**Jazz Unit Guide**

**Name:** __________________________

**Jazz Skills and Vocabulary**

- **Isolations**: moving one body part at a time.
- **Forced Arch**: High on the balls of your feet (relevé) and in demi plie (bent legs).
- **Jazz Square**: 4 step pattern that makes a square; box step.
- **Grapevine**: Sideways traveling step, alternating crossing in front and back.
- **Jazz Walk**: Walk/ steps done in forced arch.
- **Ball Change**: Change of weight using the ball of the foot.
- **Pas de Bourre**: Bourre step; back, side, front.
- **Pivot Turn**: Turning/ changing direction with both feet connected to the floor.
- **Chasse**: To chase.
- **3 Point Turn**: A turn completed in 3 steps, right or left.
- **Chaines**: In a chain, links, series of rapid turns.
- **Pirouette**: Spin, whirl.
- **En Dehors**: Outside (related to the direction of a turn).
- **En Dedans**: Inside (related to the direction of a turn).
- **6 Step Pirouette**: 6 step pattern followed by an en dehors pirouette.
- **Grand Battement**: Large beat; kick.
- **Saut De Chat**: Jump of the cat.

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**The Origins of Jazz Dance**

The origin of the word “jazz” still remains an unsolved mystery. Jazz could have come from the jazz or razz bands of the southern US, particularly New Orleans at the turn of the century. The styles they played were called “Ragtime”, “Blues”, and “Dixieland”. This music was mainly the domain of African American Artists. These musical forms incorporating syncopation, European harmonies, complex rhythms of West Africa, and American gospel singing were to become known as “jazz”. This sound naturally inspired movement, and “jazz” was born.

Speculation about these two American art forms, jazz music and jazz dance, is that their influence sparked one another. They evolved sometimes together and other times separately. The roots of jazz dance borrow from a melting pot; a mixture of world culture traditions.

**1900- 1930’s The Early Years**

In the early 1900’s, concert staples were tap, soft shoe, and ballroom dance. These steps were often the cornerstones of minstrel shows and vaudeville acts. Also, during this era, over one hundred zippy, fast paced popular dances came and went in America. By the Flapper Era of the 1920’s, Dixieland music, with its fast Ragtime beat, spread from New Orleans up the Mississippi and on to Chicago and New York. Famous dances of this period were the Charleston, the Shimmy, and the Lindy Hop. Catchy rhythms and fun steps served the sway in popular opinion in favor of these styles of dance. Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, an important black tap dancer of the day, elevated rhythmic structure, precise footwork and complexity of steps to professional standards during the 1920’s.
Into the 1930’s spotlight came the legendary jitterbug, as well as several Latin influenced dances such as the Rhumba and the Conga. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, a dynamic dancing duo, combined balletic elegance and jazzy percussive accents to sustain a long and fruitful partnership on stage and screen. Their performances created an acceptance for what would evolve into jazz dance.

1940’s The Swing Era

The Swing era of the 1940’s marked a major dance boom. Movies, ballroom dancing, musical theater, and nightclub performances helped increase the great appeal of jazz dance and music. The Broadway musical, Oklahoma, choreographed by Agnes de Mille, was the first open attempt in musical theater history to advance the storyline using jazz-like choreography.

A famous dancer of the time was Gene Kelly. Although he is known today for his performances in Singin’ in the Rain and An American in Paris, he was also a dominant force in Hollywood musical films from the mid-1940’s until this art form fell out of fashion in the late 1950’s. His many innovations transformed the Hollywood musical film, and he is credited with almost single-handedly making the ballet form commercially acceptable to film audiences.

The forties also witnessed the development of jazz into a serious dance form. Specialized techniques and choreographic styles were budding at studios and in some colleges.

Jack Cole, often considered the “father” of jazz dance trained in modern and Asian dance forms. This combination proved successful for the nightclub, musical, and film choreography.

1950’s Jazz

In the mid 1950’s ballet and modern dance sprouted their wings in the US and their appeal helped push jazz dance into a new growth spurt. Plays, musicals, movies and television helped legitimize it as a performing art not merely entertainment. In 1957, noted choreographer Jerome Robbins used Jazz-like choreography to depict street gang life in New York City in the widely acclaimed, highly “dancy” musical, West Side Story. Many theorists view this as the true beginning of jazz dance as we know it today.

A new talent, Matt Lennox (a Cole trained dancer), became identified with a linear, percussive style which he incorporated into his Broadway, concert dance, and television choreography. He is a primary figure in the evolution of the jazz dancer going from a high kicking chorus girl to a concert caliber performer, and of a jazz dance going from the dance halls to concert halls.

1960’s The Great Emerge

In the 1960’s, Gus Giordano, Luigi, and other giants of jazz began to carve out their own niches, and the face of jazz dance changed from “fun” to the realm of the highly skilled dancer. During this decade, the identifiable styles and techniques of the greats emerged.

Giordano was involved in all facets of dance: dancer, teacher, choreographer, author, and founder of Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Center in Chicago. His book, Anthology of American Jazz Dance, was the first of its kind and was instrumental in helping turn the study of jazz dance into a respectable and important American dance form.

Dance historians have defined Luigi’s style as classic jazz, sophisticated, elegant, and liquid fire. The exercise routine he created for his own rehabilitation after a devastating accident became the world’s first complete technique for learning jazz dance. Luigi’s talents and perseverance have given him the opportunity to work in every part of show business, from burlesque to Hollywood musicals, Broadway and beyond.