



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
GENERAL STUDIES COURSE PROPOSAL COVER FORM

**Course information:**

Copy and paste current course information from Class Search/Course Catalog.

**Investigates vital cultural heritages that have shaped dance in U.S. American popular culture from 20th century to the present. Emphasizes dance as a producer of social space and cultural identity as well as a reflection of diverse social realities and dynamics of power. Following required reading and videos, the course surveys time periods of dance from the late 1800s through the 20th century to the present day.**

Academic Unit HIDA Department School of Film, Dance and Theatre

Subject DCE Number 202 Title Dance in U.S. Popular Culture Units: 3

Is this a cross-listed course? No  
If yes, please identify course(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a shared course? (choose one) If so, list all academic units offering this course NO  
Course description: \_\_\_\_\_

**Requested designation:** Cultural Diversity in the United States-C  
*Note- a separate proposal is required for each designation requested*

**Eligibility:**

Permanent numbered courses must have completed the university's review and approval process.  
For the rules governing approval of omnibus courses, contact the General Studies Program Office at (480) 965-0739.

**Area(s) proposed course will serve:**

A single course may be proposed for more than one core or awareness area. A course may satisfy a core area requirement and more than one awareness area requirements concurrently, but may not satisfy requirements in two core areas simultaneously, even if approved for those areas. With departmental consent, an approved General Studies course may be counted toward both the General Studies requirement and the major program of study.

**Checklists for general studies designations:**

- Complete and attach the appropriate checklist
- Literacy and Critical Inquiry core courses (L)
  - Mathematics core courses (MA)
  - Computer/statistics/quantitative applications core courses (CS)
  - Humanities, Fine Arts and Design core courses (HU)
  - Social and Behavioral Sciences core courses (SB)
  - Natural Sciences core courses (SQ/SG)
  - Global Awareness courses (G)
  - Historical Awareness courses (H)
  - Cultural Diversity in the United States courses (C)

**A complete proposal should include:**

- Signed General Studies Program Course Proposal Cover Form
- Criteria Checklist for the area
- Course Syllabus
- Table of Contents from the textbook, and/or lists of course materials

**Contact information:**



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Name Stephani Woodson Phone 480.965.5214

Mail code 2002 E-mail: swoodson@asu.edu

**Department Chair/Director approval: (Required)**

Chair/Director name (Typed): Jake Pinholster Date: 10/22/14

Chair/Director (Signature): 

**Arizona State University Criteria Checklist for**

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES [C]**

**Rationale and Objectives**

The contemporary "culture" of the United States involves the complex interplay of many different cultures that exist side by side in various states of harmony and conflict. The history of the United States involves the experiences not only of different groups of European immigrants and their descendants but also of diverse groups of American Indians, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans--all of whom played significant roles in the development of contemporary culture and together shape the future of the United States. At the same time, the recognition that gender, class, and religious differences cut across all distinctions of race and ethnicity offers an even richer variety of perspectives from which to view ourselves. Awareness of our cultural diversity and its multiple sources can illuminate our collective past, present, and future and can help us to achieve greater mutual understanding and respect.

The objective of the Cultural Diversity requirement is to promote awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity within the contemporary United States through the study of the cultural, social, or scientific contributions of women and minority groups, examination of their experiences in the U.S., or exploration of successful or unsuccessful interactions between and among cultural groups.

Proposer: Please complete the following section and attach appropriate documentation.

<b>ASU--[C] CRITERIA</b>			
<b>CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES</b>			
YES	NO		<b>Identify Documentation Submitted</b>
		<b>1. A Cultural Diversity course must meet the following general criteria:</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The course must contribute to an understanding of cultural diversity in <b>contemporary</b> U.S. Society.	Official Course Description, Syllabus, TOC in Course Textbook and Example of Unit Materials
		<b>2. A Cultural Diversity course must then meet at least one of the following specific criteria:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	a. The course is an in-depth study of culture-specific elements, cultural experiences, or cultural contributions (in areas such as education, history, language, literature, art, music, science, politics, work, religion, and philosophy) of gender*, racial, ethnic and/or linguistic minority groups** within the United States.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	b. The course is primarily a comparative study of the diverse cultural contributions, experiences, or world views of two or more gender*, racial, ethnic and/or linguistic minority groups** within the United States.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. The course is primarily a study of the social, economic, political, or psychological dimensions of relations between and among gender*, racial, ethnic and/or linguistic minority groups** within the United States.  *Gender groups would encompass categories such as the following: women, men, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender individuals, etc.  **Cultural, racial, ethnic, and/or linguistic minority groups in the U.S. would include categories such as the following: Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans/First Peoples, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, Muslim Americans, members of the deaf community, etc.	Official Course Description, Syllabus, TOC in Course Textbook and Example of Unit Materials

Course Prefix	Number	Title	Designation
DCE	202	Dance in US Popular Culture	<b>CULTURAL</b>

Explain in detail which student activities correspond to the **specific** designation criteria.  
Please use the following organizer to explain how the criteria are being met.

Criteria (from checksheet)	How course meets spirit (contextualize specific examples in next column)	Please provide detailed evidence of how course meets criteria (i.e., where in syllabus)
Example-See 2b. Compares 2 U.S. cultures	Example-Compares Latino & African American Music	Example-See Syllabus Pg. 5
Criteria 1: The course must contribute to an understanding of cultural diversity in contemporary U.S. Society.	Students develop an understanding of cultural diversity in contemporary U.S. society by exploring issues of “power, class, gender, age and sexual orientation” through the lens of dance as a socio-cultural practice. In reading primary texts, and viewing films, students are introduced to dance through and the political, social, and cultural climates which produced them. The socio-historic discussion of dance in popular culture highlights contributions of various racial/ethnic groups though citing specific dance elements, aesthetics, and innovations occurring at specific time periods throughout the past century. The primary text and some primary film clips focus more specifically on the contributions and innovations of African Americans and Latin American populations throughout the century. Thus the complementary nature of the selected writings from each text and films from each video exposes students to a rich perspective of diverse ethnic/cultural legacies which contribute to a deeper understanding and awareness of cultural diversity in our	Official Course Description. Syllabus: Course Organization, Course Description, Course Goals: 1, 2 Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, Syllabus pg 6: Reading Assignments Course Text Table of Contents, Unit #4 Example including: Objectives, Introduction, Questions for Consideration, Reading & Viewing Assignments, Discussion Board Topic: Aesthetics and Politics

	contemporary U.S. society.	
<p>Criteria 2.c. The course is primarily a study of the social, economic, political, or psychological dimensions of relations between and among gender*, racial, ethnic and/or linguistic minority groups** within the United States.</p>	<p>The course focuses on dance as practice that is both produced by culture and that produces culture. As such, the social, economic, and political dimensions of relations between diverse groups of the U.S. are always in view. How the experience of dance as a social and popular phenomenon moves and grows is inextricably linked to a history that includes slavery, racism and discrimination of African American people and people of color. Today's contemporary society in its diverse manifestations registers these histories by affirming the importance of diverse contributions, as well as creating new paradigms of dance and embodied transfer in contemporary popular dance culture.</p>	<p>Official Course Description. Syllabus: Course Organization, Course Description, Course Goals: 1, 2 Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, Syllabus pg 6: Reading Assignments Course Text Table of Contents, Unit #4 Example including: Objectives, Introduction, Questions for Consideration, Reading &amp; Viewing Assignments, Discussion Board Topic: Aesthetics and Politics</p>



**Course Organization**

**DCE/THE 294: Dance in US Popular Culture** is a one-semester dance *humanities course*. In this course we explore ways in which dance in U.S. popular culture is a site where social, political, cultural, economic and ideological realities are reflected, negotiated and at times re-envisioned and re-configured. Following the required reading and videos, the course surveys time periods of dance from the late 1800s through the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Throughout we maintain a central focus between the relationship of dance as both a producer and product of unique social and cultural spaces.

- PART 1/Units 1-2: Pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century-1910s
- PART 2/Units 3-4: 1910s-1940s
- PART 3/Units 5-6: 1950s-1970s
- PART 4/Units 7-8: 1980s-present

Within each part, there are readings, viewings, discussion boards, quizzes and four writing assignments. Please read the syllabus carefully for all guidelines and due dates!

**Course Description**

Investigates vital cultural heritages that have shaped dance in U.S. American popular culture from 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Emphasis on dance as a producer of social space and cultural identity, as well as a reflection of diverse social realities and dynamics of power. Following your required reading and videos, the course surveys time periods of dance from the late 1800s through the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

**Course Goals**

1. Students will have an appreciation of dance in popular U.S. culture as a site where social, political, cultural, economic and ideological realities are reflected, negotiated and at times re-envisioned and re-configured.
2. Students will develop a key awareness of how diverse aesthetic values and cultural heritages have shaped popular culture dance practices from 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the present

**Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to identify how contemporary trends in U.S. social, popular and vernacular dance are broadly based cultural phenomena that interact with hegemonic power to produce the popular culture of the time (20<sup>th</sup> Century to present)
2. Students will demonstrate connections between dance and identities, civic engagement, social change, morality, changing media and technologies, politics, fashion, immigration, arts and education
3. Students will be able to visually discriminate select styles and trends of dance in popular culture throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the present

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Commented [MG(2)]:** C 1. Contemporary cultural diversity in U.S.  
C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Commented [MG(4)]:** C 1. Contemporary cultural diversity in U.S.  
C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Commented [MG(5)]:** C 1. Contemporary cultural diversity in U.S.  
C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Commented [MG(7)]:** C1: contemporary cultural diversity

**Commented [MG(8)]:** C 1. Contemporary cultural diversity in U.S.  
C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Commented [MT9]:** C 1. Contemporary cultural diversity in U.S.  
C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Attendance Policy:** Although this course is web delivered, it is neither automated nor self-paced. You are expected to log in *daily M-F* and engage in all assignments (readings/viewings, discussions, quizzes, and written assessments). If you are not present and engaged, that means responding to course content, classmates and myself, for a period of two Units of work, whether episodic or concurrent, you will be Withdrawn from the course for Excessive Missed Assignments. To access the class website and materials, you can use your personal computer, one in the library, and/or computer labs at ASU. Tech challenges are not an acceptable excuse for missed work.

**Disclaimer:** Course material is intended for an “adult” audience who can maturely handle discussions regarding such topics as race, gender, sexuality, and politics. If you feel you will have difficulty with this course content, please discuss possible alternatives with the instructor.

**Technical Know-How:** You have elected to take a web-based course and this assumes that you understand how to use the internet, Blackboard (BB), email, and troubleshoot technical difficulties. Regular access to a computer/internet/email/BB *is required* for this class. If you do not have home computer access, please be sure to check the campus computers **daily**. You must make sure that you have updated programs and software since the most current versions of Adobe Reader, PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and other media programs are needed. If you don’t have these programs updated, or your computer is a bit outdated, you must find a computer on your own or go to the computer commons. **You are responsible for making sure all is in working order.**

#### **Your Instructor and How to Reach Me**

Because the course is on-line, the first and best way to reach me, your instructor, is via e-mail. During the course, I check and respond to messages and emails at least once a day (Monday – Friday), unless circumstances prevent this, in which case I will post an announcement to that effect. If you do not hear from me 24 hours after you sent your first message/email, please send another. In addition, I am available to meet with you in person at my office in West Hall Room 238 by appointment.

*My email is: [matodd@asu.edu](mailto:matodd@asu.edu)*

#### **Required Textbook**

1. *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader*  
Edited by Julie Malnig. University of Illinois UP, 2009.

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

#### **TOTALLY OPTIONAL Textbooks:**

- A. *Social Dancing in America: A History and Reference, Volume Two: Lindy Hop to Hip Hop 1901-2000* by Ralph Giordano, Greenwood Press. Westport, 2007.
- B. *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* by Marshall and Jean Stearns. Da Capo Press. New York, 1994.

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Commented [MG(12)]:**  
C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

Available from ASU Bookstore or on-line booksellers. The Malnig text is the only one that is REQUIRED.

#### **Required Film Viewing Sources (All are provided as web links within the course).**



### **How to Do Well in this Course (A Weekly Plan)**

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**Dance in Popular Culture** is a course that engages its topic with academic rigor and interest. As such, it requires a lot of work from students: keeping up with the readings, film viewings, as well as other research and completing Discussion Boards, quizzes and preparing four written Review Assignments. At the same time it provides an intriguing window into the relationships among dance, history, identity and changing cultural dynamics of the United States that will enrich your experience and understandings of dance and US popular culture.

#### **To do well in the course, here's what I suggest as a good plan of work for you to follow each week:**

1. At the start of each Part, click on the appropriate Unit number and read the Unit Objectives, Introductions to the material, Questions and DB topics. Reflect on these as you do the reading/viewing assignments. Read "Announcements" posted by your instructor.
2. Read the assigned text, view the assigned films and, as time permits, any recommended readings, or film viewings. **Take notes.** Pay particular attention to where the course content engages the questions I have posed for you to think about in each Unit. Take notes on these questions, as your Quizzes and Written Review Assignments at the end of each Unit and Part, will be related to/and may be selected directly from these questions.
3. Respond to your Discussion Board prompts on-time (per schedule in the syllabus) with Initial and Follow-up posts as detailed in DB section of your syllabus. *Your Discussion Board responses must utilize specific reference to the course materials.*
4. Post your responses according to the criteria and by the deadlines listed on the course schedule.
5. You will have a quiz at the end of each Unit. Complete the quiz before the deadline.
6. Prepare and submit your Written Response Assignments according to the criteria and by the deadlines listed on the course schedule.

**PLEASE DRAFT ALL OF YOUR WORK AS WORD DOC and SAVE A COPY- THIS WAY IF IT GETS LOST RE-SUBMITTING IS NO BIG DEAL!**

### **Course Assignments: Description and Grade Bases**

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#### **1. Syllabus Check-in Quiz: 20 points**

You must submit this quiz no later than by 11:59pm on the first day of class to receive credit and proceed in the class. If you fail to take the Syllabus quiz, you will be Withdrawn from the course as Never Attended.

#### **2. Discussion Board: 8 Unit postings @ 15 points each, for a maximum 120 points**

Over the course of the semester, 8 topics related to each Unit will be posted. To try for the maximum points possible, post your initial response and two follow-up responses on-time and according to specifications laid out in the syllabus and grading rubric. NOTE: You must also post substantive follow-up responses to receive full credit.

To receive full credit for your Discussion Board postings follow this criteria:

1. Your **initial post (250 – 300 words minimum)** and **MUST** include references to the course readings and viewings to receive full credit. I am interested in hearing your critical take on the course materials. What do you think? Responses to the Discussion Board are less formal than the Review Assignments, but are "substantive." A substantive post is thoughtful, developed and connected to the course material.
2. Your **two follow-up posts are in response to other students' or my questions/comments or to the guiding question.** This should also be substantive; however, it need only be **approximately 80-100 words** in length. "I agree" is NOT a substantive post. Do not simply re-iterate what another student has posted either. If you agree or disagree, you must explain why thoroughly. This is the place to workshop your ideas and receive feedback.
3. You must follow all posting deadlines to receive credit. Generally, **Initial Posts are due every Tuesday by 11:59 pm. Follow-up Posts are due on two different days, but no later than Wednesday 11:59pm & Thursday 11:59pm.** Please consult the course calendar in your syllabus for exact due dates/times.

**\*\*\*\*Please Note: There are exceptions to this schedule. Always consult your syllabus calendar pg 5\*\*\*\***

Please Note: The discussion board is a place to dialogue with each other, not necessarily to provide a “correct” answer to me. It is your responsibility to be active in the discussion boards; my engagement is mainly to help guide you in reference to the core themes, however if I do pose a question to you- you **must** respond to receive full credit. Please remember that in the discussion boards you must follow the community college rules. Always keep your posts constructive and respectful; avoid profanity and personal attacks. (Internet slang such as “LOL,” smiley faces, etc. are fine). Offensive posts will be removed without credit and disciplinary action may be taken.

*Note: you may post more often than required, but the maximum points possible remains 120. I will dock points for answers that are inappropriate or do not sufficiently address the question asked.*

### 3. Weekly Unit Quizzes: 8 at 15 points each, for a maximum of 120 points

At the end of each Unit you will take a quiz, which will consist of a mix of ten true/false, multiple choice, and/or fill in the blank questions worth 1 point each, followed by a short answer question of 5 points. EACH quiz is worth 15 points. These are open-book and open-site, however you have ONLY two opportunities to take each quiz. Quizzes must be completed by the due date. They will be unlocked for a period of approximately 48 hours each week & must be completed during this time.

### 3. Written Assignments: 4 at 60 points each, for a maximum 240 points

After the end of each of the four major Parts you will turn in a written assignment responding to questions, most of which are from those raised in the **online Unit Introductions and Questions**. You will need to respond to a total of four selected questions for each Part’s Review Assignment. Each question is worth 15 points, for a maximum of 60 points per assignment. These are open-book and open-site. (see full guidelines under the “Written Assignments”).

*Tip: As you do each reading and watch each video, take notes on the questions offered, and draft your answers as you go. This will save you a lot of last-minute scrambling, improve the clarity and quality of your thought, and result in a higher grade*

### 4. Extra Credit: No extra credit offered.

**NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES SO PLEASE DON’T EVEN ASK.**

## WRITTEN REVIEW ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

**Four** Written Review Assignments are due throughout the course of the semester, one for each major Part we cover. Here’s what you need to do for each one:

### General Guidelines for Writing and Turning in Your Work

1. At the end of each Part, go to the Written Assignment page.
2. In this assignment you will write and word-process a **3-5 paragraph response (375 word minimum-500 word maximum) to each** question listed. There are a total of 4 questions in each assignment and **each** requires a **3-5 paragraph response (375-500 words)**.

**PLEASE Make sure number AND include the question itself at the beginning of each response, as sometimes you will be given a choice regarding which questions you would like to respond to.**

Objectives for this assignment:

- Use your own words to survey and analyze examples *from course content* (text or film). BE SPECIFIC. Do cite your sources. Brief quotes can help strengthen your work. This analysis will take the form of a short essay that responds to the selected questions. The mode of response could take any of the following forms appropriate to each question posed:
  - i. -debating different view points that are illustrated in course content.
  - ii. -analyzing aesthetics examples of dance movement (both physical and socio-cultural).
  - iii. -comparing and differentiating examples in reference to key points raised by the question.
  - iv. -investigating further examples that strengthen or refute a perspective raised in course content.

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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NOTE: You may also include examples from outside of class and are encouraged to do so, however, take care to **primarily engage the course content** as this is the content you are responsible for.

- **These responses will be graded primarily on your ability to critically analyze and engage course content and secondarily on your writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity- Proofread, Proofread, Proofread!). If the grammar and/or lack of proofreading and/or organization make it too difficult to read, however, you will not receive credit. Please consult the rubric provided for specific grading details.**
3. When you include quoted material from the textbook, other sources from our class, or additional readings and films you wish to consult, be sure to cite these sources – including your textbook -- using proper academic documentation (such as footnotes or parenthetical citations) in either MLA, APA or Chicago Style. As previously noted, for your textbook ONLY it is acceptable to use author last name and page number without need for full citation. Each Written Review Assignment will have four responses total.
  4. Once you have completed your local copy of the word-processed document, **SAVE IT in .doc format** before you post it. I recommend you keep a copy of the document, along with a record of your submission, until the end of the semester. Without these two items, I cannot trace missing assignments.
  5. To post your assignment:
    - Click on the Assignments page
    - **Attach your work as a .doc WORD DOC** (not docx, not rtf, not pdf) and save a copy for yourself!
    - Submit it.

## GRADES

### Grade Breakdown

A 450-500 pts.	B 400-450 pts.	C 350-400 pts.	D 325-350 pts.	E 324 pts. and below
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### Turning in Your Work

All assignments are completed online.

**For Review Assignments: Type each question before each answer.**

**Discussion Board and Review Assignments**, should be submitted following these instructions:

1. Type your answer in a word processing program (Word, WordPerfect, etc.). Be sure to cite your sources, including your textbook (for citations from your textbook: the author's last name and page number is sufficient). For any external sources you choose to consult, you must include full citation in proper format (MLA, APA, Chicago).
2. Save your work in a local file that you can edit prior to the final submission.
3. Submit your entry via the website under the proper link (Discussion Board/Review Assignments), by copying and pasting your text into the textbox. I strongly recommend that you keep copies of all documents for the duration of the semester (this way if something gets lost it is not a big deal to re-send. In addition, please double check that you submitted your responses successfully).

### Checking Your Grades

You may check your grade and read comments under each specific assignment on the course website. *Be sure to check the Assignment Rubrics for guidelines and grade breakdowns.*

### Policy on Academic Integrity

**I have a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism in this class.**

The definition of "Plagiarism" below is copied from the following website and is included for your reference here.  
<http://www.monroec.edu/depts/library/credit.htm>

*In order to avoid plagiarism, your papers must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, paraphrased summaries, or borrowed ideas. You cannot use other people's work without citing it. This includes the work of your peers. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course without explicit, prior permission of instructor. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Student Code of Conduct for complete guidelines on academic honesty*

***EVEN IF YOU "FORGET" TO CITE A REFERENCE – INCLUDING YOUR TEXTBOOK --, IT IS STILL CONSIDERED TO BE PLAGIARISM.***

**I run periodic spot checks comparing student work with each others', with the work of students in other sections of this class (past and present), and with external sources. So don't do it. Don't even think about doing it, as the MINIMUM consequence is failure in the class, with a designation of Academic Dishonesty as the reason. You could also be expelled.**

**Weekly Reading Assignment Schedule (Viewing Schedule Listed inside Course Unit online)**

**PART I: Assigned Reading: Units 1-2: 1900-Early 1910s**

**Unit # 1: Introductions: Week 1 (10/16-10/19)**

1. "Introduction" by Julie Malnig (1-15)

**Unit # 2: Ballroom, Cakewalk, Animal Dances and Ragtime (Pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century-1910s): Week 2 (10/20-10/26)**

1. "The Civilizing of America's Ballrooms/The Revolutionary War to 1890" by Elizabeth Aldrich. (36-52)
2. "Just Like Being at the Zoo/Primitivity and Ragtime Dance" by Nadine George-Graves. (55-69).

**PART II: Assigned Reading: Units 3-4: 1920s- 1940s**

**Unit #3: Charleston, Flappers, and Jazz (1910s-1920s): Week 3 (10/27-11/2)**

1. "Apaches, Tangos, and Other Indecencies/Women, Dance, and New York Nightlife of the 1910's" by Julie Malnig. (72-86)
2. "A Thousand Raggy, Draggy Dances'/ Social Dance in Broadway Musical Comedy in the 1920's" by Barbara Cohen-Stratynier. (217-232)

**Unit # 4: Depression Era Dance Marathons, Swing: The Savoy & Lindy Hop (1920/30s-1940s): Week 4 (11/3-11/10)**

1. "Reality Dance/ American Dance Marathons" by Carol Martin. (93-107)
2. "Negotiating Compromise on a Burnished Wood Floor/ Social Dancing at the Savoy" by Karen Hubbard and Terry Monaghan. (126-142)

**PART III: Assigned Reading: Units 5-6: 1950s- 1970s**

**Unit # 5: Mambo (1950s): Week 5 (11/10-11/16)**

1. "Embodying Music/Disciplining Dance/ The Mambo Body in Havana and New York City" by David F. Garcia.
2. "From Mambo to Hip Hop"

**Unit # 6: (1950s-1960s) Rock 'n' Roll & Changing Technology: Radio to TV and Music Video: Week 6 (11/17-11/23)**

1. "Rocking Around the Clock/Teenage Dance Fads from 1955 to 1965" by Tim Wall. (182-195)
2. "From Busby Berkeley to Madonna: Music Video and Popular Dance" by Sherril Dodds (247-259)

**PART IV: Assigned Reading Units 7-8: 1980s- present**

**Unit # 7: Disco and House: Week 7 (11/25-11/30)**

1. "C'mon to My House: Underground House Dancing" by Sally Sommer (285-298)
2. "Beyond the Hustle: 1970s Social Dancing, Discotheque Culture, and the Emergence of the Contemporary Club Dance" by Tim Lawrence (199-212)

**Unit # 8: Hip Hop to Krump: Week 8 (12/1-12/6)**

1. "The Multiringed Cosmos of Krumping: Hip-Hop Dance at the Intersections of Battle, Media, and Spirit" by Christina Zanfanga (337-350).

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

**Course Schedule and Due Dates**

PART I: Units 1-2: 1900-Early 1910s

**Wednesday October 16:** Class begins.

**Wednesday October 16: DUE: Syllabus Quiz DUE by 11:59pm** Initial Post Discussion Board Responses Unit 1

**Thursday, October 17: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 1 and 2

**Friday, October 18: DUE:** Unit 1 Quiz

**Tuesday, October 22: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Responses Unit 2

**Wednesday, October 23: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 1

**Thursday, October 24: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 2

**Friday, October 25: DUE:** Unit 2 Quiz

**Sunday, October 27: DUE: PART I Written Review Assignment** covering Units 1 and 2.

PART II: Units 3-4: 1920s- 1940s

**Tuesday, October 29: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Response Unit 3

**Wednesday, October 30: DUE:** Follow-up Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 1

**Thursday, October 31: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 2

**Friday, November 1: DUE:** Unit 3 Quiz

**Tuesday, November 5: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Responses Unit 4

**Wednesday, November 6: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-up 1

**Thursday, November 7: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-up 2

**Friday, November 8: DUE:** Unit 4 Quiz

**Sunday, November 10: DUE: PART II Review Assignment** covering Units 3 and 4.

PART III: Units 5-6: 1950s- 1970s

**Tuesday, November 12: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Response Unit 5

**Wednesday, November 13: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 1

**Thursday, November 14: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 2

**Friday November 15: DUE:** Unit 5 Quiz

**Tuesday, November 19: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Responses Unit 6

**Wednesday, November 20: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-up 1

**Thursday, November 21: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-Up 2

**Friday, November 22: DUE:** Unit 6 Quiz (NOTE: This quiz will be open by 11/19 for you to take early if you so choose)

**Sunday, November 24: DUE: PART III Review Assignment** covering Units 5 and 6.

\*\*\*\*\* **PLEASE NOTE: EARLIER DUES DATES THIS WEEK- PLAN ACCORDINGLY** \*\*\*\*\*

PART IV: Units 7-8: 1980s- present

**Tuesday, November 26: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Response Unit 7

**Wednesday, November 27: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses **Follow-Up 1 AND 2**

**Thursday, November 28: DUE:** HAPPY DAY OFF! Thanksgiving Day

**Friday, November 29: DUE:** Unit 7 Quiz

**Tuesday, December 3: DUE:** Initial Discussion Board Responses Unit 8

**Wednesday, December 4: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-up 1

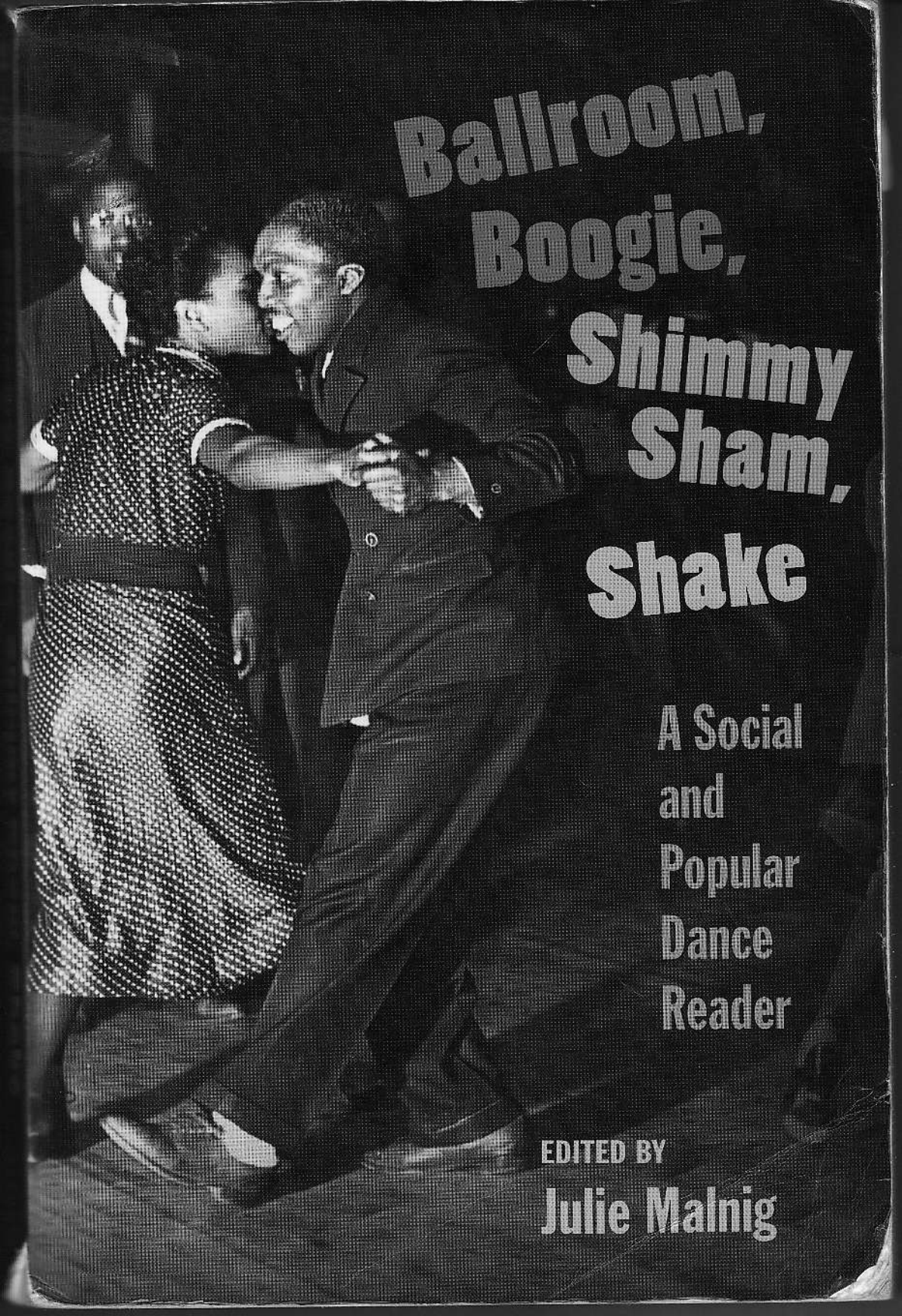
**Thursday, December 5: DUE:** Discussion Board Responses Follow-up 2

**Friday, December 6: Unit 8 Quiz AND PART IV Review Assignment** covering Units 7 and 8.

**Friday, December 6: Class ends.**

**Although Extra Credit is not offered, please note: I do this to take into consideration the arc of your work and improvement throughout the class.**

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**Ballroom,  
Boogie,  
Shimmy  
Sham,  
Shake**

**A Social  
and  
Popular  
Dance  
Reader**

**EDITED BY**

**Julie Malnig**

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# **Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake**

*A Social and Popular  
Dance Reader*

Edited by

*Julie Malnig*

University of Illinois Press  
Urbana and Chicago

2009

## Introduction

*Julie Malnig*

In the late 1970s, when the field of popular entertainment was struggling for legitimacy, noted performance scholar Brooks McNamara made a plea to historians to examine not only the "great moments" in theater history, but those less well-documented theatrical occasions, sometimes hidden in the recesses of culture where scholars had seldom tread. This traditional approach to studying the theatrical past, suggested McNamara, "leaves the student with the impression that a kind of mysterious hierarchy of performance exists, crowned by 'greatest achievements' which tower over a series of unrelated and vaguely defined 'minor forms' and crude folkish attempts at theatre."<sup>1</sup> This "tidy view" toward history, he noted, overlooked how "performance in a culture during a given period is certainly no less than the sum of all its parts."<sup>2</sup>

In many respects, McNamara's observations about the status of popular entertainments reflected a similar situation in the study of social, vernacular, and popular dance, considered a kind of poor relation within the scholarly hierarchy. Until fairly recently, the traditional periodization of dance studies neglected these forms, favoring instead the study of concert dance and well-known dancers and choreographers. Perhaps because dance, as scholars Ellen W. Goellner and Geraldine Shea Murphy point out, was for so long "viewed as unintellectual, intuitive, and uncritically expressive,"<sup>3</sup> the "greatest moments" approach was understandable as the field struggled to establish itself and legitimize its own history. Part of this omission, too, stemmed from the long-standing bias within the academy generally (as McNamara recognized), toward "high" versus "low" forms of entertainment. And to be fair, the lack of sustained attention to the study of social and popular dance forms reflected the fact that in the 1970s and early 1980s, much of this history had yet to be written.

Thankfully, though, this landscape is changing. The widespread efforts in the 1980s to expand the traditional literary, artistic, and historical canons carried over into dance studies, in which there has been much rethinking

of how we critique, conceptualize, and theorize about dance. Also, over the last ten to fifteen years we have seen a flourishing of writing on social, vernacular, and popular dance forms, the result of scholars who have been engaged in an ongoing process of excavation and analysis. In many cases, this has meant taking the time to steep ourselves in new, interdisciplinary inquiries to develop the tools necessary to understand and assess these forms within their larger cultural and social contexts.<sup>4</sup>

Although my 1987 dissertation on the history of American exhibition ballroom dance was viewed with skepticism by some as a kind of sideline curio within the dance and performance worlds, today many more doctoral students are producing, and are encouraged to produce, analytical studies on a wide range of social and popular dance-related topics from break dancing to raves.<sup>5</sup> Also, in the past decade several influential anthologies have emerged which, although not focused exclusively on social and popular dance, include significant essays on the subject, such as Helen Thomas's *Dance in the City*, Jane C. Desmond's *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage*, and Thomas F. DeFrantz's *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*.<sup>6</sup> Individual authors, too, have contributed several pioneering books spanning subjects from club culture, to punk rock, to competitive ballroom dance.<sup>7</sup>

Buoyed by the boom in critical dance scholarship and the new interest in cultural studies, what the majority of these works share is a commitment to expanding the borders of our investigations and exploring dance as integral to cultural practice. *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* intends to add to these ongoing inquiries. My aims in creating this Reader (the first full collection of social and popular dance essays) are to provide a platform for further research and to make possible more concerted study of the cultural significance of social and ballroom forms within the college dance curricula.

Because social dance covers such a large and sweeping historical and geographic terrain, one must invariably be selective in compiling an anthology of this sort. My main focus is on the secular tradition of American social dance performed by the public in a variety of social and recreational gatherings—ballrooms, cabarets, nightclubs, dance halls, discotheques, the street—from approximately the late eighteenth century through the early twenty-first century. The broad goals of the Reader are twofold: to explore various styles of social and popular dance developed as a result of the rich fusions of West African, African American, Euro-American, and Latin American forms of dance within the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean and

to analyze these dance forms within their wider social, political, cultural, and economic contexts. Although it is not possible, of course, to include all of the many stylistic variations of these dances, the collection nonetheless spotlights some particularly key dance forms and phenomena and considers the reasons for their cultural resonance and appeal.

The anthology is divided into four sections: "Historical Precedents," "Evolving Styles," "Theatricalizations of Social Dance Forms," and "The Contemporary Scene." Many of the issues and concerns central to one section, however, spill over into others. Therefore readers are urged to seek out connections between chapters, beyond their categorical groupings. The topical-chronological approach is not meant to suggest a neat or orderly progression, necessarily, from the Cakewalk to hip-hop, but rather to consider how multifaceted these dance forms are; how Old World and New World forms have collided, borrowed from, and added to one another in a dynamic and constantly evolving process of invention and change. The chapters themselves aim to merge close, physical description of the dances with contextual, cultural analysis. I asked authors to consider the "fabric" of the dances—Who performed them? How? In what contexts? And under what social and historical circumstances?—and to locate how those dances are embedded within the existing conventions and "codes" governing that culture's understandings of movement and the body.<sup>8</sup>

In recognizing social and popular dance both as an *experience of movement* and as "a form of life or as a way of being," in dance sociologist Andrew Ward's words,<sup>9</sup> these chapters adopt a wide range of strategies, many used in combination, that university students are now apt to encounter in the course of their studies in dance history and theory. These include genre and stylistic analysis, anthropological analysis, sociocultural analysis, social history, theories of popular culture and mass leisure, intertextual analysis, race and gender theory, transnational analysis, and ritual theory, among others. This diversity of approaches speaks, in part, to the increasing interdisciplinarity of dance studies and, in part, to the need for more sustained attention to social and popular dance topics in related disciplines.<sup>10</sup>

A particularly underexplored relationship has been that between *social dance and music*, both of which historically have been inextricably linked. Although the majority of contributors are dance historians, dance anthropologists, and performance studies scholars, several are scholars and writers from the areas of ethnomusicology and mass media studies. Far too often, dance scholars have de-emphasized the role of music, and musicologists (who have examined forms such as salsa, mambo, and hip-hop) have not

looked as closely as they might at the connections between those musical forms and how they are made possible by the rhythmic variations of the dances. I hope these chapters gesture toward bridging that gap.

### *A Few Words about Form and Terms*

The labels "social," "vernacular," and "popular" are used interchangeably and often inconsistently in the social dance literature. Without becoming overly prescriptive (our authors express best the ways that we may understand these distinctions), I do offer a few, brief thoughts about how I have conceptualized these terms for the sake of the collection and how the forms themselves share many similarities yet maintain important differences. Part of the difficulty in pinning down social and popular dance is that it is constantly in flux. New forms spring up; others disappear; and what may have been considered elitist in one generation, in the next may become "popular" or widely heralded.<sup>11</sup> Most of the social dances discussed in this volume are essentially vernacular in the sense that they spring from the lifeblood of communities and subcultures and are generally learned informally, through cultural and social networks. In describing the black vernacular tradition, which has been crucial to the story of American social dance, dance scholar Jacqui Malone sees it as "an evolving tradition and a vital process of cultural production."<sup>12</sup> She quotes Ralph Ellison, whose description of the vernacular reflects the mode of transmission characteristic of many of the dances referred to in these chapters. He refers to it "as a dynamic process in which the most refined styles from the past are continually merged with the play-it-by-eye-and-by-ear improvisations."<sup>13</sup> In the vernacular tradition, performers draw on and embellish existing forms of dance that, as dance ethnographer LeeEllen Friedland notes, generally grow out of a group's "shared knowledge of movement repertoire" emerging from its geography and social circumstance.<sup>14</sup>

In this volume, however, I prefer to use the term "social" dance primarily, in part to distinguish it from other forms of vernacular dance, such as folk dance, which tend to involve like-minded or homogeneous communities of dancers interested primarily in the preservation of heritage and group traditions. In social dancing, a sense of community often derives less from preexisting groups brought together by shared social and cultural interests than from a community created as a result of the dancing.<sup>15</sup> Whether in cabarets of the 1910s or house clubs of the 1990s, it is often the sheer physicality of the dancing itself, the energy of the surroundings, and the eclectic mix of individuals that bring diffuse groups of individuals together into a

collective, social bond. . . or commemorate special (harvesting rituals, wedding social dance represented and cultural values represent interests, for instance. . . Whether a society builds ent rules of behavior and bring their own individual of which color the usual

Popular dance can be accessible to and enjoyed dance, is generally semi- sidered "high" culture- ences. In the collection, to a specific process by become popularized in is their ability to spread national or worldwide- of what began as subcul porated into (some want how dances have becom consumption is a large- and popular dance in song instructions, radio- sound recordings, or M style, and popularity of present day.

Part of the defining into account the fluidi- cial dancers may begin there is no question th of sophistication, style many of the chapters exist on a continuum theatricalized styles. Th dance settings, in fact nature of the dances as and house styles in whi

collective, social bond. Unlike ceremonial or ritual dances designed to mark or commemorate special occasions or events or to produce specific outcomes (harvesting rituals, weddings ceremonies, and the like), the forms of modern social dance represented here are symbolic or *expressive* of a host of social and cultural values (regarding individual or group identity, sexuality, or class interests, for instance) *particular* to their time, place, and historical contexts. Whether a society ballroom dance, a disco dance, or a house party, different rules of behavior and propriety apply. To each of these venues, dancers bring their own individual backgrounds, tastes, and personal attitudes, all of which color the totality of the dance experience.

Popular dance can also be synonymous with social dance, in that it is accessible to and enjoyed by a large swath of the population and, like social dance, is generally seen as a counterpoint to what have typically been considered "high" culture or classical forms of dance aimed at privileged audiences. In the collection, though, popular dance is also identified according to a specific *process* by which local, vernacular, and social dance traditions become popularized in the public sphere.<sup>16</sup> A salient quality of social dances is their ability to spread beyond local contexts to become, in many cases, national or worldwide dance phenomena. Punk and hip-hop are examples of what began as subcultural dance forms only to become more fully incorporated into (some would argue appropriated by) mainstream culture. Thus, how dances have become commercialized, marketed, and sold for public consumption is a large part of the story of the relationship between social and popular dance in North American contexts. Whether through dance-song instructions, radio-dance lessons, etiquette manuals, daily newspapers, sound recordings, or MTV, media forces of many kinds have shaped the look, style, and popularity of social dance from the late nineteenth century to the present day.

Part of the defining process of social and popular dance must also take into account the fluidity in levels of expertise among dancers. Although social dancers may begin as amateurs (and many of course remain that way), there is no question that much social dancing may certainly rise to a level of sophistication, style, and skill often equal to that of professionals. What many of the chapters bear out is how both social and popular dance forms exist on a continuum from the purely recreational to more theatrical and theatricalized styles. The spatial configurations in many social and popular dance settings, in fact, enhance the performative and often competitive nature of the dances as in the three-quarter circle (or cipher) in break dance and house styles in which dancers take off on flights of imaginative improvi-

sation before their peers, or designated corners of ballrooms and clubs (such as the northeast corner of the Savoy Ballroom), designed to showcase the talents of elite dancers. In these environments, participants become spectators and vice versa, as dancers continually shift "from viewer to doer," as dance scholar Linda Tomko has noted, in an active presentation of self.<sup>17</sup>

### *Chapters and Issues*

In her 1991 essay, "Dance Narratives and Fantasies of Achievement," dance theorist and sociologist Angela McRobbie urged scholars and writers to begin to consider dance "as a social activity, a participative form enjoyed by people in leisure, a sexual ritual, a form of self-expression, a kind of exercise and a way of speaking through the body."<sup>18</sup> Of course, of all forms of dance, whether recreational or staged, performance dance may be viewed from these sociological perspectives; social dance, in particular, though, cries out for such analysis as it is so rooted in the materiality of everyday life. Our authors, I believe, take up McRobbie's challenge and address the myriad ways that social and popular dance reflects and absorbs daily life as well as shapes, informs, and influences social patterns and behaviors. Because a subject such as social and popular dance is by definition concerned with questions of "sociality," it stands to reason that these chapters touch on a host of social issues and cultural concerns.

Race and racial issues, for one, figure prominently in this collection. To talk about American social, vernacular, and popular forms means discussing the prominence of African and African American forms and their transformative influence on American social dance. As dance theorist Brenda Dixon Gottschild has said of what she calls the "Africanist" presence in dance, "Like electricity through the wires, we draw from it all the time but few of us are aware of its source."<sup>19</sup> A major characteristic of social and popular dance is that it is constantly changing, morphing, and evolving as it absorbs different dance rhythms and different cultural traditions. As one of the anthology's authors, Yvonne Daniel, notes of the trajectory of popular dance generally, "It is always borrowing, returning, imitating, shifting, reversing, inverting, improvising, and in the process shaping and polishing yet another named creation of the current day." Often, however, those creations have gone unnamed, their racial roots ignored or unaccounted for. Several authors in the collection bring to the historical record traditions not previously fully acknowledged and uncover the rich cross-fertilizations between black and white, and black and Latin, inventions that have created some of our most



popular social dances. Others theorize that these historical erasures occur when black-derived dances enter the white marketplace, where their origins become obscured and the price of popularity often means dilution of the form.

In "Our National Poetry: The Afro-Chesapeake Inventions of American Dance," which opens this collection, Jurretta Jordan Heckscher notes that "if we are to begin to understand American vernacular dance and movement, we must come to terms with its Africanity." Heckscher examines Chesapeake-area dance of the colonial era, which not only solidified a powerful and vibrant African American dance tradition but also produced some of the richest black and white cultural exchanges that would come to influence the trajectory of American social dance. Drawing on approaches from anthropology and American studies, Heckscher uses the development of the Virginia jig to trace a three-step cultural process of creolization that ultimately conjoined African and European movement systems.

In "Louisiana Gumbo: Retention, Creolization, and Innovation in Contemporary Cajun and Zydeco Dance," May Gwin Waggoner also traces the confluence of traditions, in this case of the Afro-Creoles, Anglophone African Americans, and French and Anglo-Acadians. In her stylistic and cultural analysis of Louisiana's popular dances, Waggoner points to the persistence of these groups' dance and musical traditions despite slavery, segregation, and language discrimination. Critic and novelist Wole Soyinka, writing about the resilience of West African drama in his 1982 essay, has described how cultural conditions may demand that certain forms become transformed to preserve their threatened status.<sup>20</sup> So, too, with the Cajun and Creole traditions in which, as Waggoner explains, "innovation" secured cultural survival, and "the dances were modified as different ethnic groups sought a common denominator on the dance floor."

In her chapter "Just Like Being at the Zoo': Primitivity and Ragtime Dance" (whose title refers to a quote by African American dance chronicler Mura Dehn), Nadine George-Graves traces the "physical vocabulary" of Southern black dances of the nineteenth century and their impact on Northern ragtime dance. At the same time, she draws on critical race theory to explore the systematic exclusion of these dances when transferred to white venues and the complex ways in which ragtime dance's association with the "primitive" constrained a fuller appreciation of those dances—even to the present day. In "Negotiating Compromise on a Burnished Wood Floor: Social Dancing at the Savoy," Karen Hubbard and Terry Monaghan explore the Lindy Hop as "a major reordering of almost the entire African American social dance experi-

ence." Their cultural history reconsiders traditional accounts of the famed Harlem dance club to explore how the Savoy was not only an exalted showcase for highly celebrated bands and dancers but also a venue for "the mass social dance aspirations of the predominantly black local community."

Latin American influences on North American social dance have been equally profound; in "Rumba Then and Now: *Quindembo*," Yvonne Daniel provides us with an evocative rendering of the dance from its roots in nineteenth-century Cuba through its sensational rise in the United States in the 1950s. *Quindembo* means "mixture," and indeed rumba was never just *one* dance, but a complex mixture of dance styles and fads (along with singing, feasting, and music making). Daniel traces the rumba in all its complexity and demonstrates what was lost and gained as it migrated from Cuba to North America. Like Daniel, David F. García employs race and class perspectives as well as a transnational approach in "Embodying Music/Disciplining Dance: The Mambo Body in Havana and New York City." Here he compares how the commercialization of mambo in both cities partook of racialized stereotypes that appealed to white, primal fantasies and illustrates how at least one highly influential Palladium team, Cuban Pete and Millie Donay (a Puerto Rican and an Italian American), broke free of these constraints and helped restructure "sexual comportment and interracial relations."

Although social and popular dance incorporates and reinforces social values, it may also transcend and defy them, depending on the historical, cultural, and political circumstances of the given time. Rock-'n'-roll dance, for instance, represents a curious instance of both acquiescence to and flaunting of social norms. In "Rocking Around the Clock: Teenage Dance Fads from 1955 to 1965," Tim Wall explores white youth's fascination with black-derived rhythm-and-blues music and how one's competence in the dances ensured peer acceptance. Yet at the same time, the dancers' adoption of "stylized movement imbued with the insolence and understated swagger of youth," enabled them to take a stance against the social decorum associated with previous eras of dance.

In "Beyond the Hustle: 1970s Social Dancing, Discotheque Culture, and the Emergence of the Contemporary Club Dancer," Tim Lawrence discusses how social dancing of this era, with its sustained, propulsive beats and amplified sound, was an often transcendent means of asserting individual (and group) identity. As he notes, "Riding on the back of gay liberation, feminism, and civil rights, the core dancers of the disco era were also engaging in the development of new social forms and cultural expression, and the floor provided them with a relatively safe space in which they could work out their concerns and articulate their emotions and desires."

In "Dancing Latin/Latin Dancing: Salsa and DanceSport," Juliet McMains highlights another facet of group identity in competitive ballroom dance, a form that straddles both social and theatrical dance styles. Here McMains examines the ways that Latin dance is practiced in two different theatrical and cultural arenas: semiprofessional, theatricalized DanceSport competitions and salsa club dancing (the studio versus the street). What is "at stake," McMains notes, are two versions of Latin dance, "as predetermined choreography versus improvisational movement." One represents the professionalization of Latin American social dance, the other a concept of pan-Latino identity. McMains attempts to sort out each group's competing claims of "authenticity."

Not to be overlooked in social dance's ability to create and shape identity is the notion of *pleasure* experienced in the act of dancing alongside other moving bodies. Writing about the physical and psychic effects of popular music in *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture*, critic Iain Chambers explains how popular dancing may express the simple pleasures of "letting off steam," "a well-earned break," [and] "enjoying oneself," yet those same pleasures may elicit moments of self-realization.<sup>21</sup> Sally R. Sommer, in "C'mon to My House': Underground House Dancing," writes of the essentialness of the "vibe" in house dance, a popular form of club dance (and an offshoot of disco) performed to propulsive, nonstop music.<sup>22</sup> *The vibe*, she notes, "is an active communal force, a feeling, a rhythm created by the mix of dancers, the balance of loud music, the effects of darkness and light and physical/psychical energy." Invoking anthropologist Victor Turner, Sommer describes how the combination of "hard" dancing, sonic energy, and the repetitive, incantatory-like song lyrics of house dance, may induce a transformative spirit of *communitas* or grace.

Social and popular dance is typically associated with leisure and recreation—what people do in their off time. As the field of leisure studies itself has grown, though, scholars are now exploring popular pastimes that occur apart from the world of work not merely as diversionary activities but as spaces for rejuvenation, testing of behaviors, and assertions of identity outside the confines of the ordered, everyday world. In "The Multiringed Cosmos of Krumping: Hip-Hop Dance at the Intersections of Battle, Media, and Spirit," Christina Zanfagna also invokes Turner and reformulates his concept of "liminality" to analyze how krumping—a twenty-first-century incarnation of break dancing—embodies both competitive and spiritual dimensions that manifest in the circle or "ring" (harkening back to the African American ring shout). Zanfagna describes krumping as "a combination of street fighting, moshing, sanctified church spirit possession, and aerobic striptease," a type of "serious play" in which dancers may confront anger, pain, and sadness.

The dance marathons of the 1920s and 1930s were surely another type of "serious play" that tapped the yearnings and fears of Depression-era Americans. Here, fox trots, waltzes, and the Charleston, among other dances, became contests of fortitude for primarily working-class Americans. As Carol Martin illustrates in "Reality Dance: American Dance Marathons," these spectacles, which blurred the lines between reality and fiction, presented the "struggle to survive" as an animating narrative to help spectators make sense of deprivation and loss. Here, leisure, as Martin notes, "became an escape, an expanse of time no longer related to respite from labor, but respite from lack of labor."

If social and popular dance forms are indeed a way of "speaking through the body," then it is not surprising that attitudes about morality, sexuality, and gender loom large in these discussions. Several chapters also illustrate how these concerns intersect with those of class. In "The Civilizing of America's Ballrooms: The Revolutionary War to 1890," Elizabeth Aldrich's historical and cultural analysis of the experience of immigrant and middle-class colonial settlers, social dancing and its attendant rituals of etiquette and proper decorum were a means of gaining entry into a new society. Aldrich charts the evolution from courtly couple dances to the egalitarian group-oriented cotillions, reels, and English country dances and "the struggle of the middle class as it established a code of manners for the ceremonious aspects of daily life, including evenings dedicated to dance."

In "Apaches, Tangos, and Other Indecencies: Women, Dance, and New York Nightlife of the 1910s," I explore the ways that social dancing of the 1910s, an era of heightened attention to the female body, can be read as a means of engaging working- and middle-class women with contemporary ideas about equality, sexuality, and women's identity. At the same time, I consider the moral and religious injunctions against the dances (a fact that has plagued social dance throughout its history) and how women of both classes performed "in dialogue" with these prohibitions and used popular ragtime dances as a means of testing new modes of heterosexual courtship and personal expressions of self. Both Elizabeth Aldrich and I consider the important ways that social and popular dance forms have served a didactic function within society. The courtesy literature of the nineteenth century and the dance instructional manuals of the 1910s, for instance, helped impart what were considered requisite social skills and appropriate deportment that might be attained through dance.

Lisa Doolittle considers how social dance is expressive of gender, class, and geography in her ethnographically based "The Trianon and On: Read-

ing Mass Social Dancing in the 1930s and 1940s in Alberta, Canada." In this New Historicist reading, Doolittle brings to light the recollections of former dancers, now octogenarians, to reveal how social dancing in western Canada during the World War II years became "a crucial territory for staging of choreographies of community cultural values." Doolittle analyzes how mass migration from the provinces to the cities, sudden encounters between regional groups, and accompanying qualms about what constituted acceptable dance behavior (especially for women) all accounted for the emergence of specific dance styles and practices. Doolittle, too, offers important insights into the challenges of researching social dance, an elusive, often evanescent form too often ignored in the documentary records.

An exploration of social and popular dance would not be complete without some discussion of its symbiotic relationship with more formal staged dances. From ballet to Broadway, social and vernacular forms have long served as deep reservoirs of inspiration for directors and choreographers. As dance critic Marcia B. Siegel has observed in *The Shapes of Change: Images of American Dance*, "This constant stream of vernacular and popular material flowing into our art dance, sometimes by design and sometimes inadvertently, is one of the major sources of the creativity of the American dance."<sup>23</sup> Vernacular and theatrical stage forms have continually floated back and forth, feeding and informing one another, often giving rise to yet new forms. Social dances get picked up and transformed as staged dances; those staged dances, in turn, circulate back into social realms in yet other modified forms. It is a kind of endless loop of creativity in which steps and styles are continually recycled, recombined, and reborn. The chapters in section III, "Theatricalizations of Social Dance Forms," explore social and vernacular dances as they have developed in four distinct theatrical arenas: Broadway musical theater of the 1910s and 1920s, nightclub entertainment of the 1930s and 1940s, contemporary music video, and the modern-dance concert stage. In "'A Thousand Raggy, Draggy Dances': Social Dance in Broadway Musical Comedy in the 1920s," Barbara Cohen-Stratynner looks at the intricate ways that the Charleston and Black Bottom were transformed from their black vernacular roots into stylized stage dances. She explores how the design and placement of these dances underscored their primarily middle-class audience's preoccupations with a new consumer culture, women's entry in the work world, and new patterns of courtship and marriage. Knowledge of popular social dances of the day, learned through musical shows, helped people define their place in society. As Stratynner notes, "In 1920s New York, you were what you danced."

In "From Bharata Natyam to Bop: Jack Cole's 'Modern' Jazz Dance," Constance Valis Hill traces the work of legendary jazz choreographer Jack Cole and one of his most notable dance numbers, "Sing, Sing, Sing," performed to Benny Goodman's famed composition. "More than a step," Valis Hill writes, "the jitterbug was a style, a state of mind: a violent, even frenzied athleticism." In her detailed choreographic analysis, Valis Hill describes how Cole captured the essential jitterbug in an eclectic style that combined steps from African American-based vernacular forms, East Indian dance, and the rhythms of bebop. Cole's work is a testament to the influence of social dance forms in helping forge new theatrical traditions—in this case modern jazz dance—that have been influential to this day.

Music television video (MTV), popular since the 1980s, has been rife with variations on forms of social and vernacular dance from moshing to voguing to krumping. Sherril Dodds, in "From Busby Berkeley to Madonna: Music Video and Popular Dance," spotlights some of the earliest examples of filmed dance in the work of legendary choreographers Busby Berkeley and Fred Astaire and discusses how many of these screen-dance traditions are still alive in the music videos of Madonna, Michael Jackson, and others. Dodds also delves into the complicated interplay between music video's role as a promotional tool for recording artists and a breeding ground for new dance styles. She notes that music video functions in "a sophisticated circuit of reinvention." Although it feeds off existing social dance traditions, and in many respects exploits them, it also "serves as a pedagogical tool that circulates and distributes dance styles that audience are keen to adopt and develop."

As several chapters illustrate, hip-hop and break-dancing styles have become commercialized in a variety of popular media, including music, film, and television advertisements. Halifu Osumare turns our sights to the ways these forms have become theatricalized on the concert stage. In "The Dance Archaeology of Rennie Harris: Hip-Hop or Postmodern?" she reveals how modern dance choreographer Rennie Harris, whose work combines elements of the postmodern dance aesthetic with the African American vernacular, has shattered the distinction between "high" and "low" art dance forms. Osumare, who interviewed Harris for this chapter, concludes that he is creating a new kind of so-called theatrical ritualization, "transform[ing] a dance form meant as virtuosic spectacle into an often delicate and subtle, pared down, concert-oriented movement that explores the human condition."

The range of material in social dance, both historical and contemporary, is far-reaching and the variety of styles great. Of the chapters included

here, my hope is that they may be read in multiple ways: chronologically, methodologically, stylistically, and culturally. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, instructors in fields other than dance may turn to the collection to explore how dance is a crucial element in understanding the art and culture of any given era. A student writing about the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald or Edith Wharton, for instance, might fill in her knowledge and understanding of the Jazz Age and the vital role that dance and music played in the cultural life of that time; likewise, a student studying etiquette in the Gilded Age might profit from the discussions on nineteenth-century dance and social mores. Readers are also urged to follow up on the rich bibliographic sources as guides to inform their inquiries. Still to be explored are other historical forms of social dance, non-U.S. forms, and contemporary cross-cultural variations of social, vernacular, and popular forms that have taken root globally. I hope this volume, which has begun to illuminate one corner of the social and popular dance world, will stimulate our collective imaginations and spur further investigations into this perpetually fascinating, ever culturally rich, and truly generative art form and social practice.

### Notes

1. Brooks McNamara, "The Invisible Theatre: The Folk and Festival Tradition in America," in *Theatre Byways: Essays in Honor of Claude L. Shaver*, ed. C. J. Stevens and Joseph Aurbach (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1978), 7.
2. Ibid.
3. See Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, eds., *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 3.
4. See Sally Banes, "Criticism as Ethnography," in *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 16–24. Banes discusses her challenges as a young critic covering the new hip-hop dance scene. To fully understand the dance form, like an anthropologist, she took to the South Bronx to immerse herself in hip-hop culture.
5. Some of these include Danielle Robinson, "Race in Motion: Reconstructing the Practice, Profession, and Politics of Social Dancing, New York City, 1900–1930" (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 2004); Carrie Stern, "Shall We Dance?: The Participant as Performer/Spectator in Ballroom Dancing" (PhD diss., New York University, 1998); as well as books originally written as dissertations, among them Juliet McMains, *Glamour Addiction: Inside the American Ballroom Dance Industry* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006); and Fiona Buckland, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).
6. See Helen Thomas, ed., *Dance in the City* (St. Martin's Press, 1997); Jane C. Desmond, ed., *Dancing Desires* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); and Thomas F. DeFrantz, ed., *Dancing Many Drums* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002). Other important and influential anthologies containing essays on social and popular dance subjects include Lisa Doolittle and Anne Flynn's *Dancing Bodies and Living History: New Writings about Dance and Culture* (Banff, Alberta: Banff Centre Press, 2000);

Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright's *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); and Maureen Needham's *I See America Dancing: Selected Readings, 1685–Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

7. Some of these include Tricia Henry Young, *Break All Rules: Punk Rock and the Making of a Style* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989); Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Yvonne Daniel, *Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Julie Taylor, *Paper Tangos* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); and Linda Tomko, *Dancing Class: Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Divides in American Dance, 1890–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). See also McMains, *Glamour Addiction*, and Buckland, *Impossible Dance*.

8. Dance scholar Jane Desmond notes that "every dance exists in a complex network of relationships to other dances and other nondance ways of using the body. . . . Its meaning is situated both in the context of other socially prescribed and socially meaningful ways of moving and in the context of the history of dance forms in specific societies." See Jane Desmond, "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane Desmond (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 31. Desmond's groundbreaking anthology makes a cogent case for the inherent relationship between dance and cultural studies.

9. Andrew Ward, "Dancing around Meaning (and the Meaning around Dance)," in Helen Thomas, *Dance in the City*, 18.

10. Several scholars have discussed the status of dance studies and its development over the past twenty to thirty years. Although some argue that the field must adopt its own disciplinary methods and frameworks, others maintain that interdisciplinary approaches not only enhance the field but ensure its perceived legitimacy within the academy. On the other hand, Jane Desmond points out how fields such as cultural studies have been slow to incorporate the study of dance in their discussions of various forms of cultural expression. It could be argued, then, that dance scholars' insistence on interdisciplinary approaches might help make a case for the further inclusion of dance in these and other fields. See Jane Desmond, "Embodying Difference," in *Meaning in Motion*, 29–31. For further illumination of some of these debates, see Gay Morris's introduction in her anthology *Moving Words: Re-Writing Dance* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2–12; and Goellner and Murphy, "Introduction: Movement Movements," in *Bodies of the Text*, 1–18.

11. For another perspective on the distinctions between social, vernacular, and popular dance traditions, see Barbara Cohen-Stratyner, "Dialogues: Issues in Social and Vernacular Dance," in "Social and Popular Dance," special issue, *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 121–24.

12. Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 2.

13. *Ibid.*

14. LeeEllen Friedland, "Disco: Afro-American Vernacular Performance," *Dance Research Journal* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 33.

15. For a distinction between folk and popular dance forms, see LeeEllen Friedland, "Dance: Popular and Folk Dance," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, chief ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987). She notes, "Folk dance was believed to be a pure expression of national identity, whereas popular dance was a commodity in the mar-



marketplace of a heterogeneous, multicultural society" (215). For a discussion of some of the distinctions between folk and vernacular dance, see Susan Spalding, *Communities in Motion: Dance, Community, and Tradition in America's Southeast and Beyond* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 2.

16. Media theorist Sarah Thornton also discusses how those cultural forms and practices that become popular do so also as a result of issues of taste; they may become "approved" or "preferred" by segments of society. See Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 164.

17. Tomko, *Dancing Class*, 27. For more on the performer-audience relationship in ballroom dance, see Stern, "Shall We Dance," 16-17, 74-5.

18. Angela McRobbie, "Dance Narratives and Fantasies of Achievement," in *Meaning in Motion*, 211.

19. Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), 23.

20. Wole Soyinka, "Theatre in African Traditional Cultures: Survival Patterns," in *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley and Noel Witts (London: Routledge, 1996), 342. Previously published in *Art, Dialogue and Outrage*, ed. B. Jeyifo (London: Methuen, 1982).

21. Iain Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 17.

22. In their respective chapters, Sally R. Sommer and Tim Lawrence maintain slightly different slants on the definition and trajectory of house dance. Please see their notes for further clarification of these distinctions.

23. Marcia B. Siegel, *The Shapes of Change: Images of American Dance* (New York: Avon, 1979), 3.

IN BALLROOM, BOOGIE, SHIMMY SHAM,  
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**19** DANCE READER

**The Multiringed  
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**Hip-Hop Dance  
at the Intersections  
of Battle, Media,  
and Spirit**

(337-353)

*Christina Zanfagna*

The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. At certain times on certain days, men and women come together at a given place and then, under the solemn eyes of the tribe, fling themselves into a seemingly unorganized pantomime which is in reality extremely systematic in which by various means—shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing the whole body backwards—may be deciphered as in an open book the huge effort of community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself, to explain itself. There are no limits—inside the circle.

—Frantz Fanon<sup>1</sup>

*Expanding the Circle*

The circle of the dance that Fanon speaks of can be found not only in African contexts but also in powwow dances, the ring shout of slave times, the Italian tarantella, the Brazilian *samba de roda*, and other dances spanning the

circle

globe. The circle of the dance is mobile and can form in multiple situations and environments. Ronald Radano, writing about the recurring figure of the circle in African American music scholarship, notes that the "tenacity of this historical icon," aside from its cross-cultural and even universal significance, reflects the desires of some scholars and artists to reproduce notions of a coherent Africanist black America.<sup>2</sup> The challenge "is to tell the story of the circle so as to resist claims of continuity and uncomplicated racial wholeness while at the same time recognizing socially generated coherences that emerge within the logic of race."<sup>3</sup> The importance of the circle in locating meaning in black expressive forms does not lie solely in its existence as a thing—a black thing or direct African offspring—but rather as a discourse. To dance in or into a circle is to engage in a performative and discursive process through which people transform chaos into order. It is an opportunity for discussion and interaction between seemingly disparate arenas of life. In this chapter, I will use the metaphor of the circle to link fighting and dancing, the worldly and the otherworldly, the underground and the mainstream, spirituality and commercialism. Radano continues, "The circle coheres as it is born out of incoherence."<sup>4</sup> The circle is a way for hip-hop dancers to assert their wholeness even as the edges of their lives may seem frayed and unbounded—a way to build a world within a world.

Furthermore, the challenge is to tell the story of the circle as an expanded tale of multiple and overlapping circles. After outlining the similarities between circles of battle and circles of dance in hip-hop culture, I will give a brief history of krumping and explain how it is practiced in two different ringlike contexts: one competitive, one spiritual. For the circle can also be talked about as a ring. The ring is an arena of physical combat, competition, and artistry. It is also place of spirit(s), of God, of holy dance and religious trance. At early religious gatherings of enslaved Africans in brush harbors—often referred to as the "invisible church"—the ring shout was performed. Among the trees, they shuffled counterclockwise in a circle, swaying, clapping, stomping, and tapping their heels but never crossing their feet so as not to confuse the sacred ritual with social dancing. Accompanied by chant, this rhythmic walk moved increasingly faster until "shouters" (dancers) worked themselves into a quivering, trembling trance.<sup>5</sup> The hip-hop dance styles of clowning and krumping embody both the competitive and spiritual aspects of the ring, as manifested in the boxing ring and the ring shout. In an era of holy wars, jihads, genocide, and the war on terror, violence and religion often go hand in hand. But the more meaningful linkages between battle and spirit can be seen in the daily artistic practices of individuals. Competition

and spiritual practice involve the interactive, embodied, dialectical pursuit of something greater, inspirational, and lasting.

Focusing on adolescent hip-hop dancers from Los Angeles, California, I will remodel Victor Turner's concept of "liminality" into a multidimensional condition of being in order to examine krumping as a phenomenon and experience within and in between multiple spheres of society.<sup>6</sup> Turner provides a singular vision of liminality that must be opened up in order to understand the way krumping is experienced in the public space of commercial culture. He states, "If our basic model of society is that of a 'structure of positions,' we must regard the period of margin or 'liminality' as an interstructural situation."<sup>7</sup> Krumping, in the midst of this "structure of positions" or at the center of many related spheres, creates a paradoxical situation of being between and within many interrelated, multidimensional structures of society. Reshaping Turner's argument, young hip-hop dancers occupy states of liminality while also being incorporated into the multiple spaces of the mainstream, the market commodity, and the commercial music industry. (And yet, many of them do not enjoy the material benefits of the mainstream.) There is not just one "interstructural situation"; rather, there are myriad cross-sections in which one experiences the state of being "in-between."

Thus, within liminality, there are many circles; there is a fluidity of identity in which one can cross normally "policed" boundaries of urban space and commercial culture. Krumping, in the varying spatial contexts of competitive battle, spiritual practice, and commercial media—in overlapping and concentric circles of personhood, community, culture, and society—takes on multiple meanings. My analysis also reflects the circular geometry of black vernacular dance, specifically krumping, as I use a multilens approach. I will explore the multiringed cosmos of krumping through not only the voices of krump dancers but also the sometimes oppositional voices of people from the varied contexts with which krumping intersects (i.e., scholars, journalists, filmmakers).

### *Dancing the Fight, Fighting through Dance*

Break dancing, one of the four elements of hip-hop along with emceeing, DJing, and graffiti, developed in the 1970s in the Bronx and Los Angeles. Dance critic Sally Banes describes the urban vernacular dance as a "fusion of sports, dancing and fighting" that combines Latino and West Indian influences and aspects of the electric boogie, uprocking, and aerial gymnastics.<sup>8</sup> Break dancing busted into the spotlight in movies like *Wild Style* and

cameos on Burger King commercials. Glorified (and sometimes patronized) as an alternative to gang activities, the media painted break dancing as a bona fide ghetto savior—part dance, part sport, part pantomimic drama—to keep brown and black youth away from crime, violence, and other related evils. To the uninitiated, especially cops, it looked like street fighting. Legend has it, New York City policemen were about to arrest a group of young guys for violent behavior until they explained they were “just dancing” and proceeded to demonstrate each dance move to the cops. Young people developed artistic means to claim territories, negotiate boundaries over territories, and fight for their status among and against rival clans, each with its own name and color. Paul Spencer’s description of Trobriand dance as an “idiom of confrontation” and “equivalent to fighting” offers insight into the link between dance and dispute: “To the extent that such a display led to the dispersal of a weaker group, direct encounters were avoided.”<sup>9</sup> The “display occurs at the most sensitive point,” the boundary between territories, at the crossroads of life and death, and in moments of spiritual insecurity.<sup>10</sup>

The thing is, there is a blurry line between dancing and fighting (e.g., capoeira, bullfighting, Trobriand warrior dances, and even *West Side Story*) as there is between artistic innovation and battle. There are also significant similarities between hip-hop dancing and boxing. They are both intimate arts, requiring the close proximity of human bodies, often flesh to flesh, often involving sweat. They are based around moves, moves that are responded to by those present. Toasting and boasting, taunting and flaunting play prominent roles in the ritual. Think Mohammed Ali with his rhymed, rhythmic rants. Each man and woman has his or her own unique style and, if they are good, a few tricks up the sleeve. And finally, both boxing and hip-hop dancing take place in a spatial complex known as “the ring.” Although hip-hop dancers may not refer to their arena of dance as the ring, most break dancing battles or freestyle sessions are organized in a circular formation, in which dancers move along the outside edge of the ring while other dancers break in and out of the center.<sup>11</sup>

### *Hip-Hop Dance in South Central, Los Angeles*

In the wake of the Rodney King riots of 1992, Thomas Johnson—founder and father of clown dancing—found himself behind bars and looking for a way to make a positive change in his community in South Central. After a religious epiphany while in prison, he started performing hip-hop dance at little kids’ birthday parties donned in a clown suit, a rainbow-colored Afro,

and clown face. He created the first clown dance troupe, which would just be a street dance troupe and stripper dance troupe of black street dance and break dance and the Rodney King riots of clown dancing. Bozo having a clown neighborhood with a clown like clown dance themselves.



Figure 1  
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and clown face paint. Blasting hip-hop beats through his boom box, he created the first moves of what he then called "clown dancing." Eventually, it would just be called "clowning," a highly versatile and varied form of black street dance that combines local styles such as G dance or gangsta boogie and stripper dancing, referring to the sexual and dynamic performance style of black strippers. It also fuses elements of popping and locking, two older forms of competitive, illusory hip-hop street dance associated with funk dance and break dancing, and Jamaican dance hall moves such as the butterfly and the rodeo.<sup>12</sup> The bobbling bodies, contracting chests, and liquid limbs of clown dancers led Shaheem Reid of MTV News to write, "If you look like Bozo having spasms, you're doing it right."<sup>13</sup> Under the name Tommy the Clown, Johnson began to gain a sizable following of youth around the neighborhood who were dubbed the Hip-Hop Clowns. Dancers paint their faces like clowns in an act of masking that allows them the invisibility to express themselves without self-consciousness and restraint (figure 19.1).



Figure 19.1: Tommy the Clown and the Hip-Hop Clowns, Los Angeles, February 25, 2005. Photo permission by [www.tommythec clown.com](http://www.tommythec clown.com).

As one of the krumpers, Dragon, elucidates in the acclaimed documentary *Rize*, by filmmaker David LaChapelle, "If you know there's a mask covering your face, you feel that it's just you by yourself and that your identity is hidden . . . and you can dance as freely as you want."<sup>14</sup> Tommy the Clown describes his painted face as a "weapon."<sup>15</sup> Masks also involve magic; dance theorist Lois Ellfeldt has remarked: "The wearer of the mask takes on supernatural or sacred powers."<sup>16</sup> The painted clown mask speaks to the element of play and goofiness in clowning. (Goofy is one of the funny and energetic styles pioneered by the dancer Goofy himself.) Play is about doubleness; play masks the seriousness and the sacredness behind the playfulness. It is both tragic and comic, improvisational and orderly, everywhere and nowhere.<sup>17</sup> It opens up a space of reversals in which violence becomes spiritual, art becomes battle, oppression transforms into liberation (and vice versa). Says Richard Schechner, "Play is the improvisational imposition of order, a way of making order out of disorder."<sup>18</sup> The clown, like the jester and harlequin, is an outsider engaged in the tragicomic play of life and death.

### From Clowning to Krumping

It was not long before the circus clown element soon expanded into a harder, more aggressive and personal solo style called krumping, a style that allowed dancers to confront and work through the more difficult emotions of pain and anger.<sup>19</sup> The play became more serious—that is, it became serious play—and the face paint became more "tribal" and warrior-like as South Central, particularly Watts and Compton, again started to resemble the police state atmosphere of the 1990s. Former New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton was appointed chief of the Los Angeles Police Department in October 2002 and began employing the same police tactics as he did under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. He targeted petty crime, graffiti, and minor violations such as loud radios and disorderly conduct. It is clear to see how African American youth engaged in the often-misunderstood expressive behaviors of hip-hop culture would be under attack.

Krumping developed and flourished within this atmosphere of constraint, surveillance, and brutality. With little or no funding for arts programs, after-school activities, and opportunities to express themselves, South Central youth took it upon themselves to create a proactive (not just reactive) outlet through hip-hop dance. The krumper Dragon elucidates: "We don't have after-school programs. . . . In the inner city we're all thought to be sports players. . . . Everybody does not play basketball and everybody does not play

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football. Is there something else for us to do? So a group of us got together and invented this." The dance movements reflect this type of physical release of pent-up emotion and aggression, a hyperkinetic "ghetto ballet" danced by both males and females that looks like a combination of street fighting, moshing,<sup>20</sup> sanctified church spirit possession, and aerobic striptease. It is volatile and warrior-like, spastic and quaking, an ecstatic and cathartic dance that involves the vigorous bending of the spine and the thrusting/popping of the chest. LaChapelle makes overt connections between krumping and traditional African dance as well.<sup>21</sup> In line with Los Angeles gangsta ethics and aesthetics, the style is hard and intense. The moves are strong and masculine and the speed of delivery mind-blowing.<sup>22</sup> One journalist describes the movements as "rapidly flailing appendages."<sup>23</sup> Krumping is danced to hardcore, beat-heavy hip-hop tracks, sometimes with no vocals. With preaching, as with rapping or "spitting," sometimes it is not what one does but how one does it. Style is a means to substance and pleasure, a way to engage the physical, emotional, and the spiritual.<sup>24</sup>

Similar to the b-boy and b-girl break dancing crews, krump dancers form structured and organized crews or families, a tight-knit group of individuals whose loyalties and commitment extend beyond the circle of the dance. These rings or bands of krump brothers and sisters can provide the support and stability many of the dancers do not receive from their own families at home. Each family is organized around a mentor, lead krump dancer or king, who is often referred to as a "Big Homey" and trains, teaches, and counsels "Lil' Homies" in both dance and life. Most of the initial families comprised African American youth, but soon Asian American crews such as Filipino Rice Track formed, and dancers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds began krumping as well.<sup>25</sup>

### Krumping on the Streets: Spirit in the Ring of Dance

Dragon explains, "There is a spirit in the midst of krump-ness. There is a spirit there . . . most people think, they're just a bunch of rowdy, ghetto, heathen thugs. No, what we are is oppressed." Whereas the religious imagery of the slave spirituals masked the underlying call to protest, the sacred has been the "hidden transcript" beneath the rebellious, supposedly secular performance of hip-hop dance.<sup>26</sup> Mark Anthony Neal identifies the Black Public Sphere as a collection of covert social spaces hinged around two main centers of black life: the church and jook joint or club.<sup>27</sup> The club has always been in contest and concert with the black church as a vehicle for expression, producing a



discordant marriage between the sacred and the secular. I would also add the "streets" as a third spatial center marked by liminalities, a place of the betwixt and between, of literal intersections and corners, of the crossroads, of the sacred and the profane.<sup>28</sup> Adolescent hip-hop fans often occupy a liminal moment in their lives as well as a multiliminal status in society. Youth on the streets do more "house wrecking," spirit conjuring, and pelvic gyrating than either the church or the club could imagine.<sup>29</sup> Many hip-hop dancers undergo churchlike experiences, an enduring hallmark of black popular music such as soul and jazz. Los Angeles, long touted as a diffuse concrete sprawl epitomizing the ethics and aesthetics of car culture, immortalized by the G-Funk inspired gangsta rap of Dr. Dre and Snoop, is often overlooked as a place of sociality and artistic communion.

The sacredness of krumping is captured during a krump session in *Rize*. During a collective dance gathering in a South Central school yard, one of the female dancers, Daisy, falls under the spirit and loses consciousness. Those who are not soloing or dancing play a vital supportive and interactive role for the soloist or featured dancers. They help create a mood of submergence, simultaneously celebratory and sepulchral. They respond to the dance through gestures, arm waving, head rocking, forward lurching inclinations, and visceral exclamations. Dancers sometimes hoist one another up into the air, tug on one another's clothing, kick and push at one other to rile themselves up, awakening the aggression within as if it was some sleeping lion, provoking their own spirits into being. Although it may look combative, they say that fighting is the last thing on their minds.

Collapsing into the arms of a fellow dancer, a nearby youth explains that Daisy has just fallen under the spirit, "She just struck . . . that's what we've all been waiting on." Another voice chimes in, "She has reached the inevitable." When Daisy is asked what happened, she answers, "I don't know . . . I just let go." Under the dome of the night sky, young krumpers gather in informal, amorphous circles, dance to hip-hop tracks made of heavy, repetitive, rhythmic loops, under basketball hoops that hang over their heads like holy halos. In the labyrinth of the city, at paved crossroads, rings abound. This play of circles makes up the larger circle of the krump dance session, which is a ritual of serious play. The energy and vigor of hip-hop provides the aesthetic means to exorcise the demons and conjure spirit. But though it looks wild and out of control to outsiders, it is actually self-governing/ ordering and defies claims that hip-hop youth are inherently violent and disruptive. Not only is this dance not violent, it is also organized healing

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and cathartic release. Krumpers talk about it as channeling their anger in a positive way. That said, krumping is more than a coping mechanism and reveals that hip-hop culture is not just about criminal behaviors and mentalities, thuggin', and nihilistic street life.

Similar to the forest sanctuaries of the rural South, krumping provides a street sanctuary of the urban city. It relocates the "invisible church" of the brush harbor to the streets, the school yards, and the blacktops as the dancers transform certain musical practices and rituals found in the black church to fit their hip-hop lifestyles. Dragon and Miss Prissy even perform krump-inspired praise dancing in the church, and many of the dancers proclaim that they "get krump for Christ." The abrasive nature of krumping makes it difficult to locate its sacred undercurrent; the spiritual forces brewing within it are often secreted in moves that convey sexuality, violence, and suffering. But in the circle of dance when the "spirit in the midst of krumpness" is present, the dancers' experience of the world is circular: They can, as hip-hop fan, scholar, and producer Daniel Hodge says, "see the sacred in the profane," they can love and hate simultaneously, they can span earth and sky.<sup>30</sup> Dragon explains, "This is the only way we see fit of storytelling. This is the only way of making ourselves feel like we belong." In the circle of the dance, which is animated by mythic energy and the twin experience of fantasy and reality, people can break everyday rules. Boundaries between this world and the otherworld are blurred.

### **Krumping at the Battle Zone: Competition in the Ring of Combat**

The Battle Zone, an annual krumping competition judged by the barometer of audience applause, takes place at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, Los Angeles. The Forum was formerly the home arena for the Los Angeles Lakers and now houses the megachurch congregation of Faithful Central, where hip-hop-inspired gospel star Kirk Franklin runs the musical program on Sundays.<sup>31</sup> Already, the arena fuses elements of sport, competition, and religion. In front of thousands of children and parents, Tommy the Clown, wearing a heavy weight belt and his normal clown attire, starts off the night with a prayer and then launches into the dramatic battlelike atmosphere. He is master of ceremonies, ringmaster (directing the circuslike events), and ringleader (encouraging the battle). The dance battles take place in a boxing ring and unfold in a series of rounds between two individuals matched by age, size, and gender. Each round lasts approximately ten to fifteen seconds; dancers have to execute their routine quickly and efficiently, making sure

they get to their best moves before the music stops. Improvisatory flare is critical.

The spirit of serious play is present in the boxing ring as well. Part clowns, part warriors, dancers jostle for prestige among rival clans. One dancer sits in a chair while the other performs to the seated opponent, aggressively approaching his or her prey with boastful moves of pantomimic intimidation: a flip of the cap, a tug of the shirt, a pop of the collar, an expression of utter disgust, a thrust or pop of the hips. Fellow crew members of the competitors line the ring in support. Although dancers are not allowed to touch each other, they get as close as they can—close enough to feel the breath and sweat of their opponent, close enough to make someone's blood boil and burn. The dancer sitting tries to be as stoic as possible, maintaining a stone-cold, deadpan face in the midst of the flurry of movement within and around the ring. As the battle warms up, dancers—men and women alike—rip off pieces of their clothing, inciting a raucous reaction from the audience. During these moments, the dance becomes a contest of physical and emotional revealing, the ripping and stripping of clothes a metaphor for the unveiling of spirit and raw emotion that krumping demands. Who can get their soul more naked? Who can tap that vital flow coursing through the human veins, that divine spark within?

The ring is a resource, refuge, and strategy at the crossroads of adolescence and adulthood, of roads of life and roads of death, of victory and defeat, of turf and territory, often at moments of spiritual insecurity. *The circle coheres as it is born out of incoherence.* Rings form out of necessity, because the stakes are high. They open up a space, create a stage, and make a center where there was not one before. Krumping, in various circles and rings, is a unique response to a specific set of circumstances, not just a product of behavioral norms.<sup>32</sup> Different metaphors are at work as krumping enters different kinds of rings and circles. In the boxing ring, krumping is sport and artistic battle, a creative, resistant display of one's own power and prowess. In the padded, roped-in world of the boxing ring, young krumpers are both *protected* and *permitted* to release aggression through fierce, competitive dance. Although there may be victors and losers, there does not necessarily have to be destruction. As a locus of spirit possession—as a ring shout-styled event—krumping is religious ritual. It is the means through which to bring the spirit(s) down. *There are no limits—inside the circle.* As Dragon has said, "Krump is a state of being, a mindset of no boundaries, no lines, no limitations, just to be free. I think it will bring a lot of people back to Christ and back to what life is really about."<sup>33</sup>

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### Rize: Krump Rising above and/or into Mainstream Circles

The ring shout gives way to polite applause.

—Paul Gilroy<sup>34</sup>

The documentary *Rize* is credited with bringing mainstream awareness to the dance form and movement. LaChapelle, a fashion photographer known for his flashy, glossy style, first saw krumping on the set of Christina Aguilera's music video "Dirty" and was compelled to find out more about the dance form. The documentary opens with apocalyptic black-and-white footage of the 1965 Watts riots and 1992 Rodney King riots, announcing South Central as the crucible-like setting for krumping's inception and advancement. LaChapelle never explores krumping beyond its inner-city setting, enforcing the claim that krumping is an "authentic" art form in direct opposition to the excessive materialism and bedazzling commercialism of mainstream hip-hop culture. By confining krumping to (ghetto) urban space, he feeds into a kind of segregation that black people have experienced historically and continue to experience even today around space. At the beginning of *Rize*, Dragon forcefully reiterates, "This is not a trend. Repeat, this is not a trend." But revolts against the mainstream quickly become mainstream themselves. According to dance scholar Debra Cash, the real spin move of the film (not to be confused with the head spin of break dancing) is that "these young men and women have transcended commercialism."<sup>35</sup> Krumping is simultaneously a heroic, artistic, proactive expression born out of the deplorable conditions of the inner city and an economically viable commercial endeavor, transcendent in its ability to spiritually and morally rise above oppression and literally transportive as a professional route out of the ghetto.

Since *Rize* was released in 2005, krumping has received a significant amount of media attention. It has been featured in Missy Elliot's video "I'm Really Hot," Black Eyed Peas' video "Hey Mama," and Madonna's music videos "Hung Up" and "Sorry." Female krumper Miss Prissy is reportedly touring with rapper The Game. Countless videos have cropped up on krumping battles, including one in which a crew of krumpers takes on a crew of break-dancers. Instructional videos, which break down specific moves and styles, may be ordered from the Internet. (Of course, such videos become obsolete in the blink of an eye as the styles change on a daily basis). The Debby Allen Dance Studio in Culver City, Los Angeles, offers krumping classes and hosts krump battles with Tommy the Clown. Robin D. G. Kelley warns that "the explosion of interest in the inner city cannot be easily divorced from the marketplace."<sup>36</sup> Clearly, in commercial rings, krumping becomes a commodity that can be bought

with \$

and sold. As much as mainstream society wants to distance itself from black youth, krumping is not separate from society but is in many ways central to the construction of how mainstream society sees itself. What does it mean when krumping, as a black cultural production, enters this space? How does it get policed? What limits are placed on it when it enters the commercial ring? Who are the victors and victims? Ironically, hip-hop artists' critique of dominant society often supports the structures of dominant society; they sometimes end up glorifying and reinscribing their ghettoized status as they attempt to overcome it.

Krumping's status as a trend and commodity or as creative, resistant act changes depending on in which circle it is being danced; each sphere of culture assigns different meanings to the dance. What are the possibilities and limitations within each circle? Krumping is dazzling, trendy entertainment and a source of income in commercial circles and yet subject to the power dynamics of the mainstream. It is a stylized "idiom of confrontation" in the boxing ring of the Battle Zone, a conduit of catharsis in the street rings of krump brothers and sisters, and a tool to praise God when dancing in the outer circle of the pulpit. These are but a few circles in which krumping operates within a larger, multisphered constellation; krump dancers move back and forth between these worlds depending on the particular project they are working on, depending on the needs and desires of their spirits. Riding the tension between fluidity and fixity, krumping is bound to the streets of South Central as it extends beyond and circulates through various circles of culture (reaching as far as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan). Ultimately, krumping is a sonic and physical force that challenges notions that there is one identifiable, authentic, "ghetto" culture relegated solely to the inner city.

### *The Magic of Commodity: Spirituality within Commercialism*

How do krumping and hip-hop at large, as a highly commercial mass-mediated art form, manage to induce an authentic spiritual ecstasy? Despite the music industry's ostensibly homogenizing, devouring force, both hip-hop youth and mainstream media turn consumer culture into something akin to religion. Hip-hop's musically "elemental" nature—the basic human coupling of spoken words over beats, breath over heartbeats—keeps it bound to the spirit of the masses. Like other black popular expressions before it, even as krumping goes mainstream, practitioners struggle to keep it from being co-opted. African American art forms often have an underground

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status even when they are immensely popular, as if they are telling a different tale. Hip-hop culture still gives the appearance of marginality and liminality, an appearance based on a discouraging reality that many young hip-hop followers do not enjoy in the benefits of "mainstream" life. For all its bling-bling overindulgence and absurd parody, hip-hop maintains a serious and almost ominous quality. The double voice or double vision of hip-hop uses flashiness and material goods to mask a deeper struggle that is moral and spiritual. It uses play and competition to mask and transform pain into prestige and pleasure.

Consumer capitalism also deifies hip-hop stars and rap music as charismatic, quasi-religious forces in American culture. Ronald Radano states, "The initial magic of the commodity 'slave' creating its own possession to assert a basic freedom takes modern form in the interplay of black music with the magical powers of mechanical reproduction and consumer capitalism."<sup>37</sup> The spiritual and ritual events in hip-hop are extended and enhanced by mainstream media. Hip-hop may be one of those "modern forms" Radano refers to; its status as commodity and its formidable selling potential "texture the very flesh" of the hip-hop subject with "the mark of capitalist exchange," textures it with the "magic of the commodity."<sup>38</sup> Gilroy speaks to the particular way commodities link melanin, memory, myth, and magic: "Similar investments in the magic of black vitality are associated with the views of the body as confirmation of racialised particularity that have taken root inside the black communities themselves."<sup>39</sup> Epitomizing the experience of black expressive freedom for many youth, hip-hop is often linked to a particular type of transcendence; its artistic otherness becomes almost otherworldly. The real battle in krumping is to resist the essentialist racializations around the black body that already exist in commercial media (e.g., MTV, BET, and ESPN).

### *Fruitful Darkness: Hip-Hop's Underground Railroad to Spirit*

No thanks to the slaveholder nor to slavery that the vivacious captive sometimes dances in his chains; his very mind in such circumstances stands before God as an accusing angel.

—Frederick Douglass, "Speech on American Slavery," 1850<sup>40</sup>

Although the commercial music industry tends to reduce hip-hop to a shallow glorification of the liminality many dispossessed youth occupy, its sacred function is to mediate the perplexity of the in-between, to live out the questions regarding the limits of life, which necessarily remain mysterious.

Offering up a musical, meaningful, and ecstatic framework through which to experience life, hip-hop allows listeners to “dwell poetically” in multiple liminalities and uncertainties.<sup>41</sup> Krump dancers lose themselves in the sensuousness of temporal and physical play—the play of beats, the play of movement, and the play of real and unreal—while confronting the difficulties of their everyday lives. Paradoxically, it is the pain and the struggle that allow them to rise. They acknowledge that they are politicized subjects and yet do not allow that externally imposed construction to limit their artistic and spiritual vision. They recognize that there are both limits and no limits within the circle(s) of dance. The ecstatic experience in krumping, then, is a true paradox, encompassing the pleasure in the pain, the tragedy in the comedy, the moral poverty of material wealth, the spiritual riches available in utter despondency, and the capacity for ecstasy within liminality. Paradox approximates the extremity of life that is too difficult to describe. And art, especially dance, approaches that paradox.

As Michael Eric Dyson states, “Hip-hop reaches out and speaks to that person in pain, in suffering, facing death, who reaches out to something greater—whether that be God or spirit—to battle through the forces that attempt to dehumanize us.”<sup>42</sup> It articulates the capitalist and religious spirit of the present times—the chaos, the contradiction, the mess—in a uniquely brutal and human way. To borrow a song title from Aretha Franklin—the “Queen of Soul”—krumping pulls down the “Spirit in the Dark.”<sup>43</sup> It dances into broader fields of possibilities and potentials, reclaiming public space and acquiring multiple meanings as it enters new rings of culture and power.

## Notes

1. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 57.
2. Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 54. Radano then expands on the universal importance of the circle: “Beyond the African correlates described above, we find in the historical record similar configurations in which circularity signifies tangible forms of coherence, from the circles of hell through which Dante and Virgil proceeded to the Pawnee nest figure in Native American symbolism; from the celestial wheel of Hindu cosmography to Aristotle’s ‘unmoved mover,’ who generates the circular perfection of heavenly spheres and in turn sublunar motion.” For examples of the way the ring shout has been theorized in scholarship on African American music and culture, see Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Samuel Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
3. Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, 55.

4. Ibid., 54.
5. Sally Barrow, *The Rise and Fall of African American Religious Vision: Many Drums, Many Dances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
6. See Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
7. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
8. Sally Barrow, *The Rise and Fall of African American Religious Vision: Many Drums, Many Dances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
9. Paul Spence, *Performance (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994)*.
10. Ibid.
11. The circle is a particularly vital element to the ring shout, which abandoned the man developed him in a circle. The force of his body pushed in toward the lyrics right back into the cipher. A cipher is in the art of freestyle (rhymes) over the basic rules of conduct and formally, on street and outdoor basketball courts.
12. The Electric Blue related styles on the
13. Shaheem Reid, “It Right,” MTV, 2003, [http://www.mtv.com/artist/Shaheem\\_Reid/1011111/album/It\\_Right/1.html?aid=1011111/album/It\\_Right/1.html](#) (accessed July 2004).
14. Quote taken from All succeeding quotations noted.
15. Georgina Harney, categoryID=1921
16. Lois Ellfeldt, *Dance*
17. Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*
18. Richard Schechner

4. Ibid., 54.

5. Sally Banes and John F. Szwed, "'Messin' Around' to 'Funky Western Civilization': The Rise and Fall of Dance Instruction Songs," in *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 193–94. See also Sterling Stuckey's idea of the ring shout as ideology and religious vision in "Christian Conversion and the Challenge of Dance," in *Dancing Many Drums*, 42.

6. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

7. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed., ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 234.

8. Sally Banes, "Breakin'," in *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 14. For a more extensive discussion on the history and cultural influences of break dancing and hip-hop dance at large, see also Michael Holman's "Breaking: The History" and Katrina Hazard-Donald's "Dance in Hip-Hop Culture" in *That's the Joint*. For further discussion of the stylistic elements of breaking, graffiti, and rap and the social factors that led to their emergence, see also Tricia Rose's second chapter in her book *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

9. Paul Spencer, ed., *Society and the Dance: The Social Anthropology of Process and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22.

10. Ibid.

11. The circle or ring—an important symbol in many of the world's cultures—plays a particularly vital musical and spiritual role in African American culture dating back to the ring shout. At a KRS-One concert at the Temple Bar in Los Angeles (2005), he abandoned the stage to perform from the middle of the dance floor. The crowd enveloped him in concentric circles, forming a mandala-like image on the dance floor. The force of his testimony undulated out from his center while the crowd's energy pushed in toward him with their arms raised to the sky, and their mouths spit his lyrics right back at him. Another example of the ring complex in hip-hop culture is the cipher. A cipher is formed when a group of people stands in a circle and engages in the art of freestyling. Participants take turns freestyling (performing spontaneous rhymes) over the beat-boxing (vocal percussion) of one or more of those present. The rules of conduct are unspoken and self-ordering. Ciphers are generally assembled informally, on street corners, in back alleys, parking lots, school yards, subway trains, outdoor basketball courts, at hip-hop concerts, or occasionally in people's homes.

12. The Electric Boogaloos are often credited with popularizing popping and other related styles on the television show *Soul Train* in the late 1970s.

13. Shaheem Reid, "Krumping: If You Look Like Bozo Having Spasms, You're Doing It Right," MTV, 2004, <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1486576/20040423/index.jhtml?> (accessed July 14, 2006).

14. Quote taken from David LaChapelle's documentary *Rize*, Lionsgate Films, 2005. All succeeding quotes by krump dancers are from LaChapelle's film, unless otherwise noted.

15. Georgina Harper, "Rize," 2005, <http://www.londondance.com/content.asp?categoryID=1921> (accessed July 14, 2006).

16. Lois Ellfeldt, *Dance: From Magic to Art* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1976), 26.

17. Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, 343.

18. Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 98.



19. Mandalit del Barco writes, "The word 'krump' evolved from the lyrics of a song in the 1990s, but the young dancers have given it another meaning: 'Kingdom Radically Uplifting Might Praise'"; Mandalit del Barco, "'Rize': Dancing above L.A.'s Mean Streets," NPR, June 27, 2005, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4718456> (accessed July 14, 2006).

20. Moshing, done in a mosh pit formed near the stage, is often associated with crowd surfing and stage diving at heavy metal or rock music concerts. It involves pushing, shoving, jumping, and bumping into other people in the circular pit.

21. In *Rize*, the juxtaposition of archival footage from a traditional African (Nuba) dance ritual reveals the remarkable similarity between African dance forms and krumping in style, movement, and function. In both contexts, the dancers paint their faces to create masks, arrange themselves in circle formations, and achieve trancelike states. Their movements appear violent and aggressive at times, but no real fighting occurs, and both scenes contain moments of boastful, more controlled posturing. (Strangely, the scene features Afro-Cuban *bata* drumming instead of the music they normally dance to.) No commentary is made about the pairing of these two practices; the audience is forced to intuit the connection between Africa and South Central, the tribal and the urban, the ancient and the modern.

22. LaChapelle puts a disclaimer at the beginning of *Rize*, assuring viewers that none of the footage has been sped up in any way.

23. Richard Harrington, "Moving 'Rize' Has Legs," *Washington Post*, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/23/AR2005062300653.html> (accessed July 14, 2006).

24. When someone is clowning or krumping, he or she is often said to "get krump" or "clown out."

25. Milk, a well-known Caucasian krump dancer, performed at the Battle Zone in December 2005.

26. To refer to the masked meanings in black music, Mark Anthony Neal borrows the term *hidden transcript* from James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

27. Neal, *What the Music Said*, 6–7.

28. Realizing that *communitas* and "liminality" in the modern world are different from the liminal phase in Ndembu ritual, Victor Turner introduced the term "liminoid" to denote the quasi-liminal character of cultural performances, entertainment, and leisure activities in industrial society; Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology," *Rice University Studies* 60, no. 3 (1974): 53–92. Liminoid phenomena occur outside the boundaries of normal economic, political, social structures and are, in effect, decontextualized. The liminal and the liminoid, as existential situations, open onto a "realm of primitive hypothesis" that juggles the factors of existence and juxtaposes the "categories of event, experience, and knowledge, with a pedagogic intention"; Turner, "Betwixt and Between," 241.

29. "The Corner," a hip-hop track by Common featuring Kanye West and the Last Poets on *Be* (2005), speaks about the social, cultural, and spiritual significance of the corner in African American culture and the inner city.

30. Daniel Hodge, interview with the author, Los Angeles, April 24, 2005.

31. Kirk Franklin is one of the pioneers of the gospel rap style, which developed in the early 1990s in conjunction with the increasing popularity of contemporary Christian music and the commercial success of his 1997 hit "Stomp." (Franklin's 2005

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"Looking for You" single spent seventy-four weeks on Billboard's Hot 100.) Gaining a sizable following among America's youth, the holy hip-hop movement now has its own record labels, awards ceremony, apparel, and radio shows. The past few years have also witnessed an explosion of hybrid institutions, organizations, and events that integrate hip-hop aesthetics and ethics with overt spiritual objectives.

32. Robin D. G. Kelley, "Looking for the 'Real' Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto," in *That's the Joint!*, 123.

33. "Film Focus: *Rize*," 2005, <http://www.bbcworld.com> (accessed July 14, 2006).

34. Paul Gilroy, "Exer(or)casing Power: Black Bodies in the Black Public Sphere," in *Dance in the City*, ed. Helen Thomas (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 27.

35. Debra Cash, "Dance: Spin Crazy," 2005, 90.9 WBUR, [http://www.wbur.org/arts/2005/50519\\_20050808.asp](http://www.wbur.org/arts/2005/50519_20050808.asp) (accessed July 14, 2006).

36. Kelley, "Looking for the 'Real' Nigga," 121.

37. Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, 167. The slave songs and, more important, the discourse surrounding the origin of slave songs territorialize and essentialize blackness as an exclusive category ultimately impossible to mimic or appropriate. Thus, it gains a certain type of intangible, magical capital.

38. *Ibid.*, 149.

39. Gilroy, "Exer(or)casing Power," 27.

40. Frederick Douglass, "The Nature of Slavery," extract from a lecture on slavery at Rochester, NY, 1850, in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Random House, [1855] 2003), 266.

41. Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells . . .," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 216-56.

42. Michael Eric Dyson, *Open Mic: Reflections on Philosophy, Race, Sex, Culture and Religion* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003), 271.

43. Refers to the Aretha Franklin song "Spirit in the Dark," on *Spirit in the Dark* (Atlantic Records, 1970). Perhaps we can understand this idea as an inversion of Plato's allegory of the cave where enlightenment is found in things profane and things hidden in the flickering shadows, in a "fruitful darkness"; Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 243. Some kind of subliminal metaphor of an underworld is at work here—the belly of the beast, the horrifying pit of the slave ship—that lies at the heart of the struggle young hip-hoppers confront as they engage with the music, the dance, and the culture.

Example of Unit Materials for DCE 202 Dance in US Popular Culture

**PART II: 1910s-1940s**

**Unit 4: Depression Era Dance Marathons, Swing: The Savoy and Lindy Hop (1920/30s-1940s)**

Welcome to Part II: Unit 4!

**Unit # 4 Objectives**

- Describe the social conditions that produced the Depression Era Dance Marathons and their similarities to dance competition reality shows today
- Debate the spectacle of the Dance Marathon as theatre and/or reality
- Detail the socio-historical importance of the Savoy
- Describe how the Lindy Hop helped re-define and critique gender and racial characterizations at the Savoy
- Identify eras of popular dances at the Savoy and the conditions under which the Savoy closed.
- Detail and compare socio-cultural issues seen in the dances popular in the U.S. in the 1940s and today.
- Identify the Zoot Suit fashions and Investigate the Zoot Suit Riots

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**Unit # 4 Introductions**

**The Depression and Dance Marathons**

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In 1929 the stock market crash brought about a worldwide depression. The country saw drastic shifting in economic and social realities, which can be seen in dances and attitudes about dance during this era. In this Unit we will cover the Depression Era through the end of WWII and talk about major shifts in the social realities of the day that shaped dance in popular culture. As we discussed in the introduction to the class, this semester will not attempt to cover a complete history, instead snapshots through which we can gain insight to some of the dances and the times.

As we move out of the “raging twenties” and into the Depression Era of the 1930s, we see a time of high unemployment when many people lost their homes or farms and became dependent on bread lines and government food relief to survive. Having a great deal of time on their hands, many people spent long days listening to the radio and maybe if they could afford it, going to the theatre. Others attended or entered Dance Marathons that were in many ways quite similar to such contemporary shows as *American Idol* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. These marathons, like today’s television shows served as entertainment that traversed the boundaries of theatre and reality. The Dance Marathons attracted both unemployed

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C 2. c. relationships among diverse groups

and often vulnerable people with time on their hands, who were desperate for the opportunity to make money. In one of your essays for this Unit, “Reality Dance: American Dance Marathons,” you will read about the Marathons. In other contexts dancing served as a diversion from the desperate circumstances of everyday life.

### Lindy Hop 1940s

As the 1940s began, the country was still reeling from the effects of the Depression. However, when the Japanese government bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941 and the U.S. was thrust into war with Germany and Japan, the vigor of the war effort brought an end to the Depression. Under a perceived threat the government mandated “blackouts” and enacted mandatory “relocation” of Japanese American people to “Internment” camps through 1944. When they returned to their homes and businesses most found that they had lost everything.

The war became the engine that brought the U.S. out of the Depression. Unemployed were suddenly in high demand for both the material production efforts of war as well as the need for soldiers. There were shortages for basic necessities and a rationing system was introduced to buy such things as gasoline, tea, sugar, butter, meats, and other foods. In part because materials could not be purchased freely, people had an increased income for entertainment, which included going to movies, dancing, and going to nightclubs. It was in this atmosphere that the Lindy Hop flourished and was renowned especially at the opulent Savoy Ballroom in New York.

### The Savoy: Lindy Hop, Jitterbug, and Swing

The Savoy Ballroom was promoted for a time as “The Home of Happy Feet.” It was open for 33 years, from 1926-1958, in the center of Harlem. Owned by two white businessmen Moe Gale and Jay Faggen, and managed by an African American man, Charles Buchanan, the Savoy was one of the first racially integrated public places in the country. It was a successful business that acted as a seedbed in the development of music and dance. It was famous worldwide. The top bands played at the Savoy, including Chick Webb and his orchestra, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Benny Goodman.

As the title, “Negotiating Compromise on a Burnished Wood Floor: Social Dancing at the Savoy,” of the second article you will read for this Unit suggests, although the Savoy was site of powerful artistic, musical, aesthetic, social and political force, it was also a contested site with competing investments and interests. In addition to reading this article, please spend time watching the videos for this Unit, as well as browsing the web pages below for more information on the Savoy. Allow the visual, textual and musical impressions to inform your understanding of the Savoy dance floor as a place that catalyzed innovation and social change.

- [http://www.savoyplaque.org/about\\_savoy.htm](http://www.savoyplaque.org/about_savoy.htm)
- <http://www.savoyplaque.org/timeline.htm>

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## Cab Calloway, the original “hepster,” The Zoot Suit, and the Zoot Suit Riots

Youth culture of the 1940s popularized swing music, dancing, as well as the fashionable, Zoot Suit and hepster lingo. Cab Calloway, a famous bandleader whose credits included playing the Savoy, coined the phrase dancing “like a frenzy of jittering bugs” to describe some Lindy Hop dancers. In 1938 he published *Cab Calloway’s Hepster Dictionary: The Language of Jive*, and popularized such phrases as “hepcat,” “daddy-o,” “cutting a rug” and “Zoot suit,” to describe a popular form of dress at the time.

Wearing a Zoot Suit was popular primarily among African American and Latino American youth at this time and enacted a political statement, for several reasons. The official argument against the Zoot Suit was that the government’s war effort demanded rationing of necessities including the copious amounts of fabric it took to make a Zoot Suit. This official stance, however, also veiled intense racial discrimination faced by African American and Latino American youth at this time. Regarding the Zoot Suit, PBS’s American Experience website stated, “The oversized suit was both an outrageous style and a statement of defiance. Zoot suiters asserted themselves, at a time when fabric was being rationed for the war effort, and in the face of widespread discrimination” ([http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng\\_sfeature/sf\\_zoot\\_text.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng_sfeature/sf_zoot_text.html)). In 1943 Los Angeles erupted into the worst race riots it had ever seen. After ten nights many Anglo servicemen and young Mexican American Zoot Suiters, nicknamed “Pachucos,” were hospitalized. PBS has a full length documentary on this, which I highly recommend; however for purposes of this class you are only responsible to read the film description at the following website: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng\\_filmmore/fd.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng_filmmore/fd.html)

## Unit # 4

### Questions for Consideration

After reading the Lesson Introductions and online material, please watch the videos and read your text. As you do so, please make your own notes as well as notes referring to the following questions for consideration, which will help catalyze critical thinking about this rich time period we are covering in this Unit.

1. How and where did depression era dancing serve a socio-economic purpose? Do you see similarities anywhere in US popular culture today? Ground your comments about today in your specific links to the depression era.
2. Do you think it is significant that one of the first racially integrated public venues was a dance hall? Why or Why not?
3. Compare how the stories of the Savoy are told across the websites, the video clips “The Savoy King,” “Chick Webb,” and other videos, and the article you read in your text. Be the critical historian, from the various stories and

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glimpses you have gotten from the Savoy, explain what you think is most significant in these stories and why. Be specific. Cite your sources.

4. Please “read” the Lindy Hop as a social commentary about its time. Include how it either reflected, challenged, and/or (re)produced the values of the society. Be specific. Do reference specific observations regarding the physicality of the dances in your answer. You might reference examples from the “Savoy Routines,” the “Big Apple Dances” video clips, or others. Pay attention to gender and racial dynamics.
5. The narrator who introduces the “Savoy Champions” video clip states that the Lindy incorporates all styles from Charleston to Blues. She notes that the character of jazz dance (including the Lindy) is that dancers do not dance in unison necessarily, but instead in response to the music and each other. Dancers often “answer” the music as if another instrument in the orchestra. This structure is an Africanist aesthetic known as “Call and Response.” Dizzy Gillespie and other Savoy musicians and dancers engaged in a call and response.

After watching the videos, answer this question. What did the structure of call and response allow for, both physically and in terms of upholding or challenging such conventional forms of dancing that evolved from Ballroom? (For an example of ballroom aesthetics watch the video clip “Romantic Dances,” “Slow Dances,” or “Veloz and Yolanda” ).

6. In the classic text on Jazz Dance by Stearns and Stearns, they say “the Lindy is a fundamental approach, not an isolated step...The Lindy caused a general revolution in the popular dance of the United States” (329). 1. Describe this revolution. 2. Explain how that revolution is relevant in dance in popular culture today. Remember we are talking about the approach not the “steps.”
7. On *America Dances!* “Big Apple Dances,” pay attention to how the two white narrators introduce the dances, which are demonstrated by two African American men. Watch the contrasting aesthetics of bodily comportment demonstrated throughout the rest of the video clips and then compare them (Be sure to reference George-Graves discussion of this on pg. 63). As an addendum, please briefly note: Why do you think these dances were not demonstrated by a man and a woman in this context? What commentary might this make about identities and cultural power/disenfranchisement?
8. Do you think wearing a Zoot suit in the 1930s and 1940s could be considered a political statement? Why? How? Reference the PBS website in your response.

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## PART II: 1910s-1940

### Unit # 4: Depression Era Dance Marathons, Swing: The Savoy and Lindy Hop (1920/30s-1940s)

## Assigned Reading

- "Reality Dance/ American Dance Marathons" by Carol Martin. (93-107)
- "Negotiating Compromise on a Burnished Wood Floor/ Social Dancing at the Savoy" by Karen Hubbard and Terry Monaghan. (126-142)

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## Websites:

- [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng\\_filmmore/fd.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/eng_filmmore/fd.html)
- [http://www.savoyplaque.org/about\\_savoy.htm](http://www.savoyplaque.org/about_savoy.htm)
- <http://www.savoyplaque.org/timeline.htm>

## PART II: 1910s-1940

### Unit # 4: Depression Era Dance Marathons, Swing: The Savoy and Lindy Hop (1920/30s-1940s)

#### Assigned Video

*America Dances!:*

- Big Apple Dances
- Dance Marathons
- Lindy Hop
- Lindy Hop in Choreography
- Lindy Hop Jitterbug Contest

*YouTube:*

- The Savoy King: Savoy Ballroom Vignette
- Chick Webb (Savoy)
- Veloz & Yolanda Perform Early Dance Fads (1943)

#### Recommended NOT required

- Romantic Dances
- Slow Dances
- Dance 'Til You Drop: Dance Marathons of 1930's & 1940's
- Dance Marathon 1931
- Lindy Hop- Hellzapoppin (1941).
- Hellzapoppin' (1941) Ending Conga Sequence "Conga Beso" - Jane Frazee, Martha Raye, & The Six Hits

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## Discussion Board Unit # 4

### Unit 4: TOPIC 5: Aesthetics and Politics

In this unit we discuss youth culture of the depression era and how Lindy Hop provided a social outlet for youth of various racial, ethnic and class affiliations. We also read about the Zoot Suits that were fashionable in youth culture and how they performed and asserted identity. Aesthetic preferences and pleasure in dance, performance, and fashion are all cultural manifestations of a specific time, place and social group. They are also all political. (Please refer to George-Graves discussion of hegemony, p. 66).

From this time period, 1930s-1940s, please choose a dance, a fashion (such as the Zoot Suit), an historical event, or a language style (such as Cab Calloway's hepster lingo) and examine and explain how it is politico-cultural expression of identity. Examine connections with your historical example and a contemporary manifestation. (For example, how might a "hoodie" provide a contemporary counterpoint to examining the zoot suit as an assertion of cultural identity?)

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