorus before the end of the normal dance cycle. This enables dancers to stay on the phrasing of the music. For example, the song changes after 24 counts of a 32 count dance. So we "re-start" at count 1 and skip 25-32 to stay on phrasing with the music.

In a **perfectly phrased song**, all choruses and verses are 32 counts. This makes choreography a breeze because there are no tags or restarts. ***When the song is more complicated**, choreographers have to decide when and where to add a tag or a restart. If the bridge differs significantly from the rest of the song a marked change in the choreography in the form of a tag may be necessary. However, choreographers may decide to dance through audible tags and restarts if the dance will eventually get back on phrase without them.

4/4 Time signature is usually 32 counts to a phrase. Musically that's 8 measures of music containing 4 beats each. When we hash this out for choreography one / equals 8 counts so it looks like: //// with ////=32 counts

3/4 Time signature is usually 24 counts to a phrase; or, 8 measures containing 3 beats each. One / equals 6 counts. ////=24 counts. Waltz line dances tend to be 24, 36, 48.