

4 Jazz and dance

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Jazz is often presented as a musical art form, which is fine for musical connoisseurship. But any serious inquiry into the nature, history, aesthetics and even future of jazz needs to examine the unique relation between music-making and dancing that existed at its origin and was mutually nourishing for decades. The severing of this relation brought about tremendous changes in both the music and the dance.

Popular dancing is an extremely important cultural activity, for bodily movement is a kind of repository for social and individual identity. The dancing body engages the cultural inscripting of self and the pursuit of pleasure, and dancing events are key sites in the working and reworking of racial, class and gender boundaries. For this reason Linda Tomko has argued that dancing is ‘a social and cultural process operating in the midst, and not at the margins, of American life – indeed, as American life’ (1999, xiii). Particularly significant are moments of transformation, when conventional forms of popular dancing are no longer sufficiently expressive, leading to experimentation with and development of new forms of bodily identity. New music emerges whose kinetic power reflects and reinforces the new bodily identity; the music and dance resonate with each other. These episodes of transformation inevitably generate alarm about the release of unbridled sexuality and trigger efforts to repress and supervise dancing and the places where it occurs.

Western dance historians have sometimes viewed dance forms as proceeding through cycles of innovation, consolidation, decline and then revitalisation through incorporating elements of the dances of peasants or foreigners (for example, see Sachs 1965, 350). In the revitalisation process that took place in the US during the Progressive Era (c. 1890–1920), Marshall and Jean Stearns note in their classic book, *Jazz Dance*, African-Americans played the parts both of the ‘peasants’ and the ‘foreigners’ (1968, 32), while also serving as innovators and revitalisers themselves.

Origins in the Progressive Era

The Progressive Era was a time of enormous social upheaval. The rapid expansion of mass-production technologies, new immigration patterns and

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the increasing number of people living in urban areas were having a deep impact on American economic and social life. The populist movement thrived, labour struggles intensified and suffrage became a popular movement. These and other developments brought challenges to existing patterns of power and privilege, a reconstitution of social identities and a restructuring of the patterns of leisure life, giving rise to collisions with existing forms of cultural expression.

One could hardly look for a more visible and dramatic manifestation of these changes than the transformations in popular dancing. Shortly after the turn of the century, American popular dance practices consisted of two currents. One included established ballroom dances mainly of European origin, such as the two-step, polka, tango (a special case) and waltz. While earlier in their histories these dances had been wilder and controversial themselves, in the transplanted American context of the day they had come to be characterised by a standardised formal and repetitive step pattern in which the couple moved in a circular path around the dance floor, the male leading, the female following. In upper social circles, such dancing was generally restricted to private ballrooms. The other current consisted of newer, cruder dances – often from lower-class African-American communities in the south or west of the US, which had long had their own distinctive dance styles – and included the grizzly bear, bunny hug, monkey glide, chicken reel, kangaroo dip, shimmy, Texas Tommy and turkey trot, in which the dancers imitated animals and their movements. These proto-jazz dances – called ‘rag’, ‘tough’ or ‘animal’ dances – were popularised and inspired by rag-time music, and tended to be found in the nightclubs, bar-rooms, cabarets, brothels and other places where such music was played.

The two types of dance were not incompatible – one might navigate the floor with the first, then stop and do the second – still, they contrasted. Rag dances involved greater use of the whole body, including many parts neglected by traditional ballroom dances: upper torso, waist, hips. Rag dances could be wild, earthy and erotically charged, had room for improvisation – what mattered were originality and style – and were generally done in place, with the creative agency vested in each individual. Rag dances, which would have been next to impossible to do in the corsets that until the recent past had been a regular feature of female clothing, opened up new possibilities of expression for the (white, middle-class) female body in particular. The often free sensuality of these dances helped trigger, in 1911, a vigorous campaign against them and the establishments in which they were performed. The campaign was waged far more against the dance than the music: the technology of the instrument mediates between the desire of the performer and the music performed, opening up a space that (supposedly) purifies the music of sexuality.

The two competing strands of social dancing – one relatively codified and repetitive, the other improvisational and sensual – always coexist in social dancing to some degree, but rarely as dramatically, or with as much interaction, as during the Progressive Era. Jazz dancing would develop, as it were, in the ‘front’ between them.

Meanwhile, in another development crucial to the development of jazz music and dance, a space was gradually opening up for the professional Negro performer. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the decline of minstrelsy and the rise of travelling shows ‘helped the Negro dancer establish himself as a small but necessary cog in the wheel of tent-show business’, write Marshall and Jean Stearns, providing ‘the seeds on a grass-roots level for the growth of a professional style of dancing’ (1968, 63). By the 1880s, a few Broadway shows were including scenes with Negro dancers – though in the usual stereotypical roles – and by the 1890s, some Broadway shows had all-Negro casts. In the late 1890s, the cakewalk, its parodic aspects partly a response to white popular dancing, was the focus of a dance craze which often centred around competitions. This ‘furnished a springboard for the rash of dances to come, for during the competitions stress was placed upon individual invention’, effectively allowing the cakewalk to serve as ‘an incubator of talent, a framework for new steps, which helped to prepare the way for ballroom dances’ (*ibid.*, 123–4). Because few white dancers were competitive, the cakewalk craze provided Negro dancers with additional visibility and status. The growing opportunities for Negro professional dancers, and the increasing number of venues where performers and audiences could be of different races, helped foster and spread particular dances and dance forms, including tap dancing.

By the beginning of the second decade of the century a dance ‘craze’ or ‘revolution’ was under way, helping to restructure American leisure life and the role of dancing in it. One contributing factor was technological – the spread of the phonograph – which not only popularised different kinds of dance music but allowed novice dancers to learn, with musical accompaniment, in private. Another factor was the growing commercialisation of American leisure life; the commercial promotion of the phonograph, for instance, did much to foster the acceptability of dancing in public. ‘The ragtime dance craze’, writes Susan Cook, ‘could not have attained the unprecedented popularity and respectability it did without the new means of consumer access and artistic legitimization afforded by talking machines and the surrounding industry discourse of moral uplift’ (Cook 2000).

Yet another important force was the popularity of exhibition dance teams such as Maurice Mouvet and Florence Walton, Vernon and Irene Castle, and others. These exhibition dancers helped blur the boundaries between formal and rag dances, and between informal dancing and professional theatre

(see Malnig 1992). They borrowed from rag dances, and by eliminating the rough and erotic edges created exciting new forms of dancing which they made acceptable, even in high social circles. They also opened new possibilities for enjoying dancing as a form of expression – not for professionally trained and costumed bodies on stage doing formal routines, but for ordinary bodies improvising in ordinary clothes in ordinary spaces. ‘Quotidian dancing’, Tomko remarks, became ‘an instance of performance, while performance came to be an activity available to any sociable body’ (1999, 27). This was especially novel for the female body, which could now perform with a new vitality and originality rare in older social dances, but also without becoming a sexualised object as in theatre dancing. Dancing in socially mixed situations was less and less for professional performers only.

The dance craze sparked a vast increase in the number of places to dance. New ballrooms, cabarets and nightclubs opened, and many hotels and restaurants installed dance floors to cater to the dance-mad public. And, in a development of far-reaching significance to the history of jazz, the market for musicians soared – leading to a vast increase in the number and size of bands able to support themselves. This is one important subject for jazz dance studies: the dance was not spinning off the music; it was the other way around.

Most importantly, the dance craze made it fashionable for all classes to go out dancing. The result, in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘gave the modern dance a social position and brought the nice girl into the café, thus beginning a profound revolution in American life. The great rich empire was feeling its oats and was out for some not too plebeian, yet not too artistic fun.’¹ A new life force was beginning to announce itself, going under the name ‘jazz’. The earliest known use of the term (1913), in a sports column, referred to the spirited motion that a certain pitcher put on the ball; but the term was soon widely applied to music and dancing, fiction, drama and the graphic arts. For this life force, fierce musical rhythms and sensuous bodily motions belonged naturally together:

And the rhythm whispered with the fierce unrest
Of a heart throbbing in a passionate breast

wrote Joseph March in his overwrought poem, ‘Wild Party’ (1928).

In 1917, an African-American pianist and songwriter named W. Benton Overstreet wrote a song called ‘The Jazz Dance’, the first known occurrence of the phrase in a song title. The lyrics name several dances of African-American origin, though the sheet music bills the song as a foxtrot (which was not an animal dance, and possibly named after a dancer called Fox). ‘Jazz dance’ was evidently broadly interpretable. It was not simply dancing

to jazz music; other non-jazz dances could also serve. Nor was it dancing by African-Americans: though the distinctive rhythmic features of jazz music and dance are undeniably of African-American origin, African-Americans had other forms of dancing as well; references to a distinctive ‘Negro dancing’ date back at least to the beginning of the eighteenth century. And tap dancing – with its own multicultural provenance in the Irish jig and the English clog, thoroughly worked over by African-American vaudevillians – could also be called jazz dance. ‘Jazz dance’, therefore, embraced those emerging new forms of social dancing that engaged the whole body, whose rhythms resonated with those of ragtime music and which united invention and execution through openness to improvisation. Jazz dancing, like jazz music, was a performer’s art.

Dancing in the Jazz Age

In the 1920s, new forms of jazz dancing, including the Black Bottom and the Charleston, spread to a large audience; Roger Pryor Dodge ascribed the success of the Charleston to the fact that it was ‘truly generic in character’, able to be ‘infinitely varied without losing any of the quality’, but with an easily masterable basic step that was ‘but one bar long’ (1995, 282). Jazz dancing also moved on-stage in musical theatre and modern ballet. New forms of dancing are often spread and transformed in the interaction between vernacular and stage versions, but jazz was different. The interaction between jazz vernacular dances, versions of jazz vernacular dances as represented by musical theatre and modern ballet assimilations of jazz was complex, sometimes disturbing and often fraught with racial politics. In another key subject of jazz dance studies, deep and troubling questions arose about what jazz dancing was, who could perform it and what it meant in leisure and art.

Opportunities for African-American professional dancers expanded further with the success of African-American musicals. *Shuffle Along* (1921), the first to be performed in white theatres, was the breakthrough: ‘Negro musicals were in demand thereafter, and dancing in musical comedy finally took wing’ (Stearns 1968, 132). These always included at least one performance of a vernacular dance: *Shuffle Along* included a cakewalk, *Liza* (1922) and *Runnin’ Wild* (1923) had Charleston numbers, and *Dinah* (1924) had a Black Bottom. These dances were inevitably altered in the process, and musicals thus began to play a crucial role of mediation and transformation as the dances were disseminated in new contexts in an unending cascade and recascade. The ‘black musical served as a crucial stopover on the circuitous path of popular black dance forms’, writes Anthea Kraut (1998, 27).

This process acquired a new dimension when, as Kraut notes, ‘the same dance steps that appeared first in a black musical revue were imitated, re-worked, and re-staged in white productions’ (*ibid.*). The Shimmy, for instance, was performed by Mae West in *Sometime* (1919) and Gilda Gray in *The Ziegfeld Follies* (1922) – both actresses claimed to have invented it – while Ann Pennington performed the Black Bottom in *Scandals of 1926*. Musical theatre, of course, was only doing what it does best: adopting something novel and exciting and reflecting it back to the audience. But the musical theatre was almost totally controlled by white producers, even when it featured a black cast. And certain Harlem Renaissance figures, concerned about the representation of African-Americans, noted the absence of the connection to African-American life in such reflections involving material of African-American derivation. ‘I have never seen one yet entirely realistic’, Zora Neale Hurston wrote. White performers think that ‘the Negro is easily imitated, but nothing is further from the truth’. The white performers may ‘have all the elements’, but somehow always manage to accent ‘the wrong element’. The result: ‘Just about as Negro as caviar or Ann Pennington’s athletic Black Bottom. When the Negroes who knew the Black Bottom in its cradle saw the Broadway version they asked each other, “Is you learnt dat *new* Black Bottom yet?” Proof that it was not *their* dance’ (Hurston 1995, 844–5). Already at the very beginning of jazz dancing, therefore, different groups with different interests had come to have an investment in ‘authentic’ jazz dance. Ever since, jazz dance criticism (like jazz music criticism) has had its cartographers, critics who find it important to chart the boundaries of where dances came from, and who devote considerable energy to erecting or denouncing those boundaries, and praising or condemning those who transgress them.

Another process of mediation and transformation was involved in the work of modern dance choreographers who sought, not to represent vernacular jazz dances as such, but to use them as material or influence. These modern dancers were only doing what *they* do best: mixing an exciting, newly discovered form with their own traditions to produce something expressive, even liberating, and transforming their own traditions in the process. This provoked fewer immediate charges of cultural theft than musical theatre productions did – no group was seeming to supplant or speak for another, thus it seemed no more troubling than Picasso’s use of African motifs – still, as Brenda Dixon Gottschild has observed in writing about white choreographers’ appropriation of African-derived stylistic elements, ‘It is too easy for the African American part of the equation to become invisible when jazz dance is described as an American folk dance’ (1996, 49). For these early choreographers, usually European and much further from the milieu in which jazz was nurtured, ‘jazz’ might be virtually synonymous

with ‘American’, almost as indistinguishable an influence as the music-hall motifs that appear, say, in *Parade*, the Cocteau–Picasso–Satie collaboration choreographed by Léonide Massine in 1917.

In 1922, for instance, Russian-born dancer-choreographer Adolph Bolm created the ‘jazz-pantomime’, *Krazy Kat*, but neither the movements nor the music (by American composer John Alden Carpenter) could be described as jazz or even jazz-inspired, and the term seems to be meant as a description of the eponymous comic-book protagonist’s free-swinging impudence and flair.² At least Bolm was living in the US (where the work was premiered) and had some first-hand exposure to its popular culture. The same cannot be said for the dancers and choreographers of European ‘jazz ballets’ that were premiered in Paris before 1925, including the (Paris-based) Swedish Ballet’s *Within the Quota* (1923; based on a Cole Porter score and panned when the company toured the US), Darius Milhaud’s *La création du monde* (1923; inspired by African creation myths), Jean Wiener’s ballet, *Arc en Ciel* (1925) and Nijinska’s *Jazz* (1925; based on Stravinsky’s *Ragtime*). It is true that Paris was an international cultural centre. Still, many of the artists involved had not been to the US and their exposure to jazz and US popular culture was modest, spotty, derivative and often confused; Nijinska included in her ballet hula-hoops, grass skirts and other Hawaiian touches. When the word ‘jazz’ is linked to these works it must be understood as an attempt to cast a contemporary ‘American’ edge on what were essentially European music-hall traditions. Things changed in 1925 with the arrival in Paris of Josephine Baker. Although Baker (who had first drawn attention in the US in *Shuffle Along*) was not the first African-American performer to appear in Paris, her show was a sensation and served to popularise some jazz dance elements. The term ‘jazz dance’ then came to name a movement style characterised by hip-centred motions, isolation, and sensual and quirky vitality.

Not all modern dancers thought jazz liberating. Isadora Duncan, who for her own reasons wanted to police a boundary she drew between high and low art, saw jazz as being on the wrong side. In ‘I See America Dancing’ (1927) she called it ‘monstrous’, denounced its ‘tottering, ape-like convulsions’, and rejected the ‘sensual convulsion of the South African negro’, who, according to her, had invented it. Jazz, with its ‘rhythm from the waist down’, was not fit music for dancing America, whose rhythm came from ‘the solar plexus, the temporal home of the soul’.³

Yet another critical issue for jazz studies arises from the attempts by certain white performers, and especially white jazz critics, to ‘elevate’ or ‘rescue’ jazz from what they considered party-music status to that of a ‘symphonic’ art form that, they felt, properly belonged in concert halls. This was the explicit aim, for instance, of Paul Whiteman’s 1924 Aeolian Hall

concert – billed as ‘The First American Jazz Concert’ – which culminated in George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, and the campaign continued for the next quarter-century. But for Hurston, Langston Hughes and others jazz was a music-dance phenomenon, an integral part of African-American life.⁴ ‘Music without motion was unnatural to Negroes’, wrote Hurston (1995, 844–5), while in her plays the way her characters dance is an essential part of how they articulate themselves in the world, and structurally important to the plots. ‘As a cultural form that requires interaction and thus forges social bonds’, Kraut observes, ‘vernacular dance has the potential to both assemble and disassemble the folk communities featured in Hurston’s work’ (1998, 35). At stake in these differing perspectives is nothing less than the nature of jazz itself: is it an art form, or a part of life? Whose life?

The Swing Era

By the end of the 1920s, the dance craze was well integrated into American leisure life. Dance spaces had proliferated. So had the bands needed to play in them, their local or national tours now handled by booking agencies such as Music Corporation of America (founded in 1924). Despite the fact that bands were generally characterised as ‘sweet’ or ‘hot’, the most popular bands generally had to be able to be both. And it was the ‘hot’ aspect of the music that was connected more to jazz development; a ‘hot’ dance band featured at least one jazz improviser, for what was sometimes called race dancing. Many future musicians of seminal importance in the history of jazz began their careers in high-school hot bands.

Early jazz composition and arrangement were heavily influenced by having to serve the dancers’ need for respite, variety, partner changes and a fixed number of choruses for taxi dancing (where a dime would buy, say, two choruses’ worth of partner). Linda Dahl writes, ‘This was basic training for many bands, where the rudiments, primitive though they were, were established for arranging early jazz music: solo space was sparse, leading to a compact, compressed approach to playing’ (1999, 65).

But by the end of the 1920s, a few black bands were exploring changes in the music. The still-popular ragtime, and the Charleston (see Spring), had a 2/4 rhythmic base, and the rhythm was grounded by the banjo and tuba, which played together on the downbeat. But the new tendency in certain bands was to play an even 4/4 rhythm instead of the Charleston’s 2/4. The early jazz beat-carriers, banjo and tuba, were replaced by string bass and piano, and the off-beats were slightly anticipated. This generated a propulsive rhythm soon to be called ‘swing’. Swing was less a conceptual feature of a musical structure than a kinetic bodily experience, something

to be felt rather than explained; Benny Goodman compared the task of definition to trying to describe the colour red to a child who had never seen it. Jazz dancing could now be more precisely described as dancing animated by this kinetic force. One might compare, for instance, the simple *pas de bourrée*, a ballet step, and the ‘fall off the log’, a jazz step. Both have an essentially identical foot pattern – a three-step grapevine with a lift at the beginning – but in performance are very different. The ballet step is done with an erect posture, and is a formal element which is subordinated to a larger dance structure; the jazz step is done with much more vigorous upper-body movement, and shares with the others that precede and follow it principally a rhythmic pulse, together with a stylistic flair and originality.

Around 1927 a new dance, the Lindy Hop (named after the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, whose solo flight across the Atlantic took place that year), began to emerge, characterised by an eight-count basic phrase. It was still more generic and open to improvisation than the Charleston, flexible enough to evolve with the developing swing style. In 1930, the Duke Ellington orchestra’s recording of a song called ‘That Lindy Hop’⁵ illustrates the music in transition: Ellington plays an early 1920s stride piano, the horns play Charleston figures in late 1920s style emphasising the first and third beats, while the rhythm section, on the off-beat, is clearly headed towards swing. The lyrics capture the dance craze:

Come do that Lindy Hop
And you will never stop
I’m telling you, that’s what the new rage is . . .
That dance will live on history’s pages!

Song lyrics had hyped the latest dance crazes for almost two decades, but this one was on the money. While some regional dances clung to life – such as the Balboa at Balboa Beach, California – the Lindy effectively replaced all the others.

The Lindy developed mainly at the Savoy Ballroom in New York City, though it had numerous regional variants even in the boroughs of its home town. In the 1930s the Savoy was one of the most cosmopolitan places in the world, artistically speaking. It was not the only ballroom in Harlem, but it attracted the best bands and the best dancers. For about a quarter-century after its opening in 1926, the Savoy was a catalyst for innovation, where influences from all over the world were assimilated to pioneer new traditions in music and dance. Its principal feature was a 200 × 50 ft hardwood dance floor, with bandstands against the east wall. When Lindy Hoppers first appeared, the Savoy management deemed them too wild to mix with the other dancers and cordoned off a special area for them, but it soon became

the dance at the Savoy. Most of the best dancers congregated to the north-eastern end of the ballroom in an area known as the 'Corner'.

Thanks mainly to the feverish activity at the Savoy, the Lindy was transformed during the 1930s. The dancers adopted a more relaxed pose by settling into their knees, giving their hips more swivel room and the dance a more horizontal look. Acrobatic 'air steps' developed in which one partner flipped another. Such changes made the dance suitable for the stage, and the Lindy appeared in movies and musicals of the era. In the Swing Era, the Lindy was the most popular jazz vernacular dance. It spread across the US and even the world, and came also to be called the 'jitterbug' and 'swing dancing'.

Meanwhile, modern dance choreographers continued to incorporate jazz, as in the 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' scene choreographed by George Balanchine for *On Your Toes* (1936). The assimilation of jazz vernacular dance into show dancing was the wave of the future. Writing in 1938, Lincoln Kirstein claimed that the future of American stage dancing lay, not in trying to imitate inimitable Russian dancers such as Pavlova and Nijinsky, but in drawing inspiration from America's vigorous and exciting amateur dancing; its national academies of the dance were the gymnasium on prom night, nightclubs and vaudeville stages. Three decades later, he would write that the 'strongest exterior influence on the development of the academic dance has derived (and still does, largely through Stravinsky) from jazz rhythm, beat, the shifting pulse and syncopation of styles and steps from ragtime to rock' (Copeland and Cohen 1983, 265). And in 1944, Katherine Dunham established the Dunham School of Dance, which paved the way for generations of African-American stage dancers who were strongly jazz-influenced, such as Talley Beatty, Geoffrey Holder, Eleo Pomare, Gus Solomons Jr and Alvin Ailey.

The big-band era ended soon after World War II, during another period of social transformation involving changed economics, entertainment patterns and musical tastes. The jazz alliance between music-making and dancing that had had a run of nearly four decades broke up – a development which is arguably the most significant single turning point in jazz history, and an important topic for jazz dance studies. For champions of jazz music as an art form, it was cause for celebration. At last, wrote André Hodeir on the first page of his book, *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence*, Armstrong, Ellington, Bechet and Gillespie were appearing 'in the same concert halls as Gieseking and Menuhin', and it was no longer possible, as it had been shortly before, 'for an alert, reasonably well-informed person to confuse authentic jazz with cheap dance music' (Hodeir 1956, 7).

The music changed. True, the rhythm still swung, but the rhythm section began to function in new ways. Outside the dance-band context, drummers

could play more lightly and emphasise different parts of the kit – cymbals and brushes, for instance – and serve the soloist more than before. The rhythmical demands of playing for dancers are so rigorous that the difference between a ‘ghost’ big band that has been performing the top 40s of the 1940s in concert halls and one that has worked a ballroom circuit is immediately recognisable. It is a different music.

The audience also changed: those who went to clubs tended to be wealthier and older than those who sought out dance events. For many youths restlessly seeking a new bodily identity in the new cultural context of the turbulent post-war years, the break-up of the jazz music–dance alliance meant that jazz was no longer a tool of self-discovery. This stunning cultural reversal is sent up in the movie, *Jailhouse Rock* (1957), in a scene in which Elvis Presley, a youth whose sensual new music makes his peers move their bodies, finds himself at a party where the adults are talking pretentiously about jazz. When asked his opinion, he explodes – ‘I don’t know what the hell you are talking about!’ – and bolts from the cloying atmosphere.

But jazz had left a profound influence on popular dancing. The dancing of early rock-and-roll dancers was a modified jitterbug. And even after those dancers decoupled, different versions of swing dancing continued, performed to slowed-down music and in response to local conditions. These might be called ‘allotropic’ forms of swing, adapting the term for the different forms that hot metals can take when they cool and crystallise in different patterns. Allotropes of swing dance include the imperial style in St Louis, the shag in the Carolinas, the whip and push in Texas, and West Coast swing in California.⁶ In the recent swing-dance revival, international swing-dance workshops and the video camera have intensified the spread and transformation of new styles. By the 1950s, too, jazz dancing – generally meaning a certain vocabulary of hip-centred steps, syncopated rhythms and isolated body motions – was thoroughly assimilated into show dancing, as can be seen in the works of Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse.⁷

Alliances between jazz music and jazz dancing are now special events – temporary bridges between separate cultures. In 1960, John Lewis, a founder of the Modern Jazz Quartet, defended his composition of a piece for jazz ballet by saying that ‘Jazz began as music that people danced to. We are not going out on a limb. We are just putting the music back where it belonged.’⁸ But it didn’t stay put. Jazz musicians may occasionally write for choreographers – Wynton Marsalis has been commissioned by companies as diverse as Garth Fagan and the New York City Ballet – but almost never for vernacular dancers. The contemporary jazz music scene is for listeners only; the ‘jump’ bands favoured by contemporary swing dancers work an entirely different scene.

For nearly half its history, dancers and musicians were co-creators of one cultural movement. To see the history of jazz as a series of musical performances and recordings – treating the dancers as simply those who paid the box office, or as people being entertained by the true artists who are up on the stage – amounts to a fundamental misunderstanding of jazz. Dance is an integral and indispensable part of jazz studies.