

dance collectives offer alternative kinship networks and sites of affiliation and belonging for Filipino Americans.

As an ambitious cultural history, *Manifest Technique* invites us into the postcolonial memory work that the Filipino American hip hop vernacular materializes and reimagines. Although Villegas proposes to analyze the masculinist and “messy” queer aspects of hip hop, as he asserts in the introduction, his analysis in the first chapter on the feminist and queer politics of Filipino American hip hop emcees Geo and Bambu’s musical poetics could have been enhanced.² For instance, Villegas could have explored further how the politics of masculinity and homophobia in militarized communities affect Filipino American hip hop artists’ cultural expressions and the “Filipino American military class” writ large. Nonetheless, *Manifest Technique* offers a rich and expansive comparative ethnic studies framework among other foundational hip hop studies, including those published by Jeff Chang, Elliott Powell, Nitasha Tamar Sharma, and Oliver Wang.³ Villegas’s study astutely illuminates how Filipino American vernacular cultures formulate a historical suturing between U.S. empire and postcolonial memory work, which will enrich perspectives for scholars working on Filipino American performance cultures. This book will greatly benefit interdisciplinary scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, and music journalists working at the intersections of performance studies, hip hop studies, American studies, Filipino/Filipino American studies, and Asian American studies.

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Between Beats: The Jazz Tradition and Black Vernacular Dance

By Christi Jay Wells. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

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Most books have an origin story, but few are as pointed—or as cinematic—as *Between Beats*. Academic perspective collided with the urge to dance, causing the author to “truly [feel] the gravity of jazz historical narratives. When I say gravity, I mean precisely that: it pulled me off my feet and planted my ass in a chair” (1).

Recounting the experience of lindy-hopping to a live band performing Ted Buehrer’s transcription of Mary Lou Williams’s music at the 2013 American Musicological Society’s annual meeting in Pittsburgh, PA, Wells felt that gravity pull their “ass into a chair” when the “band crossed the ‘bebop’ moment” and the music went from being music for dancing to music to be listened to

²See for example, Guest Editor C. Riley Snorton, “The Queerness of Hip Hop/The Hip Hop of Queerness,” *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International* 2, no. 2 (2013), vi–x.

³Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York, NY: Picador, 2005); Nitasha Tamar Sharma, *Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness, and a Global Race Consciousness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Oliver Wang, *Legions of Boom: Filipino American Mobile DJ Crew in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Elliott H Powell, *Sounds from the Other Side: Afro-South Asian Collaborations in Black Popular Music* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

respectfully... never mind that they still felt the impulse to dance, intellectually and corporeally. Wells uses that moment to begin to unwind the complex cross-currents by which the body and the impulse to dance are fundamental to music, yet have frequently been displaced by other narratives of musical value and appropriate deportment, behavior, and “choreography” while listening.

An introductory chapter on “Jazz Music and Its Choreographies of Listening” leads to five well-researched case studies centered around times and places, some as specific as a few years in a particular venue, each illuminating much larger contexts or tendencies in the relationships between music, dance, and culture. “‘Its Bite and Its Feeling’: The Quadroon Ball and Jazz’s New Orleans *Plaçage* Complex” is the first and perhaps the most intricate. The nineteenth-century quadroon balls fostered the emergence of music that would lead to jazz, while the dances combined sexual display, courtly ritual, and legal negotiation leading to the *plaçage*—a civil union-but-not-a-marriage between a light-skinned, free woman of color and a man of European descent. Wells builds here on the work of several recent historians: A trenchant quote from Diana Williams points out that “descriptions of the antebellum balls conjured an elaborate choreography of physical intimacy and social distance.”¹ Wells also quotes Emily Clark, who illustrates “how jazz as practice, history, and historiography—replete with both explicit and implicit miscegenation fantasy tropes—is and long has been firmly imbricated within the discursive feedback loop of the New Orleans *plaçage* complex to which the quadroon balls gave rise” (38).² To a great extent, this combination of social/cultural history and mythology becomes the ordering metaphor of *Between Beats*, as Wells expands on the productive tension between “fact” and narrative, between history and mythology. Drawing in the specifics of music and dance so often omitted from even the most sensitive historical explorations is difficult, and yet important, simply because they are both technically specific and frustratingly ephemeral.

In “‘Lindy Hopper’s Delight’: The Chick Webb Orchestra and the Fluid Labor of Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers,” the specific confines of the Savoy Ballroom provide a logical boundary for deeper exploration of the convergence between musical and movement dialects that were carried north in the Great Migration and became local to Harlem. This chapter traces the lindy hop from youthful black expression on an interracial, presumptively egalitarian dance floor to a professionalized dance style on segregated stages and screens.

“‘Counter-Bopaganda’ and ‘Torn Riffs’: Bebop as Popular Dance Music” takes us to that “bebop moment,” one of the fundamental breaks in the connection between jazz music and dance—at least, as it has traditionally been told (110). Wells rewrites dancing into the recalcitrant musical style, both as a musical impulse and a choreographic practice in possibly the most important historiographical intervention offered here. The chapter traces not only the practice of World War II-era dancing to records on flatbed trucks (something that foreshadows the soundsystem culture of post-war Jamaica), but also the transformation of the lindy hop to the bop lindy, Jersey bounce, and applejack in ballrooms like the Audubon in Harlem and the Chateau Gardens in lower Manhattan.

Historiography is explicitly addressed in chapter 5, “A Fine Art in Danger.” Wells takes on the difficult negotiation between what was forward-looking about the academic Marshall Stearns and his vocal advocacy for jazz and jazz dance and what was problematic.³ The very fact that Stearns considered dance so fundamental to understanding jazz is something that the work of recent scholars like Wells and Constance Valis Hill is starting to reassert.⁴ However, some of Stearns’s impulses were nonetheless rooted in the colonial, exoticist tropes that had been generated in the Quadroon Balls, and later

¹Diana Williams, “Can Quadroon Balls Represent Acquiescence or Resistance?,” in *Gendered Resistance: Women, Slavery, and the Legacy of Margaret Garner*, eds., Mary E. Frederickson and Delores M. Walters (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 126.

²Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 148.

³In addition to his work as a writer and broadcaster, Stearns founded the Institute for Jazz Studies, was a consultant to the U.S. Department of State’s jazz diplomacy tours in the 1950s and 1960s, and co-authored *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1968) with his wife Jean, who completed the book after his death.

⁴Constance Valis Hill, *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

nurtured in venues like the Cotton Club and Hollywood films, before being (supposedly) suppressed in the Bop era.

Between Beats closes with the highly local, deeply social, and dance-focused scene at Jazz 966, a club within a senior center in Brooklyn that Wells discovered while researching the bop chapter. Wells was drawn into this culture, connecting not just with the bop dancers they had come to interview, but another, younger frequenter of the club, musicologist Guthrie Ramsey, Jr., whose work had shaped Wells's thinking about "community theaters," or "sites of cultural memory." Ramsey's influential 2003 book had posited "the social dance" as one such site in Black communities (210).⁵

Dance, as a physical expression of music, is slippery to explicate. The body, like music, is a complex moving organism; the details can be overwhelming, but they also matter. As Wells cites, a common saying about social dance is that it is a "three-way" partnership between a dancer, their partner, and the music—an interplay Wells explicitly captures in a transcription of lindy hopper Frankie Manning's scatted description of bandleader Chick Webb's "response" to the "call" of Manning's step. Another effective and efficient passage describes how different dancers "dance every note" at Jazz 966 with a simple table of counts, weight transfers, and textual descriptions of variations in leg movements. The sections of actual dance analysis are a small percentage of the text (of which I will always want *more*), though the sense of movement is carried throughout the text, even onto the cover. A collage of musicians and dancers in the same space but through time, as indicated by changing fashion and color (black and white to technicolor, a trace of media technology's impact on memory), the artwork was executed by Brandy Smith, Wells's dance partner, when their dancing was curtailed by COVID.

Such personal moments wind through the academic prose, grounding the experience, from the author's excited discovery of a particular drawing in an advertisement for a quadrone ball, to the "gut punch" discovery further down in the same column—an advertisement of rewards for runaway slaves (35). Later, Ramsey's gentle accusation of Wells "ethnologizing" him is a knowing gesture of the give-and-take of first-person research by one who can articulate what other interviewees may recognize but not be able to express. Nuances of language, particularly those that reflect "the role of institutions and discourses in shaping our available corporeal modes of being," are carefully articulated, from the author's own pronouns (26) to such closely allied and yet often profoundly different terms such as black, Black, Black American, African, and African-American (xv). Calling attention to these terminologies might in the future seem superfluous, even somewhat quaint, but in this moment the care paid here resonates through the book. It might also provide a touchpoint for future scholars wishing to gauge the connotations and implications of those terms circa 2020.

Between Beats is a book likely to appeal to scholars of music, dance, and American and African-American culture and studies (the relationship there is both inextricable and complicated, as the book addresses), and may even attract keen lay readers eager to explore dance history or dance's often neglected importance to music and culture. The text richly evokes music and dance in very specific places and times, but common folkways wind their ways through migration, segregation, and integration, both buffeted and nurtured by institutions and industrial structures from Roaring Twenties dance halls to classic Hollywood, to a neighborhood senior center around the turn of the millennium. That Wells juggles that complexity with grace and wit results in a book that is intellectually rewarding and historically evocative, and that makes you want to get up and dance.

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⁵Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4.