Advanced Jazz Dance History

DEFINITION:
Jazz dance is identifiable by its syncopated rhythms (accenting the offbeat) and isolated moving body parts. Jazz styles include movements that are sharp or smooth, fast or slow, exaggerated or subtle.

BRIEF HISTORY:
Jazz dance reflects the American historical events, cultural changes, ethnic influences and especially the evolution of music and social dances. The essence of jazz dance is its bond to jazz music.

Jazz dance was born out of the combination of African and European influences. When the African slaves were brought to America, with them came the syncopated rhythms that were inherent among African folk songs and dances. As some of the white plantation owners observed and participated in the songs and dances, they added new ideas and styles to the dance steps which were influenced from folk dances from their European homelands. The popularity of jazz grew out of the plantation and into traveling entertaining groups called minstrel shows. During the *Roaring Twenties,* dance halls became a popular hangout for the young and spirited.

In the 1930's, Blues became the new sound of the 1930's and was heard in great symphonic jazz orchestras such as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. This was the swing era, and dance interpreted the energy with the vigorous *lindy hop, jitterbug and boogie woogie* dances. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers starred in films that promoted jazz. Ballroom dance evolved into its own distinct dance form.

In the 1940's, with the onset of World War II, the popularity of jazz dance enjoyed in the dance halls diminished. Young men were enlisted in the military forces, and women assisted in the war by going to work in the factories. Jazz dance's death as a social format gave rise to the birth of a professional dance form. Systemized dance training of ballet and modern influenced the development of jazz technique.

With the new musical sounds of rock 'n 'roll of the 1950's, social dancing became popular again. The jitterbug sustained the years and was often seen at the sock hops, along with the chicken and the mash potato. Matt Mattox emerged as another influence to jazz technique. His method derived from the concept of a straight line, creating a percussive style with strong angular movements, sharp accents, rebounds and turns.

Dancers and choreographers from ballet and modern companies were crossing over into the Broadway craze for musicals. Jack Cole, who was trained in modern dance, defined jazz technique into isolated body parts and flowing natural movements. He is often considered the "father of jazz dance technique".

In the 1960's, dances like the *twist, hitchhiker, monkey, swim* and the *jerk* became popular dances influenced by song artists such as Elvis Presley and the Beatles. Two more theories of jazz technique evolved from Eugene Louis Paccinto "Luigi", and Gus Giordano. Luigi's style incorporated the whole body in a lyrical quality influenced from his ballet training. He recovered from a serious car accident by treating himself and using dance as a means of physical therapy. Giordano, who was trained in modern, developed a classical uplifting elegant style using isolated movements which emphasized the head and torso. He also incorporated yoga as a means of relaxation.

The end of the 20th century produced more vehicles for social dancing in the discos of the 70's and the new wave clubs of the 80's. Bob Fosse was noted as an outstanding choreographer of Broadway shows and created the distinctive style of the long-legged look with raised shoulders and limp wrists. The 80's and 90's incorporated dance into music videos and used dance themes as a basis for motion pictures. Dance competitions have made their way back, with prizes being more than a cake. Awards include scholarships to prestigious dance schools around the country.

Other Jazz Dance Styles

Hip Hop: This style is syncopated and often uses isolations. It is frequently seen on music videos and is danced to a rap-like beat.

The **history of hip-hop dance** encompasses the people and events since the late 1960s that have contributed to the development of the early hip-hop dance styles: uprock, breaking, locking, roboting, boogaloo, and popping. Black and Latino Americans created uprock and breaking in New York City. Black Americans in California created locking, roboting, boogaloo, and popping—collectively referred to as the funk styles. All of these dance styles are different stylistically. They share common ground in their street origins and in their improvisational nature.

More than 40 years old, hip-hop dance became widely known after the first professional street-based dance crews formed in the 1970s in the United States. The most influential groups were Rock Steady Crew, The Lockers, and The Electric Boogaloos who are responsible for the spread of breaking, locking, and popping respectively. The Brooklyn-based dance style uprock influenced breaking early in its development. Boogaloo gained more exposure because it is the namesake of the Electric Boogaloos crew. Uprock, roboting, and boogaloo are respected dance styles but none of them are as mainstream or popular as breaking, locking, and popping.

Parallel with the evolution of hip-hop music, hip-hop social dancing emerged from breaking and the funk styles into different forms. Dances from the 1990s such as the Running Man, the Worm, and the Cabbage Patch entered the mainstream and became fad dances. After the millennium, newer social dances such as the Cha-Cha Slide and the Dougie also caught on and became very popular.

Hip-hop dance is not a studio-derived style. Street dancers developed it in urban neighborhoods without a formal process. All of the early sub styles and social dances were brought about through a combination of events including inspiration from James Brown, DJ Kool Herc's invention of the break beat, the formation of dance crews, and Don Cornelius' creation of the television show *Soul Train*. (Wikipedia)

Lyrical: This style can be presented in both a modern or balletic form. It is movement that is sustained, suspended, and flows. It is based upon the lyrics of the music.

Musical Theater: This style of dance is usually similar to character in style, but the dancer is not meant to portray a specific character. The dancers may also sing the lyrics to the song as they dance.

Jazz Vocabulary

AXEL: Turning tuck jump
BALL CHANGE: The transfer of weight from one foot to the other, on the ball of the foot.
BODY ROLL: A wavelike motion which rolls through the length of the body, focusing on the hips.
CHAINE TURN: A turning step on both feet making a chain like pattern on the floor.
CHASSE: To chase; one leg seems to chase after the lead leg. Can be done to the front or side.
C-JUMP: Turning leap in which the back and head are arched back and both legs are bent with the feet reaching towards the head.
DOUBLE STAG: A turning leap where both legs are bent at approximately 60 degrees.
DRAG-One body part leads, as the other follows.
FAN KICK: A battement that makes an arc in the air.
FLAT BACK: Bending forward from the hips with a straight back.
FLICK: A sudden sharp movement.
FORCED ARCH: Placing the foot on the floor with only the ball of the foot touching.
HITCH KICK: A kick that begins with a hitch of the opposite leg.
ISOLATION: Moving only one part of the body.
JAZZ HAND: Flat hand with all fingers spread out.
JAZZ SIT: weight rests in one hip.
JAZZ RUN: An elongated run that uses plie and allows you to travel quickly and efficiently.
JAZZ SLIDE: Movement where leading leg lunges in second and following leg slides straight along the floor.
JAZZ SQUARE: A series of step which create a square pattern. Stepping, side, back, side, front.
JAZZ WALK: A walk on your toes, with knees bent and shoulders back, leading with the hip.
KICK TURN: Hold grand battement while you pirouette.
LAYOUT: A dramatic movement in which a dancer extend one leg and arches the back at the same time.
LUNGE: A large, open fourth position in which one knee is bent (usually the front), and the other is straight.
NEEDLE: One foot is on the ground (flat) in-line with the shoulders, and the opposite leg is kicked back, reaching for the sky. This puts the dancer in a position, with the straight legs forming a straight line, from head to toe.
PARALLEL: Referring to the feet. Toes pointing to the front and heels to the back.
PAS DE BOURRE: Step combination including a step to the back, then to the side, then a step in front.
PASSE: The supporting leg is straight and the other leg is bent with the toe touching the supporting knee**.**
PENCIL TURN: A turn on one leg, with the supporting leg straight and the other leg extended to the front in a degage position.
PIROUETTE: A turn on one leg, with the supporting leg straight and the other leg in a passé position at the knee. Knee stays forward.
PITCH: Side extension in which you tilt the upper body to either side as the leg lengthens in opposition.
PIVOT TURN: Turning on the ball of the foot to face the opposite direction.
SHARP: Referring to strong, striking energy used to accent a movement or a step.
SINGLE STAG: A turning leap where the leading leg is straight and the back leg is bent in attitude.
SIX STEP: Like the pas de bourre, but you are crossing forward instead of back.
SPLITS: In a right or left split, the knee of the rront leg faces up toward the ceiling while the knee of the back leg faces the ground. Ideally the hips should be squared to the front. In a middle split, both knees should face forward until flat in the splits when they may face upward.
SPLIT LEAP: Performing the right or left splits in the air. Typically following a chasse.
SPOTTING: Finding a focal point in which to "spot" as you do any kind of turning movement
SPREAD/ SIDE/ CENTER LEAP: A leap done with both legs straddle at equal heights.
SWITCH/ SCISSOR LEAP: Scissor-like leap where legs switch places in the air
TILT: A jump in which the body resembles a pitch in the air
TUCK JUMP: A jump where both knees are brought up towards the chest.
TOUR: Turn in the air.

People of Interest

Jack Cole: The legendary jazz-dance pioneer Jack Cole was born John Ewing Richter in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and died at age 62 in Los Angeles. Over his four-decade career, the hard-driving dancer/choreographer developed a searing style of distinctively American dance for stage and screen. A master of many forms, Cole drew from them all—modern, ethnic, ballet, and popular—to forge a twentieth century movement language known as theatrical jazz dance. (Cole preferred the expression "urban dance.") Cole was recognized even in his time as a stellar exponent of the art form. In retrospect we see that he broke down genres, anticipated dance multiculturalism, trained exceptional performers, and challenged both his audience and the dance establishment. His innovations and achievements earn Cole a place not only at the top of the jazz dance realm, but in the pantheon of America's greatest dance artists. (danceheritage.org)

Eugene Louis "Luigi" Faccuito: was an American jazz dancer, choreographer, teacher and innovator who is best known for creating a jazz exercise technique. The Luigi Warm Up Technique is an influential training program that promotes body alignment, balance, core strength, and "feeling from the inside."[1] It is also used for rehabilitation. This method became the world's first standard technique for teaching jazz and musical theater dance. Faccuito developed the technique, which consists of a series of ballet-based exercises, for his own rehabilitation after suffering paralyzing injuries in a car accident at the age of twenty one. Determined to dance again, he first learned to regain control of his body by what he uses as a cornerstone of his technique – namely, to "lengthen and stretch the body without strain," and "put the good side into the bad side.'' He then focused on a way "to stabilize himself – as if he were pressing down on an invisible (dance) barre. His efforts paid off because he went on to have a successful dance career, and became a world renowned jazz teacher. (Wikipedia.org)

Bob Fosse: Choreographer Robert Louis Fosse was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 23, 1927. Fosse took an early interest in dance, displaying unusual skill. His parents supported his interest, enrolling him in formal dance training. By his early teens, Fosse was dancing professionally in local nightclubs. It was here that he was first exposed to the themes of vaudeville and burlesque performance. After fulfilling his military requirement, Fosse settled in New York City and continued to pursue dance. The first few parts that Fosse landed were as part of a Broadway chorus. In 1953 he appeared briefly in the MGM movie musical *Kiss Me Kate* (1953). His work attracted the attention of Broadway director George Abbott and choreographer Jerome Robbins. Fosse choreographed the 1954 show, *Pajama Game*, which was directed by George Abbott. Fosse's signature style, which incorporated complex moves and imagery drawn from vaudeville, was instantly popular. *Pajama Game* earned him his first Tony Award for Best Choreography. His next musical, *Damn Yankees*, was another smash. Fosse forged a working relationship with leading dancer Gwen Verdon that would span his career.
Hugely successful by 1960, Fosse still faced opposition from director and producers who considered his material was too suggestive. His subsequent musicals included *Sweet Charity*, *Cabaret* and *Pippin*. The 1972 film version of *Cabaret* (1972) won eight Academy Awards. Fosse won Tony Awards for direction and choreography for his work on *Pippin: His Life and Times* (1981). Fosse wrote three additional stage musicals before his death. He survived a heart attack, suffered during rehearsals for *Chicago*, to write and choreograph the autobiographical film *All That Jazz*. His later productions were not as successful as earlier work. *Big Deal*, Fosse's last musical, was particularly poorly received. (biography.com)

Gus Giordano: Gus Giordano's dedication to jazz dance exhibited itself in all facets of his extraordinary life: dancer, master teacher, choreographer, author, and founder of the Giordano Dance School (GDS) in Evanston, Illinois, founder of the dance company Giordano Dance Chicago and founder of Jazz Dance World Congress. Mr. Giordano created and taught the Giordano Technique at venues across the United States and around the world. He choreographed in all areas of performance including television, film, stage commercials, industrials, and concert dance. (giordanodance.org)

Matt Mattox: Mattox was a dancer, choreographer and teacher who helped shape contemporary jazz dance in the United States and Europe. Mr. Mattox, who had made his home in France for many years, had a prominent career dancing in films and on Broadway in the 1940s and afterward. Though he was not as well-known as some of the celebrated Hollywood dancers of his era, he was by all accounts every bit their peer. As a dancer, Mr. Mattox was celebrated for his "ballpoint ease, pinpoint precision, and catlike agility," as Dance magazine wrote in 2007. He was perhaps best known to moviegoers as the young, bearded Caleb Pontipee, one of the marriageable frontiersmen at the heart of the 1954 film "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers."On Broadway, Mr. Mattox danced in *Once Upon a Mattress* (1959), in which he created the role of the Jester; and in the 1957 revival of *Brigadoon*, in which he played Harry Beaton. Combining his own extensive training in ballet with tap dance, modern dance and folkloric dance traditions from around the world, he created a new, fluidly integrated art form he liked to call "freestyle dance." (ibdb.com)

Jerome Robbins: is world renowned for his work as a choreographer of ballets as well as his work as a director and choreographer in theater, movies and television. His Broadway shows include *On the Town, Billion Dollar Baby, High Button Shoes, West Side Story, The King and I, Gypsy, Peter Pan, Miss Liberty, Call Me Madam,* and *Fiddler on the Roof.* His last Broadway production in 1989, *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, won six Tony Awards including best musical and best director. Among the more than 60 ballets he created are *Fancy Free, Afternoon of a Faun, The Concert, Dances At a Gathering, In the Night, In G Major, Other Dances, Glass Pieces and Ives, Songs,* which are in the repertories of New York City Ballet and other major dance companies throughout the world. His last ballets include *A Suite of Dances created for Mikhail Baryshnikov* (1994), *2 & 3 Part Inventions* (1994), *West Side Story Suite* (1995) and *Brandenburg* (1996). In addition to two Academy Awards for the film *West Side Story*, Mr. Robbins has received four Tony Awards, five Donaldson Awards, two Emmy Awards, the Screen Directors' Guild Award, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Mr. Robbins was a 1981 Kennedy Center Honors Recipient and was awarded the French Chevalier dans l'Ordre National de la Legion d'Honneur. Mr. Robbins died in 1998. (jeromerobbins.org)

Fred Astaire (born Frederick Austerlitz;[1] May 10, 1899 – June 22, 1987) was an American dancer, choreographer, singer, musician and actor.
His stage and subsequent film and television careers spanned a total of 76 years, during which he made 31 musical films and several award-winning television specials and issued numerous recordings. He was named the fifth Greatest Male Star of All Time by the American Film Institute. He is best known as the dancing partner and on-screen romantic interest of Ginger Rogers, with whom he co-starred in a series of ten Hollywood musicals which transformed the genre.

Ginger Rogers (born Virginia Katherine McMath; July 16, 1911 – April 25, 1995) was an American actress, dancer and singer who appeared in films, and on stage, radio, and television throughout much of the 20th century. During her long career, she made 73 films, collaborating with Fred Astaire as a romantic lead actress and dancing partner in a series of ten Hollywood musical films that revolutionized the genre.

Deborrah Kaye "Debbie" Allen (born January 16, 1950) is an American actress, dancer, choreographer, television director, television producer, and a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.[1][2] She is perhaps best known for her work on the 1982 musical-drama television series Fame, where she portrayed dance teacher Lydia Grant, and served as the series' principal choreographer.

Mandy Moore is a two-time Emmy-nominee and world-class Director, Choreographer and Dancer best known for her ground-breaking work on the global television hit So You Think You Can Dance. Mandy's contemporary and jazz choreography has been performed on television, in film and on concert and theater stages around the world. Her long list of credits includes: American Idol; Did You Hear About The Morgans? with Hugh Grant; Dancing With The Stars; So You Think You Can Dance (where she also appears as a Guest Judge); Nickelodeon's Fresh Beat Band; the L.A. Ballet Company's innovative New Wave L.A. program; Celine Dion's sold-out Taking

Chances concert tour; Strictly Come Dancing; and Cirque du Soleil's My Immortal. Mandy both directed and choreographed a crowd-pleasing stage production of The Wedding Singer, and continues to teach at L.A.'s Edge Performing Arts Center; internationally for the JUMP dance conventions; and in private studio sessions for independent performers.

Eugene Curran "Gene" Kelly (August 23, 1912 – February 2, 1996) was an American dancer, actor, singer, film director, producer and choreographer. He was known for his energetic and athletic dancing style, his good looks, and the likeable characters that he played on screen. Best known today for his performances in films such as An American in Paris (1951), Anchors Aweigh (1945), and Singin' in the Rain (1952), he was a dominant force in musical films until they fell out of fashion in the late 1950s. His many innovations transformed the Hollywood musical and he is credited with almost single-handedly making the ballet form commercially acceptable to film audiences.