

THE SWING-DANCE REVIVAL AND ITS EFFECTS
ON THE RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION OF
SWING-ERA MUSIC AND MATERIALS

by

CARRIE ELIZABETH MOFFETT

Bachelor of Arts, 2007
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA

Master of Library and Information Science, 2014
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA

Submitted to the Faculty
Graduate Division
College of Fine Arts
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

December, 2023

THE SWING DANCE REVIVAL AND ITS EFFECTS
ON THE RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION OF
SWING-ERA MUSIC AND MATERIALS

by

Carrie Elizabeth Moffett

Thesis **approved:**

Major Professor

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the music faculty here at Texas Christian University for all of their instruction and help during the course of my degree. In addition to their classes, many of them have shown interest in my thesis topic during the five years I have been a graduate student. In particular I would like to thank Dr. Cheney for being my advisor during the longer-than-expected process of crafting my thesis. Additionally, I express my gratitude to the other thesis committee members, Dr. Watkins and Mr. Carter.

Additionally, I would like to thank my boss, Cari Alexander, who first encouraged me to obtain this degree. She has been very patient and helpful in finding ways to balance my job requirements with being a graduate student. I would also like to thank the rest of my colleagues at the Texas Christian University Library. After a burst pipe damaged many of the books on my thesis topic in 2021, my fellow staff have been very helpful in ordering and processing replacement books, collecting books from our off-site storage facility, and helping me obtain books through interlibrary loan.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support while I went on this journey. They were always happy to ask about what was going on with my degree and to encourage me when things got frustrating. Without all of this help, I never would have gotten through my degree and thesis.

Table of Contents

Approval Page	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures	vi
Glossary	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: History of Swing-Era Music and Dancing	4
Chapter 2: Nostalgia and Internet Culture	23
Chapter 3: Neo-Swing and the Swing Revival	35
Chapter 4: Band-Leader Research Habits	47
Chapter 5: Swing-Dancer Research Habits	59
Conclusion	72
Appendix	75
Bibliography	79
Vita	84
Abstract	85

List of Figures

Figure 1: Question 1 Graph.....	62
Figure 2: Question 2 Graph.....	64
Figure 3: Question 4 Graph.....	66
Figure 4: Question 6 Graph.....	67
Figure 5: Question 8 Graph.....	69
Figure 6: Question 9 Graph.....	70

Glossary¹

Airstep: A “dance move that involves one of the dancers leaving the ground, possibly being lifted or thrown by their partner.” Also known as an aerial.

Charleston: “A historical predecessor of Lindy Hop which was popular in the 1920s and 1930s. It has a swiveling, kicking style and was considered scandalous in its time.” The Charleston can feature solo- or partner-dancing, or both.

East Coast Swing: “Swing dance form derived from Lindy Hop that mostly relies on six-beat moves.”

Hollywood Style: “A dialect of Lindy Hop with a different style that typically involves more tension in the arm connection between the dancers and a more upright position. Sometimes known as Dean Collins style.”

Jitterbug: “Alternative name for the Lindy Hop, although sometimes this term indicates a slight variant of the Lindy Hop that is more bouncy” than the Savoy style “and concentrates more on six-beat moves.”

Lindy Hop: “An exuberant and often acrobatic social dance for couples. The Lindy hop originated in the ballrooms and dance clubs of Harlem in New York City in the late 1920s. The characteristic step is the swingout, in which the man, exploiting centrifugal force, swings his partner out of a closed position, holding her by only one hand to guide her outward and then bring her back into coupled position.”²

Savoy Style: Name for the original style of Lindy hop that was created in the Savoy Ballroom.

Swing: “1. A kind of commercialized jazz as played by large bands, a mainly arranged music, often featuring soloists but relying for its excitement on the overwhelming, biting effect of a number of instruments playing propulsively together with the frequent employment of riffs. 2. A rather indefinable element which is nevertheless the first requirement of good jazz and what distinguishes it from other music.”³

¹ David Drysdale, “Glossary,” *Lindy Hop*, 2008, <https://www.lurklurk.org/lindyhop/glossary.html>. Drysdale’s glossary provided all but two of the terms in this glossary.

² Claude Conyers, “Lindy hop,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deanne Root, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2219309>

³ Peter Gammond and Peter Clayton, “Swing,” in *Dictionary of Popular Music* (New York: The Philosophical Library Inc.: 1961), 214-215.

Introduction

Jazz reached nation-wide popularity during the Swing Era (1933-1947), as big band music took over the airwaves and dance halls. Memories of Swing-Era music are inexorably intertwined with memories of the dancing that flourished alongside it. Dancers danced the Lindy hop from ballrooms to stages across the country and the dance matured alongside the music that accompanied it. When the big bands faded away after the end of World War II, both the music and the dancing might have faded into obscurity. Instead, later waves of nostalgia led different groups of people back to both the music and the dance.

The entertainment industry, and its creators, have a fascination with the past, often seen through a nostalgic lens. In the late 1980s and 1990s, some of that fascination turned towards the Swing Era, with its big-band style of jazz and its energetic and athletic forms of social dancing. Lindy hop had a resurgence as a dance craze, and a new version of music combined the earlier big band style with rock and punk styles. The popularity of the swing revival climaxed culturally with appearances by swing bands and swing dancing in several films, and even a well-known television commercial for The Gap. Since then, the interest in Swing-Era music has never gone away, and the Lindy hop community thrives around the world. In this thesis, I examine the effect that the surge in popularity and growing interest in swing music has had on research and preservation efforts of Swing-Era music.

The first chapter provides a historical background for the rest of the thesis. I begin with a brief history of jazz, from its origins in New Orleans to its spread through Chicago, New York and eventually to Hollywood. I provide a more focused section on the Swing Era itself, which followed the rise of big-band music in popularity, with a particular focus on Benny Goodman

and Duke Ellington. Finally, I discuss the music's relationship with dance, specifically Lindy hop.

In the second chapter, I introduce the topics of cultural nostalgia and the embrace of the past, emphasizing music and dance of the Swing Era. I examine society's current love of nostalgia in entertainment products, with a particular focus on musical trends that mimic the style of the big bands from the Swing Era. I also touch on the impact of instant internet access to music on listeners' ability to find whatever music most suits them. I explore several examples of Lindy hop and swing music in mainstream media to conclude the chapter.

The third chapter jumps to the late 1980s early 1990s, when swing began finding its way into the mainstream again. One example is Neo-Swing, a mix of rock and swing music that emerged on the West Coast. At the same time, on the East Coast, both Lindy hop and swing music were being rediscovered. In Sweden, a group of dancers found old VHS tapes of Lindy-hop dancing and were inspired to track down Frankie Manning in order to learn from an original practitioner. This would eventually lead to a world-wide community of swing dancers.

In Chapter 4 I examine Swing-Era music through the lens of band leaders who currently perform Swing-Era music. I sent a list of prepared questions to several current band leaders who play for Lindy hop events. I compare the results of their questions to determine what types of research goes into performing for dance events and recording swing music albums.

The final chapter is dedicated to dancers, all of whom are current members of the Lindy hop community. This section explores the connection between the recent revival of Lindy hop and interest in vintage music. I sent a survey out to Lindy hoppers in different communities to get anonymous information on how they learned about both swing music and dance. I analyzed the results of this survey to find out if dancers are researching the Swing Era. Additionally, I

asked them about their music purchasing habits, both for personal use and as DJs. Combining these two different sets of research questions provides an insight into the research habits of this group of people. Did the swing revival lead to an increase in research collections being used? Is Swing-Era music being preserved more by libraries and archives due to the interest of the swing community?

The original plan for this thesis included a third set of questions sent out to universities or institutions that held archival collections from major swing-era bandleaders. I sent the initial inquiry to archivists at six different institutions. Unfortunately, I never received responses from any of the archivists. Due to the time-frame necessary with my graduate studies, there was not sufficient time to follow up or to approach different archivists. I therefore decided to focus my research on dancers and bandleaders.

Chapter 1 History of Swing

Brief History of Jazz

African Roots/Slavery

Written records of early jazz are scarce. Because most slaves were not permitted to learn to read and write, most aspects of African culture and society that survived slavery in America had to be passed down orally.⁴

In many ways it is a miracle that any aspects of African cultures survived at all. Europeans and Euro-Americans were certain of their superiority in comparison to native cultures in Africa, Asia, and South America. Particularly in Africa, European colonizers believed that the societies of these “Other” cultures had never advanced beyond the primitive state that Europe had left behind long ago.⁵ African cultures did not just evaporate, however, when Africans were captured and sold into slavery. As Burton Peretti reminds us, “The black slaves were not cultureless blank slates upon which the white masters wrote their names, faith, and language. . . . West African culture survived the Middle Passage, the sea voyage to the New World, but only a few cores of the old experience persisted under the slave regime.”⁶

Once Africans had arrived in America and were sold as slaves, their white masters forbade most of their cultural heritage. The masters expected African religion, culture, social mores, and music to be forgotten. Slave owners lived in a constant state of concern that the system of slavery might collapse, and therefore kept tight control over anything which might

⁴ Eric Nellis, *Shaping the New World: African Slavery in the Americas, 1500-1888* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 102.

⁵ Nellis, *Shaping the New World*, 9.

⁶ Burton W. Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music Race and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 11.

allow the slaves to conspire together.⁷ Music and dance in particular had been a central part of West African culture. Most slave owners forbade drums in particular, since there was concern that they were using the drums to communicate and overthrow their masters. Through all of this persecution, however, vestiges of their culture persisted.

Historians, ethnographers, and anthropologists have provided us with sufficient evidence of the fact that the African Negro, whether as a slave in America or as a native within the social structure of Islamic society (as in certain parts of West and Central Africa), is remarkably adept at accommodating his beliefs and customs to his new surroundings.⁸

Most slaves learned about Christianity, and many eventually came to embrace it. They also learned Christian hymns to which they incorporated their own rhythmic and tonal structures, creating a still-vital genre: gospel music. The same was true of instrumental music. In the familial setting of the plantations, the music that was heard by the slaves was mostly piano pieces and music for dancing. Some masters even thought it was amusing to have their slaves dance their own dances, with the expectation that they would be somewhat clumsy and unrefined. In reality, the slaves were just as likely to be mocking the owners' dancing.⁹ Eventually, African Americans merged the styles from their disparate cultures, one they grew up with and one forced on them in their new lives, to create an entirely new type of music.

This new music developed from a multi-colored variety of musical traditions brought to the new world in part from Africa, in part from Europe. It seems in retrospect almost inevitable that America, the great ethnic melting pot, would procreate a music compounded of African rhythmic, formal, sonoric, and expressive elements and European rhythmic and harmonic practices.¹⁰

⁷ Eric Nellis, *Shaping the New World*, 104.

⁸ Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 15.

⁹ Brooke Baldwin, "The Cakewalk: A Study in Stereotype and Reality," *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1981): 208.

¹⁰ Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 3.

Rise of New Orleans Style

A new style slowly emerged across the South. Different versions of gospel and blues began to develop in different communities of African Americans. After emancipation, many African Americans began to migrate to cities where they might find more work, bringing their differing musical traditions with them. New Orleans was one of the cities that was most accepting of African Americans in that post-emancipation era. The city's diversity of musical styles resulted in it becoming the birthplace of a new musical idiom. Wynton Marsalis compares the mixture of musical styles in New Orleans to a gumbo.¹¹ The European traditions of opera, dance, and military bands comingled with the Afro-Caribbean culture that had arrived as part of the slave culture in Louisiana. This mixture of influences included the central ingredients of early jazz.

What is jazz and what did it sound like in those early years? Peretti gives what may be the simplest definition.

Jazz, born through this migration to New Orleans, can be defined as instrumental blues, featuring individual and collective improvisation and a unique “swinging” of the beat. It seems certain that all of these elements were integrated only in New Orleans.¹²

Living in a city where music was such an integral part of life, musicians began to blend the different types of music they were hearing with the music that they brought with them to the city. New Orleans pianists began to create a style of music that incorporated the African polyrhythms of their ancestors and, through commercialization, ragtime emerged in the 1890s.¹³

Different kinds of blues and jazz developed differently in various parts of the country, but many scholars consider New Orleans the heart of jazz territory beginning in the Jazz Age of the

¹¹ *Jazz*, episode 1, “Gumbo,” directed by Ken Burns, aired January 9, 2001, on PBS, DVD, disc 1.

¹² Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 21.

¹³ Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 15-16.

1920s. The bands there eventually settled into a style that spread north and formed the foundations of the different types of jazz that were to come. David Bradbury provides a description of what the New Orleans style of jazz would have sounded like to patrons of a Chicago club in the 1920s.

What they were providing, for the 700 or so people who squeezed into the Lincoln Gardens every night to dance the bunny-hug or the foxtrot, was stomping music in the now well-established New Orleans style: a group of musicians playing as one, with solo contribution largely confined to ‘breaks’—out-of-tempo unaccompanied interruptions at the end of a phrase in the tune. The rest of the time the band improvised together, following a lead by the cornet-player, who normally stayed close to the melody.¹⁴

Migration to the North

After the promising years of Reconstruction (1865-1877), segregation became law in the South. Increasingly difficult and hostile conditions led many African Americans to look for better lives elsewhere. The mass movement of African Americans from the southern states to the North in the years between world wars became known as the Great Migration.

From 1916 to 1930, nearly one million blacks left the cities, towns, and farms of the South to seek improved economic and political conditions. The North, most of them believed, would provide their families with well-paying jobs and the benefits of America’s civil liberties. This migration, more than any other historical event, defined the social and intellectual significance of jazz for African Americans.¹⁵

From today’s perspective, the popular music of the early Jazz Era qualifies as “sweet” jazz or dance music. It included only a small amount of the “swing” heard that characterized the hot bands, and there was usually very little improvisation at all. The sweet music intended to allow white audiences to dance the foxtrot, waltz, or maybe the Charleston. The most popular entertainer providing this type of music was Paul Whiteman.

The Whiteman band, at times expanded to an elephantine 30 pieces as if imitating the girth of its 20-stone leader, had set the standard for popular music after the First World

¹⁴ David Bradbury, *Armstrong* (London: Haus Publishing, 2003), 21.

¹⁵ Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 43.

War. Because Whiteman crowned himself ‘The King of Jazz’ while basically performing written dance music with little space for improvisation, jazz-lovers have often ignored the band’s strength in playing well-crafted arrangements immaculately.¹⁶

While Whiteman cannot be ignored in the history of jazz, his African-American counterparts drove the stylistic development of jazz in the next decade. One of the major turning points was the arrival of King Oliver in Chicago.

Oliver was a cornet player who had made a name for himself as the self-proclaimed King of the New Orleans style of jazz. He was enormously popular in New Orleans before moving his band to Chicago in 1918. By 1922 he and his band had taken up residence in one of Chicago’s many dance halls. “The place he was playing was the Lincoln Gardens Café, a dance hall at 31st Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. It has a special importance for jazz history because it was the place where many young northern musicians, black and white, heard New Orleans music for the first time.”¹⁷ Not long after beginning his time leading the house band at the Café, Oliver sent to New Orleans for his young protégé who had begun to make a name for himself: Louis Armstrong.

King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band excelled in the type of New Orleans-style jazz that emphasized group playing with solo breaks (usually by Oliver, Armstrong, or both). The level of playing was high, and Armstrong described how he was forced to improve his playing to keep up with the more seasoned musicians when he joined the band.¹⁸ The same was true for jazz players everywhere; this type of competition inevitably led to innovation and a shift away from the New Orleans style jazz. As Gunther Schuller points,

On the other hand greater fluency and instrumental skill were inevitable, and for this reason alone the polyphonic collective style was doomed to extinction. Once a single player could hold the listener’s attention, the collective ensemble became unnecessary.

¹⁶ Bradbury, *Armstrong*, 16.

¹⁷ Bradbury, *Armstrong*, 19.

¹⁸ *Jazz*, episode 2, “The Gift,” directed by Ken Burns, aired January 9, 2001, on PBS, DVD, disc 2.

While we may regret the virtual extinction of the collective ideal in jazz, it was inevitable and inherent in the highly individualistic nature of jazz expression.¹⁹

Armstrong was one of the earliest single players to be able to capture the audience's attention. He stood out even among the excellent players in the Oliver band. Eventually, his wife Lil Hardin—the pianist for the Oliver band—convinced him to move to New York and join the Fletcher Henderson band as a featured soloist.

He had a revolutionary impact on the band, on Redman's arranging style, and—through the wide exposure he got through Henderson's performances and records—on the expanding jazz community of musicians and fans. Henderson insisted that working in a band that played in such unusual keys, for the times, as E and D “put the finishing touches to his playing. . . . But he influenced the band greatly too, by making the men really swing-conscious with that New Orleans style of his.”²⁰

The Henderson band did not stay together for long, but its players had a lasting impact on jazz. Armstrong went on to be a successful soloist and bandleader and Henderson eventually worked as an arranger for Benny Goodman. The swing-conscious style that Armstrong introduced sowed the seeds from which big-band-style jazz grew.

The Swing Era

The Great Depression and the Rise of Radio

At the height of the Jazz Age (1929), the rise of jazz's popularity was almost brought to a halt. Throughout most of the 1920s, the primary way jazz spread across the country was through records. Record companies thrived and constantly made new recordings in any genre or style that proved popular. Then on October 24, 1929, the stock market crashed, and America entered the Great Depression. Suddenly, a huge portion of the population struggled to make enough money

¹⁹ Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 79.

²⁰ Bradbury, *Armstrong*, 26.

to live on. They certainly did not have the extra funds to purchase records as they had in the 20s. Only a few of the biggest records companies managed to survive, while the rest went bankrupt over the next few years.

The invention that saved the music industry, and what set jazz on course to be the primary popular musical style of the 1930s, was radio. Records at the time only had space for five minutes of music on each side, so they could only accommodate two songs. Radio allowed listeners to experience hours of music at a time. Listeners also did not have to spend more money each time they wanted new songs. While the record companies struggled, the radio companies began to thrive.

In contrast to contemporary American radio, many of the musical performances heard in the 1930s came in the form of live broadcasts. . . . As a result, many bands relied on radio for exposure, a time when they could play selected numbers from their “book” (a collection of scores a particular band might perform) and allow the unseen audience an opportunity to sample more than a single song.²¹

As radio stations thrived, they developed the infrastructure to allow them to broadcast not just locally, but across the country. Before this, most people who were aware of jazz and other popular music were only familiar with bands that came from the city closest to them. People who lived in more rural areas frequently never heard jazz at all.

Radio stations did help to enlarge the big band audience, however, by broadcasting many live performances—a few on regular commercial series, but most on sustaining shows, many of them complete with crowd excitement, directly from where the bands were playing. Every night the airwaves would be filled with the music of the big bands.²²

Many musicians during the Great Depression were lucky to get long-term gigs playing for the house band of a weekly broadcast, and eventually certain names began to emerge. Benny Goodman was a young, new bandleader at the time and was hoping to achieve recognition. At

²¹ William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *Music of the Great Depression* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), 138.

²² George T. Simon, *The Big Bands* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 11-13.

the beginning of 1935, Goodman got his big opportunity. He was given a weekly Saturday night slot on a national radio program.²³

The radio stations did not just stop at broadcasting from the studio, however. As jazz began to gain popularity on their stations, they decided to go where the bands were already playing. They ran wiring to the most popular clubs and broadcast the live performances across the country. This also allowed a more diverse selection of musicians to be heard. While the players hired to play in studio were usually all white, radio stations could broadcast from a club that hired black musicians. In this way Duke Ellington came to the attention of a wider audience. The 1930s was a period of intense musical growth for Ellington, who perfected the style his band had adopted during their time at the Cotton Club. The decade saw Ellington and his band expand their touring to include more of the country and the world.²⁴ As the popularity of swing rose, Ellington's was not the only band that began touring the country and spreading swing outside of New York City.

The Rise of the Big Bands

At the same time radio was making jazz available to more of the country, the music was also taking on new characteristics that came to define the Swing-Era, or big-band, style that dominated the airwaves until after the Second World War broke out. Until then, the most popular jazz bands were playing what was considered "sweet music," which smoothed out many of the edges of hot jazz for white audiences and inspired dancing no more vigorous than the Charleston.

²³ Simon, *The Big Bands*, 27.

²⁴ Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 46.

As the Swing Era developed in the mid-1930s, the music began to become hotter, even though various bands had different styles.

At the same time as the sweet bands entertained dancers and diners, another kind of orchestra attempted to establish a foothold among listeners and critics. . . . they distinguished themselves by playing many up-tempo numbers, emphasizing rhythm, soloists, and hard-driving arrangements that revealed the jazz roots anchor. They encouraged listeners to get up and dance, but not necessarily to a waltz or a fox trot.²⁵

The way the bands were built and the way the songs were structured also changed. The New Orleans-style jazz that Oliver still played emphasized simultaneous improvisation. Virtuoso soloists inevitably began to emerge and build their own bands. Most of the bands performing during the Swing Era formed around a featured soloist. Examples of such band leaders include Goodman and Artie Shaw on clarinet, Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey on trombone, and Duke Ellington and Count Basie on the piano.²⁶ Around these bandleaders, other excellent musicians came together both to provide support, but also to play solos of their own. The best bands had a number of musicians who could take solos during a piece. While all of the members of the bands were necessary for success, the importance of the band leaders cannot be overstated.

For in each band it was the leader who assumed the most vital and most responsible role. Around him revolved the music, the musicians, the vocalists, the arrangers and all the commercial factors involved in running a band, and it was up to him to take these component parts and with them achieve success, mediocrity or failure.²⁷

One bandleader who insisted on having a band made up of excellent musicians that were capable of soloing on their own was Ellington.²⁸ He wrote the music that he wanted to write and employed wonderful musicians to play it. One of the skills that made Ellington so special was his ability to balance being the headliner and bandleader of the band with writing the best music for

²⁵ Young and Young, *Music of the Great Depression*, 120.

²⁶ Simon, *The Big Bands*, 4.

²⁷ Simon, *The Big Bands*, 7.

²⁸ Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz 1930-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 74.

the other members of his band. He was never interested in a homogenous band behind him while he played solos.

A unique musical partnership, truly unprecedented in the history of Western music, developed in which a major composer forged a musical style and concept which, though totally original and individual, nevertheless consistently incorporated and integrated the no less original musical ideas of his players. . . . Miraculously, the Ellington imagination fed on the particular skills and personalities of his players. While at the same time *their* musical growth was in turn nurtured by Ellington's maturing compositional craft and vision.²⁹

Benny Goodman was on the opposite end of the spectrum, in many ways. He was a fiercely talented clarinetist, but not a composer in the way Ellington was. Goodman put together a talented band, but initially was missing some of the spark that the other successful bands had. Luckily, he was friends with John Hammond, who was heavily involved in the jazz scene behind the scenes. Hammond knew that Goodman's band had promise; it just needed someone to help refine their style.

For in late 1934, Hammond, realizing that Henderson's own band was moribund, proposed to Benny Goodman that he hire Henderson as his chief arranger. This would obviously help the now unemployed Fletcher financially, but, more importantly, it might provide the young Goodman orchestra with some of the class and excitement which Hammond had so admired in the Henderson band.³⁰

With their style locked in, finding their audience was the next task. The Goodman band was hired as one of the bands for the NBC radio program *Let's Dance* in 1934. The program was broadcast live across the country, and caught the attention of a then-ignored section of the population: college and high school young people.³¹

²⁹ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 48.

³⁰ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 7.

³¹ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 19.

Nationwide Popularity

Some historians assert that the Swing Era began on August 21, 1935 at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles.³² Goodman had taken his band on a cross-country tour, but found underwhelming responses at every stop before Los Angeles. When they arrived in Los Angeles, they decided to throw out the sweeter music they had been forced to play at other stops and focus on the hot jazz they wanted to play. The hotter music was a massive hit, and the Swing Era was born.

In fact, swing band popularity had been building up for several years among college kids and other young people who had access to records of black artists, particularly Armstrong, who was selling 100,000 records a year even in the Depression. The Palomar was just the place where the pressure exploded and the music flooded over the adult population.³³

This interest in “hot” jazz signaled a major shift in the types of music that bands were playing and the types of music record labels and radio stations were producing. The radio networks and record companies wanted recordings to appeal to the most people, so they required bands to keep the music fairly simple. The success of this hotter style of jazz allowed bands to develop the style and create a number of timeless recordings. “Here was a happy and rare coincidence: a large segment of the public seemed to prefer the best and most advanced arrangements the band had to offer, not, for once, the worst. Incredibly, jazz—at least one kind of jazz—had reached a potentially huge audience.”³⁴ The best bands, and many mediocre bands, flourished under these new circumstances.

³² Michael P. Zirpolo, “The Birth of the Swing Era – Part 1 ‘I Got Rhythm’ (1935) Benny Goodman,” *Swingandbeyond.com*, September 9, 2017. <https://swingandbeyond.com/2017/09/09/the-birth-of-the-swing-era-part-1-i-got-rhythm-1935-benny-goodman/>

³³ Bradbury, *Armstrong*, 66.

³⁴ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 21.

Ellington took advantage of the ability to push his band to the fullest extent of its abilities.

I have previously mentioned that from the outset Ellington resisted the stigmatization of his music as jazz, or more correctly, as *merely* jazz. Similarly, he resisted—not always successfully—the constant pressures to commercialize his art, to level it off to some pre-ordained mold of easy marketability, i.e., to identify himself with the expected stereotypes. At no time was this pressure stronger than in the mid-thirties, when swing, as epitomized by Goodman, captured the nation.³⁵

Although his band's performances featured choreographed dances at the Club Kentucky and the Cotton Club in New York from 1923 to 1931, Ellington grew more interested in pushing the boundaries of what jazz could be than in mimicking the popular trends.

Goodman and his band flourished in the structured style of the Swing Era. Goodman had always been a brilliant clarinetist and had surrounded himself with excellent players. He insisted on excellence from his band. The Goodman orchestra played precisely as an ensemble, which was envied by some of the other bands that emphasized the arrangement and composition rather than virtuosic soloists.³⁶ Many subsequent jazz musicians have trivialized the musically tight but somewhat repetitive music that Goodman produced in his heyday. It is easy to emphasize the fact that Goodman was not the creative genius that Ellington was. Goodman's contributions to jazz history cannot be overlooked, however.

Benny has always been utterly true to himself; and in that truth lies a definite originality. For let it also be remembered that Benny Goodman, for all that he has been imitated and caricatured, is a true original. There is no gainsaying his immense influence on jazz, its musicians, on performers both classical and jazz, as well as indirectly on composers and arrangers.³⁷

The Swing Era only managed to thrive for a short period of time. Jazz, which had always thrived as a fringe style, had managed to attract the attention of the nation. To do that, however,

³⁵ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 74.

³⁶ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 43.

³⁷ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 45.

it had jettisoned much of the spontaneity that had defined its origins. “Although big-band swing was still the dominant force in popular music, it was increasingly criticized by a growing group of jazz fans. The so-called New Orleans revival began with record collectors, who were listening to discs made in the early days of jazz and overturning what little was known of its history.”³⁸ Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker led the way back to a more improvisational style of jazz that became known as bebop. World War II also changed the landscape of the radio industry, with singers fronting many of the bands. In 1942, the studio bands went on strike against the radio companies over royalties. The radio companies bypassed the strike by using their featured singers accompanied by an ensemble of other singers instead.³⁹ This signaled the final death knell for most of the big bands. Crooners such as Frank Sinatra dominated the popular music of the day before making way for rock and roll.

The Lindy Hop’s Connection to Jazz

Origins of the Dance

One cannot discuss popular music in the 1920s and 1930s without mentioning dance. Social dancing was one the major components of people’s lives. This was particularly true in the 1930s, as Frankie Manning points out:

These were the depression years (which didn’t make that much difference to my family since we were poor anyway) and dancing was an outlet for people because there wasn’t much else they could do. We all stayed in Harlem, but you could find someplace to step out every night of the week. Going to a ballroom became our social life.⁴⁰

³⁸ Bradbury, *Armstrong*, 73.

³⁹ Simon, *The Big Bands*, 31.

⁴⁰ Frankie Manning and Cynthia R. Millman, *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 67.

The Lindy hop eventually replaced the Charleston, but where did the Lindy hop come from and how did it evolve?

Most of the origins of the popular jazz dances are not documented. What we know about them comes from oral traditions and only brief written mentions. We do know that music and dance were an inherited part of African American cultural tradition.

Music and dance were interwoven with African religion and its American adaptations. West African religions integrated spirit lore, possession rites, communal gathering, singing, dancing, and the playing of instruments—elements impossible to disassociate from one another. Drums housed specific spirits and dances represented them; . . . Most distinctly, the music was highly rhythmic, the contribution of the drums and of its symbiotic relation to dance.⁴¹

Above, I discussed how African rhythms had played a part in the early creation of jazz. Vestiges of African dances can be found in many African-American vernacular dances.

A number of dance styles emerged in different areas of the country until the first national dance craze, the Charleston, coalesced. “In the early 1910s a new dance craze, the Charleston, was sweeping through urban and rural areas of America. Charleston’s popularity was strong enough to turn it into a truly nationwide fad, to the point of incorporating it into various Harlem theatrical productions.”⁴² The Charleston could be danced to the ragtime music that was also sweeping the country. The Charleston was originally a solo dance that utilized the entire body in a rhythmic style, characterized by an abandonment of the social constraints that had been observed by most of society until after World War I.

Eventually, the Charleston shifted from a solo dance to a partnered dance, inspired by the European partnering traditions with which white dancers grew up.⁴³ This combination of African

⁴¹ Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 12.

⁴² Alexandre Abdoulaev, “Savoy: Reassessing the Role of the ‘World’s Finest Ballroom’ in Music and Culture, 1926-1958” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2014), 182.

⁴³ Abdoulaev, “Savoy: Reassessing the Role,” 190.

and European dance traditions was similar to the process by which jazz combined European and African musical influences. The partnered Charleston was danced close together, so that step variations were difficult to pull off. As in jazz music, eventually the best performers wanted to improvise; they began to change the dance to facilitate this.

In 1927, the convention of partnered Charleston, in the chest-to-chest, closed position, may have been broken by Savoy Ballroom dancer George “Shorty” Snowden. With his partner Mattie Purnell, Snowden claimed to have invented the Breakaway, a step that separated the partners from close connection by allowing them to remain tethered to each other at arm’s length for a brief period of time.⁴⁴

Dancers did not take long to realize that these breakaways created more room for them to personalize their movements in contests. The two-count Charleston step shifted to a four-count swing-out, which is the primary dance pattern of the Lindy hop, while the music of the era also shifted in tempo with the dancing. “Shorty” Snowden is credited with the creation of the swing-out as well, which is a defining move of the Lindy hop.⁴⁵ The swing-out allows the dancers to transition from closed to open and back again, permitting more room for variation in the open position. Once the basic movement of the Lindy hop was established, the dance began to become more popular. The upright posture of the Charleston and European dances began to transition to a posture with more deeply bent knees and increased space between the partners. This posture allowed them to dance to ever-faster pieces, and the speed also helped with the air steps (known today as aerals) that began to be introduced by the performers. The dance was constantly evolving, and the competitions at the Savoy Ballroom and elsewhere were a major part of that evolution.

I think that because the Saturday night contests were so competitive, they had an important role in the development of the Lindy hop. People wanted to have something

⁴⁴ Abdoulaev, “Savoy: Reassessing the Role,” 191-192.

⁴⁵ Abdoulaev, “Savoy: Reassessing the Role,” 197-198.

special for these contests, so they would add to the steps they were getting in the ballrooms or come up with something new.⁴⁶

The Lindy hop, with its flashy performance, proceeded to catch the eye of the nation.

Connection with the Bands

Indisputably, the breeding ground for the Lindy hop was the Savoy Ballroom. The Savoy occupied an entire Harlem city block on Lenox Avenue.⁴⁷ Several ballrooms were located in that area, but most dancers were still dancing the foxtrot, waltz, and Charleston to sweet jazz. The Savoy catered to all types of dancers, but it became known as the home of the Lindy hop. “The Savoy ballroom had strong ties to the local community, yet it was racially integrated; thus, it provided a line of transmission between black and white communities. It was financially accessible to everyone, including the ordinary Harlemiter, yet it was elegantly luxurious.”⁴⁸ The Savoy became a pillar of the community, but why did the Lindy hop spring up there?

I suspect it may have had something to do with the music played there. Much of the Swing Era coincided with the Great Depression, and one of the ways for musicians to make a steady income was in a dance band.

Swing bands understood that drawing and maintaining crowds of dancing patrons was vital to continued employment in Harlem’s ballrooms; a reputation for successful engagement with dancers meant consistent work. Success in ballrooms was thus defined by one’s ability to keep the dancers on the floor, to construct a rhythmic and musical space that sparked their energies and inspired their steps, spins, and improvisations.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 83.

⁴⁷ Barbara Engelbrecht, “Swinging at the Savoy,” *Dance Research Journal* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 3.

⁴⁸ Howard Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, Venue, Media, and Tradition,” *American Music* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 189.

⁴⁹ Christopher J. Wells, “‘Go Harlem!’ Chick Webb and His Dancing Audience During the Great Depression” (PhD diss, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 113-114.

The job of a dance band included providing music that not only fit the hot dances, but was catchy enough to get people out of their seats. The master of this, and the bandleader who headlined the Savoy, was Chick Webb.

Webb was famous for being in sync with the dancers at the Savoy. He could read the room and see what type of tempo he needed to play next to follow the ebb and the flow of the energy in the ballroom. The Savoy had some rather famous battle-of-the-band nights, often between their house band—Webb’s—and some of the other most famous bands of the era. Goodman’s band may have been a big hit across the nation, but they conceded defeat to Webb as a dance band. The only band considered to have played step-for-step with them was Count Basie’s band. Webb was not just in tune with the ballroom’s audience, however. He was actively in a dialogue with the dancers there, even though no words were spoken.

Frankie Manning, one of the pioneering Lindy hop dancers, reported one occasion at the Savoy when Webb picked up on one of his improvised dances during an instrumental solo by a member of the band and responded with appropriate drum shots. Such interaction was not unusual. Manning also described how he would often “catch” musical ideas from the band while dancing and how the drummer or soloist in turn would “catch” his steps.⁵⁰

With the competition between the dancers and the connection with the band both spurring them to new heights, it was only a matter of time before the Lindy hop moved from social dancing to professional performance.

Professional Dance Troupes

While the Lindy hop was a social dance that could be performed by anyone at any level of skill, a number of dancers began to devote significant time to mastering it. For dancers such as

⁵⁰ Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop,” 200.

Manning, who was constantly improving his dance, the hope was that one day they might be invited to dance in Cat's Corner.

The Cat's Corner was a substantial area situated in the northeast corner of the ballroom and clearly delineated by an unspoken rule that reserved it for the best dancers. Nobody could blunder into this part of the ballroom. Dancers graduated into this corner by the sheer inventiveness of their dancing and the finesse and distinction of their performing style.⁵¹

Being invited to dance in Cat's Corner meant that a dancer was a member of an elite group, better than the regular dancers. Dancers from Cat's Corner competed in and won most of the weekly competitions at the Savoy.

That these same dancers were the ones who also turned professional is unsurprising. The first person to take a group of dancers to a professional gig was Snowden.⁵² He, his partner, and two other couples formed the first professional team. In these first performances the Lindy hop was still completely improvised and had no specified choreography. Each pair took turns dancing on stage for a set amount of time, with no group steps. Herbert White, manager of the Savoy, also became the manager of several of the groups that became known as Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. These groups allowed a number of Savoy dancers the chance to become professional dancers and come to national awareness.⁵³

Manning, a dance legend, was the leader of the first and main group in White's roster of dancers and the driving force behind much of the dancing that they presented. He was the one who began to put together jazz steps in a routine that could be repeated each night. Manning may also have created the air steps that also became a major part of their routines. "As the popularity of the dance and the music increased with social dancers, professional troupes were formed,

⁵¹ Engelbrecht, "Swinging at the Savoy," 6.

⁵² Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 93.

⁵³ Abdoulaev, "Savoy: Reassessing the Role," 198.

usually drawn from the ranks of Savoy ‘Lindyhoppers.’ These troupes toured the United States and Europe, performing an increasingly showy version of the Lindy hop.”⁵⁴

These showy steps and routines generated enough interest to get dancers placed in several African-American-fronted Broadway shows like the *Hot Mikado*. Dancers were also occasionally asked to come out to Hollywood to perform dance segments in films, the most widely recalled of which are probably *Day at the Races* and *Hellzapoppin’*. They performed the vast majority of their work in reviews and variety shows in New York or on the road, however. According to Manning, “Swing bands loved working with the Lindy hoppers. The biggest orchestras, like Count Basie, Cab Calloway, or Jimmie Lunceford, which generally assembled their own review, would book us through Whitey.”⁵⁵ Several of the best dancers even traveled to Europe and Australia as part of these reviews. As with swing and the big bands, World War II began the decline of the Lindy hop. As the music they danced to faded out of popularity, the professional dancers mostly turned to other jobs and had to give up professional dancing.

⁵⁴ Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, Venue, Media, and Tradition,” 185.

⁵⁵ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 138.

Chapter 2 Nostalgia and Internet Culture

Nostalgia

Swiss physician Johannes Hofer introduced the term “nostalgia” in 1688. The word derives from two Greek words that roughly translate to pain or suffering and returning to one’s native land.⁵⁶ Hofer was attempting to diagnose Swiss mercenaries fighting on behalf of European monarchs in foreign countries. The mercenaries showed no physical symptoms but were not performing to standard expectations. All the soldiers experienced a state of depression linked to being away from their homes. Subsequently, physicians saw nostalgia as an illness that needed to be cured because it was affecting the ability of the troops to function. For decades nostalgia continued to have negative connotations and to be seen as something that needed to be cured.

The modern view of nostalgia has shifted away from an illness to something much more complex. Nostalgia still contains the element of yearning for the past, though with fewer of the negative connotations. Tannock suggests that “the nostalgic subject turns to the past to find/construct sources of identity, agency, or community, that are felt to be lacking, blocked, subverted, or threatened in the present.”⁵⁷ A person experiencing nostalgia is often experiencing personal upheaval and is looking back at a seemingly simpler time. In many cases, that earlier time is childhood, but it can be any period that was particularly happy. Many people who have lived through the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 experienced nostalgia during the

⁵⁶ Constantine Sedikides, Joost Leunissen and Tim Wildschut, “The Psychological Benefits of Music-Evoked Nostalgia,” *Psychology of Music* 50, no. 6 (2022): 2045.

⁵⁷ Stuart Tannock, “Nostalgia Critique,” *Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (1995): 454.

lockdowns.⁵⁸ Familiar television shows, movies, and music that they had enjoyed in the past brought great comfort to those trapped in a highly unusual and unpleasant present.

While many psychologists still warn of the dangers of devoting too much time to the past, they also see nostalgia as a way to help people deal with challenges in the present.⁵⁹ Grainge writes that “theoretically, nostalgia is understood as a socio-cultural response to forms of discontinuity, claiming a vision of stability and authenticity in some conceptual ‘golden age.’ This approximates the conventional sense of nostalgia as a yearning.”⁶⁰ Nostalgia is more complicated than just a yearning for home or past. Another version of nostalgia recognized by psychologists derives from stories and pictures rather than from lived experiences.⁶¹ The “golden age” mentioned by Grainge could be a time period that a person has never personally experienced, but rather read about or seen on screen. Two major developments have contributed to these expanded possibilities: the expansion of access to the internet and the media’s use of nostalgia as a genre and marketing tool.

Internet Access

For most of the history of humanity, the only way to enjoy music was live. People either performed the music themselves, or listened to someone else perform it. The first change appeared in the late nineteenth century, as inventors learned how to record sounds and send them

⁵⁸ Nicole Johnson, “The Surprising Way Nostalgia Can Help Us Cope with the Pandemic,” *Science, National Geographic*, July 21, 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/surprising-role-of-nostalgia-during-coronavirus-pandemic>.

⁵⁹ Danielle Campoamor, “Why We Reach for Nostalgia in Times of Crisis,” *Smarter Living, The New York Times*, July 28, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/28/smarter-living/coronavirus-nostalgia.html>.

⁶⁰ Paul Grainge, “Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes, and Media Recycling,” *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 28.

⁶¹ Craig Owen Jones, “‘Acolytes of History’?: Jazz Music and Nostalgia in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*,” *Science Fiction Film and Television* 9, no. 1 (2016): 27.

through a wire. One of the reasons that jazz music became so popular was that these new technologies became available to the public; many households owned a record player, a radio, or both.

During the 1920s and 1930s the general public seemed to have endless entertainment suddenly at its fingertips. Radio owners could hear live music from clubs and ballrooms in New York City and other major locations around the country, and different types of ensembles playing in the studios. A constant stream of records was also released by bands both large and small. This allowed jazz and the big bands to be heard around the country, creating a nation-wide swing craze. Technological development allowed music and entertainment possibilities to expand.

The digital and video revolutions have, in particular, transformed our ability to access, circulate, and consume the cultural past. The surfeit of information in contemporary culture, enabled by information technologies like computers, cable television, VCR and digital recording, has had a dramatic impact both on our engagement with the past and our sense of the archive.⁶²

The availability of more options allowed people to pick and choose genres and styles that were of interest to them.

In the twenty-first century, the ways that people can watch or listen to music and other forms of entertainment has continued to increase dramatically.

Central to the impact of video is the capacity for “time-shifting.” Practically, this gives the individual far more control over the way that television can be watched; viewers are released from network programming schedules with the possibility of replay, and are given more choice through the advent of home-rentals.⁶³

The number of television broadcast channels jumped from three in the early decades of television to several hundred today, with internet streaming adding to the possibilities in the last decade.

⁶² Grainge, “Nostalgia and Style in Retro America,” 32.

⁶³ Grainge, “Nostalgia and Style in Retro America,” 32.

YouTube and other video platforms also make it possible to find videos of all types collected in one place. Finding examples of almost anything on the internet is easier than ever.

This ease of access is particularly true for music. Before the rise of the internet, listening to the radio provided little choice in what was heard. Even switching between the vinyl records, cassettes, or CDs in one's own personal connection is a much more tedious process than is common with the digital music most listeners now use. These challenges led some people to create their own personal anthologies on both cassette ("mixtapes") and CD to provide a specific set of their favorites. The ability to create specific playlists was improved by Apple, with the introduction of the iPod. Digitally transferring one's favorite music to an iPod made it possible to listen by album, pre-made playlist, or even on shuffle.

iPod [*sic*] users often report being in dream reveries while on the move—turned inward from the world – and living in an interiorized and pleasurable world of their own making, away from the historical contingency of the world, and into the certainty of their own past, real or imagined, enclosed safely within their own private auditory soundscape.⁶⁴

Listeners could now create playlists based on their own nostalgia. Between the ability to choose and program one's own music and the internet making available an increasing amount of music from all decades and all corners of the world, it is no wonder that many styles of music that were thought of as dead were revived.

Nostalgia-Tinged Entertainment

Beginning in the 1970s, nostalgia became a major commodity in American culture, and companies began using it in areas ranging from fashion to entertainment.⁶⁵ Audiences have often had a fascination with stories, if not musical styles, of the past. Stage entertainment often set the

⁶⁴ Michael Bull, "The Auditory Nostalgia of iPod Culture," in *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices*, ed. Karin Bijsterveld and José van Dijck (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 83.

⁶⁵ Grainge, "Nostalgia and Style in Retro America," 27.

action in earlier eras. Many operas looked to mythical and historical figures for inspiration. Even in the early years of cinema, filmmakers produced genres ranging from historical epics to biographies of famous figures from within living memory. The type of nostalgic entertainment common today came to fruition during the 1970s, when people wanted to look back at the 1950s, which they saw as a simpler time, because it did not have an unpopular war and had fewer conflicts over civil and gender rights than the 1960s or 70s. Shows such as *Happy Days*, which focused on earlier traditional family values, became major hits for the networks, as did films such as *The Sting* and *American Graffiti*. Each generation has shifted the decade they are nostalgic towards forward, usually coinciding with whatever time the creators of entertainment grew up in. In the late 2010s and early 2020s, shows harkening back to the 1980s have inundated viewers' choices.

Grainge points out that many such films and television series that were created due to nostalgia are not particularly realistic.

Evident in the contemporary “nostalgia film” (a “genre” which can be taken to include movies like *American Graffiti*, *Body Heat*, *Boogie Nights*, and *Forrest Gump*), representations of the past are replaced by our cultural stereotypes of that past; periods are plundered for style in the attempt to satisfy our “image fixation *cum* historical cravings.”⁶⁶

Some current creators feel a nostalgia for the 1980s that they remember from their childhood. These memories are often idealized and gloss over many of the difficulties of the time. This idealization can create a distorted image of the past for those who never experienced it.

Views of a past decade are commonly shaped by the popular culture that was created at the time or through entertainment shaped by the collective remembrance of the decade. Dance researcher Eric Martin Usner finds an example of nostalgic memory in the swing revival of the

⁶⁶ Grainge, “Nostalgia and Style in Retro America,” 29.

1990s. “Popular memory of and thus nostalgia for this time has been consequently strongly shaped by the ‘authentic’ images of the period found in popular culture—for those who experienced it and especially for succeeding generations.”⁶⁷ Because the most popular images remain in the collective consciousness, they become the stereotypes used to produce movies or television series set in the past: flapper dresses, the Charleston, and flowing drinks for the 1920s; pristine houses in suburban neighborhoods for a family and teenagers hanging out at the soda shop for the 1950s; legwarmers and neon clothes, big hair, and shoulder pads for the 1980s.

Such stereotypes do not just come from the living memory of those who grew up in a different time. Viewers now have instant access to video, both documentary and recreational, that shows time periods from the last 125 years. YouTube and similar video platforms provide clips of both video and music, and streaming services mean easy access to a vast library of content from around the world with a few clicks of a button. Often this entertainment reinforces the stereotypes that are already abundant, as new generations learn the same touchstones of popular culture that generations before them have already learned. Only recently are time periods beginning to be re-examined in order to create more fleshed-out and well-rounded views of history. The Swing Era is no exception to this idealization of memory.

Nostalgia-Based Entertainment

The availability of any genre or style of music from nearly any time and place has influenced contemporary music and created an interesting combination of contemporary musical choices mixed with older musical influences.

⁶⁷ Eric Martin Usner, “Dancing in the Past, Living in the Present: Nostalgia and Race in Southern California Neo-Swing Dance Culture,” *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2001/02): 97.

If you turn on your radio and listen to any (sort of) mainstream radio station, you will quickly run into 80's synth pop like The Weeknd's Take My Breath (his 80's inspired cover art displayed above), old school soul influences like in Silk Sonic's Leave the Door Open and disco elements like in Dua Lipa's Levitating, her most recent album literally being called 'Future Nostalgia.'⁶⁸

Music from the pre-digital years, ranging from the big bands to disco to torch singers, has had a great influence on many contemporary styles of music. Pop music in the 1990s moved increasingly towards over-produced tracks featuring autotune and lip-synched performances, dissatisfying many fans. This is partly the reason that a show like *American Idol* was such a hit when it launched in 2002. The show guaranteed that all of its contestants were singing live. The shift in popular music towards having real instrumentalists onstage accompanying real singing helped propel a return to the past for inspiration.

The big band style re-emerged in several ways over the years, from the traditional approach of a performer like Michael Bublé, or the use of instrumentation (winds and brass in particular) imitating the big bands of the Swing Era. Kelly Clarkson, the first winner of *American Idol*, currently uses a full band, including horns, to accompany her when she sings live, and her first Christmas single, "Underneath the Tree," could easily be danced to.

Even more recently, Jon Batiste released the single "I Need You," which makes explicit use of Swing-Era influences. According to the press release for the song, "It fuses the sound of early 20th century black social music, with modern pop production and a hint of hip-hop storytelling."⁶⁹ In the accompanying music video, Batiste meets a girl in a photo gallery as they are both admiring a photograph of Lindy hoppers dancing in front of a band. As he begins to

⁶⁸ "Nostalgic Feelings in Pop Culture," Featured Content, *The Good Men Project*, January 12, 2022, <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/nostalgic-feelings-in-pop-culture/>.

⁶⁹ "Singer Jon Batiste Releases New Single 'I Need You': Watch New Video! New Album 'We Are' Arrive March 19, 2021," *TheUrbanMusicScene.com*, January 22, 2021, <https://news.theurbanmusicscene.com/2021/01/jon-batiste-releases-new-single-i-need-you/>.

sing, the dancers come to life and jump out of the painting, and he begins dancing with them.

Batiste and the girl find a bit of the joy from the older music and dancing.

One of the best examples of this combination of vintage and current influences in music comes from the group Postmodern Jukebox. According to Scott Bradlee, the group's founder,

I called the series “Postmodern Jukebox”—a name that both appealed to my [failed] academic aspirations, and also just sounded like a self-explanatory name for this project. “Postmodern” because it broke down some of the walls between genres by blending the old with the new; “Jukebox” because it focused on pop songs that were familiar to a lot of people.⁷⁰

Bradlee and the band rearranged well-known tunes by pop singers in a vintage style to give them a whole new aesthetic. They also posted videos to YouTube for fun before the brand took off. Now they spend most of the year touring the world while still releasing new music.

Records are not the only medium to express this nostalgic trend. The plot of the musical *Bandstand*, which came out in 2017, takes place just after the end of World War II. While the music for the show is original, the composers did their best to make the songs sound as if they could have existed in the mid-1940s. According to Gina Ratan, who helped mount the National Tour, “It is every bit of 1940’s style music that you could possibly imagine and love. It’s really such a treat both musically and also in the staging and the conception of the story.”⁷¹ The plot of *Bandstand* centers on members of the armed forces who have all returned home from war with various forms of PTSD, and the grieving widow of another fallen soldier. The characters put together a band to win a national contest and, in the process, help themselves heal. Films made during the post-war era rarely portrayed realities of war such as psychological trauma. The choreographers of *Bandstand* also used Lindy hop as the basis for most of their choreography, a

⁷⁰ “The History of Postmodern Jukebox,” Blog, Scott Bradlee’s Postmodern Jukebox, January 4, 2016, <https://postmodernjukebox.com/blog/historyofpmj/>.

⁷¹ Gina Ratan, “Behind the Scenes with Bandstand,” *The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts*, October 9, 2019, interview, 17:31, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA7jWJwR5PI&t=14s>.

dance style that seems much more authentic than many other shows set during that period. The big band style and the swing craze had thoroughly worked its way back into the mainstream by 2017. But when did it begin to make its way back into entertainment?

Swing on Film

While most of the examples of swing influencing popular culture mentioned above date from the twenty-first century and most likely stem from the ability to listen to all kinds of music on a whim, a handful of projects that came out in the 1990s directly related to the swing renaissance of that decade. The revival and creation of neo-swing music, the popularity of swing dancing, and the inclusion of dance scenes in entertainment form an almost symbiotic relationship. The neo-swing music style, which I cover in more depth in the next chapter, came first, followed not long after by the dancing that had originally accompanied it. The appearance of swing dance scenes in motion pictures of the 1990s grew from that surge in popularity. Many dancers who began in the 1990s have cited the movie *Swingers* and an advertisement for Gap khakis as the impetus that led to their beginning swing lessons.

Swingers is an independent film written by Jon Favreau, directed by Doug Liman, and released in 1996. The film stars Favreau, Vince Vaughan, and Ron Livingston as three friends living in Los Angeles and trying to make it as actors. Favreau's character is dealing with a break-up with his longtime girlfriend and his friends are insistent on dragging him out to parties and other events to help him get back into dating. Because of the low-budget nature of the movie, the filmmakers had to get creative to film the party and club scenes they wanted. In one of the DVD extras, Livingston explains how they managed to create those party scenes.

The casinos, the Hollywood party scene, the other bars. . . . We couldn't afford to pay the people to close the bar down, and pay the extras, and then get wardrobe for them also. We just went in a shot when the bars were open and the people were there and the music's playing. You can't recreate that for any amount of money.⁷²

The film captured the early rise of neo-swing and the swing revival in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The climax of the movie comes when the three main characters go out for a night at the Derby, at which Big Bad Voodoo Daddy are playing. Favreau's character finally overcomes his heartbreak, making a connection with a new girl with whom he jitterbugs to live music. For an inexpensive movie it did quite well, and that swing scene became a cultural touchstone.

According to Tony Gower, owner of the Derby,

It exploded all across the country, because in the beginning I was trying to find swing bands, and like I said, there was probably only half a dozen. And then all the sudden you're getting music coming in from New York, Chicago. Swing bands were popping up all over the place. And then it went over to Europe. Bands from England started to send material over . . . from France, even from Australia, from New Zealand. So the impact of *Swingers*, I feel, went worldwide.⁷³

In Gower's opinion, the spread of the swing movement across the world was a direct result of the film *Swingers*. The surge in popularity of Swing-Era music and dancing was also featured in several other films of that decade.

Two years before *Swingers* came out, New Line Cinema released the comedy film *The Mask*, starring Jim Carrey as a mild-mannered man who finds an ancient mask that turns him into a bold and brash cartoon-like character. The first time he meets his love interest, played by Cameron Diaz, she is performing at a nightclub owned by her gangster boyfriend. Carrey's character uses his cartoon-like powers to transform the band from a sweet dance band into a swinging ensemble, complete with a shift from white to black suits, so he can perform a high-

⁷² *Swingers*, directed by Doug Liman (Miramax Films, 1996), DVD.

⁷³ *Swingers*, DVD.

energy swing number with the girl. The band featured in the scene is the Royal Crown Revue, one of the first to form during the neo-swing craze.

Another film with a prominent swing scene is the 1999 romantic comedy *Blast From the Past*, in which Brendan Frasier plays Adam, a young man who has grown up in a bomb shelter with his parents after his father mistakenly believed the Cuban Missile Crisis had escalated. The family spends over 30 years in the shelter before they believe the surface to be safe from the nuclear fallout. When they finally leave the bomb shelter, Adam is a man with old-fashioned values in a world that has seemed to move on. This plot resonated with the feelings of many young people who became involved in the swing revival. According to Judge, “Generation X and Y—those in their twenties and thirties and the ‘echo boom,’ teenage kids of baby boomer parents—are experiencing an almost fanatical appreciation and longing for ‘classic America,’ roughly the years 1920-1960.”⁷⁴ In a scene in the middle of the movie *Eve*, a girl whom Adam has befriended, takes him to a club. Instead of getting turned down by a beautiful woman like *Eve* expected, Adam uses the ballroom dancing skills he learned from his mother to impress two beautiful blonde women. The fact that this club is playing swing music locates it during the neo-swing revival.

The most prominent use of swing in the 1990s was a television ad for the retailer The Gap.

The Gap returned to merging nostalgia with their advertising in 1998 with the onset of the “Khakis” campaign in which each commercial featured Gap-clothed dancers performing one of five social dance forms: swing/lindy hop (“khakis swing”), hip hop (“khakis groove”), freestyle (“khakis soul”), sixties go-go (“khakis a-go-go”), and country line dancing (“khakis country”).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Mark Gauvreau Judge, “Back to the Future,” *First Things* (August/September 1999), 15.

⁷⁵ Colleen Dunagan, “Performing the Commodity-Sign: Dancing in the Gap,” *Dance Research Journal* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 10-11.

As was the case with *Swingers*, many dancers who began performing the Lindy hop in the late 1990s cited the “khaki swing” commercial as one of the pieces of entertainment that inspired them to seek out lessons. The ad also reflected the greater trend of nostalgia that had become prominent in the 1980s and 1990s; the Gap saw this nostalgia as a potential marketing tool that it could use in its ad campaigns. Dunagan suggests that “nostalgia comes into play in this campaign through the social dances, each of which has experienced a substantial revival due to renewed interest in their historical periods and an interest in being retro-chic.”⁷⁶ How the swing revival began and became compelling enough to come to national attention is an interesting story, developed in the next chapter.

⁷⁶ Dunagan, “Performing the Commodity-Sign,” 11.

Chapter Three Neo-Swing and the Swing Revival

Neo-Swing Music

The return of the Lindy hop to public awareness through movie and television screens was part of a larger movement called “neo-swing.” These filmed examples of swing served as the inspiration for many of the dancers who decided to try swing dancing during this craze. Juliet McMains and Danielle Robinson note that:

Nineties swing dancers often cite contemporary movies that feature swing dancing (*Swing Kids* and *Swingers*, in particular) and the infamous 1998 Gap commercial set to Louis Prima’s “Jump, Jive and Wail” as the impetus for their own embrace of swing. It seems more likely, though, that these films and commercials latched onto the coattails of a movement that was already underway and propelled by the emergence of early ‘90s neo-swing bands, such as the Brian Setzer Orchestra, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, and Royal Crown Revue.⁷⁷

What is neo-swing and where did it come from?

Shifts in popular culture often come to pass through rebellion against current styles. Neo-swing was a reaction by some punk, rock, and rockabilly musicians to the excesses and noise of musical trends of the mid-1980s. Punk rock was beginning to wear thin for a number of musicians involved in the scene. The neo-swing revival began when California punk musicians began incorporating the clever lyrics and memorable melodies, in addition to the dapper clothing, of the big band era.⁷⁸ The lead musicians of such neo-swing bands as Royal Crown

⁷⁷ Juliet McMains and Danielle Robinson, “Swingin’ Out: Southern California’s Lindy Revival (2000),” in *I See America Dancing: Selected Readings, 1685-2000*, ed. Maureen Needham (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 90.

⁷⁸ Paul Parish, “A Revival in Full Swing: The Signature Dance of the 1930s is Back in Style,” *Dance Magazine*, September 1999, 50.

Revue and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy began to mix the punk music they had been playing with the sounds of the Swing Era.⁷⁹

V. Vale credits Eddie Nichols, the lead singer of the Royal Crown Revue, with beginning the swing renaissance in 1989. In an interview for a book about the neo-swing renaissance, Nichols discussed his love as a kid for doowop and 1950s a cappella music, before turning to punk rock. “Then I discovered punk rock. I remember the first time I saw a picture of Sid Vicious, I thought, ‘This is It!’ I was in seventh grade and I went nuts on it.”⁸⁰ Nichols went on to become a working musician on and off, playing in both punk rock and rockabilly bands. In the late 1980s his attention turned back to those styles he remembered from his early years and he began to put together the Royal Crown Revue. Nichols said about his new sound:

I think swing is attractive to old punks and rockabilly cats because it’s something you *can* grow older with. And it’s got a great sense of style; there’s an attraction that I attribute to a *fascination with what America used to be*.⁸¹

Royal Crown Revue became one of the major swing bands on the west coast during the neo-swing craze. Highlights of their career included performing the swing number in the Jim Carrey film *The Mask* in 1994, and a Las Vegas residency in 1997.

Another important band during the swing-renaissance era was the Brian Setzer Orchestra, which came out of the rockabilly scene. Setzer was a guitarist who originally started his career with a band called Stray Cats. In an interview with *Guitar Player*, he says, “I was seventeen, and I was drawn by the power, the sheer magic, of rockabilly guitar. I don’t know if those guys could

⁷⁹ Eddie Nichols, “Royal Crown Revue,” interviewed by V. Vale, in *Swing!: The New Retro Renaissance*, ed. V. Vale and Marian Wallace (San Francisco: V/Search Publications, 1998), 23; Kurt Sodergren, “Interview: Big Bad Voodoo Daddy,” interviewed by Alex Steininger, *In Music We Trust*, July 1998. <https://www.inmusicwetrust.com/articles/10h02.html>

⁸⁰ Nichols, “Royal Crown Revue,” 21.

⁸¹ Nichols, “Royal Crown Revue,” 23.

read or write—I didn't care—but they sure could play.”⁸² The Stray Cats only lasted five years, after which Setzer worked gigs as a solo guitarist before turning to what was arguably his most successful enterprise. In his late teens, he wound up one Monday night at New York City's famous Village Vanguard. There he heard the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, which had been the house band at the Village Vanguard for decades, keeping the big-band style alive. Setzer recalls, “I remember hearing them and going, ‘Wow, what a big, musical sound.’ It was as powerful to me as a guitar plugged into a big amplifier.”⁸³ Setzer was inspired by the idea of a guitar player leading a big band. He then went to a saxophone-player friend and pitched the idea of putting together a big band and writing new charts. The Setzer Orchestra enjoyed a very successful career and collected a handful of Grammy awards.

Neo-Swing Dance

It is difficult to discuss 1930s big band jazz without also discussing the dancers that danced to it. While the musicians who were creating this new style might not have had dancers in mind, it is undeniable that the revival of the Lindy hop and other swing dances that exploded at the same time played a factor in the music's growing popularity. “The brief but energetic ‘swing craze’ that marked the late 1980s and 1990s gave a new spasm of life to the Lindy Hop.”⁸⁴

People were interested in partner-dancing once again.

Despite its disappearance from mainstream culture, the Lindy hop (or jitterbug, as it had sometimes been known) never completely died out. A simplified, mostly six-count version of the dance continued to be taught in ballroom institutions such as Arthur Miller Dance schools. The

⁸² “Brian Setzer: Swing Shift,” interview by Chris Gill, *Guitar Player*, June 1994 (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002), 63.

⁸³ “Brian Setzer: Swing Shift,” 65.

⁸⁴ Terry Monaghan, “Why Study the Lindy Hop?,” *Dance Research Journal* 33, no.2 (Winter 2001/02): 124.

punk-rock edge drew a different crowd and suddenly brought new attention to the dance that had once accompanied the music's predecessor. Dance studios that taught the jitterbug or Lindy hop suddenly found themselves needing to expand their classes to accommodate all of the young people who suddenly wanted to learn how to swing dance.

Neo-swing was created largely by middle-class, white, suburban youth whose nightlife centered around the social dances like the Lindy Hop and other derivative swing dances, and the corresponding swing or big band music, from what is commonly calls "the swing era" (1935-1945).⁸⁵

Spurred by the depictions of swing dancing in several popular films (discussed in Chapter 2), swing dancing became more popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s than at any time since World War II.

The music and the dancing were not the only features of the swing fad, however.

Indeed, one of the most unusual aspects of today's swing revival is that contemporary lindy hoppers are *obsessed* with their dance's history and its origins—theirs is a perpetual search for the ever-elusive, authentic "swing." The word "vintage" is a crucial term for this community, because dancers are fueled by a commitment to re-creating the past – the movement, mores, fashion, and music of the "swing era."⁸⁶

Shopping for vintage clothes to wear to dances became highly popular. Some of the most dedicated dancers took it even farther, wearing the clothes in their everyday life and investing in items like vintage cars and other paraphernalia.

Clothes, music, and other material items were not the only reasons people became interested in the swing craze. Many of those involved yearned for a simpler time, when they felt that people were more polite and society was generally more conservative.

Indeed, they focus on its positive effects—an activity that transcends political concerns as people from almost every racial and ethnic group in Los Angeles area come together under its auspices. However, the "past" swing revivalists tend to reinhabit is a distinctly

⁸⁵ Eric Martin Usner, "Dancing in the Past, Living in the Present: Nostalgia and Race in Southern California Neo-Swing Dance Culture," *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2001/02): 89.

⁸⁶ McMains and Robinson, "Swingin' Out," 86.

white one that is filled with argyled co-eds and World War II GI's who are perpetually on leave, never quite at the front.⁸⁷

Unfortunately, this was a very white-washed view of the Swing Era that glossed over many of the negative aspects of the time, such as the Great Depression, racism, and cultural appropriation.

The neo-swing revival only lasted until the early 2000s before it began to fizzle out. Some of the more successful bands continued to perform, however. The longevity of the scene was probably not helped by some of the band leaders' lack of interest in the dancing. According to Nichols of the Royal Crown Revue, "We used to hate it at first when all the lindy-hop kids came in, but I guess they did help build the scene."⁸⁸ Such dismissals were a major contrast to the way bands and dancers flourished together in the 1930s. Eventually, the music shifted again and many of the casual dancers adopted new fads. Swing dancing was not finished yet, however, and another more authentic revival was already underway across the country.

The Classic Swing Revival—New York City

An average person might think that the Lindy hop or swing dancing died around the same time rock and roll took the place of the crooners. That is not entirely accurate. The Lindy hop continued to be performed until partner dancing was overtaken in popularity by solo dances in the 1960s. Even then, swing dancing did not die out completely. A basic six-count version of it might still appear in various ballroom schools, though usually under the name jitterbug. Maybe it was the influence of neo-swing music or maybe a confluence of nostalgia triggered both revivals at the same time, but Savoy-style Lindy hop began to be rediscovered in the early 1980s. Instead

⁸⁷ McMains and Robinson, "Swingin' Out," 89.

⁸⁸ Nichols, "Royal Crown Revue," 27.

of being an instant fad, this revival was slow and steady, with the Savoy style of Lindy hop returning first in New York and then Sweden.

According to Frankie Manning, the real heroes who were a major force in bringing the Lindy hop back were Larry Schulz and Sandra Cameron.

In my opinion, Larry and Sandra deserve a lot of credit for getting the older Lindy hoppers back out there and helping to introduce their style to a new generation. In 1982, they had hired Al Minns (who had been introduced to them by Ally Sommer, a dance critic and historian) to teach at the Sandra Cameron Dance Center, which, to my knowledge, was the first time that a dance studio brought in one of the original Savoy Lindy hoppers as a teacher.⁸⁹

Al Minns continued to teach the authentic Savoy style of Lindy hop until his death in the mid-1980s. After Minns' death, Manning would eventually be convinced to take over teaching, along with Norma Miller and others.

In 1986 the New York Swing Dance Society decided that it not only wanted to preserve and revive the social dancing aspect of the Lindy hop, but also to bring back the performance-based side of Lindy hop that was a major component in spreading the dance.⁹⁰ Both the social and the performance versions of the Lindy hop use the same swing-out-based dance. One major difference was that performances were often choreographed instead of improvised (though some performances include an element of improvisation). Another major difference was the use of aerials.

Around late 1986, early 1987, Monica Coe and Pat McLaughlin started the Big Apple Lindy Hoppers, the official dance company of the NYSDS. Their purpose was to preserve and present the performance side of Lindy hop, to learn how to do air steps, and to work with me.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Frankie Manning and Cynthia R. Millman, *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 225.

⁹⁰ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 228.

⁹¹ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 228.

Air steps, or aerials, are not encouraged on the social dance floor since it is difficult to do them without hurting someone nearby. Only experienced dancers perform aerials, because it is easy for dancers to get hurt if they do them incorrectly. Not everybody chooses to perform them, but they are an important part of the history and deserve to be preserved.

Manning has said that he was certain that swing dancing had died and was a bit skeptical about it making a return.⁹² He had gone from having steady gigs and performing all over the world to working for the U.S. Postal Service for over thirty years. When the New York Swing Dance Society began to host dances, the crowds were small. Manning attended occasionally to enjoy the music and a few dances, but considered it a niche activity that would not catch on.

It wasn't until I walked into one of the New York Swing Dance Society's dances at the Cat Club in 1985 that I first had the thought, *Wow! Maybe something is happening.* When I saw all these people out on the floor dancing to a live big band and having such a good time, I said, "*Look at this!*" It was like being in a smaller version of the Savoy all over again. *That's* when I first thought, *Okay, it's coming back.*⁹³

Since then, Manning has become known as the Ambassador of Swing and has been a major advocate for the dance and its history. Without him, it might not have become the worldwide movement it is today.

Swedish Dancers

At the same time dancers in New York City were rediscovering the Lindy hop, another group of dancers in Sweden were discovering it for the first time. In an early example of the way media has been a key influence in spreading a dance, the Swedish dancers learned the basics of Lindy hop from movies. Manning had this to say about them:

⁹² Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 226.

⁹³ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 226.

I was amazed to discover that the Rhythm Hot Shots had learned to Lindy by watching *Hellzapoppin'* and *A Day at the Races* over and over in slow motion on a VCR. They would sit in front of the television for hours trying to get a step.⁹⁴

Unfortunately, film performances that only last around five minutes can only teach so much about a dance style. The Swedish dancers could have left it at that, but they decided to pursue other ways of learning.⁹⁵

A few of the Swedish dancers—Lennart Westerlund, Anders Lind, and Henning Sörenson—decided to travel to New York City and take lessons from Minns, who had begun teaching Lindy hop again by 1984. These dancers took what they learned in New York back to Sweden to share with their fellow enthusiasts. By this point they had dedicated serious time to the Lindy hop and started their own performance troupe: The Rhythm Hot Shots. In 1987 the troupe invited Manning to come to Sweden for two weeks to train the group. This trip had a major impact on the way the Swedish dancers thought about the dance when they realized it was just as much about having fun as about putting together the right steps. This successful trip would also begin a long relationship between Manning and Swedish dancers.

Herräng, a small town outside of the city of Stockholm, was central to the Swedish Lindy hop revival. Six Swedish dancers—Lennart Westerlund, Eva Lagerqvist, Eddie Jansson, Catrine Ljunggren, Ewa Staremo, and Anders Lind—invited New York swing dancers to Sweden to work with them.⁹⁶ The Swedish dancers decided that they should hold the event away from the distractions of the city. The first Herräng dance camp took place in August 1982 with twenty-five dancers. The organizer decided to repeat the event annually, and it has become a touchstone of the Lindy hop revival.

⁹⁴ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 229.

⁹⁵ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 229.

⁹⁶ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 229.

The Herräng Dance Camp has grown considerably over time, from twenty-five Swedish dancers during a weekend in 1982, to a five-week, all-day, all-week event with thousands of dancers from all over the world in 2020: the largest and only multiweek swing dance event in the world.⁹⁷

Manning was asked back to teach at Herräng in the late 1980s and eventually became a regular instructor there every year. More people began to come from farther afield as the Lindy hop revival grew. Manning believed that Herräng was a key factor in the spread of the Lindy hop over the years.

Herräng is a haven of Lindy hopping, and I think it's really helped the swing dance revival in a lot of ways. First, the Rhythm Hot Shots have done a lot to pass on the dance traditions of the 1930s and 1940s to the next generation. Second, when people take back all that they've learned in Sweden to their country, it's helped keep the dance evolving. Finally, Herräng has inspired a lot of other people to start camps and weekends all over the world, many of which I've been privileged to teach at.⁹⁸

This sharing of knowledge has allowed Lindy hop to be taught globally. Currently, swing dancing is practiced in almost every major city in the world.

Ongoing Swing Scene

Instead of fading away, as the neo-swing music craze did, the Lindy hop revival has continued to grow and thrive, due in part to the sharing of knowledge between dancers. Lindy hop teachers went to New York City or Herräng in Sweden and returned home to teach lessons in their own cities. As dancers developed in each location, they began their own local events.

Lindy Exchanges began as a tradition in the United States, where locals invited dancers in other cities to come to their Exchange to experience their social dancing scene. Dancers would then “exchange” the hospitality of their own events when they visited other cities.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Mats Nilsson, “From Local to Global: Reflections on Dance Dissemination and Migration within Polska and Lindy Hop Communities,” *Dance Research Journal* 52, no. 1 (April 2020): 37.

⁹⁸ Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 230.

⁹⁹ Samantha Carroll, “The Lindy Binge: the Social and Cultural Functions of Lindy Exchanges,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 20, no. 4 (December 2006), 450.

While some dancers never dance outside of their own city, it has become increasingly popular for the more dedicated dancers to travel to other cities to experience their events. Several different types of events happen in the current swing community. The first is an Exchange, which is comprised exclusively of social dancing. At an Exchange, dancers simply experience dancing with other people, usually to the music of a number of the local swing bands. The other two types of events do not really have specific names. While these events include social dancing, they also feature other activities during the weekend. The second type might best be called a workshop. The local dancers bring in teachers, often from outside their city, to teach classes during the days, normally followed by social dancing in the evenings. This type of event allows dancers to improve their skills and take new ideas back to teach in their own communities, while also getting to spend a lot of time dancing. The final type of event takes things one step further. In addition to the social dancing and workshops, these events also include competitions. These competitions can range from mix-and-match (in which dancers are paired randomly) and other improvisatory competitions, to choreographed solo, partner, and group routine competitions. Most of the larger events with competitions even feature cash prizes.¹⁰⁰ Any dancers can compete in the lower-level competitions; those interested in becoming professional instructors (who often teach all over the world) can work their way up the ranks.

These competition-based events attract the most participants. They operate on a much larger scale than a local Lindy hop event. Local events usually attract people who live within driving distance of the dance venue. Several of the larger events, such as the International Lindy Hop Championships, attract participants who fly to New York City from all over the world. One

¹⁰⁰ “Competitions,” *International Lindy Hop Championships*, 2023, <https://ilhc.com/competitions/>.

of the largest events that I have ever attended was a celebration of the life of Frankie Manning on what would have been his hundredth birthday in 2014.

From May 22 to 26, over 2,000 dancers from over 47 countries descended upon New York to celebrate the centennial of legendary lindy hopper Frankie Manning, who sadly passed away in 2009 at the age of 94. The final day was also celebrated as the inaugural World Lindy Hop Day.¹⁰¹

The event featured social dancing, live bands, historical presentations, and even a performance at the famed Apollo Theater. “Frankie 100” was a weekend that will be remembered by attendees for a long time.

Another reason swing dancing has continued to thrive has been its flexibility. Even in the 1930s, the Lindy hop and swing dancing in general have incorporated parts of other dance styles. The Lindy hop absorbed dances that had predated it, such as the Charleston and the Black Bottom. Additionally, dancers in different places developed the basic dance differently, producing different styles. This stylistic diversity almost became a problem when the Lindy hop revival first began.

While the Savoy-style Lindy hop was being revived in New York and Sweden, another group of dancers was reviving the dance in California. They did not base their style on the styles of Manning and Minns, but on that of the California dancer Dean Collins. His Hollywood style was much smoother than that of Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers. As a result, a bit of contention developed between the east- and west-coast dancers regarding which style was the “correct” style of Lindy hop. Eventually, it became clear that it did not matter. Both were valid styles, and dancers could use both if they wanted. Manning put its best:

Swing dancing exploded in America, and all these different styles – Savoy-style, shag, Balboa, Carolina shag, steppin’, hand dancing, Hollywood, and West Coast – became

¹⁰¹ Simon Selmon, “Frankie100 and World Lindy Hop Day,” *Dance Today* (August 2014), 60.

popular in different parts of the country. It's all swing dancing to me, which is a name that covers all the different kinds of dances done to swing music.¹⁰²

In the end, current swing dancing absorbed all of the previous swing styles. Some events focus on individual styles like Balboa or West Coast Swing; others highlight several of them at the same time. While swing dancing and music will probably never be the national craze that it was in the Swing Era, its revival has been widely popular and long-lasting.

¹⁰² Manning and Millman, *Frankie Manning*, 238.

Chapter Four

Band Leaders

The current swing revival continues to thrive, with dancers and dance communities all over the world. One cultural concern that has become increasingly important to the swing community in the last decade is focusing on the actual past rather than the imagined past, as was often the case previously. There is a great deal of attention to the avoidance of cultural appropriation and making sure dancers do not whitewash the origins of the dance and its music. Research into what was really happening during the time in which the dance was created—instead of the glossy remembrance that can be the focus of nostalgia—is important. Part of the purpose of this thesis is to ascertain what kind of research is currently being done by members of the swing community: mainly the bands and the dancers. This chapter will focus on the bands and band leaders who are important figures in the current swing community. The next will focus on the dancers and their music-purchasing and research habits.

Methodology

The first step was figuring out which band leaders I wanted to send questions to. Since the focus of this study is Swing-Era music, any band I chose would need to play that style of music. That was still not a small-enough number of bands to make a feasible study. Many all-purpose bands that play corporate events, weddings, bar mitzvahs, quinceañeras, and other parties probably have at least a couple of swing tunes on standby. I decided to begin by narrowing the list down to bands that primarily played Swing-Era jazz.

The criterion of mostly playing Swing-Era jazz still left quite a few bands from all over the country, as well as those in other countries. To achieve a workable number for the purposes of this thesis, I decided on a selection of six bands that play at major Lindy hop events in the United States. I focused on events that were large enough to bring dancers in from all over the country and possibly from abroad. They have all also released recordings. The bands are relatively diverse. Of the six band leaders, two are female and four are male. While five of the bands are based on the east coast (a fertile area for the swing revival), one is from the west coast. None of the band leaders are black, because none of the bands that seem to play at this level seem to be currently led by black musicians. Two of the band leaders are of Asian descent, however.

All of the band leaders were sent a standard inquiry, to find out who would be willing to participate in my study. Four of the band leaders responded; these were then sent the study questions.

The questionnaire is designed to cover several topics while making sure it would not take too much time to answer. Some of the questions cover basic information about how the band was started and why they chose Swing-Era jazz as their primary style. Some of the questions also ask about the types of performances they typically play and how they choose their sets. The final set of questions revolves around choosing music for recordings and what type of research they have participated in as part of their preparation. The list of questions sent to the band leaders are the following:

1. What made you decide to start a band that plays Swing-Era jazz? Is Swing-Era jazz your main style? If not, what is?
2. How often do you play for dance events versus other non-dance events?

3. How do you decide what music to play for events? Is it different for different types of events?
4. How do you choose music to record? Do you stick with old standards or are you looking for lesser-known pieces to reintroduce? Do you create original pieces?
5. Have you ever visited an archive to look into the charts and recordings left behind by Swing-Era band leaders? Was the research done in person or virtually?

In the end, all four band leaders responded to my questions within a month.

The Bands

The four band leaders participating in the study are George Gee from the George Gee Orchestra, Paul Cosentino of the Boilermaker Jazz Band, Jonathan Stout of the Jonathan Stout Orchestra and Sextet, and Laura Windley of the Mint Julep Jazz Band. The bands range in size from a small five-person ensemble to a full big band characteristic of the original Swing Era.

George Gee is a Chinese American born in New York. In addition to popular rock and roll and R&B, he discovered a love of jazz, particularly of the big band style, while he was in high school. Gee attended Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where he became a DJ for the college radio station. In Gee's words: "I played Basie, Ellington [*sic*], Miller, Goodman while all the other shows played punk rock."¹⁰³ This program ended up being surprisingly popular with the students and led to other opportunities for Gee.

The station manager asked George to interview William "Count" Basie before a campus concert in 1979. This inspiring conversation changed George's life . . . the very next day, he reached out to fellow jazz players to create a 17-piece big band, which quickly became a darling of the campus community.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ George Gee, questionnaire received by email, June 29, 2023.

¹⁰⁴ "About George," George Gee Swing Orchestra, last modified 2023, <https://www.georgegee.com/about-george>

Gee spent roughly a decade in Pittsburgh honing his style before moving back to New York. As luck would have it, he arrived at the same time swing was experiencing its first major resurgence. The Gee Orchestra has continued to play in New York until the present, with a recurring engagement at Swing46 Jazz and Supper Club every Sunday night. “We still play classic swing jazz but with other musical influences such as latin [*sic*], bebop, blues and such.”¹⁰⁵

Paul Cosentino of the Boilermaker Jazz Band is currently based in Pittsburgh. According to Cosentino, Swing-Era jazz is a bit of a family legacy. “My grandfather was a piano player from that time period. I grew up with the music. I started playing swing-era and early jazz in middle school.”¹⁰⁶ Cosentino leads the band while playing reed instruments such as the alto and tenor saxophones, but he is best known for playing the clarinet. He founded the Boilermaker Jazz Band in 1988. According to Cosentino, “I was fortunate to be finish [*sic*] college just when the swing dancing craze hit.”¹⁰⁷ The Boilermaker Jazz Band plays a mix of jazz music ranging from the 1920s to the 1940s. One feature that helps create their vintage style is Cosentino’s clarinet. “Paul plays an antique Albert System clarinet, which gives him a wonderfully distinctive sound not often heard on today’s bandstands.”¹⁰⁸ The band has been together for thirty years, playing a mixture of different types of events. Unlike the rest of the bands, Cosentino says only about 25 percent of their work is for dancers, while the remainder is other types of events ranging from festivals to corporate events and weddings. Cosentino also occasionally sits in as a guest with other bands.

¹⁰⁵ George Gee, questionnaire received by email, June 29, 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Cosentino, questionnaire received by email, June 14, 2023.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Cosentino, questionnaire received by email, June 14, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ “Meet the Band,” Boilermaker Jazz Band, accessed September 26, 2023, <https://www.boilermakerjazzband.com/bio>

Jonathan Stout and his Orchestra is the third ensemble. Stout is based in California and began playing rock guitar in the early 1990s. Like many others, he came to the jazz of the Swing Era through the swing craze of the 1990s. Stout began swing dancing in 1995, but did not begin to play jazz exclusively until the end of the decade. According to him, he did not initially intend to put a band together.

I had no ambitions of playing professionally, but 2002 Hilary Alexander and I started a band specifically to play for the swing-dance community, using the skills and expectations I'd learned as a swing dance DJ.¹⁰⁹

From Stout's point of view and from the testimony of at least one of the neo-swing band leaders, most of the live bands performing in Los Angeles at that time were not geared towards dancing. The art of playing for dancers that a band leader such as Chick Webb excelled at had to be redeveloped for modern audience tastes by the new bands. "Add to that the number of times that people (DJ's, musicians, dancers) conflated 'Swing-Era' with anything before 1965, that I got really sick of hearing Rat-Pack-Era Sinatra, New Testament Basie, and stuff like that, instead of ever getting actual 'Swing-Era Jazz.'"¹¹⁰ Jonathan Stout and the Campus Five featuring Hilary Alexander caters specifically to dancers and the dance community, though the recent pandemic has required them to branch out a bit. In 2003, they established the Jonathan Stout Orchestra to fulfill the demand for a full big band that could be danced to, growing from a seven-piece ensemble to fourteen members.

The final band leader, Laura Windley of the Mint Julep Jazz Band, also began as a dancer and DJ who had no aspirations to start a band. While she was dancing and working as a DJ, Windley also sang in another swing band, and helped with marketing. When Windley had an

¹⁰⁹ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

intellectual disagreement with the band leader, she was fired from the band. Some of her friends in the dance scene suggested that she should put together her own band to play for their events.

We saw the niche that this kind of band would fill, the gigs already available to us, how we could improve on what our friend had done as a bandleader, and what we could bring to the table that we believed would be marketable to the dance community.¹¹¹

Windley created the Mint Julep Jazz Band to satisfy a need in the swing community scene; the band plays primarily for dance events. They also play other events, including an appearance on *Sesame Street*, and Windley estimates their performances are 60 percent dances and 40 percent other types of performances. They are based in Durham, North Carolina and are led by both Windley and her husband Lucian Cobb (the band's trombonist).

How they Choose Music and Research Practices

All the bands specialize in Swing-Era jazz music and play it either exclusively, or at least the majority of the time. They all play for dance events, though some also play for other types of events, and all have released at least several recordings. Producing music for live events requires an extensive repertoire list to fill time, as well as a commitment to finding music in the necessary style.

The process of building a live set varies from band to band depending on what kind of performances they play. The Boilermaker Jazz Band only plays for swing-dance events around 25 percent of the time. They also play for a mixture of concerts, jazz clubs, corporate events, weddings, and other types of parties. Unsurprisingly, building a set is different for each type of event. According to Cosentino, "Background music for a corporate event is much different than music for a Lindy hop dance. We always play swing music, but customize the song list

¹¹¹ Laura Windley, questionnaire received by email, June 4, 2023.

depending on what is needed for that event.”¹¹² The Mint Julep Jazz Band also plays a mix of dance events and other types of events. In their case, about 60 percent of the performances are dance events and the rest non-dance events. When she is building a set list, Windley says, “I use my expert swing DJ skills and former event planner/wedding coordinator skills to craft a custom set list for each event.”¹¹³

The other two bands play almost exclusively for dance events, and thus seem to operate in a way that more closely resembles what band leaders of the Swing Era big bands did. Stout’s band played almost exclusively for dance events for twenty-one years before having to add other types of performances, owing to the global pandemic. According to Stout, “Among dance events, I do change the median tempo and tempo distribution based on the needs of the event . . . Lindy hop vs Balboa, more experienced scenes vs less, beginners vs tons of pros, etc.”¹¹⁴ Choosing a set list that will keep dancers engaged is a tricky business, and Chick Webb was the best at it during the Swing Era. Stout’s learning how to arrange set lists for different types of dance crowds is a modern extension of Webb’s process. For events aimed at the general public, he says he adds in a ballad or two. He is also well known for his storytelling and giving context in between songs at dance events. He says he often does more storytelling with a less well-versed audience. Gee, on the other hand, plays exclusively for dancers, now mostly in New York City. He is similar to many of the Swing-Era band leaders in that he does not have a preselected set list. According to Gee, “I always choose my playlist on stage and never/rarely beforehand. What happened in the moment influences my social choices.”¹¹⁵ The ability to read the room and cater

¹¹² Paul Cosentino, questionnaire received by email, June 14, 2023.

¹¹³ Laura Windley, questionnaire received by email, June 4, 2023.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

¹¹⁵ George Gee, questionnaire received by email, June 29, 2023.

to the needs of the crowd is an almost-lost art, practiced now only by bands that regularly play for social dancers.

In order to play for a dance event, the band needs at least three hours of material ready to play. Since most swing songs only last four to six minutes, bands need to have dozens of songs prepared—more if they are playing several nights of the same event. So how do these various band leaders and bands decide which songs to record for the albums that they put out? The answer mostly seems to lie in originality: not just original compositions, but having something original to say about a specific song.

All four bands choose the majority of their songs from the vast array of music written in the Swing Era. The Boilermaker Jazz Band exclusively plays arrangements of music already written. According to Cosentino, “We try to do a mix of standards and more obscure songs. It’s good to have some titles that people recognize, but we also have a larger repertoire and like to play different songs.”¹¹⁶ Cosentino makes no mention of how his band treats their arrangements, but that is an important similarity among all three of the other bands. According to Windley, the Mint Julep Jazz Band chooses the songs for their recordings from the songs they feel are working best in their sets. Three band members choose most of the songs, selecting those that they find interesting and that resonate with the swing-dance community. Windley clarified one rule the band has; “We have a policy that, unless we are bringing something new to the table or a high-quality recording of a song/arrangement doesn’t exist, that we don’t record it.”¹¹⁷

Stout indicates that the same is generally true for their band.

Originally we almost entirely played transcriptions of existing arrangements . . . and often the things we would record would be versions of songs where the original was too scratchy

¹¹⁶ Paul Cosentino, questionnaire received by email, June 14, 2023.

¹¹⁷ Laura Windley, questionnaire received by email, June 4, 2023.

to DJ. We would occasionally do original arrangements of old songs, often somewhat inspired by a particular recording.¹¹⁸

Stout also admits that they looked for “deep cuts,” or songs that are not played very often or don’t have a good recording produced, and that for years the only playable versions of some of their repertoire was the one they had put out. After a decade of performing, however, many other bands began to play their songs and arrangements. The Jonathan Stout Orchestra needed something to set themselves apart from other bands. The George Gee Orchestra does so by doing something different with whatever songs they play. “In our nine recordings (holiday album to be released later this year)—we have evolved our recording projects to include many original transcriptions of swing hits, plus a healthy addition of original jazz in the style and danceable.”¹¹⁹

Both the Mint Julep Jazz Band and the Jonathan Stout Orchestra are increasingly depending on original songs as part of their distinctive style. Windley says, “Keenan has created a number of original tunes for the band. Both Keenen and Lucian have done original arrangements of songs, as well as transcriptions/reductions.”¹²⁰ Stout also began to focus on a distinctive sound for his band that was harder for other bands to replicate.

So, starting with our 2016 album . . . most of the tunes were original arrangements of old songs. And at least one was an original tune. Our 2021 album had 5 original tunes, and was almost exclusively original arrangements.¹²¹

Overall, these bands and band leaders are doing their part for the preservation of the music of the Swing Era, both with new recordings of old pieces and new songs in the old style.

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

¹¹⁹ George Gee, questionnaire received by email, June 29, 2023.

¹²⁰ Laura Windley, questionnaire received by email, June 4, 2023.

¹²¹ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

When asked about their research habits, two of the band leaders mentioned having extensive personal collections of recordings, as well as doing extensive reading in books about the major figures of the era. Gee wrote,

I consider myself a historian of music with many personal connections with jazz musicians and swing dancers from the original era (everyone from Basie, Lionel Hampton to Frankie Manning, Norma Miller, Jean Veloz etc.). I have an extensive book collection in my personal library plus so much information now on the internet!¹²²

These connections make sense, because Gee was in New York City as these musicians were being brought back into the fold by the swing craze. Cosentino has a similar story about his research habits. “I have an extensive collection of recordings. And just about everything is available these days online. I can almost always find something I’m looking for. I have also read numerous bios and memoirs of musicians and composers.”¹²³

While both musicians have extensive physical research materials available to them, they still are happy to utilize what can be found on the internet. The ability to access so much information on the internet certainly makes it easier to study almost any topic. The internet can provide access to songs and arrangements that a newly formed band wants to play, and can also on occasion be a double-edged sword for a band that has been performing for a while. Stout elaborates, “While I took great pride in my ‘digging’ for tunes and curation of them, when any other band could just find these songs on Spotify, then it had less value. Having our own unique version of a tune is a value . . .”¹²⁴ Stock arrangements might be satisfactory for many bands that are just starting out or trying to make money, but the best bands are the ones that interpret songs in original ways.

¹²² George Gee, questionnaire received by email, June 29, 2023.

¹²³ Paul Cosentino, questionnaire received by email, June 14, 2023.

¹²⁴ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

Despite all of these band leaders having a strong desire to find obscure music and create their own versions of them, only Windley has visited a physical archive to look at one of the many collections of Swing Era material that are preserved there: “Yes, I have been to the Duke University Archives in person to look at the Les Brown collection and scan several big band arrangements.”¹²⁵ Stout is the only other one who expressed interest in going to an archive. “At some point I’d love to go to Yale to look at the Goodman collection.”¹²⁶

Conclusions

All of the band leaders engage in extensive research as part of their work. They mostly do so through recordings available for purchase and through the internet. Very little of this research is being done in a physical archive space. This chapter’s findings make clear that libraries, archives, or anyone who has a collection should try to make these holdings available online. They also need to ensure that swing musicians are aware of the collections both as physical and online resources. Band leaders such as these four would almost certainly utilize such collections if they were better known and easier to access.

Additionally, while the band leaders are not participating in preservation in the traditional archival sense, they are involved in another form of preservation. Several of them mentioned making recordings of songs for which the original vinyl was too scratchy to play. They also write about finding obscure songs that are not commonly played by other bands. Music preservation has always had two components, the first of which is the preservation of a score as the composer originally wrote it that is done at archives and museums. Music is also meant to be played,

¹²⁵Laura Windley, questionnaire received by email, June 4, 2023.

¹²⁶Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

however, and part of the preservation of a piece is each new recording making the work available to new audiences. Performing these songs is the type of preservation that swing-band leaders are participating in most directly. They are keeping songs from the Swing Era from disappearing.

Chapter 5

Swing Dancer Research Habits

Methodology

Obtaining responses from regular swing dancers instead of well-known band leaders required a quantitative method rather than the qualitative one used in the previous chapter. The questions were as straightforward as possible and administered using the online resource SurveyMonkey. The multiple-choice answers allowed for a straightforward analytical analysis of the responses.

The survey uses three main types of questions. The first set centers on respondents' background as swing dancers. The second set asked about their purchasing habits with regard to Swing-Era music. The final set of questions asked about what kinds of research respondents have done on both the music and history of the Swing Era. The survey consisted of a total of nine questions:

1. How long have you been swing dancing?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 10-15 years
 - 15-20 years
 - More than 20 years

2. How often do you swing dance?
 - Every Day
 - A few times a week
 - About once a week
 - A few times a month
 - Once a month
 - Less than once a month

3. Have you ever been to a swing-dance event?

- Yes
 - No
4. Do you purchase recordings of swing music?
- Yes
 - No
5. If yes, do you purchase physical or digital releases?
- None of the Above
 - Physical
 - Digital
6. Do you ever DJ for swing dances?
- Yes
 - No
7. If yes, what kind of music are you looking for when you add music to your sets? (Choose all that apply)
- None of the Above
 - Current Bands
 - Vintage Bands
 - Other
8. Have you ever done research into the Swing Era and its music?
- Yes
 - No
9. If yes, how did you conduct this research? (Choose all that apply)
- None of the Above
 - Reading Published Materials (books, articles, etc.)
 - Internet Research
 - In a Physical Archive or Similar Collection
 - Other

The survey should have taken no more than five minutes to complete.

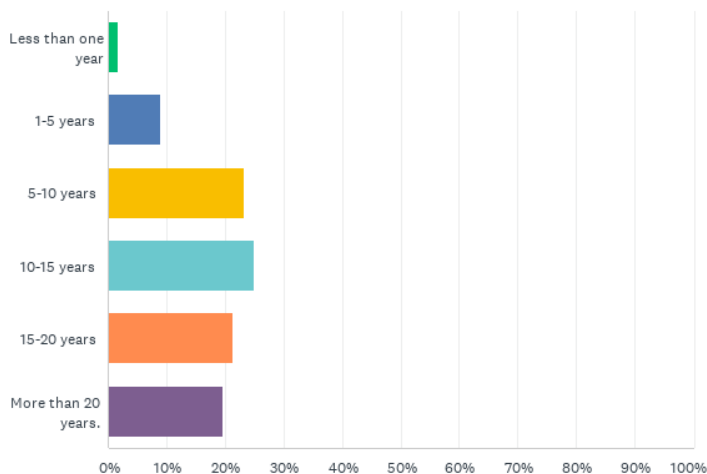
When it came time to distribute the survey, I turned to social media, since many swing-dance societies and swing events have an online presence. Since I am also personal friends with many swing dancers in and outside the United States, I posted the link for my survey on my personal Facebook page for a month. I also asked several of my friends who are swing dancers in different locations across the country to both take the survey and to post it to their own social media pages to widen the net. Many of them agreed to do so, and one even posted it to a group dedicated to swing-dance instructors around the country. By the end of the month, there were fifty-six responses, which seem to contain a balanced range of dancer experience.

General Dancer Information

Fifty-six swing dancers responded to the survey request. The first set of questions deals with their history as swing dancers and how involved they currently are with swing dancing. As Figure 1 shows, the time dancers had been involved with swing ranged from less than a year to more than twenty years.

Figure 1: Responses to Question 1

Q1 How long have you been swing dancing?



The smallest percentage of dancers (1.79 percent) responded they have been dancing for less than a year, and only 8.93 percent of the dancers picked one-to-five years as their answer. The fact that almost 90 percent of the answers came from dancers who had been swing dancing for at least five years works out well for the purposes of my study. If they have been dancing for less than a year it is probably too soon for them to have done any major research. The amount of research that dancers will choose to do in the span of one to five years often increases the longer they stay in the dance community. If they continue dancing after five years, they are more likely to be dedicated dancers who have a deep interest in the music and history of the art form.

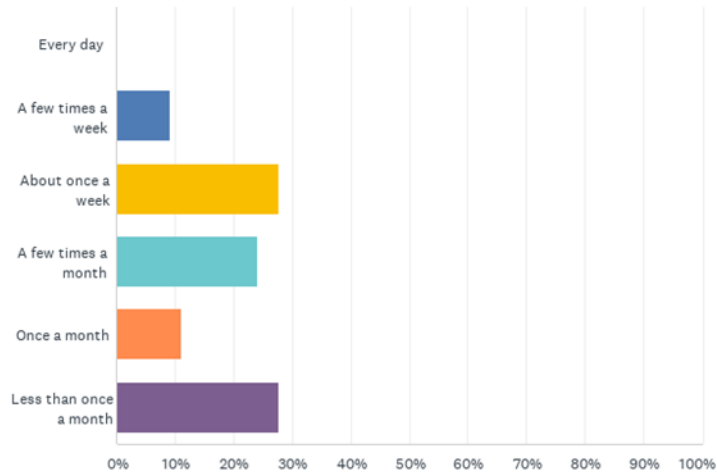
The largest percentage of the dancers who responded have been dancing between five and fifteen years. The five-to-ten-year answer got 23.21 percent and the ten-to-fifteen-year answer got a full 25 percent. The ten-to-fifteen-year group was the largest of any of the groups. The final two ranges of experience are not far behind the previous two. The choice of “fifteen-to-

twenty years” had 21.43 percent of the responses and the choice of over twenty years had a response from 19.64 percent. Twenty years ago was 2003, so it is likely that those who chose that answer probably began dancing during the initial neo-swing craze of the 1990s and stuck with the scene as it evolved into its present form.

The next question, the responses to which are shown in Figure 2, asked how often the respondent goes swing dancing. Unsurprisingly, no one chose the “every day” answer. Probably the only people who swing dance every day are instructors who teach on an international level. Even then, they are likely to only go out to a dance a few times a week, while dancing at home the rest of the time. While 9.26 percent of the dancers said they dance a few times a week, 27.78 percent said they dance at least once a week. The difference in these answers may be due to where the dancers live. Cities with a thriving dance community naturally provide more options to dance several days of the week. A small city may only have one weekly dance hosted by the local swing-dance society, and any other dances would require a longer commute. Those people may only have the opportunity to dance once a week.

Figure 2: Responses to Question 2

Q2 How often do you swing dance?



Combining these percentages leaves over half the dancers who currently participate in dance activities on a less frequent basis. Those who participate a few times a month were 24.07 percent of respondents. This may mean that the dancers have a weekly dance where they live, but that they do not attend every week. Another 11.11 percent said that they participate once a month. The final 27.78 percent indicated that currently they only go dancing less than once a month. While the swing dance community is welcoming to individuals of all ages, young adults make up a large portion of the crowd. Young people who are just out of college, exploring their independence, and often single, are some of the most frequent dancers in many communities.¹²⁷ Once they begin to have families and more responsibilities at work and home, many dancers begin to dance less often. Another possibility is that dancing is one of a swing dancer’s many

¹²⁷ Samantha Carroll, “The Lindy Binge: the Social and Cultural Functions of Lindy Exchanges,” *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 20, no. 4 (December 2006), 449.

hobbies, because most of the dancers do not dance professionally. They may only choose swing dancing occasionally.

The final question asks whether the respondents have ever been to a swing-dance event, but does not specify whether the event was local or required travel. This should be clarified in further research. The first experience of many dancers is at an event with their local swing community. In my survey, all the responding dancers said that they had been to a swing-dance event before. For the purposes of this study, all dancers having attended an event is the most useful possible response. If respondents are involved enough to choose to go to a weekend-long event, then they may be invested enough to do research into the Swing Era.

Purchasing Swing-Era Music

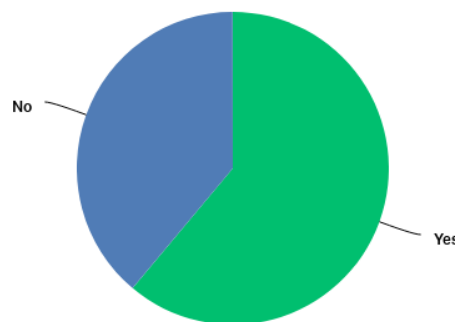
The next set of questions revolved around the dancers' habits regarding the purchase of music. The first set of questions in this section deals with the general swing dancer population and their purchasing habits. The second set narrows the field down a little, asking who DJs for their local dances. Since people who DJ buy new music frequently, they were asked what kinds of music they were most likely to buy.

The first question, to which the responses are shown in Figure 3, simply asked if respondents had ever purchased any recordings of swing music. Considering the amount of time most of the respondents had been dancing, I expected the "yes" response to be high. The response was less than I expected, at 61.11 percent, with the remaining 38.89 percent giving a "no." Upon reflection, the disconnect in expectation and actual response may be because of the increase in availability of music on the internet that I referred to in Chapter 2. Many younger dancers may be choosing to listen to swing music through YouTube or Spotify instead of

purchasing the albums (physically or digitally). Purchase of both physical and digital albums has been decreasing for years.¹²⁸ Because of the resurgence of nostalgia in the music industry in recent years, vinyl have become popular again. Consumers are not just buying vintage records, but record labels are releasing limited editions of new content on vinyl.¹²⁹

Figure 3: Responses to Question 4

Q4 Do you purchase recordings of swing music?



The conflict between physical and digital releases is reflected in the answers to the next question, which asks participants to specify whether their music purchases were digital or physical releases. There is also a “none of the above” response, and in retrospect the question should probably have included “both of the above” as a response option. 30.19 percent of the participants chose the “none of the above” response, and three respondents skipped the question, which correlates with the numbers who said they did not purchase recordings. From the other

¹²⁸ Hugh McIntyre, “Report: Physical Albums Sell Significantly Better than Digital Ones,” Business, Forbes, March 28, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2018/03/28/physical-albums-sell-significantly-better-than-digital-ones-even-today/?sh=e3ad61db538f>.

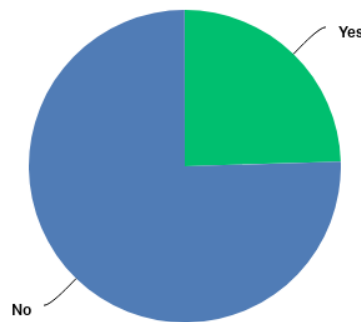
¹²⁹ Ben Sisario, “Vinyl is Selling So Well that it’s Getting Hard to Sell Vinyl,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/arts/music/vinyl-records-delays.html>

responses, 39.62 percent responded that they purchase digital releases and 30.19 percent responded that they purchase physical. Digital purchases dominate, but dancers appear to still be interested in buying physical releases. Further study is necessary to determine what percentage of the physical releases are by vintage bands, and what percentage are by modern ones.

The next set of questions was aimed at dancers who reliably purchase new music: the DJs. The initial question in this set, the responses to which are given in Figure 4, simply asked who among the respondents spent time DJing, whether for their local dances or for larger swing-dance events. Only 24.53 percent of the dancers who responded said that they DJ. This does not come as a great surprise, since DJing requires a significant amount of extra work outside of the regular dancing hours. The DJ also does not get to spend as much time dancing. The follow-up asked what types of music DJs are looking for when they add music to their setlists.

Figure 4: Question 6 Graph

Q6 Do you ever DJ for swing dances?



In answer to the question of who DJs for swing dances, 17 people skipped this question and 51.28 percent answered with none of the above. The rest of the answers are divided between

modern bands and vintage bands. 46.15 percent of the DJs responded that they purchase music by vintage bands. Music by modern bands is purchased by 35.90 percent of the DJs. The preference for vintage bands is probably due to two main factors. The first is simply the number of available recordings. Bands in the Swing Era were constantly releasing recordings. While not all of these recordings are available on modern forms of distribution, enough of them are that one could put together more than one DJ set and not repeat music. The second factor is that the vintage music is what the Swing Era was built on, so it is important for the swing communities to continue playing the recordings. Modern bands do not get left behind too far, however, which is good because it helps them to stay in business.

The question of modern and vintage band purchases allowed respondents to answer more than once, so the numbers do not add up to 100 percent and proves that many DJs are purchasing both types of music. The responses also allowed the choice of “other” and typing in a response. Only two respondents chose this option, one of which was just to say “both.” However, one DJ specified that when seeking new music, they were looking for “black artists.” There has been a trend in the swing community in recent years towards making sure that African Americans do not feel erased from a history that they were largely responsible for creating.

Research Habits

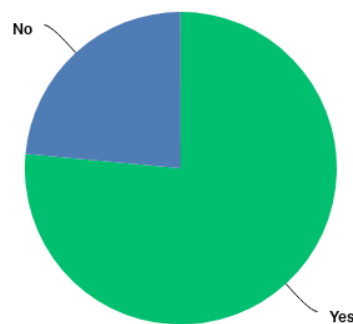
The final pair of questions was about the dancers’ research habits. The swing music and the Lindy hop revivals have deep roots in the past. While some dancers are content to just go out and dance for fun, the longer people dance, the more likely they are to want to investigate the history of the art form. The research being done by dancers is also not only about keeping the history of the music and dance alive. Instructors discuss going back to old recordings for dance

inspiration, and the band leaders discussed in the previous chapter frequently looked to the past for inspiration.¹³⁰

The first question in the Research section simply asked whether the dancer had done any research in any medium. The answers, shown in Figure 5, came down strongly in the affirmative. 76.47 percent of the dancers have done research before, leaving 23.53 percent who had not done research. In addition, five people chose to skip this question, which may indicate that they have not done any research. The final question asked those who had done research to confirm what types of resources they had used. This was another question for which the participant could select all that apply. As Figure 6 shows, a “none of the above” response was chosen 11.11 percent of the time.

Figure 5: Question 8 Graph

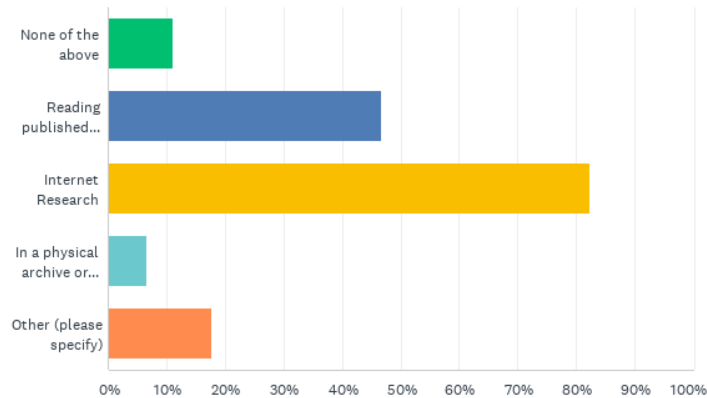
Q8 Have you ever done research into the swing era and/or its music?



¹³⁰ Jonathan Stout, questionnaire received by email, June 26, 2023.

Figure 6: Question 9 Graph

Q9 If yes, how did you conduct this research?



There were three possible answers for those dancers who have done research, as well as an “other” option which would allow them to give a different answer. The three main categories were published materials such as books and articles, internet research, and research in a physical collection in an archive or library. The largest number of people (82.22 percent) responded affirmatively to the internet research option. This is unsurprising given the pervasiveness of the internet. 46.67 percent also said they had done research by reading published articles or books. Most books are easily available in both hard-copy and e-book formats. Only 6.67 percent said they had visited a physical collection in person. The travel required for most people to visit a collection is probably a deterrent to in person research, but they may also be unaware that these collections exist.

Additionally, eight people responded affirmatively to the “other” category, giving some interesting options that I had not previously considered. More than one person mentioned learning history from others in the dance scene, which is common. While it may not be research

in the traditional sense, it is certainly an oral tradition. One person mentioned biographies and PBS programs, which should probably qualify as video histories. Most of those who have been dancing for several years have probably seen Ken Burn's *Jazz* series.¹³¹ Another person mentioned interview and forum discussions with both modern and historical dancers (both in-person and recorded). This is a common component at Lindy hop events, although the number of historical dancers available continues to dwindle every year. Many of these talks have been recorded and are available on YouTube. Finally, one person mentioned reading the information included in CD liner notes. Liner notes can be an excellent source of information if the company has taken the time to provide informative liner notes.

Conclusions

Based on the responses to the questions, many contemporary dancers clearly choose to invest time and effort into learning about the art and culture of the Swing Era. While some are content to just dance, many dancers are interested in expanding their knowledge. This study also demonstrates that many dancers gravitate towards easily accessible types of media. The most difficult type of research option to access (physical archival collections) was used by only a few people, while the easiest (the internet) was used by almost everyone who decided to do research. These results are another demonstration that patrons exist for these materials if the libraries and archives who have the collections will make it known they exist or make them easier to access. If dancers know the materials exist and can be easily accessed, I believe that they will study them.

¹³¹ *Jazz*, directed by Ken Burns, aired January 9-31 2001, on PBS and available on DVD from Florentine Films (2000).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The music of the Swing Era brought joyful music and dancing to people at a time when society was desperate for it. The Great Depression raged outside the dance halls, but inside nothing mattered but the swing of jazz pulling the dancer onto the dance floor. The big-band style of jazz was an important part of American musical history and popular culture. According to Thad Jones,

Jazz, to me, has been the most vital and progressive music of the last 200 years. In the short time it's been in existence, it's created more diverse forms, from just this one, simple musical structure, of any music in existence today. . . . That's a marvelous gift that shouldn't be allowed to die and to wither. It should be nourished—especially in America, where jazz really was born.¹³²

The Swing Era should also not be overlooked because of its commercialized nature. Luckily, the swing revival has led to a resurgence of interest in the music, lifestyle, and dancing of the Swing Era.

The principal question this research hopes to address is whether the swing revival has led to an upswing in research into and preservation of Swing music and dance. I believe the evidence shows that contemporary Lindy hoppers have embraced research into the era. Three quarters of the respondents stated that they had engaged in research into the Swing Era. While the group of dancers was small, it contained an effective cross-section of experience, so it likely represents an accurate sample. One particular aspect of the responses stood out. Only three dancers stated that they had been to a physical archive to undertake this research, though all use online resources, published materials such as books and article, or documentary films. There are dancers and band leaders who would likely appreciate the collections related to major Swing-Era bandleaders in

¹³² Thad Jones, "Straight-Ahead with the Count Basie Orchestra," in *Swing Legacy*, ed. Chip Deffa (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies, 1989), 259.

institutions around the country, but the dancers are either unaware that these collections are available or cannot get to the archives in-person. It would be helpful for the collection managers to begin thinking of ways to connect with the swing-dance community and let them know that the collections are available. Another good idea would be to begin digitizing the collections as soon as possible.

The second question this research hoped to answer related to the issue of preservation. Traditional preservation takes place in an archive or institution and is outside the scope of this thesis. At least two of the band leaders mentioned having a large collection of vintage recordings, and it would not be surprising if some of the dancers did as well. Labels have also upgraded a number of old vinyl recordings to digital format such as CD or WAV files for use by current consumers. Preservation of the music is taking place, though mostly through new recordings of old songs instead of the physical preservation of music charts.

Preservation does not only take place in the maintenance of sheet music and recordings, though. Archivists and musicologists do their best to preserve composers' manuscripts, but the continued performance of the music by orchestras and other ensembles is crucial to keeping the works alive. This is true for both Classical music and Swing-Era jazz. All the band leaders discussed creating their own version of songs from the era. A couple of the band leaders specifically discussed looking for songs for which the recording was not very clear, and then creating an improved version. There is even a project called Heritage Sounds which has engaged in crowd sourcing to raise money to transcribe songs from important band leaders and create charts, allowing swing bands to play these pieces again.¹³³ This may not be preservation in the traditional sense, but these band leaders are preserving the music of the Swing Era. Perhaps

¹³³ "Home," *Heritage Sounds*, accessed October 18, 2023, <http://www.heritagesounds.com/>

institutions with collections of Swing-Era music might consider partnering with a swing band to resurrect the music that is buried in their collections.

Appendix

Bandleader Questions

1. What made you decide to start a band that plays swing-era jazz? Is swing-era jazz your main style? If not, what is?
2. How often do you play for dance events versus other non-dance events?
3. How do you decide what music to play for events? Is it different for different types of events?
4. How do you choose music to record? Do you stick with old standards or are you looking for lesser-known pieces to reintroduce? Do you create original pieces?
5. Have you ever visited an archive to look into the charts and recordings left behind by swing-era band leaders? Was the research done in person or virtually?

Dancer Survey Questions

1. How long have you been swing dancing?

- Less than one year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- More than 20 years.

2. How often do you swing dance?

- Every day
- A few times a week
- About once a week
- A few times a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

3. Have you ever been to a swing-dance event?

- Yes
- No

4. Do you purchase recordings of swing music?

- Yes
- No

5. If yes, do you purchase physical or digital recordings?

- Physical
- Digital
- None of the above

6. Do you ever DJ for swing dances?

Yes

No

7. If yes, what kind of music are you looking for when you add music to your sets?

Current Bands

Vintage Bands

Other (please specify)

None of the above

8. Have you ever done research into the swing era and/or its music?

Yes

No

9. If yes, how did you conduct this research?

Reading published materials (books, articles, etc.)

Internet Research

In a physical archive or similar collection?

Other (please specify)

None of the above

Questions for Institutions with Swing-Era Collections

Institutions with Swing Era jazz collections

1. When did you receive the (insert name) collection? Was it donated or did you seek it out for your institution? Have you added to it?
2. How many items are in (insert name) collection? What types of materials: charts/scores, promotional materials, photographs, letters, audio recordings (on what types of media), video recording?
3. How often does someone come to do research in this collection? Have there been any points where you have noticed an increase in interest?
4. What kind of preservation work are you doing on this collection? Are you working on any kind of digitization of the materials? If so, is the funding internal or external?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdoulav, Alexandre. "Savoy: Reassessing the Role of the 'World's Finest Ballroom' in Music and Culture, 1926–1958." PhD diss., Boston University, 2014.
- "About George." *George Gee Swing Orchestra*, last modified 2023. <https://www.georgegee.com/about-george>.
- Baldwin, Brooke. "The Cakewalk: A Study in Stereotype and Reality." *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1981): 205-218. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3787107>.
- Bradbury, David. *Armstrong*. London: Haus Publishing, 2003.
- Bull, Michael. "The Auditory Nostalgia of iPod Culture." In *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices*, edited by Karin Bijsterveld and José van Dijck, 83-93. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.
- Campoamor, Danielle. "Why We Reach for Nostalgia in Times of Crisis." *The New York Times*, July 28, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/28/smarter-living/coronavirus-nostalgia.html>.
- Carroll, Samantha. 2006. "The Lindy Binge: The Social and Cultural Functions of Lindy Exchanges." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 20 (4): 447–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310600987262>
- Collier, James Lincoln. *Duke Ellington*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- "Competitions," *International Lindy Hop Championships*, 2023, <https://ilhc.com/competitions/>.
- Conyers, Claude. "Lindy hop," *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deanne Root. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2219309>
- Deffa, Chip. *Swing Legacy*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989.
- Determeyer, Eddy. *Rhythm is Our Business: Jimmie Lunceford and the Harlem Express*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Drysdale, David. "Glossary." *Lindy Hop*, 2008, <https://www.lurklurk.org/lindyhop/glossary.html>.
- Dunagan, Colleen. "Performing the Commodity-Sign: Dancing in the Gap." *Dance Research Journal* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 3-22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S014976770000019X>.
- Engelbrecht, Barbara. "Swinging at the Savoy." *Dance Research Journal* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 3-10. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1478672>

- Erenberg, Lewis A. *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Firestone, Ross. *Swing, Swing, Swing: The Life and Times of Benny Goodman*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.
- Frankie Manning: Never Stop Swinging*. Directed by Julie Cohen. Frankie Manning Foundation, 2009. 30 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rp8Zc15gCCI>
- Gammond, Peter, and Peter Clayton. "Swing." In *Dictionary of Popular Music* (New York: The Philosophical Library Inc.: 1961), 214-215.
- Grainge, Paul. "Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes, and Media Recycling." *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 27-34.
- Harker, Brian. "Louis Armstrong, Eccentric Dance, and the Evolution of Jazz on the Eve of Swing." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61, No. 1 (Spring 2008): 67-121. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2008.61.1.67>
- Hennessey, Thomas J. *From Jazz to Swing: African-American Jazz Musicians and Their Music, 1890-1935*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994.
- "The History of Postmodern Jukebox." *Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox*, January 4, 2016. <https://postmodernjukebox.com/blog/historyofpmj/>.
- "Home," *Heritage Sounds*, accessed October 18, 2023, <http://www.heritagesounds.com/>
- Jazz*. Directed by Ken Burns. Florentine Films, 2000.
- Johnson, Nicole. "The Surprising Way Nostalgia Can Help Us Cope with the Pandemic." *National Geographic*, July 21, 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/surprising-role-of-nostalgia-during-coronavirus-pandemic>.
- Jones, Craig Owen. "'Acolytes of history'?: Jazz Music and Nostalgia in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*." *Science Fiction Film and Television* 9, no. 1 (2016): 25-53. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/611205>.
- Judge, Mark Gauvreau. "Back to the Future." *First Things*. August/September 1999, 14-16. <http://www.firstthings.com/>.
- Magee, Jeffrey. *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

- Manning, Frankie, and Cynthia R. Millman. *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007.
- McIntyre, Hugh. "Report: Physical Albums Sell Significantly Better than Digital Ones." *Forbes*, March 28, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2018/03/28/physical-albums-sell-significantly-better-than-digital-ones-even-today/?sh=e3ad61db538f>.
- McMains, Juliet, and Danielle Robinson. "Swingin' Out: Southern California's Lindy Revival (2000)." In *I See America Dancing: Selected Readings, 1685-2000*, edited by Maureen Needham, 84-91. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- "Meet the Band." *Boilermaker Jazz Band*, accessed September 26, 2023. <https://www.boilermakerjazzband.com/bio>.
- Monaghan, Terry. "Why Study the Lindy Hop?" *Dance Research Journal* 33, no.2: 124-137. Accessed November 17, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1477810>
- Nellis, Eric. *Shaping the New World: African Slavery in the Americas, 1500-1888*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.
- Nilsson, Mats. "From Local to Global: Reflections on Dance Dissemination and Migration within Polska and Lindy Hop Communities." *Dance Research Journal* 52, no. 1 (2020): 33-44. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/755942>.
- "Nostalgic Feelings in Pop Culture." *The Good Men Project*, January 12, 2022. <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/nostalgic-feelings-in-pop-culture/>.
- Parish, Paul. 1999. "A Revival in Full Swing." *Dance Magazine* 73 (9): 50-52.
- Parker, Sally. "Fast Start: Keeping the Lindy Hop Alive and Jumpin.'" *Rochester Business Journal* (NY), March 8, 2013. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1644D57517E084B0>.
- Peretti, Burton W. *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Radecki, Allana. "Duke Ellington, Jazz Dance, and the African Aesthetic." *Jazz Education in Research and Practice* 2, no. 1 (Spring, 2021): 58-75.
- Ratan, Gina. "Behind the Scenes with Bandstand." Interview by Lisa Condon. *The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts*, October 9, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA7jWJwR5PI&t=14s>.
- Robinson, J. Bradford. "Swing(ii)," *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deanne Root. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.53904>.

- Schuller, Gunther. *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Schuller, Gunther. *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz 1930-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Sedikides, Constantine, Joost Leunissen, and Tim Wildschut. "The Psychological Benefits of Music-Evoked Nostalgia." *Psychology of Music* 50, no. 6 (2022): 2044-2062. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356211064641>.
- Selmon, Simon. 2014. "Frankie 100 and World Lindy Hop Day." *Dance Today* 58 (155): 60–61.
- Setzer, Brian. "Swing Shift." Interview by Chris Gill. *Guitar Player*, June 1994. In *Playing From the Heart: Great Musicians Talk About Their Craft*, edited by Robert L. Doerschuk, 63-69. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002.
- Simon, George T. *The Big Bands*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1967.
- "Singer Jon Batiste Releases New Single "I Need You": Watch New Video! New Album "We Are" Arrive March 19, 2021." *TheUrbanMusicScene.com*, January 22, 2021. <https://news.theurbanmusicscene.com/2021/01/jon-batiste-releases-new-single-i-need-you/>.
- Sisario, Ben. "Vinyl is Selling So Well that it's Getting Hard to Sell Vinyl." *The New York Times*, October 21, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/arts/music/vinyl-records-delays.html>
- Sodergren, Kurt. "Interview: Big Bad Voodoo Daddy." Interviewed by Alex Steininger. In *Music We Trust*, July 1998. <https://www.inmusicwetrust.com/articles/10h02.html>
- Spring, Howard. "Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, Venue, Media, and Tradition." *American Music* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 183-207. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3052731>.
- Stewart, Doug. "This Joint is Jumping." *Smithsonian* 29, no. 12 (1999): 60-74.
- Strickland, Michael. "Swing Dancing: How Dance Effectiveness May Influence Music Preference." Master's Thesis, The Florida State University, 2014.
- Stovall, Maya. "African American Cultural Technology: The Lindy Hop, the King of Pop, and the Factory Worker's Experience." *Transforming Anthropology* 23, no. 1: 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/traa.12042>.
- Swingers*. Directed by Doug Liman. Miramax Films, 1996.
- Tannock, Stuart. "Nostalgia Critique." *Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (1995): 453-464. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389500490511>.

- Unruh, Kendra. ““Jubilant Spirits of Freedom”: Representations of the Lindy Hop in Literature and Film from the Swing Era to the Swing Revival.” PhD diss., Purdue University, 2012.
- Usner, Eric Martin. “Dancing in the Past, Living in the Present: Nostalgia and Race in Southern California Neo-Swing Dance Culture.” *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (Winter, 2001): 87-101. Accessed on November 17, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1477806>
- Vale, V., and Marian Wallace. *SWING! The New Retro Renaissance*. San Francisco: V/Search Publications, 1998.
- Wells, Christopher J. ““Go Harlem!” Chick Webb and His Dancing Audience during the Great Depression.” PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014.
- Young, William H., and Nancy K. Young. *Music of the Great Depression*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005.
- Zirpolo, Michael P. “The Birth of the Swing Era – Part 1 ‘I Got Rhythm’ (1935) Benny Goodman.” *Swingandbeyond.com*, September 9, 2017. <https://swingandbeyond.com/2017/09/09/the-birth-of-the-swing-era-part-1-i-got-rhythm-1935-benny-goodman/>

Vita

Carrie Moffett was born in Houston, Texas on August 7, 1985. In 2007 she completed a degree in Clarinet Performance at Carnegie Mellon University, along with a minor in Music Technology. After graduation, she worked in a number of fields related to the arts, including as an archivist for the Aspen Music Festival and as a backstage worker for Houston Community College. In 2012 she began attending Louisiana State University, from which she graduated in 2014 with a Master of Library and Information Sciences.

In October 2014 she began working as a library specialist in the Music and Media Library at Texas Christian University. She is in charge of the School of Music archives and has been the student supervisor since 2021. In March 2020, she gave a poster presentation at the Music Library Association Conference with her colleagues Cari Alexander and Allison King about the creation of the Van Cliburn Competition Archives Database. In 2018 she began taking classes at Texas Christian University, and will graduate with a Master of Music in Musicology in December 2023.

Abstract

Pop culture has a fascination with the past, often seen through a nostalgic lens. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, some of that fascination turned towards the swing era, with its big band style of jazz and its energetic and athletic form of social dancing. The Lindy hop had a resurgence as a dance craze, and a new version of music combined the earlier big band style with a rock influence. The popularity of the swing revival climaxed culturally with appearances by swing music and dancing in several films and even a well-known Gap television commercial. Interest in this era of music has continued, and the Lindy hop community thrives internationally. In this thesis, I examine the effect that the surge in popularity and growing interest in this era of music have had on research and preservation efforts, with a focus on the research efforts of band leaders and swing dancers.