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Series Foreword

From the Lindy hop to hip hop, dance has helped define American life and culture. In good times and bad, people have turned to dance to escape their troubles, get out, and have a good time. From high school proms to weddings and other occasions, dance creates some of our most memorable personal moments. It is also big business, with schools, competitions, and dance halls bringing in people and their dollars each year. And as America has changed, so, too, has dance. The story of dance is very much the story of America. Dance routines are featured in movies, television, and videos; dance styles and techniques reflect shifting values and attitudes toward relationships; and dance performers and their costumes reveal changing thoughts about race, class, gender, and other topics. Written for students and general readers, The American Dance Floor series covers the history of social dancing in America.

Each volume in the series looks at a particular type of dance such as swing, disco, Latin, folk dancing, hip hop, ballroom, and country & western. Written in an engaging manner, each book tells the story of a particular dance form and places it in its historical, social, and cultural context. Thus each title helps the reader learn not only about a particular dance form, but also about social change. The volumes are fully documented, and each contains a bibliography of print and electronic resources for further reading.

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Preface

My sister Erin and I have written this book from the perspective of being avid Swing dancers ourselves. We live and breathe it most nights of our lives through our business, the Pasadena Ballroom Dance Association (PBDA), which we founded in Pasadena, California, in 1983. We have always referred to our business as "a school of social dance," offering classes and dances in all styles of American social dance, and the concept of Swing as a "social dance" is important here. In 1924, when the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing mapped out a structure and a set of rules governing ballroom dances, two distinct styles of dance emerged: International Ballroom, and American Social dance. Dance historian and author Ralph G. Giordano gives this excellent explanation of the International style: "Ballroom dancing is marked by a pursuit of perfection on set routines danced with the same partner" (2007, Vol. II, 45). Social dancing, however, is an entirely different art form. Based not upon choreography but on a dancer's ability to lead or follow, Social dance entails spontaneity and constant interplay between the music and the partner. The pursuit of perfection for a Social Swing dancer means being able to dance gracefully and skillfully with a variety of partners; leading or following with a flair of individual expression in a tandem duet of synchronized energy. It doesn't matter if it's a fast song or a slow song, one you've never heard before, or a tune you've danced to over and over again. You don't feel exactly the same way twice, so you dance it differently each time. And when it all comes together—when you've clicked with the music and your partner, you're in sync with the rhythm and your entire body's

moving with effortless ease—everything feels exactly right. There is elation and joy, as satisfying as any perfectly executed choreographed performance routine. Those are what great social dancing moments are made of.

In the 1990s, at the height of the second era of swing, a number of styles of Swing were popular, but the Lindy Hop became a global phenomenon. This was due, in large part, to one of the original Savoy Ballroom Lindy Hoppers, Frankie Manning, who shared his expertise in the dance worldwide. His 2007 autobiography, *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop*, co-authored by Cynthia Millman, is a wonderful record of his life and will ensure that his legacy, and the dance that he so loved, will be preserved for future generations. Manning passed away at the age of 94, as we were writing this book. Like so many people around the world, we feel lucky to have known him. We will always treasure the time we spent with him over the years: dancing with him, talking to him, and calling him our friend. Along with the Lindy Hop, this book also delves into West Coast Swing, a vital offshoot of the Lindy Hop, as well as many other styles including Jitterbug, East Coast Swing, Shag and Balboa, to only name a few.

This is not an instructional guide to learning Swing dancing, but is instead a look back at the remarkable history of Swing and its evolution over the years in the multiethnic melting pot of America. It may seem odd that we start with the subject of slavery in the United States, but that's where the story begins. It progresses through the years of minstrelsy, the jazz age, the big band era of swing music, bebop, and the decline of partnered dance in the 1960s, then traces Swing's development and resurgence in the late 1990s, continuing through more contemporary trends of the twenty-first century. We have chosen to focus mainly on the East and West Coasts of America—New York and Los Angeles—the two areas where Swing, in general, has had the most notoriety. However, many other regions contributed to the development of the dance, and by the second era of Swing, many of the smallest cities in the most remote areas of the country were playing significant roles in keeping it vital.

The evolution of music parallels this story, as the connection between swing music and the dance known as Swing is undeniable. Besides its many talented musicians, American history is filled with innovative dancers who created new steps and new styles, often testing the limits of social acceptability in the process, but advancing the cause

of Swing. But it clearly took the right combination of elements—the music, the social climate of the time, and previous dance trends to springboard from—to produce the Lindy Hop, the original style of Social-partnered Swing dancing in America. It was a similar combination of elements that produced the second era of Swing, along with one extra important element: some of the original first era dancers being on hand to help guide its course.

In writing this book, we've walked a tricky tightrope in regards to our own contribution in "bringing Swing back" from its original heyday of the 1930s and 40s. Erin and her dance partner in the 1980s, Steven Mitchell, are credited with bringing Frankie Manning out of "dance retirement," and our PBDA has been unique in its large numbers of students and its longevity as a vibrant part of the international social dance community. While we recognize that we have played an integral role in the Swing story, there are clearly people who are more important to the overall history of Swing dancing, and we personally know a number of people equally qualified to have written this book. They would have each chosen different stories to tell, and had their own focuses based on their areas of expertise; their finished products would all be interesting and equally valuable. For the subject of Swing dancing is multilayered, multidimensional, and vast, and its history is not one story, but many. We hope this book gives the honor due to all original and subsequent Swing dancers, event organizers, instructors, historians . . . all the people who throughout the years have pushed for the preservation of Swing dancing (and social dancing in general), as well as those with new interest in the subject.

The story of Swing is still unfolding in the twenty-first century, with contemporary trends driving social dance in new directions. However, as of this writing, Swing dancing has become clearly defined as a long-lasting cultural tradition steeped in history, an American folk dance, an American treasure.

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Acknowledgments

My sister Erin leads one of the busiest lives of anyone I have ever known, and although I took the lead in writing this book, it would not have happened without her enormous contribution of good ideas and sound editorial input for which I am very grateful. We have always worked closely together in running the Pasadena Ballroom Dance Association; it has always been a true family business. While Erin and I taught the classes, our parents were fully involved behind the scenes—and although they were both excellent dancers in their own right, they had the "business sense" which helped us make our dance dreams real. In all our endeavors in life, our parents remain our biggest fans, and we appreciate them more than we can ever say. Erin and I both met our husbands as a result of our dance business. They both have careers of their own, but they have always been wonderfully supportive of ours and have often worked (and danced) right along with us. Erin's husband, Jim Key, a general contractor, has devoted many hours to our dance hall and our various events. My husband, Scott Price (a piping-design engineer who is also an amazing dancer), took time to read each chapter as I completed it, and I have appreciated his critical eye and thoughtful comments. His entire family has been extremely supportive and helpful, too. We also want to thank our editor George Butler, Erin Ryan, and our friend Rhonda Hicks for helping me with preproduction details. Jessica Cheatwood, Kevin and Richard Price, Larry Schulz, Mary Collins, Alycia Keys, Jean Veloz, and Paul Armstrong are just a few of the people who made photographic contributions.

Ralph G. Giordano's remarkable 2007 two volume set *Social Dancing in America*, inspired us tremendously. We're grateful for the opportunity he gave us to write this book, along with his confidence in us and his continuous support along the way. We also want to thank the staff and all the students of PBDA (as well as all the attendees of Swing Camp Catalina over the years) for their enthusiasm and for continuing to inspire us. We appreciate all the talented musicians who have ever inspired us to move, and all the wonderful partners who have shared happy moments with us on the dance floor.

On a more personal note, I want to thank my sister Erin for bringing Frankie Manning into our world as our lives have been enriched many times over by knowing him. (I know I'm not alone in this sentiment.) A special thank-you as well to Frankie's son Chazz Young and Frankie's longtime companion Judy Pritchett for their friendship and encouragement. A big thank-you to Norma Miller for her continued efforts in keeping the Swing flame burning brightly. Jean Veloz, Skippy Blair, Jack Carey, and Annie Hirsch, are only a few of the dancers who took the time, either in person or by telephone or e-mail, to give me their thoughts and historical insights. Cynthia Millman contributed some wonderfully written words to this book's conclusion (and both she and Chazz Young contributed wonderful photographs of Frankie Manning, which added immensely to the final product). But it is truly my sister Erin who set me "dancing" on my life's course, and I have always been inspired by her love of dance, her continued enthusiasm for teaching dance, and her dedication to preserving the important American art form known as "Swing."

Finally, for all Swing dancers everywhere, this history belongs to you, as you are a part of it. I hope that our sincere love of dance shines through, as it should, throughout all the pages of this book. And I hope it is an interesting and inspiring read, which encourages Swing dancing's continued preservation.

1

Swing Dance: Born in the USA

Ballroom dance styles differ greatly one from another. Cha-Cha, for instance, paints an entirely different picture and creates a different mood than a Tango or a Foxtrot. And an onlooker, even one with no prior dance knowledge or experience can immediately recognize that a Viennese Waltz doesn't look anything like a Samba or a Rumba. Some styles of social dance are best described as sultry or sensuous, while others are graceful and refined, performed with an epitome of elegance and high-class style. Swing aficionados generally use words like "happy" and "fun," when describing their dance, and Lindy Hop, the original style of Swing, is often referred to as "an outward expression of an inner joy." Sometimes silly, sometimes cool, it's a dance that lifts the spirits. And to those who catch the bug (the "Jitter"-bug, that is), it's an addictive thrill. Instead of shouting out loud with joy, a Swing dancer jumps up in the air and kicks or spins around in some such display of happy exuberance.

The word "Swing" when used today, in reference to social dancing, is generally an umbrella term covering Lindy Hop, Jitterbug, Jive, West Coast and East Coast styles, plus Balboa, Shag, and many regional variations of all of these (such as Carolina Shag and Hollywood-style Swing, etc.). While there are distinct differences between the various styles of Swing, they all share similar rhythmic components and character traits and are clearly branches from the same family tree. But where did this dance called "Swing" come from? What are the origins of its birth?

It is impossible, of course, to pinpoint the exact moment a seed for any future dance style is planted. It may take years for that seed to develop its own set of characteristics and, finally, acquire a name of its own. But in the case of Swing dancing, historians have determined at least the geographical region where the dance started, and that it is consummately American in its beginnings and its evolutions. It is an American vernacular dance, a true American folk dance. More precisely, it's categorized as an "Afro-American" dance, whose roots extend across the continent deep into the heart of Africa. And this joyous, jubilant style of dance began its historical evolution, remarkably, in one of the most sorrowful and tragic chapters in American history: the African slave trade to North America.

Between the settlement of the first British colony at Jamestown in Virginia in 1607 and the end of the seventeenth century, slave trade had developed into a well-established practice in the United States. Southern plantation owners ensured a profitable return on their sugar and tobacco crops and rice harvests by maintaining an organized system of slave labor. By the eighteenth century, increasing numbers of African men, women, and children were rounded up, forced onto slave ships, and shipped off to mainland America. The slave trade was big business (Peter Kolchin, 1993, 3).

In 1793, when Eli Whitney (1765–1825) invented the cotton gin, dramatically increasing production and revolutionizing the industry, cotton became "king." The international market price for cotton was set at the Cotton Exchange in Savannah, Georgia, and as white gold brought hard currency to the region, it also brought more enslaved Africans into the flourishing Southern colonies. In 1803 alone, over 20,000 slaves were brought from Africa into Georgia and South Carolina to work in the cotton fields. The institution of slavery became so deeply entrenched in the agricultural South that it affected the legal, political, and economic workings of all the colonies (*Africans in America*, "Brotherly Love," pbs.org; Kolchin, 26–27).

Most contemporary scholars put the total number of African slaves who sailed to the Americas at somewhere between 9 and 12 million. It is difficult to even approach the subject of slavery without shuddering at the horrors and sufferings endured by so many during that time in American history. But there can be no denying that the traditions of those African slaves had a profound influence on many aspects of culture in the New World, perhaps most notably in the American art

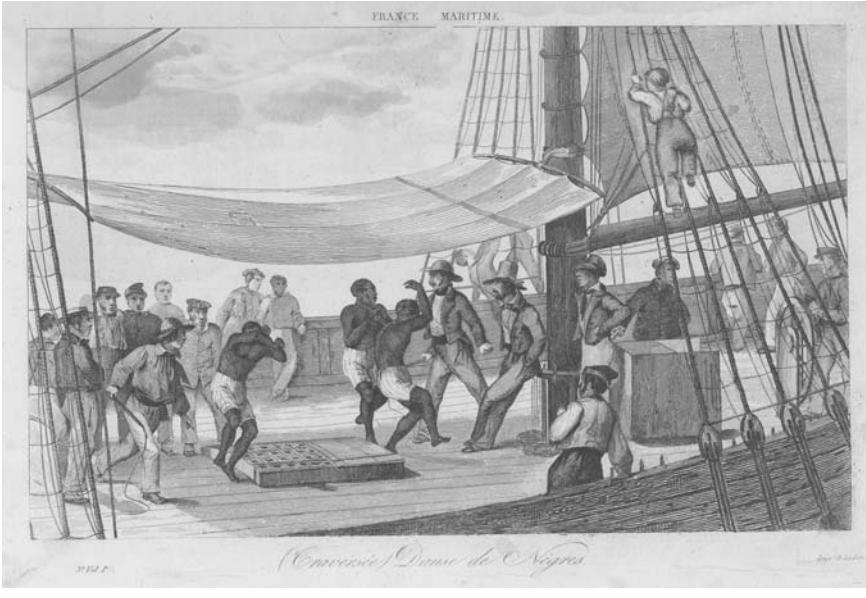
forms of music and dance. The journey that connected the tribal dances of Africa to the vernacular American dance called Swing may have begun with the slaves' literal journey from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean on human cargo transports—the various sailing vessels best referred to as the "slave ships."

The wretched conditions for slaves onboard the sailing vessels have been well documented. There are many eyewitness accounts of the lack of food, the cargo holds overstuffed with human cargo, the chains, the stench, and the horrific cruelties of the slave traders. An eighteenth-century slave ship surgeon, Alexander Falconbridge, describes how slaves were generally chained together, two by two, in handcuffs and leg irons, and were often forced to lay down, one on top of another, in cramped spaces too low to stand up in. He comments, however, that some captains treated their captives more humanely than others (he sailed under one captain whom he described as "one of the very best men in the trade," and another whom he described as "brutal"), and he notes that, although it varied from vessel to vessel, there was at least some social contact between crewmembers and slaves. According to Falconbridge, slaves were often made to dance as a form of exercise, to keep them stronger and healthier on their transatlantic journey, a practice that became known as "dancing the slaves." The onboard dancing was also thought to combat scurvy; the true cause of the disease, unbeknownst to anyone at the time, was a deficiency of vitamin C (Alexander Falconbridge, 1788, 209; Kolchin, 1993, 21).

Historian Marcus Rediker asserts in *The Slave Ship: A Human History*:

> Captains and doctors alike believed that exercise was essential to the health of the enslaved aboard the ship, so they organized dancing on deck every day, for men and women prisoners, assisted sometimes by music but more commonly by whips . . . (Rediker, 2008, image caption, np)

Dance historians Marshall and Jean Stearns agree that during the slave ships' voyages from Africa, captors forced slaves to dance to keep them fit and healthy. But the Stearns also suggest that the slaves were exposed to European dance forms. The dancing of the slaves may have provided entertainment for crewmembers; it isn't hard to imagine European crewmembers occasionally adding their own dance steps and showing off their own dance styles on board. So those slaves who survived the journey to the United States may have already absorbed something of British-European dance (Stearns and Stearns, 1994, 16).



Traversée: *Danse de Nègres* (Dancing the Slaves). This engraving of a slaving vessel from *La France Maritime*, Amédée Gréhan, ed., 1837, shows how slaves were often forced to dance on deck. This kept them healthy for their journey to the New World. (Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.)

The African slaves who made it to the New World brought with them their religious beliefs and their cultural traditions. They arrived with their own tribal subcultures and their own tribal languages, of course, all distinct one from another. But they were all intrinsically African. Dancing is an important African tradition, a tradition that transcends language. And for slaves in America, dancing became a communal link, connecting them to each other, and reconnecting them to their shared heritage. It gave them back a tiny bit of all they had lost, a bit of their homeland, a bit of themselves.

As the traditions of slaves from various tribes and different villages of origins meshed—including traditions of music and dance—they became "Afro-American" in nature. This fusion of cultures was actually twofold: African slaves with other African slaves, and Africans with the varied European citizenry of North America. The blending of styles created something—not totally African, not wholly European, but a completely new style of American dancing.

The Ring Shout

Their hands clapped the percussive rhythms. Their chants and moans, repeated words and vocal melodies, became their music. They danced in circle formations after-hours on their Southern plantations. They were slaves, captured in Africa and shipped overseas for lives of forced labor in North America. During work hours they tilled the soil, picked the cotton, cleared the rice fields, and spent their days in indentured servitude. But at night, in the hours belonging just to them, they formed a Ring Shout circle, and they shuffled and they stomped, with every movement resonating as a deep part of their heritage, tying them to their homeland a vast ocean away. Dance historians and scholars are in agreement that the Ring Shout, with its shouting, clapping, and counterclockwise movements, is a clear example of an African dance that survived in the United States.

In the late 1930s, as part of President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, the U.S. government hired unemployed writers to compile a folk history of slavery in the United States. The writers conducted interviews with former slaves in a massive effort to document the stories of their lives. Seventeen volumes of typewritten records prepared by the project are housed today in the archives of the Library of Congress under the title *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narratives, 1936–1938*, providing tremendous historic insight into the times and daily lives of former slaves. There are numerous references to the Ring Shouts in these narratives. Silvia King was born in Africa, stolen from her husband and three children, brought to the United States, and sold into slavery in Texas. King recalls dancing with other slaves in the Texas backwoods, and gives a good description of a Ring Shout (which she calls a "Ring Dance") in this following narrative:

> De black folks gits off down in de bottom and shouts and sings and prays. Dey gits in de ring dance. It am jes' a kind of shuffle, den it git faster an' faster and dey gits warmed up and moans and shouts . . . Sometimes dey sings and shouts all night. . . . (*Slave Narratives*, Vol. 16, part 2, 294)

With one dancer following directly behind another in the basic geometric pattern of a circle, the plantation slaves could incorporate the nuances of their various tribal dance traditions. They could also add their own individual movements and improvisational steps

within the framework of the group dance. In Africa, however, the circle dances of the tribes were not only social, they were also spiritual; they were expressions directly linked to African religion. According to historian P. Sterling Stuckey, the Ring Shout enabled the African slaves to connect with each other not only at a social level, but also spiritually (2002, 44).

Early paintings, illustrations, and firsthand descriptions of the Ring Shouts certainly bring to mind church gatherings and revival meetings. The participants' body positions, such as outstretched arms reaching skywards, create scenarios resembling church service assemblies and revival meetings. Dance historian and author Ralph G. Giordano notes that "in later years, the Ring Shout was actually an integral part of Sunday religious church worship among African Americans" (2007, Vol. I, 150).

Music was another primary element in African sacred rituals. Over the centuries, tribal drumming in African religious ceremonies had produced percussive music with sophisticated rhythms. Staggered time and offset beats were often blended together in a choir of rhythmic patterns. But music incites emotions, and the power of the drum to connect the slaves to each other and to the cultural heritage of their African tribal villages intimidated plantation owners. They often banned drumming, fearing that the rhythms would rally the slaves and produce large-scale revolts. Slave Codes enacted in the Southern states restricted the lifestyles of the slaves and expressly prohibited the use of drums for dancing, or any other purpose. Giordano explains that violators of the Slave Codes were subject to severe punishments "including whippings or even death" (Vol. I, 149). So, without drums, the plantation slaves used their own bodies to re-create the polyrhythmic complexities of their African tribal music. Brushing two hands together in combination with claps and snaps can produce various shades of sounds. Adding vocal tones, from sharp and shrill to guttural and soulful creates layers of rhythms. Then, striking an arm to the chest or the upper thigh (like a drumstick pounding on a drum) creates more percussion and, finally, using the feet to tap and stomp adds pulses between the beats and within the multi-layers of sound.

The term for this type of musical accompaniment, the clapping and slapping routines, became known as "patting juba," and there are many references to it in the literature of the Old South.

Mark Twain writes of rafts men on the Mississippi River in the 1840s:

> Next they got out an old fiddle, and one played and another patted juba, and the rest turned themselves loose on a regular old-fashioned keelboat breakdown. (Quoted in Stearns and Stearns, 1994, 29)

A "breakdown" was a general term used, in early literature and historic accounts, to describe any type of percussive solo dancing. But at some point the word "juba" was definitely applied to a specific shuffling dance. For example, in *The Speakers Garland Literary Bouquet*, published in 1892, a poem by Frances E. Wadleigh titled *Pattin' Juba* is prefaced with the following explanation:

> "Pattin' Juba" is the darky expression for a shuffling dance in which the hands accompany the motion with a rhythmic patting. (Vol. VIII, xxx, 85)

In her studies of West Indian dancing, in the late 1930s, scholar Katherine Dunham notes that the Juba (or "Jumba" dance) was "primarily a competitive dance of skill" (1941, 997). And the *New York Public Library's African American Desk Reference* states that:

> The Juba (based on the African *Giouba*) was a competitive dance, in which participants would demonstrate all their skills moving in a counterclockwise circle and rhythmically shuffling their feet. (1999, 407)

Typical to African dance in general, the Ring Shout focused on individual soloists against the background of the group. Similar to the "jam circles" known to Swing dancers (where one dancing couple at a time "swings out" into the middle of a formed circle to be highlighted briefly with their fanciest footwork and aerials), soloists moved into the middle of the ring one by one, improvised their footwork (their Juba dancing), and then merged back into the circle's perimeter again. Some of the best improvised moves of the Ring Shouts were mimicked, remembered, and rehearsed, and took on lives of their own.

It would be a mistake to assume that the white slaveholders never witnessed the Ring Shouts. In fact, in some cases they even encouraged their slaves to dance. It wasn't that unusual for North American plantation owners to bring their slaves up to the "Big House" for talent exhibitions. Eventually the slaveholders hosted competitions and gave

prizes to their most "dance-talented" slaves (Richard Nevell, 1977, 49). Besides the Juba, some of the other improvised steps that were eventually given names were: The Hornpipe, the Buck, and the Jig.

Precursors to Swing: The Hornpipe, the Buck Dance, and the Jig

There are many factors that led to the creation of Swing dancing and many prior dances, and former dancers, who contributed to its birth. (Many more, it should be added, than there is room to mention in the pages of this book.) But several early dance styles can be viewed as rungs on the evolutionary ladder leading to the creation of both Tap dancing and to the Lindy Hop, the original style of Swing. While the Hornpipe, the Buck dance, and the Jig differ in point of origin, they are all percussive styles, adapted and danced by African American slaves in the United States. And while each is a "solo" dance, with its own set of rhythmic subtleties, the variations in the footwork patterns were blended with African dance traditions. Subsequent variations gave rise to vernacular jazz steps, which eventually set the stage for the emergence of Swing dancing.

The Hornpipe, a Country-dance of English origin, is generally described as a lively solo Jig with intricate footwork that could be performed in a very small space. It became a favorite dance of sailors onboard ship and is historically linked to British sailors, who danced to entertain themselves and each other on long sea voyages. In the early eighteenth century, the Hornpipe was danced in bare feet on the wet slippery decks of ships. (Even into the nineteenth century, sailors only wore shoes for formal occasions and worked onboard ships in bare feet.) Eventually, however, the dance became associated with the rhythms and sounds of the sailors' heavy sea boots, stamping on the floorboards of the open decks (e-mail interview with Margaret Newman, Royal Naval Museum).

T. P. Cooke, a Victorian stage actor who specialized in nautical roles, is credited with bringing a "sailor's version" of the Hornpipe to the stage. Eventually, the Hornpipe's association with the British sailor became so strong that the dance became part of standard naval training in Britain. But it was American actor and stage dancer John Durang (1768–1822) who catapulted the Sailor's Hornpipe into nationwide popularity. Durang created his own stylized version of the Sailor dance

and documented his choreography on paper, so it has been well preserved for posterity. (Durang's son Charles published the choreography in the 1855 *Ball-room Bijou*.) Durang's notes are subject to interpretation, of course, but he uses a number of terms which seem less nautically inspired and more in keeping with the Afro-American jazz vernacular, such as "Cut the buckle down," and "Grasshopper step down," and "Jockey crotch down" (Durang's choreography is reprinted in Stearns and Stearns, 1994, 38). Whatever Durang actually meant by the word "jockey," it's interesting to note that the closed position of the Lindy Hop is sometimes referred to as the jockey position. And to hang-time in closed position (as in waiting to swing-out on count one of a phrase, or in waiting to swing-out into a jam circle) is sometimes called "jockeying." Legendary Lindy Hopper Frankie Manning described how his original dance troupe used the term. He hunched down low, imitating an eager horse ready to break out of the starting gate, and explained:

> You know when you go the racetrack and you see the horses all ready to start a race? They're all ready to go, right? We'd all be standing there, looking down the line, like the horses do at the starting point. When do we start? When do we start? (PBDA video archives, 1988)

There is also a specific step in the Lindy Hop called the "Sailor Step," in which a couple rolls back to back while maintaining a hand-to-hand hold. Locked in position with their backs against each other, both partners lean to the right, hopping on one foot while kicking back with the other, propelling themselves around in a clockwise circle. The move replicates the look and feel of a hornpipe.

Dance author/historian Mark Knowles writes in *Tap Roots*: *The Early History of Tap Dancing* that Durang's Hornpipe "later fused with African American rhythms to create American Tap" (2002, 75). The same historical link that connects Durang's Hornpipe to Tap dance also connects it to Swing.

In the Appalachian Mountains, European folk dances blended together to create a toe-heel, stepping, shuffling dance style called "Clogging." While a traditional American style of Clogging originated in the Appalachian communities, with standardized specific footwork developing later on, Afro-American slaves across the southeastern states also danced versions of Clogging, and it is mentioned throughout the Federal Writers' Project, *Slave Narratives*. One of the original versions

of the Clog, with definite Afro-American ties, was the Buck dance, which is one of the most difficult dances to define. As dancer/historian Ruth Pershing of the Cane Creek Cloggers of North Carolina points out,

> The phrase "Buck dance" means different things to different people, and greatly depends on geography, race, age, tradition, communities, as well as the quirks of language and individual experience. (E-mail interview)

The word "buck" has long been used in reference to a young man: the Buck dance may have originally been created as a catchall title, covering all male solo styles of dance. Into the twenty-first century, what some dancers call Buck dancing might also be called "Flatfoot Dancing," "Big Circle Clogging" (with looser, larger leg movements) or just plain "Clogging" by others. Tap dancers may also describe what they do with their feet as "Buck dancing." For example, in the 1933 Hollywood musical motion picture *42nd Street*, actress dancer Ruby Keeler Tap danced her way throughout the film with a notably different style than her Tap dancing contemporaries, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Keeler herself described what she was dancing as "Buck dancing." Tap dance historian/swing preservationist Rusty E. Frank interviewed Keeler for the 1995 book *Tap: The Greatest Tap Dance Stars and Their Stories*, and quotes Keeler as saying:

> I never wore taps. Never. I wore wooden soles like Bill Robinson. . . . I used to call them "My Buck Shoes." (1995, 36)

In the nineteenth century, the Buck dance was certainly well known to Southern plantation slaves. It is mentioned throughout the *Slave Narratives* in much the same manner as it is here in this narrative by former slave Agatha Babino:

> We have dance outdoors sometime. Somebody play fiddle and banjo. We dance de reel and quadrille and buck dance. (*Slave Narratives*, Texas, XVI, part 1, 38)

James Wiggins, a former slave born in Maryland circa 1850, reported: "As a child I was very fond of dancing the jig and buck" (*Slave Narratives* Maryland, Vol. 8, 67, 68).

It is generally agreed that the Buck dance performed by African American slaves on Southern plantations was a forerunner of Rhythm Tap, although Tap dancing didn't evolve until the early twentieth