

**PULSATING VALUE: EXAMINING THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISMISSIVE  
ATTITUDES TOWARD CONCERT JAZZ DANCE IN 1960S AMERICA**

**Erinn Liebhard**

M.F.A. Candidate University of Colorado at Boulder

**Jazz dance has always reflected the temper of the times.  
(*Rag to Rock to Disco*, 1979)**

The above statement by seminal American choreographer Gus Giordano captures with clarity the importance of jazz dance to American culture. While this idea is embraced and cherished by practitioners of the form, I believe many dance scholars of other forms view concert jazz as an increasingly irrelevant art in today's society. This dismissal of jazz will be explored in the following paper by identifying how concert jazz dance, a form inspired by social dance ideas and practices, has come to be considered unworthy of serious critique. I will focus upon 1960s America, positing that the era's increasingly separatist approaches to concert jazz dancing as either social (i.e. popular) or artistically presentational (i.e. ballet and modern) have been critical to the development of a dismissive attitude toward jazz dance as an important American art.

My rationale for serious study of the jazz movement aesthetic is based in its history of instigating and reflecting societal shifts in the United States, beginning in the early 1800s. During this time, Europeanist and Africanist music and movement ideas were meeting and intertwining as a result of European immigrants and African slaves living and working in close proximity to one another (Stearns, 1994, p. 11-24). In the

following article, I will discuss how jazz dance artists developed over time the abilities to both construct and deconstruct identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality through movement, making the jazz aesthetic an important creator and carrier of American cultural knowledge, a role it still plays in current American society.

I have chosen to delimit the scope of my research to 1960s America for several reasons, including the fact that the sense of separatism posited between socially inspired and presentationally inspired forms of jazz dance was driven by the boundaries developed by critics and scholars who were defining what could be considered artistic in dance. These exclusive attitudes instigated the development of deep rifts between concert jazz dance choreographed within the valued artistic standards promoted by ballet and modern aesthetics, and the more inclusive or popular performance of jazz incorporating social dance. Coupled by the increase in popularity of social dances that displayed the jazz movement aesthetic, and a spike in the formation of presentational dance companies, (Sussmann, 1984, p. 24), the development of this rift positions 1960s America as a key era through which to explore the formation of borders around what is deemed art, and the effect these created borders had on jazz as a current, living art form.<sup>1</sup>

To support these concepts, I will first analyze the sociological content and physical characteristics of the jazz movement aesthetic in examples of social, then presentational dances of 1960s America (these key terms will be defined later in the article). I will then compare these analyses to identify concepts that have instigated the

---

<sup>1</sup> This concept is explored by Tufts sociologist Leila Sussmann in her 1984 article “Anatomy of the Dance Company Boom.”

drawing of boundaries regarding artistry between social and ballet/modern-based concert jazz dance. I feel it important to note that this analysis is not meant to be an exhaustive survey of any and all social and presentational dance reflective of the jazz movement aesthetic in this era. Rather, I have carefully selected a handful of telling examples to demonstrate my positions.

Existing scholarship concerning jazz as a unique dance form is heavily concentrated in its origins in the early 1800s through its development during the 1950s; it then picks up again with the advent of hip hop dance in the late 1970s through the present. Led by the important work of renowned scholars such as Marshall and Jean Stearns and Brenda Dixon Gottschild, the current body of scholarship, though well written, thought provoking and valuable, leaves a gap at the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>2</sup> My research seeks to help fill this gap in research chronology, working toward the creation of a more complete historical lineage in this discipline. Hopefully, this research will also begin to disrupt the artificial boundaries placed around what is deemed as artistic between social versus ballet and modern-based concert jazz dance. This breakdown of borders will allow for a more inclusive outlook as dance scholarship moves into the twenty-first century.

Working with the concepts emerging from diverse scholars writing about jazz dance, I will use the term “the jazz movement aesthetic” to describe the form as a unique amalgam of Africanist and Europeanist movement ideas. Several commonalities between jazz movement and Africanist dance are noted by Africanist dance scholar

---

<sup>2</sup> Brenda Dixon Gottschild’s book *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance* addresses the African presence in American minstrelsy, ballet and postmodern dance, though she skips forward into hip-hop without addressing concert jazz dance. Marshall and Jean Stearns’ seminal book *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, released in 1968, passed up on the unique opportunity to address the jazz dance of this era.

Kariamuwelsh Asante. These include: polyrhythm, polycentrism, dimensionality and repetitive motif (Asante, 2001, p. 146). Also pertinent to this definition are art scholar Robert Farris Thompson's elements of Africanist Art, as selected and applied to dance by Africanist dance scholar Jacqui Malone. These elements include dominance of percussion, apart playing, call and response, and the "aesthetic of cool" (Malone, 1996, p. 11). Additionally, Jonathan Jackson's analysis of improvisation as central to African American vernacular dance is crucial to how I will be discussing the elements of jazz dance style as it moves throughout time in American culture.

Further, when intertwined with Europeanist aesthetics of upright alignment, virtuosic ballet movement and partner dancing, along with the uniquely American scenario of multiple cultures in close proximity, the above elements unite to form a basis for understanding the jazz movement aesthetic. Many current scholarly analyses, such as those of Brenda Dixon Gottschild, position the jazz movement aesthetic under the term "black dance." I believe this to be an incomplete way to describe the aesthetic, as without both Africanist *and* Europeanist influences, jazz would not exist. This is a concept I wish to position carefully, as it is important to recognize that much of what is now understood as jazz dance has been a result of the appropriation of Africanist dance movement by people of European backgrounds. Europeanist elements are also present in jazz movement, and when analyzing the aesthetic, must be noted in tandem with analyses of Africanist elements, all while taking careful measures to address instances of appropriation.

To clarify how I am using additional specific terms in the following research, I will discuss the important differences between vernacular, social, and presentational dance.

Vernacular dance erupts from the streets or an informal social arena, oftentimes coming from urban and suburban settings. Social dance, on the other hand, might emerge from movements in a vernacular dance form, but these then undergo formal codification so that the dancers can be critiqued regarding proficiency of the form within a more formal social setting. The term “presentational dance” denotes any occurrence of dance in which the movement has been formulated into a series of choreographed choices that are meant to frame the viewer’s experience (Moradian, 2011, p. 1). In this definition, presentational dance is different from social dance since, while both are embodied intention, presentational dance is specifically constructed through choreography for the viewing of an audience. This term encompasses work ranging from choreography on television shows to staged Broadway productions, to the work of diverse concert choreographers.

An example of the above definitions can be found in Gus Giordano’s descriptions of The Twist in *Rag to Rock to Disco*. The Twist was first considered a vernacular dance, as it was a movement trend practiced in the informal social settings of a specific period of time. Eventually, The Twist would be considered a social dance, as it ended up in regulated studio settings, undergoing refinements through formal teaching processes. Finally, The Twist was further modified by its fusion with a ballet-modern idiom in order to meet the aesthetic interests of Broadway and concert jazz dance audiences.

As dance is both affected by and affects culture, an understanding of the social climate of 1960s America is crucial to this analysis. During this mid-century decade, urban decay was spreading, race relations were at the forefront of public opinion with

the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and political tensions were high, due to the continuation of the Cold War and the emerging conflict with Vietnam. The country saw a major feminist movement, the sexual revolution and developing interest in open expression of the body as working toward equality and open expression for all people (R. Giordano, 2007, p. 171-172). Rock and Roll was growing in popularity, due to its ability to act as a channel for the frenetic energy created by this cultural atmosphere. This music is noted by differing social theorists as having developed within people the desire to dance out this tension, and conversely, dance was affecting the way people perceived their world. Social dances began to depart from the formal, codified, heterosexually partnered and racially segregated waltzes and fox trots of the previous decade.

When considering the jazz movement aesthetic in the social dance of the 1960s, renowned jazz dance scholar Billy Siegenfeld has said, “the Europeanist influence in jazz dance is almost more sociological than physical.” He explains the Europeanist physical influences in jazz dance of upright alignment and tightness at the core as supporting American sociological taboos against the presentation of sexuality and the bending of traditional gender, class, and race stratifications (B. Siegenfeld, personal communication, December 1, 2012). As a country born out of rebellion, the United States became uniquely positioned to question those taboos, which were still very present in the 1960s. During this time, Rock and Roll culture was one of the ways that feminist questioning, race equality, and sexual/ gender revolutions were enacted. Performance of dances such as The Twist became methods for questioning traditional binaries like “man and woman,” “black and white,” and “gay or straight” (R. Giordano,

2007, p. 174).

As a seminal example of taboo bending through dance, The Twist was among the first partnered trends in the American social dance scene to isolate and utilize the hips. The Twist was deemed scandalous by many middle and upper class Caucasian parents for its polyrhythmic gyration in the hips, movement that was seen as providing too much room for what was considered blatantly sexual gesturing. However, these polyrhythmic movements accented The Twist's clear and complex connection to the percussive rhythms in Rock and Roll music played by the horn section and high-hat on the drum, an element that links the dance to the jazz movement aesthetic.<sup>3</sup> Dancers stayed true to the beat as they oscillated their ribs against their knees, interrupting this oscillation only to observe the drum breaks in the music. This oscillation pattern makes clear the isolated and polycentric ways in which the body was being organized into a whole with many rotating centers. The Twist also exhibits polyrhythm, as dancers maintained the oscillation of the ribs against the knees while allowing the head to find its own meter to which to groove (*Dancetime! 500 Years of Social Dance*, 1998).

These qualities can be seen in Chubby Checker, the African American man widely-recognized as the inventor of The Twist, due to his creation of a song by the same name and the accompanying dance moves (Performance of Chubby Checker on *American Bandstand*, 1960). Checker's calm, upright torso against his quickly oscillating pelvis and lower legs displayed Robert Farris Thompson's aesthetic of cool while the wholly improvisational nature of the dance was performed through repetitive movements

---

<sup>3</sup> The high-hat, a percussion instrument composed of two cymbals facing in toward one another, was being played with drum sticks to create a rolling, consistent rhythmic pattern that was usually present throughout a whole rock and roll song during this time period. This encouraged within dancers a tendency toward precise reflections of rhythm in their movements, a tenet of the jazz movement aesthetic.

(Thompson, 1973, p. 41). With his August 1960 appearance on *American Bandstand*, Checker's entrance onto the predominantly Caucasian television show was one of the ways in which social dances started to break down racial barriers (R. Giordano, 2007, p. 187). According to Rennie Harris, a prominent jazz and hip-hop dance scholar and artist, "everybody watched *American Bandstand*" (R. Harris, personal communication, December 1, 2012). He noted that at the time, African American dancers appreciated seeing their approach to movement become accepted by middle and upper class Caucasians. Harris also explained that this appreciation was accompanied by frustration as the appropriation became more evident and rarely credited its African American origins.

While still done in partners, dancers performing The Twist did not have to touch, freeing up their abilities to make improvised, individual choices as they utilized the idea of apart play. Jazz scholar Siegenfeld further mused: "I remember going home from school and watching Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, where the dancers were still doing hand-held party dances, which is what I then went out and did at parties. Then, The Twist came along, and that detached us all from each other" (B. Siegenfeld, personal communication, December 1, 2012). Siegenfeld has also noted that at that time, dancing without the confines of a partner linkage opened up many new possibilities for expression and equality among partners.

Cynthia Jean Cohen-Bull, a prominent dance scholar known for her anthropological perspectives on the dance of 1960s America, suggests that The Twist was a site of rebellion. For American teenagers who were beginning to entertain ideas of free sexual expression and equality in gender, race, and class, this dance practice

encouraged partner switching and the display of sexuality, serving as a location for physically manifesting these rebellions (Bull, 2001, p. 408). While most Caucasian youth were dancing in their living rooms and at school dances, young African Americans were left to seek new places to dance when African American cabarets closed in the late 1950s. The closure of these safe places for expression, thought by some to be due to an excise tax levied on ballrooms, forced the migration of black social dancers to the streets, signaling the beginning of block party culture and street dance (Hazzard-Gordon, 1990, p. 154). While this relocation was forced, it was also a step in the opening up of African American social dance to the public eye. According to Tim Wall, a prominent scholar on popular music and dance, African American and Caucasian teenagers witnessing one another's social dance movements through street participation and television dance had opportunities to look toward an integrated society (Wall, 2009, p. 196).

Popular television programs on which the dancing was social rather than presentational, such as *American Bandstand*, were widely distributed demonstrations of this concept. When these shows began, featured performers danced in heterosexual, racially segregated partnerships. As time progressed, performing social dances like The Twist was becoming a popular method to test the social norms of the time, with television becoming the major distributor of such experimentation (R. Giordano, 2007, p. 177). According to Siegenfeld, who was coming of age as these events were taking place, "[The Twist] was about moving the pelvis . . . the society I was in, a predominantly white, middle-class society, had taboos against movement originating in that part of the body. If you watched the kids do it on *American Bandstand*, it looked

either very innocent or just plain stiff.” In this light, *American Bandstand* can be seen as a site of both borrowing and appropriation of Africanist movement concepts by Caucasian dancers. While the show opened Caucasian youth to new movement ideas that would eventually be credited to African Americans, it also stripped The Twist of its undertones of sexual expression and visual representations of racial equality.

The Mashed Potato is another of the American 1960s dances that heavily displayed the jazz movement aesthetic. While The Twist was the jumping off point for most other Rock and Roll dances of the time, The Mashed Potato did exhibit its own quirks. It was similar to The Twist in the fact that it was heavily improvised, repetitive, directed by percussive breaks, and danced apart from a physically touching relationship. The difference was in the physical movement choices. In The Mashed Potato, polyrhythm could be seen in the coordinated twisting in and out of the feet and the knees against the torso shifting in half time on top of said action (*Dancetime! 500 Years of Social Dance*, 1998). Additionally, a kind of coolness could be observed in the torso and head, floating against one another with seeming effortlessness, in any direction and tempo the dancer so chose, against the hot tempo kept in the legs.

The Mashed Potato found a public audience by way of the performances of seminal funk singer James Brown. The James Brown, the singer’s signature dance, was an ecstatic Mashed Potato of sorts, fused with The Skate, which was a social dance emphasizing a gliding motion of the feet (Gottschild, 2005, p. 117). Brown’s execution of this jazz-tinged movement during well-attended concerts and through television appearances was among the ways the public began to witness multi-racial audiences performing similar movements on a mass scale. Other animal dances of the time, such

as The Pony, The Monkey and The Funky Chicken, emphasized a similar rhythmic pulse in footwork and isolations in the upper-body, further encouraging competence in a complex jazz movement aesthetic as a way to subvert racial stereotypes of simplistically performed social dance movements (Smith, 2010, p. 102).

Another trend displaying the jazz movement aesthetic was, what is now commonly termed, “Hippie Dancing.” Known to be free thinkers, hippies displayed uninhibited physical expression. This was seen in their completely improvised reactions of swaying and twirling, and any other sort of motion that came out of their bodies when listening to music. While Hippie Dancing did not exhibit the rhythmic pulse or polycentric elements displayed in other social dances of the 1960s, it certainly did embody a sense of “doing your own thing.” This phrase came to signify improvising, further highlighting the importance of one of the many jazz movement aesthetics highly visible in nearly all the social dance trends of the time.

While social dancers were dancing out the jazz movement aesthetic in school gyms, social clubs, and bars, the aesthetic was also continuing its journey of development in American presentational dance. Specifically, jazz was becoming shaped by the needs of its female performers. Scholar Amanda Card suggests that female professional dancers, driven by the feminist movement, found empowerment in jazz classes, as the movement felt like an opportunity to “be men in moving like men” (Card, 1998, p. 24). Feeling as though they had been contained by the physical and theatrical gender constraints of ballet and modern, professional female dancers who turned to jazz found freedom in the internal tension and open presentation of sensuality found in the jazz movement innovation of seminal figures such as Jack Cole (Card, 1998, p. 21).

Professional dancers also found the jazz movement aesthetic in the dances that were being created for television shows like *Hullabaloo*, which ran from 1964-1966 in a slot that competed with *American Bandstand*. Unlike *Bandstand*, the dances on *Hullabaloo* were choreographed, working to showcase current social dance trends such as The Twist in a more presentational fashion. In a 1966 choreography, set to the original and just released Neal Hefti version of the Batman T.V. Show Theme, the primarily female *Hullabaloo* dancers shifted through multiple, simultaneous rhythms and isolations, interspersing this action with upright pirouettes and complicated changes in facing, executed through percussive footwork (*The Hullabaloo Dancers Perform the Batman Theme, 1966*).

Through these presentational jazz movements, choreographer Patrick Adiarte provided the *Hullabaloo* dancers a chance to “move as men.” His choreography was polycentric, polyrhythmic, percussive yet upright, and frequently utilized a cool upper body on top of hot footwork, all of which positioned him as a creator and performer steeped in the jazz movement aesthetic (*The Hullabaloo Dancers Perform the Batman Theme, 1966*). As Amanda Card analyzed, these are the same qualities to which female professional dancers were drawn when they found themselves training in jazz. Norma McClain Stoop emphasized in her profile of Adiarte in the February 1971 issue of *Dance Magazine* that Adiarte’s training with Luigi in New York was what led him to join the cast of *Hullabaloo*. Stoop also noted that Adiarte’s style most easily transferred into the creation of Broadway choreography, which was seen in his contributions to musicals such as *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*.

Another clear example of the jazz movement aesthetic in Broadway and theater dance can be found in the iconic, instantly recognizable choreography of Bob Fosse. Fosse's "The Rhythm of Life," a signature scene from *Sweet Charity*, which premiered on Broadway in 1966 and came to film in 1968, was rife with the jazz movement aesthetic. While it certainly does not need to be proved that Fosse operated within this aesthetic, an analysis of its presence in 1960s presentational dance would not be complete without his inclusion. "The Rhythm of Life" presented a critique of the hippie subculture of the time, in which the dancers bopped with a percussive double-bounce throughout the piece, displaying a deconstruction of the aesthetic of cool in their nonchalant physical awareness of their alternative lifestyles. Throughout the dance, polycentrism and polyrhythm can be seen in the multiple, rotating isolations happening all at once within the shoulders, ribs and knees. Additionally, the entire piece drew heavily upon improvisation (*Sweet Charity*, 1968).

Beyond television and Broadway, presentational dance was also being shown more frequently in smaller concert formats by emerging dance companies. The 1960s saw a major shift in the way dance was consumed by the American public, as this time period produced a "dance company boom." Until the mid-1930s, ballets and vaudeville productions were among the only forms of dance found regularly in a presentational or concert format. In the mid-1930s, early American modern choreographers such as Martha Graham furthered this concert dance trend for the theater stage. In the 1960s, the development of the postmodern aesthetic in dance opened even more radically how concert dance was being presented and discussed. Due to both funding constraints and desires to abandon "the old rules of dance," such as use of the proscenium stage,

choreographers began showing presentational dance in any venue they could, from churches to apartments to parks. As this practice became standard, these choreographers began to formalize allegiances with their dancers, and the American dance scene saw a large growth in the number of established dance companies (Sussmann, 1984, p. 24).

During this postmodern boom in the 1960s, there were also a handful of companies displaying the jazz movement aesthetic through the creative pursuits of individual artists fusing the Africanist vernacular foundations of jazz with the concert styles of modern and ballet. Speaking to this idea, Zoe Sealy, Artistic Director of the Minnesota Jazz Dance Company (1976-1986), notes that while, “in the late 60s, there really were not a lot of jazz companies . . . there was Giordano in Chicago and Luigi in New York” (Z. Sealy, personal communication, October 6, 2012). The influence of Giordano and Luigi is noted specifically as defining a new form of jazz in which contemporary ballet and modern movements were being fused with the social influences of the jazz dance style. In his film *From Rag to Rock to Disco*, Gus Giordano points out how, “the style of the street moved into isolations and syncopations of the concert dancer.” In the 1960s, Giordano’s choreography heavily utilized percussive double-bounce and rhythmic footwork while executing layouts, battements, and barrel leaps that called for an intimate understanding of the upright alignment and virtuosic vocabulary of ballet technique. Giordano’s was one of the first concert jazz dance companies to very visibly use virtuosic ballet and modern technique within performances that were labeled as jazz dance.

The jazz movement aesthetic was also present in the work of choreographer Donald McKayle, whose works such as *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder* addressed the African American experience through dance. His polyrhythmic, polycentric, and percussive movement seamlessly integrated into the powerful upright alignment found in ballet (Thorpe, 1995, p. 137). Like most concert choreography, apart play was integral to the structure of this piece. His ability to create choreography that shifted seamlessly between connected partnering and apart play gave McKayle additional tools for building and breaking human relationships within the piece. McKayle's choreography speaks to the importance of multiple cultures in close proximity to one another in the development of the jazz aesthetic, as his choreography was also among the first of the time to meld Africanist movement ideas with ballet training (*Donald McKayle, Early Work*, 1999).

Even though much of the work done by the emerging postmodern dance companies of the time had little relation to the jazz movement aesthetic, the emerging form of contact improvisation, in which many postmodern choreographers were well versed, did display a parallel. This form encouraged the physical connection of finding the weight of another person's body, and placed an emphasis on using that weight while "doing your own thing" to generate improvised movement (Bull, 2001, p. 407). The importance of the improvisation of "doing your own thing" in contact improvisation runs parallel to the same practice in Rock and Roll and Hippie dancing, forming what I argue is a direct connection to the jazz movement aesthetic.

My above analysis of dance in 1960s America demonstrates that both social and presentational dance shared sensibilities of the jazz movement aesthetic. Additionally,

this research shows a pattern of these sensibilities beginning within social dance and then crossing over into choreographed presentational dance, though much more frequently in televised and theatrical forms than in modern and postmodern concert dance. I believe this disparity to be a strong contributor to the divide between televised/theatrical presentations and modern/postmodern concert forms that can still be observed today, particularly in regards to the valuing of jazz movement. While there has been much scholarly emphasis on identifying jazz within theatrical dance of 1960s America, a focus on why many modern and postmodern choreographers were seemingly avoiding the jazz movement aesthetic has not been studied in-depth. Among the exceptions to this rule that I will not address, since they are explored in-depth by scholars Brenda Dixon Gottschild and Thomas DeFranz, are some of the dances generated in the 1960s by the New York City Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Katherine Dunham Dance Company. Therefore, in the following concluding section, I will focus my efforts on identifying why, at a time that jazz-influenced social dance was booming and making its way onto television and stage, the contingent of concert dance choreographers working within the jazz movement aesthetic was so small.

Most dance companies forming during the 1960s in America were based in the postmodern aesthetic, in which choreographers such as Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton worked to break free from various cultural constructions they felt came from a “popularized entertainment factor” emerging from an open display of sexuality and use of balletic and virtuosic physical displays. Though the social dances of the time were generating physically rich ideas and practices based in the jazz movement aesthetic,

these ideas and practices were not absorbed by most of those artists defining themselves as working within a postmodern dance culture. Therein, the jazz movement aesthetic was dismissed within this culture on the basis of its popular appeal, open display of sexuality, and use of balletic virtuosity.

That said, visible crossover between social dance displaying the jazz movement aesthetic and modern/postmodern dance *could* be seen in the ideals of self-expression, freedom, egalitarianism, and spontaneity shared between Rock and Roll, Hippie, and casual contact improvisation dancers. However, presentational contact improvisation and other postmodern concert forms still did not possess the full elements of the jazz movement aesthetic found in Rock and Roll dance. A prime example of this is the lack of extensive polycentric and polyrhythmic use of the shoulders, head, hips, and knees moving independently or in different directions at the same time that was seen in social dances, and emergently in jazz-influenced theatrical dance (Bull, 2001, p. 407).

I analyze this physical disconnect between the two forms as a purposeful choice made by many postmodern presentational choreographers and some choreographers working in Broadway productions. In 1961, African American choreographer Geoffrey Holder claimed that he would not dance *The Twist*, calling it “dishonest and embarrassing” (R. Giordano, 2007, p. 188). Holder, a Broadway choreographer, was not alone. Various Broadway and modern choreographers alike rejected the open expression of sexuality seen in the apart play and polycentric, polyrhythmic use of the pelvis found in *The Twist* and other such Rock and Roll dances. Postmodern choreographer Yvonne Rainer’s 1965 *No Manifesto* even explicitly stated, among other

such thoughts, that she said “No to seduction of the spectator by the wiles of the performer.”

This rejection of open display of sexuality is ironic considering the desire of postmodern choreographers to use dance as a means to communicate egalitarian ideals, as well as Broadway’s heavy reliance on popular movement and sensuality for appeal. In trying to rid dance of what they had deemed as unnecessary cultural constructions, postmodern choreographers chose to strip away identifiers of individuality, such as sexuality. To many choreographers who prescribed to the ideas of second-wave feminism, sexuality was seen as a negative, cultural construction rather than one of empowerment as claimed by those participating in Rock and Roll dancing.

Siegenfeld posits that among the modern dance practitioners of the time, specifically those who rejected anything with popular appeal, “Dancing to ‘pop’ music was absolutely banned. Broadway became the only place where people could dance to metric rhythm.” He believes that this is why Bob Fosse’s choreography, analyzed above through the example of *Sweet Charity*, became so prominent in the theater. “He loved the Africanist aesthetic. He was taking advantage of the sexual liberation of the 1960s to generate highly isolated work reminiscent of this aesthetic” (B. Siegenfeld, personal communication, December 1, 2012).

Siegenfeld further theorizes that driving forces behind the modern and postmodern dance movement of the 1960s were working staunchly to strip away any societal influences that were even vaguely commercially popular in nature. This included the open presentation of sensuality evoked among the social dancers who were consuming commercial popular movement, and the use of popular music (B.

Siegenfeld, personal communication, October 16, 2012). Due to associations with the openly sensual choreography to popular music featured on television shows like *Hullabaloo*, the jazz movement aesthetic seen in much of Broadway choreography was wholly rejected by the developing modern and postmodern dance scene.

As the movement vocabulary of the jazz aesthetic was crossing over from social dances into the presentational dance of 1960s Broadway, it did not leave racism entirely behind. Prolific dancer Gus Solomons Jr. said, "I noticed when I first came to New York (1961) . . . I would audition for Broadway, and I never got the job, but I always got kept to the end. The choreographer wanted me, but the producer didn't - couldn't - mix the show" (Gottschild, 2005, p. 72). Solomon's experiences demonstrate how the commercial pressures of Broadway played into racism, as producers of the time were led to believe that ticket sales would suffer if the show featured integrated casts.

Broadway still had a long way to go in regards to equality, an issue made even more salient by the fact that jazz-influenced theatrical choreography of the time frequently appropriated Africanist ideas. Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull has suggested that the ideals of self-expression and egalitarianism that modern choreographers revered were not visible in the presentational theatrical dance of the day. This argument could be supported by the above notion that Broadway's commercial concerns propagated racism. I argue that such commercial concerns did *affect* but not *erase* the ability of theatrical dance to present forward-thinking ideals. The emphasis that theatrical and televised jazz choreography placed on 'the aesthetic of cool' is evidence of the importance of these forms in displaying self-expression and egalitarianism.

'The aesthetic of cool, laid out by African art scholar Robert Farris Thompson as a sense of coolness under pressure and ability to appear calm in intense situations, bears a great deal of resemblance to these revered ideas of self-expression and egalitarianism. In Africanist dance, the expression of coolness is open to anyone who would like to present a challenge, as evidenced by the equalizing circles of the traditional dances in which the idea formed. This aesthetic of cool is ever-present in the theatrical choreography of the 1960s, by way of the air of confidence projected over the top of the rigorous performance of rhythmically complicated steps and other such physical challenges.

An additional quality found in the jazz movement aesthetic that was often rejected by postmodern choreographers and embraced by jazz dance companies was the use of upright alignment and virtuosic ballet vocabulary. In the film *Rag to Rock to Disco*, Gus Giordano states, "most American professional dancers have ballet as their basis, and then learn other forms to become versatile dancers." In the 1960s, many dance companies working within the jazz movement aesthetic, such as Giordano's, started to become increasingly reliant upon the Western conception of virtuosity that could be found in employing upright, virtuosic elements of ballet.

This was seen physically through more frequent incorporation of movements such as battement, grande jeté and other large leaps that interrupted otherwise grounded choreography. I analyze this as a measure to maintain relevance to audiences of the dance company culture, who were becoming increasingly patterned to believe that the jazz movement aesthetic was base due to its open display of sexuality and integration of material with popular appeal. Beyond the 1960s, social dance

continued to develop wholly within the jazz movement aesthetic, while presentational jazz dance continued to become more and more reliant upon the Western conceptions of virtuosity found in ballet.

The outlook that concert jazz based in social dance concepts is unworthy of serious critique experienced much development in the 1960s. The developing dance company system, overwhelmingly focused upon the postmodern aesthetic, rejected the open display of sexuality, popular appeal, the aesthetic of cool, and ballet influence that is still displayed by concert jazz dance today. This outlook has trickled down through time and is still present in dance scholarship today, despite evidence that the jazz movement aesthetic has been and will continue to be a powerful means for the construction and deconstruction of cultural knowledge.

It is crucial this effort to recognize jazz dance as relevant to the past, present and future of American culture does not stop here. Continuing to work toward a full lineage of the jazz movement aesthetic will encourage understanding of where the movement originated, how it has been both borrowed and appropriated, and the cultural implications of those processes. Encouraging a living understanding of the aesthetic will benefit today's students of dance, position it as a valuable category of creative and academic dance research, and allow jazz movement to legitimately continue to be a vital artistic method for reflecting the temper of the times.

## References

- Asante, K.W. (2001). Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation. In A. Dils & A.C. Albright (Ed.) *Moving History/ Dancing Culture: A Dance History Reader* (pp. 144-151) Middletown, CT. Wesleyan University Press.
- Bull (Novack), C.J.C. (2001). Looking at Movement as Culture: Contact Improvisation to Disco. In A. Dils & A.C. Albright (Ed.) *Moving History/ Dancing Culture: A Dance History Reader* (pp. 404-413) Middletown, CT. Wesleyan University Press.
- Card, A. (1998). The 'Great Articulation of the Inarticulate': Reading the Jazz Body in Australian and American Popular Culture in the 1960s. *Journal of Australian Studies*. 22(58), 18-28.
- Clark, D. (Producer). (1960, August 1). *Performance of Chubby Checker on American Bandstand*. Philadelphia, PA. American Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved from the Official Website of Chubby Checker, <http://www.chubbychecker.com/videos.asp>
- Fosse, B. (Director). (1968). *Sweet Charity*. United States: Universal Pictures.
- Giordano, G. (Director). (1979). *Rag to Rock to Disco*. United States: Orion Enterprises Inc.
- Giordano, R. (2007). *Social Dancing in America: A History and Reference*. (Vol. 2: Lindy Hop to Hip Hop, 1901-2000). Westport, CT. Greenwood Press.
- Gottschild, B.D. (2005). *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography From Coon to Cool*. New York, NY. Palgrave Macmillian.
- Hazzard-Gordon, K. (1990). *Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African-American Culture*. Philadelphia, PA. Temple University Press.

- Jackson, J.D. (2002). Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing. *Dance Research Journal*. 33(2), 40-53.
- Malone, J. (1996). *Steppin' On the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*. Urbana, IL. University of Illinois Press.
- McGiffert, J. (Director). (1999). *Donald McKayle, Early Work*. United States: Creative Arts Television Archive.
- Mclain Stoop, N. (Feb. 1978). American Musical Director/ Choreographer: Patrick Adiarte. *Dance Magazine*. 54-57.
- Moradian, A. (2011). Abstraction: The Empty Space. *Choreograph.net*. Retrieved from <http://choreograph.net/articles/lead-article-abstraction-the-empty-space>.
- Roy, S. (2010). Step-by-Step Guide to Dance: Yvonne Rainer. *Guardian.co.uk*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/dec/24/step-by-step-yvonne-rainer>
- Smith, G. (1966, March 14). *The Hullabaloo Dancers Perform the Batman Theme*. Los Angeles, CA. National Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amvE30VCk0w>.
- Smith, K.L. (2010). *Popular Dance: From Ballroom to Hip Hop*. New York, NY. Infobase Publishing.
- Stearns, M. & Stearns, J. (1994). *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Boston, MA. Da Capo Press.
- Sussmann, L. (1984). Anatomy of the Dance Company Boom, 1958-1980. *Dance Research Journal*. 16(2). 23-28.

Teten, C. (Producer). (1998). *Dancetime! 500 Years of Social Dance. Volume II: 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. United States: Dancetime Publications.

Thompson, R.F. (1973). An Aesthetic of the Cool. *African Arts*. 7(1). 40-43.

Thorpe, E. (1995). *Black Dance (Reissue Edition)*. New York, NY. The Overlook Press.

Wall, T. (2009). Rocking Around the Clock: Teenage Dance Fads from 1955-1965. In J. Malnig (Ed.) *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (pp. 182-198) Urbana, IL. University of Illinois Press.