

**Made in America: The cultural legacy of
jazz dance artist Gus Giordano**

by

Linda Sabo

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Iowa State University**

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Linda Sabo

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signature redacted for privacy

Major Professor

Signature redacted for privacy

For the Major Program

Signature redacted for privacy

For the Graduate College

DEDICATION

To Fritz, for giving me the time ... and the rope

To Gus, for giving me his blessing and for sharing the dance

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ABSTRACT

Jazz dance is just beginning to be recognized as a viable artistic medium. Throughout this century, a path has been forged by a few jazz dance pioneers who have developed and codified their movement methodology and inscribed their style on other dancers through training programs and choreography.

The late Jack Cole initiated the concept of a learned technique for jazz dancers and other (earlier) innovators began to respond to jazz music and create choreography that fused classical technique with this new style. Presently, Gus Giordano, with Luigi and Matt Mattox, is one of three living dance artists that are considered pioneer figures in systemizing jazz dance. The dance company Giordano established in 1963 still exists and tours extensively, and the technique he meticulously codified, illustrated, and published in 1975 is still known and used by dance teachers on several continents. These achievements allow for a widespread dissemination of his aesthetic, and his success at establishing an annual Jazz Dance World Congress has gained credibility and respect for jazz dance as a serious artistic expression. Giordano's most notable contribution, however, is the codification of his distinctly powerful and universally applicable jazz style present in his technique. The clean straightforwardness of Giordano's line and this style's deep center of control make this technique more understandable and assumable in the foundational training of a young dancer. Although Giordano borrows from ballet and modern dance, his technique is

dynamically and aesthetically distinct from either genre chiefly because of its liberal borrowing from the African dance aesthetic, which give it authority, drive, and sensuality. These qualities, when inscribed upon the dancer's body create an empowering and grounding effect, dissimilar to the effect created by other existing dance idioms.

In authoring his own movement aesthetic, Giordano helps to establish jazz dance as a genre, unique and separate and clearly not derivative of any other dance form. A kinesthetic "reading" of his movement style will reveal how Giordano's fashioning of diverse cultural components has had an empowering effect upon the female dancer. By transcending traditional oppressive forms of inscription and giving her a clear and powerful voice, Giordano's style of jazz dance achieves equality in difference.



GUS GIORDANO
(Photo by Mike Canale)

INTRODUCTION

The first time I met Gus Giordano was at the end of a master class he taught at his studio in Evanston, Illinois, and it was relatively late in the game, August of 1992. This man who had been dubbed the "Genial Godfather of Jazz Dance" by *Dancemagazine* had already retired from running his school and company and turned them over to his tough and talented daughter Nan, herself a Giordano dancer. I owned then the complete hard cover version of Giordano's *Anthology of American Jazz Dance* (Orion, 1975), which includes a full documentation of his technique, and which I had procured and used when I began teaching at Syracuse University in 1977. It was . . . fortuitous that I ordered this book. I ordered many books at that time, but I was not familiar with this author's name, nor aware that anyone other than Luigi, at whose studio I had taken a few classes in Manhattan, had documented a jazz dance training program. I had named jazz dance as one of my skills for many years by this time, and believed, like most other people, that if a dancer was trained in ballet and modern classes—and tap, as I was—she or he could also dance jazz, or "show," or whatever was asked of them. And, to a certain extent, I suppose that can be true. Since my introduction to the Giordano technique, however, I believe more than ever that just performing the steps technically well does *not* a jazz dancer make.

My book arrived, and I was surprised by its size, an 8 ½ x 11" hardcover, but I was positively amazed by its content. On its first 170 pages were

reproductions of 48 reviews, clippings, journal articles, and essays dating from 1929 through 1974, concerning the nature and evolution of jazz dance, particularly its rise in popularity during this century. Along with these essays were over 150 illustrations scattered throughout the text. Most of them are photographs (in many cases they are full-page prints) of dancers and choreographers in performance, rehearsal, or "real life" reprinted on glossy pages. The remaining 274 pages are dedicated to the fastidiously detailed documentation of the then recently formulated Giordano jazz dance technique. Next to each exercise, which are precisely described and rhythmically notated, are visual demonstrations or photographs of company members performing various stages of the exercises and combinations. Of all of the notation systems I had ever used or seen, this was the clearest, most precise, and most possible to duplicate accurately.

And so, I began to augment my own class with Giordano exercises and combinations. Even the style was possible to duplicate in most instances, although it was not until I actually attended class with Gus himself and heard more definitive explanations from the source that I was able to apply many (any!) of his style's nuances. It was not until I felt its application within my own body that I was struck by its power and began to discern the personal transformations this training is capable of producing. And, it was not until many years later, when I began to study and perceive the philosophical and ideological implications of art on societal development and humanity as a whole that I began to truly comprehend the considerable impact that Giordano's writing of the body may

have already had. He could have created his technique only so that his company could precisely dance his choreography in his style of movement. He could certainly have decided to teach his technique only at his own school. Least progressive of all, he might have stifled the voices of the dancers and students who have worked with him over the years, maintaining his technique shrine-like and untouched by the influences of time. But he did none of these things. Instead, Giordano continues to personally share *his* dance with thousands of people throughout the world. Giordano places no restrictions on who could or should be in his classes and makes many converts to jazz dance because of his positive attitude. Most indicative of his forward-looking approach is his acceptance, indeed his celebration of the fluid and diffuse nature of the jazz genre. Giordano *expects* that his technique will be altered as his disciples interpret it through their own points of view. He welcomes new styles and perspectives of either movement or music that reflect the passage of time, even updating his own technique since the 1960s to reflect the changing consciousness of each new decade. In his review of Winthrop Sargeant's book *Jazz, Hot and Hybrid*, Robert Sabin wrote in 1939:

Like the America from which it sprang, jazz is complex and contradictory. . . . It has been debased and commercialized, gotten up in false symphonic clothing, reduced to a pathological jibberish—and still it thrives, passing through fad after fad and adapting itself to an amazing variety of conditions. . . . It is one manifestation of a deep-rooted impulse which is leading to new discoveries in all the arts. (15-6)

Inherent in the liberal and somewhat capricious nature of jazz dance is its inevitable connection to pop culture, and therefore Giordano's most enduring

legacy may be his lifelong campaign to raise the level of excellence and the level of consciousness of jazz dance as a artistic medium throughout the world.

Dancer, choreographer, teacher Gus Giordano is the self-proclaimed "ambassador" for the elevation and dissemination of jazz dance. By first understanding more precisely certain aesthetic components of this medium we may more thoroughly understand how jazz has affected the consciousness of a people. By examining the particular jazz "soul" in the person and in the movement system of Gus Giordano, we can more accurately interpret the movement "literature" that he has written on the body of the female dancer. This reading of the body can also enable us to make certain assumptions about how being trained as a Giordano dancer has and can affect the dancer's conception of herself and of her place in the world. Finally, by understanding the importance of dance in the process of enculturation, we may better understand how the agency displayed through the body of the female jazz dancer can affect women overall. Through my own exposure to Giordano's style of dancing and his style of teaching, his personal commitment to the agency of the individual dancer and the ongoing hybridity of this art form (what he characterizes as a "chameleon"), I can attest to the agency it permits me as a dancer, and the progressiveness and open-mindedness it produces in me as an artist and a person. If it sounds as though I am evangelizing, perhaps I am, but just as old time revival meetings, the Ring Shout, and the passion of ancient dance rituals, it is in the spirit of jazz.

I. ENCOUNTERING THE SPIRIT OF JAZZ DANCE

("Watch out for that tree!")

In the beginning—was the beat. From the moment that our universe began, assuming such a moment existed, there was motion, which pre-supposes the existence of rhythm. Rhythm, in terms of the human experience, is the visual or aural perception of any type of deliberate movement pattern that is part of that experience. Rhythm has shaped the support and the impetus for many forms of human expression. Dance is considered by many historians to be one of the most fundamental of these expressive forms, functioning as an emotional release, a means of connecting to and drawing power from nature, a mode of worship, and as an expression of sexual drive or initiation into the adult community of the tribe. It is reasonable to assume, say dance historians Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp, that "when primitive man had satisfied his basic needs for food and shelter, he should express his emotions through movement, through rudimentary dance, through the most natural and immediate channel of expression—his body. . . . In dancing, the ordering of movement, gesture, rhythm are the means whereby feeling is exteriorized, messages conveyed, today as in the earliest times" (7). There is a great distinction, however, between the dance of ancient cultures and our own. People today have forgotten how to dance, and, as a collective unconsciousness, we have forgotten *why* we danced. Twentieth century men and women spend much of their lives "inside" the mind while carrying on a somewhat forced relationship with the body. A select few can

participate in sports or the performing arts, but the large majority of people in the world are spectators. How many of the traditions of our ancestors have we lost through the passage of time? Not only have most post-adolescent humans lost the ability for spontaneous physical response, western society as a whole has lost the spiritual core of dance. What humanity has never relinquished, however, is its response to rhythm.

The drum evolved from early mankind's search for variety in their choice of rhythmic stimuli, and was the logical extension of fists or feet beating the ground, tree stumps, or other parts of the body. Cave paintings testify to the importance of dance to early man; likewise, descendant tribes of ancient cultures still execute traditional dances that give us clues to the past. So integral was drumming to black slaves brought to this country from Africa that it was forbidden by acts of law in order to extinguish in the Negro any remaining signs of vitality and strength and to crush their communal voice. Percussive elements, including stamping and shuffling movements of the feet, were an expression of the African's close connection with the earth, and a reflection of the cosmic order of their universe. Drums are found in practically every culture and are known to have existed since at least 6000 BC. In much of Africa certain drums symbolized and protected tribal royalty as late as the seventeenth century. These elements are also found to be characteristic of many non-African cultures such as the ancient aboriginal societies of Australia, tribal island societies in the South Pacific, the Maori peoples of New Zealand, Indian cultures of Mexico, and the Native American Indians whose dances, as recently as 1904, (until 1934!), were

banned by the United States Government. This official ban most likely resulted from the government's fear of the Indian war dance, but the fact that the ban existed at all, "gives an insight into the significance of dance in the Indian culture" (Clarke & Crisp 21).

What is striking to note is that despite the debilitating imperialism leveled on many of these indigenous and traditional cultures through colonization, fundamental remnants of ancient dance customs continue to survive. More than any other aspect of culture, the *physical* culture of a vanquished people will emerge through the aftermath of oppression either in hybrid states like a baby chick carrying the genetic make-up of both the conquering rooster and the dominated hen, or as secretive intact rituals kept alive indefinitely through a process of cultural cryogenics. Saved rituals are cherished as a link to a former cultural identity, and as a vehicle to eventual agency.

And yet, it can be said that within the art of dance itself, there exists a condition similar to that of imperialism. Western dance forms are differentiated hierarchically beginning with concert forms at the top. They are: concert dance, theatre dance, opera dance, show or popular entertainment forms of dance, social/ballroom dance, and folk dance. This hierarchy appears to descend in cultural significance in terms of the level of training needed to accomplish it and the amount of structure present in the form. Within the category of concert dance, a secondary hierarchy exists putting ballet at the top, followed by modern and postmodern, then ethnic/folk, jazz dance, and tap. Concert jazz dance is a relatively new phenomenon that has been gaining popularity since the 1970s.

Leading up to this was the pioneering work being done as early as the 1940s and 1950s by Jack Cole and Katherine Dunham. Choreographic breakthroughs in musical theatre were made in the 1920s, 30s and 40s by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and Agnes DeMille, and experimental jazz companies were founded and developed in the 1960s and 1970s by Matt Mattox, Gus Giordano, and Luigi. Unfortunately, the genre of concert jazz dance is still often aligned with show dancing, i.e. early musical comedy, minstrel shows, cabaret, club, film, revue, vaudeville and carnival shows. Traditionally, in these venues technical virtuosity is often less important than personality, and the portrayal of the exotic or primitive takes priority over honest representation and good taste.

Generally speaking, although these vehicles of pop culture have more mass appeal, ballet is still in the ultimate position of authority when it comes to the artistry of the genre. What that insinuates about other dance forms is that they are inferior in terms of technical power and effectiveness, aesthetic purity, and as mediums worthy of communicating the more profound truths of life. I would like to question here the legitimacy of positioning form over content—or, more specifically, over *spirit*. In this thumbnail trace of the origins of what we now know as concert jazz dance, I will pause at certain benchmark contributions to the form in order to examine their aesthetic components, or the spirit of the movement.

The Jazz Aesthetic: Its Derivations

"People who truly dance are those who have never bartered the fierce freedom of their souls, never strangled their hunger for rhythmic movement, nor frustrated their joyous physical response to music and song. Furthermore, when such beings dance, for them all time stops; the air draws back and the past, present and the future merge into a single indescribable jewel in eternity." (Pearl Primus, 1961)

In her 1941 essay on black dance, choreographer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham discusses the unique assimilation of African traditions into a larger American cultural body that is contemporary and forward-looking "rather than towards one which is on the decline" (Dunham qtd. in Long 63). In the process of discovering how the sublimated (in this case African dance), becomes the new identity that is American dance, Dunham identifies three cultural processes that involve the African background of black folk dance in the Western Hemisphere. These are: "the incorporation of African religious dance into new ritual behaviors; the secularization of African religious dance; and the interaction of African secular dance with European secular dance." It is the third part of Dunham's model that will guide this portion of my essay, but not in a linear fashion of tracing historical events. The crucial role of African-Americans in the formation of all faces of contemporary American culture is, if not sufficiently, at least frequently documented. It is generally acknowledged that at least in its surface configuration, jazz music and jazz dance carry the genetic makeup of European American cultural forms, (most notably the Creole formation in the South, and the Irish immigrants in the North), Eastern (Hindu), Native American, and African diasporic cultural forms.

In this analysis, I hope to ascertain a model for my own proposition that the African component of the jazz aesthetic has been as instrumental in the twentieth century woman's process of "becoming" and identity-making, as it has been for the African-American of either gender. Ultimately, I hope to call upon this information to demonstrate my claim that the Giordano dance technique, through a systematic inscription of key elements of the African aesthetic onto the female dancer's body, has contributed to the emancipation of the female dance artist and, by way of enculturation, plays an ongoing role in the empowerment of all women conditioned by its influence. I will begin by recounting what is known of the African aesthetic as it survived in traditional Zimbabwean dances, and in two American theatrical dance forms: tap dance, and the cabaret novelty dance of Snake Hips Tucker. Next, I will discuss how these aesthetic components contrast with and/or complement aspects of the European aesthetic as seen in the classical ballet, modern and postmodern dance.

Africa and the West Indies

Initially, I will name my primary sources for this section, in order to particularize how each author illustrates the African aesthetic from a different perspective. Kariamu Welsh Asante's article "The Zimbabwean Dance Aesthetic: Senses, Canons and Characteristics" examines the West African aesthetic as performed by traditional African dancers within its original cultural context. Cheryl Willis in her article, "Tap Dance: Manifestation of the African Aesthetic," argues that the "deep structure" of African culture (its aesthetic) survives

displacement and retains an ongoing participation in the construction of American culture. She proceeds by documenting her analysis of tap dance as an expression of this deep structure. Finally, in "Stripping the Emperor: The Africanist Presence in American Concert Dance," Brenda Dixon Gottschild argues that the Africanist aesthetic is most often silenced within American culture, and "is rarely acknowledged." Her illustration of these aesthetic principles as seen in the dance routine of Earl "Snake Hips" Tucker lends insight into how the African aesthetic continued to be assimilated into theatrical dance forms during this century. All three authors invoke Marshall and Jean Stearns' trailblazing work *Jazz Dance* (MacMillan 1968), as well as two works by Robert Farris Thompson, who set down ten canons of fine form in African Art in his book *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act* (University of California Press 1974).

The Stearns relate an anecdote regarding the early Negro dancer Thaddeus Drayton who recalls meeting an African student in Paris during the 1920s. Moleo, the student, was putting himself through school by dancing. "He was from German South Africa, and doing —barefoot—a complicated flash step, which we called Over the Top. We believed that an American Negro, Toots Davis, had invented it, but when I asked Moleo what American had taught him, he laughed and said 'That step came from my tribe in Africa'" (14).

Africans brought into America as slaves could not bring with them their indigenous language. The experience of Black dance tradition in this country, however, has shown perhaps less compromise than that of Black language and literature and to a large degree its cultural inheritance remained somewhat

indigenous despite imperialist influences. That is not to say that America's dance tradition has become what had been Africa's, but that even though movement and rhythm derived from the African Diaspora in parts of the Western Hemisphere integrated with European forms, African movement was initially less marginalized and actually became the basis of new forms. Anthropologist Melvin Herskovits said, "The dance itself has . . . carried over into the New World to a greater degree than almost any other trait of African culture" (Herskovits qtd. in Stearns 14). What Herskovits is referring to is what Willis names as the deep structure of African culture, or the retention of characteristics of the black slaves' original culture that was not "effected by time and geography; [whereas] surface structure *is* effected by time and geography (my emphasis)." Willis explains:

In the United States practices associated with political, economic and social units from the African society were discouraged. . . . The deep structure of a culture is inherent within a society and functions beneath the level of consciousness. Although the surface structure of the African society was denied, the philosophical principles and psychological attitudes . . . shared practices, beliefs, and behavioral patterns of Africans (the deep structure of the culture) were and are maintained. However, the surface structure was left behind and . . . forbidden in the New World; for example, African style sculpture, drums, and clothing. (Willis 146)

Welsh-Asante identifies these transported vestiges of African culture within the categories of *characteristics* and *rhythm as text*. Willis says the deep structure of African culture is retained in *attitude*, *musicality*, and *style*. A conflation of these authors' findings with those of Brenda Dixon-Gottschild will be useful in uncovering the American jazz dance aesthetic.

Characteristics

"Love and respect for the earth is one of the main factors of African dance. It gives it a certain vitality and dynamic strength, for it draws up into the dancer the unlimited force and ecstasy of the earth." (Primus 7)

Welsh-Asante's analysis of the spirit of Zimbabwean dance is structured around three key elements as delineated by Robert Farris Thompson: aesthetic characteristics, rhythm as text, and aesthetic "senses." In the first category, *characteristics*, the author invokes six properties of African dance as identified by the Jean and Marshall Stearns. The first three of these specified features puts Africans in touch with their earthly existence. They are: "1) The African style is often flat-footed and favors gliding, dragging, or shuffling steps, 2) African dance is frequently performed from a crouch, knees flexed, and body bent at the waist, and; (3) African dance generally imitates animals in realistic detail" (14,5). The African dancer has a close and sacred relationship with the earth that the shuffling, stamping, and dragging movements celebrate, and the Zulu "consider the internal echoes of the earth as one of the most powerful symbols of growth" (Kunene qtd. in Welsh-Asante 205). This concept is in direct contrast to western religious beliefs, which very often reject mankind's material existence as corrupt and sinful. A belief based in Christian Cabalism, popular during the Renaissance, articulated three planes of existence: the earthly, the celestial and the divine. It was believed that to surpass both the earthly and celestial planes and to achieve a place with the Divine was the highest purpose of mankind and the supreme quest of Renaissance man. This was primarily an intellectual pursuit of learned men, artists, and the Renaissance magus. In primal African

tribal societies, as in many ancient aboriginal cultures, however, matter and the *earthly* incarnation of the individual are celebrated.

The next two characteristics describe the specific kinesthetic substance of African movement. These are: (4) African dance places great importance on improvisation and satire & allows for freedom for individual expression, and; (5) African dance is centrifugal, exploding outward from the hip; the leg moves from the hip, not the knee" (ibid.). In her role of anthropologist, Katherine Dunham looked less at the aesthetic and technical characteristics of dance and came to believe that the characteristics of form and function within dance are interrelated and highly significant in African and Haitian secular dances. Form, as seen in floor patterns, for instance, is reflected in the straight lines of men and women facing each other in courtship rituals, or the use of closed circles as protective devices for initiation ceremonies. Function, relates Dunham scholar Joyce Aschenbrenner, is indicated by both the emphasis placed on various body parts, and the nature of the movement. The Petro dance of a certain destructive and antisocial Haitian cult uses oppositional movement, which projects "a hostile, frenzied-feeling tone, preparing the participants for aggressive action. . . . The Yonvalou often representing the benevolent . . . god, Damballah, displays a fluidity, a soothing motion—an undulating movement signaling acceptance, prayer, ecstasy." Another dance uses a jerky contraction and expansion of the shoulders that is hypnotic for the performer; still others are dances that involve movements of the haunches or hip and stomach rotation that intends to be sexually stimulating (63).

Finally, the African spirit is expressed, as previously accounted, through the rhythmic drive behind African dance. The Stearns delineate this final quality as: "(6) African dance is performed to a propulsive rhythm that gives it a swinging quality (ibid.). Katherine Dunham likened the steady pounding of the drum to a drug, hypnotic in its effect, and discovered that the drum is of central importance to all forms of West Indian dance:

The drum beat has a way of entering the body at the roots of the hair, fevering the brain, sending an electric shock from one shoulder to the other, shooting down the legs to the very tips of the toes where it is exploded back into the atmosphere. (qtd. in Aschenbrenner 64)

Rhythm is essential to the presence of dance in the African culture. The drum is not merely accompaniment for the dance. Among other things it summons the dancers; it initiates movement in terms of time, design and style, and; it guides improvisatory segments, the length of the dance, and the dynamics of the dance. The percussive element of African dance is the heart of the event. If the heart were to stop beating, the body would cease to move.

Ancient dance rituals demonstrate an instinctual awareness of humankind's multi-faceted core that is the body, mind, and spirit, and of dance as a method that allows the embodiment of his/her spiritual nature. "From the Nigerian stomp to the Ghanaian squat to the Dunham *kaiso* walk to the shuffling movements of the *Adowa* to the slow drag of the African-Americans, to the *samba* of the African-Brazilians, the feet embrace the bountiful ground to draw from it additional power and sound" (Welsh-Asante 205).

Rhythm as Text

"Beauty is primarily in the rhythmic action per se, as all regulated pulsations are usually perceived as harmonious (i.e. beautiful). . . . As we see it, Beauty (the emotions and warmth it generates) is the heart of the matter." (Primus 5)

In many African languages, there is not a clear distinction between the words beauty and good. Many African societies believe that "the material manifestation of the [African] art form will always be imperfect but the content, if functional, will achieve moral perfection and that is where the value is placed" (Welsh-Asante 204). Welsh-Asante proceeds to painstakingly interpret the profound importance of rhythm in African culture. While this concept may seem too abstract and elusive to Western minds, to Africans, "it is in fact concrete and tangible," he claims. Because of the holistic nature of African culture, the dancing and the drumming are locked in an organic and symbiotic relationship. "Contextually, dancing and drumming are the same, although perceived differently, they both emanate from the same foundation: namely rhythm" (206). *Drumming is an absolute requirement of the African aesthetic*, and much can be learned through its decoding (the gathering of the physical characteristics and manifestations of a dance), and its interpretation (the analysis of that data), or its reading as text. "In most cases," Welsh-Asante maintains, "the rhythm identifies the text as well as the context" (208). Because dancing and drumming both emanate from rhythm, and thus should be seen in the same context, "the categories of music and dance must be discarded when entering a discussion about African culture. The holistic and interactive sensibility of the African culture as a whole is reflected here as well as in its essentially 'moral' aesthetic" (ibid.).

According to Dunham, "It is the drummer or the *mama* who regulates the tone and pace of the dance, who decides when it is appropriate to introduce the breaks or 'feints' which so often induce possession [in the *Vaudun*] and who, by fixing attention upon and directing his drumming towards a particular individual, invokes the *mystere* [spirit] to enter that individual" (qtd. in Aschenbrenner 64).

Aware that drums were the means of unification and subsequent revolutions of West Indian slaves since the early 1500s, America had restricted African slaves from drumming at all by enacting the Slave Laws of 1740. In reaction to the Stono Insurrection of 1739 when a group of slaves attempted to escape North Carolina and flee to Florida, the laws "stringently prohibited any Negro from 'beating drums, blowing horns or the like which might on occasion be used to arouse slaves to insurrectionary activity'" (Magril 40). So integral was drumming to the spiritual survival of the slaves, however, that substitutions were quickly found in the way of bone-clappers, jawbones, hand clapping, and footwork. "The slave created the bonja, too," claims Magril, made from a hollow gourd without resonance board, slack strung, which developed into the banjo of minstrelsy and jazz" (40). Walter Terry wrote of this time, "The Negroes with their African heritage, had of course danced, but with the magical voice, and soul, of the drum taken away from them, they combined within their own bodies both movement and sound" (qtd. in Aschenbrenner 64).

From 1805 to 1880, French and Spanish Catholic slaveholders in Louisiana staged regular supervised dancing events where drumming was permitted. West Indian and African dances accompanied by traditional African

drumming were permitted without European influence or restraints only in Congo Square, a field just north of New Orleans. Slaveholders believed that giving their slaves a certain amount of monitored freedom to dance on a regular basis made them "happier" and more productive, and might also prevent secret voodoo dance meetings. Katherine Dunham observed of the Haitians over a century later in her book *Dances of Haiti*, that through slavery, a bloody war, and internal struggle "the Haitian peasant has clung to the religion of his forefathers, the *voudun*. Its gods give them hope, its priests give them wisdom and courage, and its drums summon them to pray and to war." In addition, as a significant aspect of their culture, "its dances have maintained ancient rituals almost forgotten, have relieved [the peasants] oppressed spirits, and have held them together in a common state of ecstasy" (2). This explosion of the Haitian dancer's body, mind and spirit is instinctual and in tandem. Their experience is holistic. Value judgments are not placed on the dancer by anyone in the community.

There is no gaze for here there is no distinction, only interaction: When these people truly dance, there can be no observers, for those who seek to watch soon join one of two groups. Either [they] remove themselves, or they are snatched, plucked up by an Invisible force and hurled into the ring of the dance. (Primus 3)

From the perspective of the West, however, African dancing is "exotic" and subject to a great deal of judgement, particularly regarding its morality, its lack of refinement, or its seeming lack of control. The sight of the black body articulating the pelvis has underlying sexual connotations to western contemporary society. Combined with drumming, "the most primal of all sounds,"

reflects Welsh-Asante, racial implications are placed on whether or not the dance will be viewed as art. This gaze can incite envy of the Africans' freedom and ease with their sexuality, and fear of the power implied by this sexuality. Magril states that "the Negro dancer on the American stage was originally an exotic" (40). The marginalization of jazz dance as a viable artistic expression in Western culture throughout its evolution attests to the fear behind this gaze.

Attitude

"African dance is basic, vital! . . . The dance is strong magic. The dance is spirit. It turns the body to liquid steel. . . . The dance is life." (Primus 5)

Tap dance historian Cheryl Willis' examination of the African aesthetic through tap dance analyzes the characteristics of attitude, musicality, and style. Willis begins her analysis of attitude by citing early modern dance scholar and teacher Rudolf Laban. Laban believed that one's attitude toward or control over a movement is not necessarily voluntary, but that a dancer's movement quality is behavioral, and therefore a product of his or her background, physiology, perceptions, or whatever is considered a product of one's behavior. Alluding once again to the holistic nature of African culture, Willis also makes use of one of Robert Farris Thompson's ten canons of fine form in African art, that of "vital aliveness," which incorporates intensity, strong expression, speed, drive, and flexibility. "Vital aliveness," says Willis, "connects life with death and man with spirit" (147). One's own personal equilibrium or balance controls vital aliveness producing the quality designated by Thompson as the "Cool."

Thompson refers to the "Cool" philosophy as an all-important mediating process, which is governed by 'a strong intellectual attitude, affecting incredibly diverse provinces of artistic happening, yet leavened with humor and a sense of play.' The "Cool" has a paradoxical nature: control yet uncertainty, imitative yet original, high intensity yet laid back, serious yet playful, hot yet cool. (147)

Breaking the concept of the "Cool" down further Thompson's canon includes the attributes "visible" and "smooth." African society generally values the quality of openness, and in dance this is shown through clarity of movement, which is always in full view. Willis lends support to this finding by citing the Yoruba proverb: "if the secret is beat upon the drum, that secret will be revealed in dance." Willis also points to Zora Neale Hurston's observation that Africans are "an outdoor people accustomed to communal life," as a way of substantiating her contention that the deep structure of African culture is still present within the African-American culture. I dispute this contention, however, and believe that the American ideal of cool differs from the African perception of cool, primarily in regard to this concept of visibility and openness.

Twentieth century American white male icons of Cool, Humphrey Bogart, James Dean, Frank Sinatra, and John Travolta, and Harrison Ford all demonstrate many cool qualities borrowed from Africa where coolness is considered "an all embracing positive attribute, which combines notions of composure, silence, vitality, healing, and social purification" (Thompson qtd. in Willis 147). By the same token, cool black men like Bill "Bo Jangles" Robinson, Sidney Poitier, Bill Cosby and Denzel Washington demonstrate these qualities as

well, and the roles they accept as actors generally embody these cool characteristics. However, while the American idea of coolness retains elements of the African aesthetic of the cool, it retains them in a mutated fashion, which is the logical repercussion of cultural fusion. The perception of what is cool may also change depending upon the cultural background of the observer, personal taste, and the peculiarities of era, or inherent within the conscience of a particular period of history. The blunt and witty wisecracking antics of early film actresses Ginger Rogers and Katherine Hepburn gave way to the pensive, silent brooding portrayals of Meryl Streep in the 1960s and 1970s. Race itself plays a factor in what is considered cool and what is not. In Hepburn's era the black woman's model for cool was generally slower and sexier and more filled with innuendo, as seen through the personalities of Lena Horne and Eartha Kitt. So, while Dunham stressed that "borrowing, adaptation, and growth are essential aspects of culture," she also made clear that borrowing does not mean the same as assimilation: "The same dance through different people becomes entirely different." Just as her own choreography of rhumbas and Latin dances prompted John Martin in a 1940 review to declare them as being "almost Parisian in their chic," in this particular analysis he also claimed that "Dunham managed to "show [these dances] as fundamentally Negro underneath" (Dunham and Martin qtd. in Aschenbrenner 68). The American concept of coolness reflects a multi-cultural sensibility, but also has certain prevailing characteristics and dominantly agreed upon functions that differentiate it from the African aesthetic of the Cool. The deep structure of the African aesthetic of the Cool, that which exhibits the African

sense of vital aliveness tempered by a personal sense of balance, *is* retained in the American sense of what is cool. The value of visibility, or openness, however, has given over somewhat to subtlety, privacy, even mystery. This esotericism is in opposition to this African penchant for openness, but it is easy to see how it may have developed as a part of the American way of life, particularly for the African-American.

In America, while the African slaves retained the deep structure of community in their plantation lives, it was tempered heavily with secrecy for purposes of survival. Hiding behind the closed doors of their quarters at night, they would worship their ancestral gods in religious rituals forbidden by the plantation owners. P. Sterling Stuckey's fascinating article "Christian Conversion and the Challenge of Dance," traces the evolution of the African Ring Shout after it crossed the border into America. Stuckey argues that the slaves were able to fulfill their religious needs in front of the slaveholder's eyes by dancing hybrid versions of the Shout, because their American masters had no concept of the linkage between dance and spirituality to Africans. "The failure of whites to understand African spiritual and artistic values made it easier for slaves to use dance to exploit crevices in the system of slavery. Slaveholders never understood that a form of spirituality almost indistinguishable from art was central to the cultures from which blacks came." Because Africans could not conceive of a distinction between the sacred and the secular, "threads of spirituality were woven into the fabric of everyday life" (55). At massive camp meetings in the 1850s, black and white preachers would preside over outdoors Christian religious

services. Later, in tents where the slaves were housed, the Ring Shout was danced. "This dancing . . . having been forbidden by the preachers, ceased immediately on our entering the tent," wrote Fredika Bremer, a black preacher during that time. "*I saw merely a rocking movement* of women who held each other by the hand in a circle, singing the while" (60). During the Civil War, to escape intolerable lives as slaves, Africans—now, also Americans—fled into an underground structure of havens as they traveled north. Even after the war, blacks were forced through bigotry, hatred and misunderstanding to relinquish elements of their heritage or to veil them within their new American way of life. Secrecy as a means of protection became a part of their lifestyle and their legacy.

A new attitude

Although this loss of visibility and openness is connected with the appropriation of the cool into American culture, Dixon-Gottschild's analysis of *attitude* explains more clearly how the American cool is perceived. "Ephebism," is the term she uses to refer to the concept of vital aliveness and is illustrated by the qualities of "power, vitality, flexibility, drive, and attack," which implies speed, sharpness, and force (108). The coolness of embracing opposites and the ability to ally (not dissolve) difference is also an element that has been retained as part of this aesthetic, albeit more often as the ideal than the perceived reality. To explicate this, Dixon-Gottschild also invokes Thompson's "aesthetic of the cool," that combines composure with vitality. "The 'cool'," explains Dixon-Gottschild,

"embraces all the other principles. Taken together, the sum total of all the principles can be characterized as *soul force* (my emphasis)." Soul force is demonstrated when the opposing natures of the European and African are *both* embraced:

The European attitude suggests centerdness, control, linearity, directness; the Africanist mode suggests asymmetricality (that plays with falling off center), looseness, implying flexibility and vitality), and indirectness of approach). 'Hot,' its opposite, is a necessary component of the Africanist 'cool.' (110)

Regarding "smoothness," Thompson is cited again as identifying it with a "unified aesthetic impact; seams do not show, the whole is moving towards a generous conclusion based on total giving of the self to the music and to society" (148). Smooth is characterized as the act of "total giving," an ideal also placed in check by the early African-American, whose need for secrecy and mystery suggests a holding back. Someone who is cool in the American sense is likely not to be completely accessible.

A result of the blending of dance cultures in America brought about a movement aesthetic that includes the European qualities of control, directness and symmetry tempered by a need for more freedom in form. This need might lead to the ability to relinquish control and to find an aesthetic balance in asymmetry. In jazz dance, we might add, there exists a strong sense of the dancer's center. This center can be considered to be of European origin: the internal, withheld, somewhat mysterious center of control that is discovered through the application of ballet and modern technique. This Western legacy combines with a sensual awareness of all other body parts or the exuberant

ephebism of the African response. This combination is demonstrated through the incorporation of stylistic devices into technical exercises that are both ballet and modern dance-based. The blending of formulae within concert dance began itself during the Jazz Age when even Russian choreographers became infused with the spirit of the time.

Jazz, as a musical and cultural reaction to its time, began to be assimilated into ballet choreography as early as the 1920s. In her article, "Jazz Modernism," Constance Valis Hill discusses the French reaction to jazz by examining the artistic elements present in the work of several choreographers working in Paris during that time, such as *La Création du monde* (1923) by Jean Börlin, and *Le Train bleu* (1924) by Bronislava Nijinska, and other works by Leonide Massine, and George Balanchine. Responding to the restlessness of the time, "jazz swept Paris," Hill explains, "like a whirlwind, its speed and syncopated rhythm echoing the mood of a society turned upside down by global war and massive technological change." In addition to the easy appropriation of trendy dances like the Charleston into traditional ballets, serious choreographers were discovering more basic elements of jazz and assimilating them into ballet movement. Some of these new physical responses, including isolations and the squared port de bras, were reactions to the structure and dynamism of the music as seen in its "speed, dissonance, polytonality and polyrhythms that accented, pulsed and even suspended time." Of Jean Börlin's ballet *La Création du monde*, Hill wrote:

Africa was present, too, in Börlin's choreography which was inspired by Sub-Saharan sculpture . . . [and] in which he emulated the forms and mass of African sculpture in a series of cubist plastiques. Although Börlin was a Fokine-trained dancer, critics commented that he resisted the classical style of the danseur noble used his head, arms and legs in slightly angular positions and was weighted in his movement. (Hill 232)

Furthermore, Börlin was eulogized as dancing like "a mulatto Negro," and was said to have "thrown a monkey wrench" into the Russian ballet tradition by moving in this new way and by discovering rhythm, "the beautiful rhythm of today" (Brender qtd. in Hill 232).

Nijinska was also exploring angularity and rhythm in her ballets *Jazz* and *Les Noces* (1923), as well as the "swing" quality inspired by the syncopated rhythms of Stravinsky's score. This Russian-born choreographer claimed that her first dancing lesson – from two American tap dancers visiting Russia during her childhood – left an indelible impression on her. Hill claims that the speed present in her work, the "offbeat accents, downward drive of weight and syncopated pas in her *enchainements* were distillations of a classical technique that had absorbed black jazz dance and rhythm" (236).

In America, it was George Balanchine who first altered ballet's "line, attack, speed, weight, and phrasing," by continuing to assimilate jazz themes into his choreographic style. "But more than an isolated ballet step turned jazzy," writes Hill, "it was a synthesis of Jazz Age cultural influences that by the twenties' end pushed Balanchine to the threshold of a fully neo-classic style" (238-40). These aesthetic components will be revisited in the following discussion of the

jazz aesthetic, and again when we examine how they are demonstrated in the Giordano dance technique. All of these new movement responses were a reaction to the rhythm and the sound of this new music that originated in America.

Musicality. According to William C. Bennett in an article entitled "Jazz," three developing African American musical strains between the late 1800s into the early part of the twentieth century profoundly affected the evolution of jazz dance forms. Those strains are the blues, ragtime, and the brass band. The *blues* is the most influential and most African of these strains. Particularly momentous aspects of blues music were its I-IV-V harmonic essence, and its settling of the song form into an even 12 measures. The blue notes are its most striking element because of the depth of their emotional shading of the music, as well as their ambiguity, accomplished by notes that take the 3rd and 7th degrees of the scale from major to minor and back again. Also, the simplicity of the form invites improvisation, a major component of the jazz style (179).

The defining feature of *ragtime* is its syncopations. Also of African descent, syncopations create an offbeat anticipation that acts to sustain interest and gives a sense of momentum to the music. In contrast, the melodies, harmonies and meter of ragtime, of European descent, are written in 16 bar strains and usually arranged as AABACBC and are also distinctive. Finally, the *brass band* was the central musical performance unit in New Orleans where four predominant cultures converged: French, African, Caribbean, and English. The

role of the brass band in the funeral tradition of this culture was instrumental to the formation of jazz and reminiscent of the ancient ritual dance forms, its group involvement and its celebratory attitude toward and acceptance of death as a part of the life cycle.

In addition to the importance of rhythm and percussive elements to the African aesthetic, is the element of *swing*. Emerging from the wildness and the rhythmic freedom of ragtime blues-tinged marches, *swing* is an even "more complete homage to the African-American's cultural ancestry, allowing variation all around the beat according to the dictates of constantly implied polyrhythmic foundations, the integrity of the phrase, or sheer instinctual bravado" (180). The Stearns state that "the characteristic that distinguishes American vernacular dance—as it does jazz music—is *swing*, which can be heard, felt, and seen, but defined only with great difficulty" (xiv). Willis offers that it is a "swing feel" that places accents or stress where they are least expected, and quotes tapper Jimmy Slyde who said, "Swing is from the inside. You must have that within, I believe. But to the dance there's balance involved, movement involved, and still you must swing." Willis further cites Thompson's description of African music, which is "a balance of accent, pitch, melody, strength, force, buoyancy and drive." Its "deliberate off-beat phrasing of the accents and suspending and preserving of the beat," adds Willis, "enlivens and gives a swing feel to music and dance." Both tap and jazz dance, she adds, are based on the swing feel. (150). Authentic swing music makes the body want to bounce in response to that swing.

Linking tap further to African origins is its percussive element. Magril notes, "Virtuosity of footwork, with heel beats and toe beats, became a simulacrum of the drum. In modern tap dancing the 'conversation' tapped out by two performers is a survival of African telegraphy by drums" (40). Willis adds that West Africa is a percussive culture and that "West African dances [are] 'talking dances' with the expression of the conversation in percussive concepts. As the drums communicate on a verbal basis, the dancers also speak out in bodily rhythms of particular gestures and steps" (150). The polyrhythmic aspect of tap can also be seen in the way the dancer "steps inside the rhythms of the musician," an ability Thompson finds in most African dancers. To step inside rhythms, considers Willis, requires an inherent sense of rhythmic balance that allows the dancer to establish his/her own rhythms which complement rather than match the beat of the music. Finally, the improvisatory nature of tap dancing mimics the "playing apart" aspect of West African music which "gives one the space in which to maintain a private or traditional meter and to express one's own full corporeal involvement in what one is doing" (Willis 150-1).

Style. Willis states that the style of the tap dancer is angular and emulates the body posture of West African dance. "The knees are bent in a supple manner; the arms and fingers are also angular....the body is erect with a slight tilt in the hip sockets." Both Hurston and Thompson support this finding with Thompson adding, "The implication of flexible potency at the hips and knees is striking," and suppleness is shown through "bent knees, bent elbows, and

suave oscillations to the music" (qtd. in Willis 153). Straightness and balance is seen in the body posture made asymmetrical through spectacular elements like leaping and spinning. Thompson points to the African preference for asymmetrical posture or a "stylized instability," and Hurston to "angularity" and "asymmetry." "In Africa," states Willis, "the style is vitally alive....The supple posture symbolizes the willingness to respond to change" (ibid.). This angular posture is also seen in the use of "get-down" sequences found in West African and Surinam dances, where dancers mark time until it is their moment to improvise alone. "Then they crouch," relates Thompson, "bursting into choreographic flames, showing off marvels of footwork and muscular expression." (qtd. in Willis 154). The dance is performed with vigor and intensity.

High-affect juxtaposition. Dixon-Gottschild broadly distinguishes the Africanist from the European aesthetic by characterizing the former as one of "embracing the conflict," (contrariety), and the latter as dedicated to "resolving the conflict" (problem solving). Contrariety is embedded in "the aesthetic of the cool," and expressed in "dilemma stories that pose a question . . . [by] music . . . that sounds cacophonous . . . and in dance that seems unsophisticated" to untrained eyes. The author posits the Stearns' description of the dance routine performed by 1920s novelty dancer Snake Hips Tucker to demonstrate the concept of coolness. Coolness here "results from the juxtaposition of detachment and intensity" (103-4). Likening Tucker's demeanor to that of a cobra, the Stearns' choice of descriptive phrases such as "disengaged and

menacing," "sleeping volcano," slithery but "pigeon-toed and knock-kneed," and "glaring eyes" that show "dreamy and impartial hostility," enable us to surmise Tucker's success at reversing the "gaze" and assuming its power. "The most significant conflict," says Dixon-Gottschild, resides in the routine's deep subtext, in the ironic playing out of power postures by the otherwise disempowered black, male (dancing) body" (105-6).

Described by the Stearns as "the king of eccentric dancers," Tucker's simultaneous use of the full range of motion of the pelvis and the upper torso and his belly roll were contrasted by the childish and slightly effeminate hand waving pantomime which served as a transition between these movements. His shocking finale seemed to appeal particularly to women:

As if racked with sobs, he went into the Tremble, which shook him savagely, and rapidly from head to foot. as he turned his back to the audience to display the overall trembling more effectively, Tucker looked like a murderously naughty boy. (237)

The *characteristics* detailed by Dixon-Gottschild substantiate those already discussed here: Polycentrism, polyrhythm, and "a democracy of body parts." These principles are interactive and demonstrate a high-affect juxtaposition, in which opposing moods or attitudes can overlap, or stylistically differing movements can coexist. This kind of contrast deviates sharply from what is acceptable by European standards (or its academic canon), and is thus considered to be in bad taste or frivolous (107). Critics of his day had difficulty finding appropriate terms with which to describe Snake Hips Tucker's act, and even in the late seventies when America had become more accustomed to hip

swaying through Afro-American, Latin and Polynesian influences, Tucker "would still be far ahead of his time," say the Stearns, because his "fantastic skill at pelvic movements was too early and convincing to influence the general surfacing of this element in vernacular dance." Even Eubie Blake disapproved of Tucker and considered his dancing "in bad taste." (Stearns 238).

The Jazz Aesthetic: Its Singularity

"I'm not really into the fads of jazz, I'm not into disco, I'm not into break dancing. . . . I'm into jazz as an art form that is going to be around long after I'm gone. . . . Jazz came from the black culture and it meant something. It was done because it was from the human emotions, the frustration of the times. It had nothing to do with being cute." (Giordano qtd. in Gerst 1985: D3).

The ballet genre, though decidedly not an art form of *our* time, is still a valuable and moving artistic expression in its purity and delicacy of line, the idealic possibilities of the human body, and an artifact of what was long ago contemporary. It is also an invaluable training tool. Giordano borrowed a great deal from both ballet and modern dance to create a jazz dance technique. My personal conflict with ballet has to do with its two fundamental shortcomings: first, the tenacity of ballet in its refusal to share legitimacy with other dance forms, and second, that it is, in the words of Ann Daly, "one of our culture's most powerful models of patriarchal ceremony," the training process of which "tends to suppress precisely those qualities of independent judgment and self-definition considered essential to choreographical development and innovation (Dempster 25). Regardless of its distance from the twentieth century, however, the impact of ballet on the cultural expressions of today is extensive. Ballet has contributed

to the formation of all forms of theatrical dance, including concert jazz dance. Modern and postmodern dance idioms have also influenced the formation of jazz dance, however, particularly since the 1950s. The substance of each idiom's contribution can be ascertained by better understanding the characteristics of each genre. My following analysis will examine how, through systematized training methods, other dance idioms are written on the body, and then compare those with what is written by jazz dance performance and training at this early point in its evolution. Applying Elizabeth Dempster's model of comparison and analysis of dance styles which she posits in her article, "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances," I will summarize Dempster's analysis of concert ballet, modern and postmodern dance, so that I may specify and distinguish the characteristics of jazz dance in relationship to them.

A Hybrid Formation

Because jazz dance is a response to jazz music, and the result of a number of major cultural influences, it has developed a uniquely American sensibility. A sense of the democratic. As can be seen in Appendix A, many attributes of jazz dance are a combination of, or duplication of other dance forms. On this chart, I employ many of Dempster's descriptions of ballet, modern and postmodern dance, while the inclusion of jazz dance characteristics is my own invention, and the assignment of its qualities my own opinions or deductions.

One can see that while jazz is on the opposite end of the scale from ballet, a gradual movement toward the formation of jazz dance is apparent in the

evolution of modern and postmodern dance over the course of the twentieth century. For example, the pictorial aesthetic of ballet shifted to the emotional psychological aesthetic of modern dance. Modern dance's bias for the cerebral, became the experiential and corporeal aesthetic inherent in postmodern dance. Finally, the jazz dance aesthetic demonstrates "soul force," which combines a musically driven and highly dynamic physicality, the discipline of ballet, and passion and emotion, which is inherent in its musicality. This fusion of the dancer's body, mind and spirit as seen in concert jazz dance indicates some degree of movement toward the realization of a more primal need of modern society. The contrast between ballet, or an aesthetic that is only the representation of life to one that is a fuller expression of life makes me question if this dance continuum does not imply an inclination toward what the ancients with their drums and rituals knew instinctively. Of course, civilization is apparent in the evolution of an art form, and its sophistication is clear in the structure rendered by the blending of disconnected intrinsic forms. But what is lost is the aptness for all to join in the dance. The artistic rituals of our time require expertise and background qualifications. Not all members of the community are permitted this spiritual nourishment and release, only those who are adequately trained. Because this exclusionary expertise confines much of our society primarily to intellectual or a spectatorship-type of expression, it seems we have lost a great deal during this evolutionary process.

Stylized vs. Natural

The training process of ballet erases “all traces of the natural, the unschooled, the mundane or contemporary gesture.” By contrast, Graham claimed that in modern dance “no one invents movement; movement is *discovered*.” (my emphasis) (Dempster 26). In this realm, technique exists to “free the socialized body” wiping clean its slate so that it may, unencumbered, find the true or natural movement, or discover the internal landscape—bringing the inside out. Postmodern dance, on the other hand, presents “bodies of bone, muscle, and flesh speaking of and for themselves” (31), or what you see is what the dance is. Jazz dance is inherently expressive of reality *and* what is natural, while it is also engages the body in a stylized way of moving. The body finds freedom in technique, as it does in modern dance, but instead of wiping the slate clean, it inscribes upon the slate stylized markers of physical responses to what is felt internally. These “markers” are derived not solely from tradition or a precise codification of steps, as it is in ballet, nor from the random and highly individual response of psyche, as found in modern dance. The stylized markers of jazz dance spring from a response to the musical stimulus and the mood it creates, as well as from the contemporariness of the dancer, or the fact that he or she is *present*. The jazz dancer’s body admits feeling as well as does the mind, similar to the modern dancer, but that feeling finds physical expression that is stylized *because* of its musical component.

Turn-out

The turn-out, central to ballet training and, according to Dempster, “fundamental to the ethos and image of the ballet form,” defines the classical dancer’s body and ensures the ability of the dancer to “show as much of herself as possible to the spectators” (26). While both modern and jazz dance use the turned-out as well as the parallel leg positions in most training techniques, they do so to create more movement possibilities, and so the degree of turn-out is not stressed. Moreover, the internal focus and motivation of modern dance requires more concentration on the parallel to achieve its overall ethos. Jazz dance also utilizes parallel and turned-out positions for diversity of expression as well as a deliberately *turned-in* position of the feet and legs. This turning in of the legs is, in fact, a very distinctive aspect of jazz dance, and shows up in training sequences of the Giordano technique. Turning the legs and feet in can be viewed as an example of Gottschild’s “high affect juxtaposition,” and the ultimate contrariety to the extreme turnout of the feet and legs in classical ballet .

Gender Influences

According to Ann Daly, “The classical body . . . enjoys a very limited degree of autonomy with respect to the deployment and representation of her body in performance” (26). Ballet choreographers and artistic directors have been predominantly men. Indeed, Daly cites Balanchine’s belief that “the choreographic process [is] an activity of the male mind ordering and transforming ‘raw nature’ as incarnated in the bodies of women” (27). Her analysis disallows

that women will ever be part of defining or extending this art form, because any attempt to undo the gender-imaging which is fundamental to the ballet form would create dances no longer recognizable as ballet. Ballet's most striking paradox, Daly points out, is that although this genre is athletic and physically demanding of the ballerina, she is most often represented as frail, dependent, and passive (*ibid.*). Early modern dance, however, is a female-centered movement and a redefinition of concert dance. Modern choreographers created new ways of writing the body that were strongly contrastive to the old way. Some modern choreographers inherited little or no technique, and the new dance techniques that developed, for the most part reflected the creators' own individual bodies. There was not one overall unified system, as in ballet, but the dance practices of such dancers as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Anna Sokolow were unified under the name "modern dance" because they all used the body to express inner forces. "The modern body and the dance which shapes it," says Dempster, "are a site of struggle where social and psychological, spatial and rhythmic conflicts are played out and sometimes reconciled. This body—and it is specifically a female body—is not passive but dynamic, even convulsive" (29).

By contrast, postmodern dance introduced to audiences in the 60s and 70s a "democratization of the body." As Dempster puts it, "the play of oppositions and the gender stereotyping embodied in the ballet and perpetuated in modern dance traditions were systematically de-emphasized in the postmodern work of this era" (31). When viewing postmodern dance, one's focus

is most often on the movement itself, or on the experience, rather than on the dancer. This de-personalization of the dancer has always been highly controversial for its tendency to diminish the role played by the performing artist. If the dance would not even exist except for the dancer, why should his/her personhood be excluded? Is this "valid"? My own experience during a class with postmodern choreographer Alwin Nikolais in the early 1970s prompted me to make a choice in that regard early in my career. Told by him that I was "taking focus" during a technique combination the students performed separately across the floor, I asked him what I could do differently. His answer was that I should become part of the environment, no more or less important than the floor or the lights or the walls, like an aspect of a painting. This concept was startling to me. This would mean to dance without my psyche, without my emotions, my spirit, or my femininity. Why would I do that? What would be *my* artistic expression? While my views have tempered somewhat in that regard and I can find beauty and excitement in the physicality and form of this type of dance, as I do in ballet, I still find this dehumanization both confining and incomplete as a dancer, and somewhat alienating as an observer. As a positive force, however, postmodern dance creates, " a heightened awareness of the commonality of all *bodies* and the particularity of each" (Dempster 33) by presenting the potentialities of the mundane body. Even more assuring is that the postmodern body is plural. In other words it is not limited to a particular inscription or a correct application of technical elements. Nor is it subject to standardization of any particular style, or

movement stylization, or “non-real” way of moving. There is no possibility of failure.

In direct opposition to this concept of genderless dancing, jazz dance emphatically exalts gender difference, but within the framework of equality and impartiality in difference. The play of binaries inherent in ballet may be present and often apparent in jazz, (the female form, even when costumed identical with the male, is most often clearly distinctive as such in jazz dance). In true concert jazz dance, however, the female dancer is perceived as an agent, rather than as an object, and as a being that speaks for itself. This authority or agency is in direct relationship to the dancer’s appreciation of his or her own sexuality, whether or not it is directed toward another, and regardless of the sexual proclivities of the dancer. Even more instrumental in the taking of agency by the female dancer is the power and force suggested through, *and authorized by*, the particular imprint of the style being performed. What does her technique and the choreography allow *her* to express? There is also a sensual awareness—a deep pleasure in the mere execution of the movement, profoundly reminiscent of the African and West Indian dancer that celebrates this individual in her material existence. The interpretation of music that is genuinely jazz—not rock, hip-hop, or musical comedy—is dependent upon this mature connection the dancer must have to her physicality. “In too many dancing schools, they get big jazz classes because the teachers work to pop music and rock,” Giordano asserted during a 1994 interview for *Dancemagazine*. “One thing we have to do is to teach people to appreciate jazz music: as they hear the music and see the dance, they’ll start

to understand the relationship" (Mazo Interview). The gender issue implicated by jazz dance is a more extensive question, and better dealt with later in this thesis when I will discuss it as a factor of enculturation.

Jazz dance's inclusion of the dancer's sensual nature in the precision of form and stylized gesture of ballet, the psychological and emotional outlook of modern dance, and the intellectual objectivity, openness to change, and questioning spirit associated with postmodern dance, reflects the synthesis of all human resources, body, mind and spirit, as is found in African, Native-American, and many other traditional and indigenous dance forms. These factors also reflect the more inclusive nature of this art form. Women are as likely as men to become choreographers of jazz dance, although it is somewhat disquieting that most of the prominent innovators of jazz choreography and jazz dance technique to date have been male, such as Jack Cole, Matt Mattox, Luigi, and Gus Giordano. I believe, however, that because of the ongoing and progressive nature of jazz dance and of the democratic nature of the bodily inscriptions written by the dance techniques of these forerunners onto the bodies of women, women will ultimately claim joint ownership of the jazz dance aesthetic.

In summary, "Jazz," in whatever form, was the beauty that emerged when the pain of displacement, loss, loneliness, and despair—not just of the Africans, but of many European immigrants, as well—was counterbalanced by the unyielding tenacity of the human spirit. Demonstrating high affect juxtaposition in its essence, jazz is ancient and contemporary, stylized and organic, basic and sophisticated. Most forward-looking, it depends upon the sensual natures of both

genders, while admitting the diverse individuality of sexual expression. Jazz is a gift given to an unworthy world that would demonstrate to its inhabitants the endless possibilities that could be realized by the simple act of opposites converging, or of difference accepting difference. But jazz is subtle and so smooth it seems devoid of conflict, and thus, this lesson is not conspicuous. Examining or searching for the consistency in true jazz music or jazz dance is futile and non-productive. Attempting to establish for it a fixed identity, clear binaries that contrast what it is with what it is not, or any sort of permanence to comfort the European sensibilities of Americans, will distance them from their African heritage and from appreciating the true *American* spirit of jazz. Critic Robert Sabin wrote in 1939:

From the Negro and also from the American Indian, composers and dancers have absorbed the power of primitive ritual. The incomparable rhythmic fertility of the Negro and the tremendously eloquent quality of the Indian have been transmuted into forms. But this is aeons removed from that literalism which conceives Americanism in terms of a feathered headdress and a prance in circles . . . one cannot take these elements as they are and exploit them. (Giordano *Anthology* 16)

What America has *absorbed*, it unfortunately does not (yet) understand. The true artist, however, is humanity's *educator*, as well. Those who probe deeply enough into its substance should be able discern the lessons inherent within a work of art—as in the dance style of Gus Giordano—lessons that, most often, even the artist is unwitting of having taught.

II. ENCOUNTERING THE ARTIST

Gus's legacy to the world of dance lies in its ecumenicalism. The Jazz Congress is probably the prominent reflection of his attempt to reach out inclusively. In its purity, his aim . . . is to recognize that jazz dance as a genre can only be defined in terms of multiple viewpoints—viewpoints that are often at tremendous variance with each other. At its simplest and most embracing, the Jazz Congress— which I would contend will remain Gus Giordano's lasting contribution to the dance world— represents an artistic response to dance fueled by true goodness of heart. (Jazz Dancer, Choreographer and Teacher Billy Siegenfeld 1998)

Because the fabric of an artist's work is patterned on his or her own awareness of the world, every factor that nurtures, shapes or in some way affects the nature of this artist can give a seeker clues with which to interpret his work of art. With that aim, this section of my investigation is dedicated to a brief biographical overview of Gus Giordano's life experiences and influences. Ultimately, knowing something about Gus Giordano's personal story and the people, places and things that influenced his formative years will give us clues with which to better discern his cultural impact.

Even though dance artist Gus Giordano attributes much of his influence to the work being done during the 1950s by Jerome Robbins, I also feel that much of Giordano's style of movement built on the discoveries of Katherine Dunham, while the foundation of his technique solidly reflects the movement philosophy of Hanya Holm. Although, many jazz dance artists who came after her were influenced by Katherine Dunham, either directly or indirectly, Giordano may have more deeply and unconsciously absorbed her message as it is apparent in his style's crucial connection to the African elements that influence jazz dance. Dunham's legacy, by bringing to this continent the forgotten dances and rituals of

the ancestors of the American Negro, was to reintegrate into their lives, and consequently into the lives of all Americans, the social act of dance. Dunham was able to remind her dancers and her audiences of their spiritual capacity through her company's reinvention of energetic African ritual dance and rhythms. By doing this and by re-establishing the African Americans' traditional link with the earth, particularly within the realm of concert dance, Dunham was instrumental in motivating the dance world to establish and assume hybrid dance forms. The technique she developed for her own dance training system linked training principles of ballet and modern dance, (part of her own development as a dancer), with the kind of anatomical development necessary to duplicate Haitian dance movements and forms. The Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research existed in New York from the 1940s through the 1960s, and Giordano's New York experience was during the late 1940s to the early 1950s. It was during this time that Giordano studied modern dance with Hanya Holm and crossed professional paths with choreographer Jerome Robbins. Robbins' integration of the jazz style into choreographic projects like *Fancy Free*, *NY Export: OP Jazz*, and eventually the musical *West Side Story* put "American jazz on the concert stage," claimed Giordano, who was inspired by Robbins' innovation. Teacher and choreographer Jack Cole, considered by historians to be the first dancer to begin to create a technical foundation for jazz dance, was also influential to the professional development of young Giordano. To both Robbins and Cole, Giordano dedicated his book *The Anthology of American Jazz*

Dance for inspiring his own development as a teacher and choreographer and for being integral to the legitimization of the jazz dance genre.

Giordano was one who continued Dunham's process of reintegration, but inserted into it even more of the contemporary American pulse of living by allying it so intimately with jazz music. Also, Giordano created a movement vocabulary and technique based on a sensual as well as contemporary response to movement stimuli. His technique draws from but is different than other established techniques, such as ballet, which is an outgrowth of court manners and the superficial attitudes of its time, and modern dance techniques, which unfold from the dancer's own psychological or psychic approach to movement. In accomplishing this confluence of disciplines, Giordano created a truly "american" dance form. Finally, Giordano has allowed his responses, even his technique, to experience the ongoing movement of time. This is a unusual response from a dance artist, particularly in a society and an art form that places so much emphasis on maintaining traditions and on the comforting permanence of a right way and a wrong way. How Giordano achieved this non-judgmental and all-inclusive outlook is a complex issue that surely involves his own innate disposition and early upbringing. It may also have some connection to his early mentor, Hanya Holm. As for his high energy, forward-looking and soul-laden jazz style, however, this may have had its roots in the cities of his youth.

The Giordano Aesthetic: Its Derivations

A vivacious and profound essence which was a part of Gus Giordano's daily childhood experience is what most enchanted Katherine Dunham about the city of St. Louis during her first visit there as a child:

On Chouteau Street there was music and singing everywhere, and Katherine responded to the rhythms and spirit of this strange, exciting place. . . . Years later she would recall that during that visit to St Louis 'there began a possession by the blue . . . deeper than prayer and closer to the meaning of life than anything else...something people are supposed to know about and don't look at, or knew a long time ago and lost'. (Haskins 27)

Giordano's mother was from New Orleans, a city that in tandem with St. Louis might have created a double jazz "whammy" for this young boy, for on an early visit to his maternal relatives there, young Gus discovered jazz dance. A cousin in New Orleans who studied dance taught him the shuffle to "The Shoe Shiner's Drag." Watching his cousin rehearse his dance, young Gus was transfixed. "The high spirited music, the electric movement, made an indelible impression," wrote one interviewer, "and the desire to be a dancer, which was ignited in five-year-old August Giordano III—regardless of the obstacles—simply changed the world of jazz dance" (Sanders, 37).

Dancing School with Miss Buchman

Across the street from the large, rectangular, second floor studio that was the Minnette Buchman School of Dance was a Walgreen's drug store that made "the best chocolate soda in St. Louis," recalls Giordano. Columnist Harriet McCullough wrote in the 1970s that "American jazz dance owes a large debt" to

that store because when seven year old Gus began taking dance lessons "it was the chocolate soda at the Walgreen's across the street from the studio that kept him coming each week" (McCullough 106). "I don't remember too much about the studio physically," recalls Giordano, "but what I remember is that my mother used to take me to the drugstore afterwards for a chocolate ice cream soda. That was one of the reasons for going and taking these lessons" (GG, 1996). What this account leaves out is that, somewhere around the age of six, Giordano knew what he wanted to be when he grew up:

Giordano remembers his decision to become a dancer clearly. Though he saw his cousin dance only that one time, Giordano has had a 'mental picture of him that has reminded me of that time throughout the years.' Returning home, [he] announced his decision to his mother who, in a move perhaps uncharacteristic for her day, immediately enrolled him in the Minette Buchman School of Dance. (Sanders 37)

Although these were not professionally run classes, fifteen minutes of tap, fifteen minutes of, not exactly jazz but musical comedy dance, perhaps, fifteen minutes of ballet, ("and the other fifteen minutes, who knows"?!), Miss Buchman did create in this young boy a desire and a joy to dance. "I don't think you learn very much then," says Giordano. "Anything you learn at that point you can learn when you're fifteen years old in two months, actually, so it's just the joy. And we did a lot of dancing" (GG 1996).

There were many local performances, talent shows and recitals. One particularly creative piece, Giordano remembers, cast this eventual "leader" in the uncharacteristic role of the caboose at the end of a train. "I think when you perform at that age . . . I think it stays with you. I loved it. I loved it. I used to go

to audition at every amateur show that they had.” His mother watched the papers so that he wouldn’t miss an audition or contest, he performed in grade school and high school productions, and eventually at University of Missouri where he majored in creative writing and minored in dance. “I danced all the way through [my youth],” he says, and he actually began teaching as a child. “During the Depression years, Giordano used his acquired technical skills to give dance lessons in his basement—for fifteen cents a class” (Giordano, MU brochure). At eighteen he enlisted in the Marine Corps for three years, and although he was trained for and wanted to be an aerial gunner, he claims “I was still a dancer.”

During the War

As a marine, Giordano was assigned to be a Corps Trooper and traveled with a group that included Spike Jones and his orchestra and Tyrone Power. Being on the West Coast and being in boot camp with Tyrone Power was a thrill for this young man from the Midwest. “We would go around to all the USO’s in California and especially the Hollywood Canteen and we’d perform for the troops. And then we went to China and performed in the officer’s club. I never stopped dancing.” Although he claims to have seen only “a little bit of action,” the war was almost over when his squadron left the US on Thanksgiving Day in 1944 to replace another unit after the war as an occupational force in China. Being in the military during wartime might have been a harrowing or more frightening time for Giordano were he not a dancer, but not only did his talent keep him out of harm’s way for much of his tour of duty, his years as a marine made possible his

professional dance education. "At that time . . . especially if you came from immigrants . . . well, you had to go to college. . . . You couldn't be like your parents were. They made sure we went to school" (GG, 1996). Not only did the GI bill pay for his years in college, with the funds for what would have been two more years, he went to New York and studied with Hanya Holm, whose school was accredited by the government to receive these scholarship funds. Here is where Giordano received the bulk of his modern dance training that eventually formed the substructure of his jazz technique.

A Student of Modern Dance

Hanya Holm (see Figure 2.1) was a German-born modern dancer who trained with Mary Wigman and came to America in 1931 to run a New York branch of Wigman's Dresden school. During the war when the school became Holm's and began to reflect her own personal outlook, she Americanized her approach to movement, but even so the roots of her training remained essentially European. It is most likely that key elements of Giordano's technique spring from the writing of Holm upon *his* body, elements such as the importance of movement emanating from the center of the dancer's being, of which Holm wrote: "Without form we cannot speak of art, but the form must be integral, not a superimposed, part of the whole and must flow unmistakably with that inner flame which is its source and its significance" (qtd. in Sorell 42). Giordano's technique is based on the strength of the center, which is created through a



Figure 2.1. Hanya Holm in "Trend," 1937 (Michael Bouchard in Tudor, 120).

symbiotic relationship between a strong back and a strong front, or abdominal center, from which all movement emanates (see Appendix B). Giordano says, "Jazz . . . has to come from the gut. Anything that comes from the gut and takes an undulating route to get out of the body is jazz dancing" (Gerst, D3).

Other Holm influences are seen in Giordano's dynamic use of space, and use of improvisation. "The use of space as an emotional element, as an active partner in the dance, is distinctly European," says Sorell, whereas "the American dancer seems frequently to have little use, to be but slightly aware of space except as an incidental factor in design and floor pattern" (43). Giordano perceives space as a viable oppositional factor. The use of improvisation is another element of Giordano's training that was also primary to Holm's training. "Another novelty [Holm] introduced was the use of improvisation. In the way Hanya practiced it, it had been unknown in America and had all the earmarks of the German technique" (46). This training strategy is especially useful to jazz dance as it corresponded precisely with the importance of improvisation to the artistic expression of jazz music.

Giordano likely benefited from, as well as assumed into his own teaching style, Holm's ability to appreciate and nurture the individuality of her students: "[Holm] sees as the teacher's major task the opening of many new vistas; she tries to assist the student in finding the full realization of his self, in developing into whatever direction his own impulse, his own creative energy leads" (168). Whether or not Holm recognized the jazz dancer in Giordano, her training did nothing to inhibit it. Just recently, Giordano told a reporter, "it just seemed that

the jazz was what my body wanted to do and what it did the easiest and what I was the most successful at" (James, 11). Although the Giordano method will continue through the teaching of those who studied with him, like Holm's technique, it does so as a hybrid, initiating and foundational factor on which to build techniques expressive of each artist's own nature. Giordano's classes at jazz dance conventions and workshops run concurrently with classes taught by ex-company members and former students. These dancers display the qualities they received from studying with Giordano, but their class material is imprinted with their own personal movement styles and technical approaches to jazz dance training.

Other philosophies Giordano the artist shares with Holm are the ability to embrace new ideas, or a tolerance for change, as well as a determination to disseminate knowledge about the art form by extensive touring and master teaching throughout the country. Giordano's mission of bringing together jazz dance artists through workshops, conventions and most expansively through the jazz dance "congresses" he initiated, parallel a like desire in Holm to end the isolationism of individual modern companies. She felt that by bringing dancers together into a common core company, "various choreographers of the modern dance would come in and choreograph with the pool of chosen dancers" (qtd. in Sorell 282). Her idea was thwarted by the inability of modern choreographers to "let go of the group of dancers they had clustered around themselves," causing a scattering of resources and a lack of unity within the genre. Ultimately, Holm

believed, this isolationism held modern dance back as a truly authoritative and progressive art form.

Commenting on Holm's commitment to progress and a desire to express contemporary society, Walter Terry wrote that he respected her "openness to new ideas, absorbing, digesting and giving them focus and new life in terms of her own particular skills as a teacher." This forward-looking trait was fundamentally present in the personal actions of both Holm and Giordano as well as in the material and the approach of both of their training methods.

A Broadway Gypsy

In the summers between semesters at MU in Columbia, Giordano went alone to New York City where he landed his first professional job at the Roxy Theatre: "It was similar to the Rockettes. . . . Everyone would get in a line and kick. . . . Well, it was a little more extensive than that, but not much" (Johnson 25). Dancing in shows that opened and closed movies or acts like Martin and Lewis, Giordano remembers that the work "wasn't very hard," nor was it "creative or individualistic," and after four shows a day, seven days a week for ten weeks, he went back to college, returning during subsequent summers to work again at the Roxy. In 1950, Giordano and his fiancée Peg Thielke graduated from M.U., he with an A.B. in English and Dance, and she with a degree in business. While Giordano moved back to New York to work for the summer, Thielke remained in Missouri to prepare for their wedding, which took place in the fall of that year. For three years, the newlyweds lived and worked in

Manhattan as Giordano served his apprenticeship as a New York gypsy. He worked steadily in a number of venues: Broadway shows, touring shows, stock companies, television and, at one point, a modern dance company. "In those days, you could work on television and still do your Broadway show. There was quite a bit of work then," says Giordano (Chambers 15).

In 1953 the Giordanos had their first child, Patrick. Tired of the New York lifestyle and concerned about bringing a child up in that environment, Gus, through an arrangement with Actors Equity Union, accepted a job as choreographer for the Film Council of America in Evanston, Illinois, where the Ford Foundation was producing the "Golden Reel Film Festival." Giordano worked for the Film Council, supplementing his income by teaching for a studio on Randolph Street. After three years, the Council folded, and Giordano had yet another decision to make:

Around that time, the 614 Davis Street building became vacant. It was perfect for a dance studio. I thought about it, and decided that the smartest thing for me to do would be to open up a jazz studio. This was twenty-two years ago, [in 1954] and at the time, jazz dancers were nonexistent in the Midwest. It was really an excellent opportunity. Having my own studio opened up a lot of options for me. It allowed me to do exactly as I wished. (Johnson, 25)

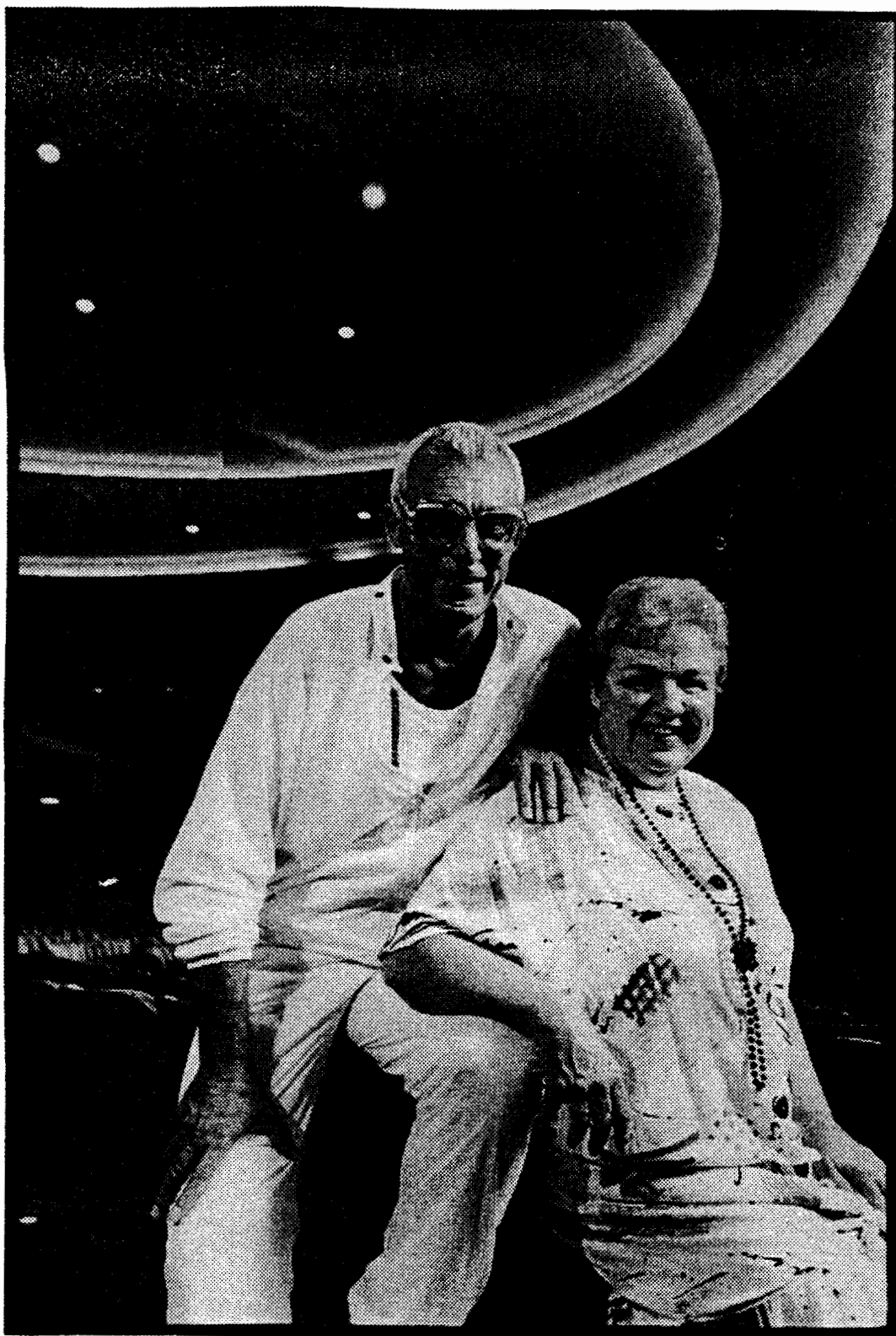
The Giordano's had three more children, Marc, Nan and Amy (and Max, the dog). Not only was Evanston to become home base for the Giordano family, it has also a home town of sorts for jazz dance, itself—or at least the town where jazz dance and jazz dancers could visit their Godfather, Gus.

A New Life in Evanston

In my early years, I was struggling to establish myself in a business that had so many people that I thought were so much better than me. . . . There was a solid core of people working [in Chicago] who I looked at and thought, "These people are really dedicated. I don't know if I'm that dedicated." Maybe ten years ago I realized that there's that total dedication in me, too. I'm still not confident, but I am dedicated. And I have been for some time. (Giordano qtd. in Mibopoulos 38).

In 1955 Giordano opened his dance studio in Evanston and with his wife, Peg, who was his manager as well as the executive director of the school, and built it into an institution (see Figure 2.2). The Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Center "put an ad in the *Evanston Review* and got 67 students," Giordano recalled in a 1980 interview (Gerst D3). Still in existence 43 years later, GGJDC employs a professional staff of over 32 who teach a variety of courses to 2500 students who study at the school each year. The school's performing arm, the internationally recognized Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, established as a touring company in 1968 is also based there, dancers for which are trained in the Center's scholarship training program. Just a few blocks away from Northwestern University, the Center also has a working liaison with the director of its dance department Susan Lee, who co-sponsored the first three jazz dance congresses and opened up a range of facilities to house the numerous classes and activities.

Until Peg's death in 1993, she was the administrative head of the school and company, managing all the of the contacts and business details for Giordano, who said of her in 1986, "She's run the whole show for most of [our 35 year collaboration] and never been paid." While Giordano's main goal at the time



Photography by Loren Santow

Figure 2.2. Gus and Peggy Giordano in the early 1990s (*NorthShore* 1986).

of that interview was “to form a federation of jazz companies [and] make jazz dance respected as a serious art form,” Peg Giordano’s unfulfilled ambition was stated simply. “I’d love to be a grandmother,” she told the interviewer. This wish became a reality, but tragically, she was not to meet each of her grandchildren in this lifetime. Her own contribution to the realization of Giordano’s dream, however, should be recognized. Her consistent good will to colleagues, business associates, students, and employees, her business skills, and her belief in Giordano’s work, especially as a teacher and disseminator of jazz dance, played a crucial role in the establishment of the Giordano legacy.

Giordano and the members of his company in the early days (see Figure 2.3) did a great deal of concert, television and industrial work on a local level making many new converts to jazz dance. Of particular prominence in this regard is Ann Barzel, long time dance critic with the *Chicago Times* and dance reviewer for *Dancemagazine*. In fact, Giordano himself dubbed her “the patron saint of jazz dance in Chicago.” Giordano’s dance company credits Barzel with its very existence:

Jazz Dance Chicago was, in essence, put together at the request of Barzel. In 1968, when she was the head of Chicago’s Ballet Guild and hostess to many dance companies, the Bolshoi ballet came to Chicago to perform. While they were here, the Russian group asked to see a performance of American jazz dance. Barzel called Giordano to fill their request. He got some of his top dancers together, and performed “New York Export Opus Jazz,” a Jerome Robbins number. The Bolshoi liked it so much they asked Giordano and his dancers to come to Russia to perform. (Sanders 39)



Figure 2.3. Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Company—the early days in Chicago (Giordano, *Anthology* 145, circa 1975).

The company's Russian tour was the beginning of an extensive national and international and touring and teaching career for Giordano and his dancers. The company today (see Figure 2.4), under the guiding hand of Nan Giordano, remains vital and still tours internationally. Giordano himself travels extensively to establish credibility for jazz dance as an art form by showing its potential to reveal profound truths through this contemporary and highly accessible means of expression.

The Fine Art of Dissemination

It is important to my argument regarding the cultural impact of Giordano's style to emphasize again that Giordano's dance company has toured extensively since its inception, one of a few companies in the jazz idiom to do so. Up until about 1985, the presence of jazz dance in the concert arena was negligible. During that time, that teacher-creators of jazz techniques, (most notably Giordano, Luigi, and Matt Mattox, Ruth Walton, and later, Jo Jo Smith and Lynn Simonson) were transforming ordinary bodies or bodies previously imprinted by other idioms, into bodies that were able to pronounce the new aesthetic. Like modern dance, jazz dance styles are diverse and techniques develop from a dancer's personal expression, idiosyncrasies, physicality and background influences.

The different jazz styles depend on what you came from. Luigi had a strong ballet background, so a lot of his jazz is fundamentally ballet. Matt Mattox came from a very fast footwork kind of tap, and his feet are going like crazy. I came from a Hanya Holm modern dance background, so that mine is that strong torso, that power

from the center. I'm most interested in the organic substance that comes from the center. The three of us are all different in our foundations, but we've had the same longevity as teachers and choreographers! (Giordano qtd. in Stoop, 70)

The dancers trained by these early jazz dance technicians went on to become dancers, teachers and choreographers themselves, building on the expressive qualities of their mentors. Referring only to company members and putting aside his thousands of students, many former Giordano dancers direct their own dance



Figure 2.4. Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago (Photos-Mike Canale 1996).

schools and companies now. Each have distinctive styles that mark the dancers who train predominantly with them, but at the base of these styles can be seen the foundational imprint of the Giordano technique: the strong center, the expansive use of the arms, clear and specific elements of style, movement that is

tight and compact with a movement quality that embodies speed, counterforce, and forward momentum, and a clear connection to the ground. Giordano's own daughter Nan, who danced with his company during the 1980s embodies these elements in her teaching and choreography, but expresses them in a voice that is clearly separate from her father's. This may be obvious in particular instances where her choice of theme, costuming, choice of music, or overall tone are obviously based on more contemporary choices. Most distinctly, however, the dynamic of her movement expresses the more determined—even aggressive qualities of today's urban pulse, as well and the subtleties of her own personality. Many other former company members continue to express their own dance voices, empowered rather than stifled by the Giordano inscription of their bodies. A few are Debbie Giordano, who heads the scholarship program at the Evanston school and teaches at Northwestern University; Sam Watson, Artistic Director of Wats on Dance; Marcus Alford, Director of Jazz Dance Theatre South; Michael Williams and Susan Quinn, Artistic Directors of QuinnWilliams Jazz, Sherry Zunker-Dow of RiverNorth, and; Judi Sheppard Misset the creator of the "Jazzercize" conditioning program. Giordano remains in close contact with many of his former dancers who continue to teach and perform at the Jazz Dance Congresses and other Giordano-sponsored, or otherwise initiated workshops.

The significance of this dissemination of Giordano's writing on the dancer's body exists in the ongoing training of dancers, to be sure. More far-reaching, however, is the company's extensive touring, as well as the international teaching done by Giordano and his disciples, which allows more

women to watch Giordano women dance, or to take on the movement themselves, two activities that make a vital impact on the enculturation of women, especially young women, in many parts of the world.

Just recently I taught for a dance workshop after which I had the opportunity to see another of the instructors, Sara Ayers of the RiverNorth Dance Company, perform a solo piece choreographed by former Giordano dancer and the company's artistic director, Sherry Zunker (*Festival "The Man Who Got Away,"* 1998). This piece was part of an eclectic dance program in which several other of the instructors performed solo pieces, as well. Particularly striking was the contrast between the physicality displayed by Ayers, herself a former student of Giordano's, and Vaganova-trained ballerina Natalia Chapurskaya. Although Ayer's piece was a "torch dance" that bemoaned "the man who got away," the authority inherent in the dynamic of her movement added depth to her emotionally-charged state, while the blending of stylized and natural movement choices gave her performance a sense of reality. While her theme may suggest to some that the dancer is powerless without a man, the kinesthetic power of her physical expression gives a more genuine voice to her pain, allowing her to channel it, validate it, and express it fully. On the other hand, the performance of "Esmerelda" by Chapurskaya displayed the technical strength of the ballerina, who also acted the piece with a fragile poignancy that belied her physicality. The delicacy of movement and grace of line were visually gratifying, and gave her the appearance of being about to break, as though she were made of porcelain. Her acting was more highly stylized and melodramatic, as it is within the Russian

ballet tradition, and so the audience was always aware of the pretense of performance. Most stunning was the reaction of the audience. Made up predominantly of the young (teenage) women who had participated in the workshop, the audience became extremely vocal during the ballet piece, responding almost as they might during a concert of a current teen idol rock star. Screaming and shouting during the ballerina's slow and deliberately focused leg extensions, some began snapping pictures each time her left leg extended to the side. Her final *grande jeté* brought most of these young women spontaneously to their feet as they whooped and applauded the purity of her placement in the air. Almost conversely, during the powerful sensuality of the jazz piece, the audience was politely silent and more conservatively appreciative at its end. These reactions seem paradoxical to the way contemporary society's supposed "assertively-trained" young women are intended to respond. I believe at a surface level, many young women are not yet able to access the emotional message within the physicality of the jazz dancer, and therefore her response is more reserved and watchful. At a deeper level, however, she is absorbing the kinesthetic power and confidence apparent in the dancer. If she experiences this physical dynamic often enough, she may ultimately be able to access it herself, more readily giving voice to her own concerns, particularly as she matures physically and emotionally. The dissemination of Giordano's technique, by gradually changing women's perception of their physical authority and effectiveness, has participated in this century's on-going maturation of the woman's voice as a viable cultural force.

The Giordano Aesthetic: Its Singularity

When I became acquainted with jazz dance in the 50's, it was called modern jazz dance, partly because it was the dance of the time but also because often modern dance was used as the basic teaching structure. We had no complete body warm-up specifically devoted to jazz dance. Some early teachers used African movements or a ballet warm up. Some used the isolation exercises of Indian dance or the swinging rhythms of tap dance. Since those formative days, jazz dance has produced more sophisticated methods for teaching the strength, flexibility, and power control the total jazz dancer requires. (Giordano qtd. in Alford 8)

Codifying a New and Distinct Way of Moving

The distinction of the Giordano aesthetic centers upon the look of strength and dignity manifest in the upper body; the body's instinctual animal-like awareness of itself, its environment, and its position of familiarity and autonomy within that environment. While the beauty of the Mattox technique lies in the intricacy of its style and complexity of movement, and Luigi's technique in its elegant balletic quality of line and proclivity for the upward, the clean powerful lines of the Giordano torso, and the body's forward drive and affinity for the ground reflect a more ancient quality that is aware of its physicality, force, and a calm inner core that is the body's center. The jazz dancer is a being who is unafraid to claim that force as the legitimate and inherent predilection of either gender. Hanya Holm believed in this "core" place, as well:

The inner man is a fine little point where your being comes together. If you could externalize it, it would not be bigger than the head of a pin. In size of volume it is not a fraction of a fraction of an atom. This inner man is like the center of a hurricane. The secret of a hurricane is its eye. The eye is calm. If you destroy that eye you destroy the hurricane. If you can't be as calm as the eye of the hurricane which holds all the answers to the devastating storm of the outside, you can't hold yourself up in the world of dilemma and battle. There is no force that does not come from an utter calm.

Sensitivity, the power to absorb and to register, is the calm of the eye which starts that outer passion and tremor. (qtd. in Sorell 189)

Did Gus Giordano set out to create a technique that would install the power center of the dancer? Had he always intended to establish a system of jazz instruction, or was its inception inspired? Tapping into pervasive truths or intrinsic understanding of the human condition is always inspired. Sometimes inspiration comes to the artist all at once, but more often, its emergence is gradual, and infinitely more subtle.

When Giordano began teaching in his studio, his overall aim was to earn a living doing something that he loved to do, that he had always done and that came naturally to him. Before the company's invitation to Russia, Giordano and a loosely formed group of dancers that studied with him danced for a number of local events and venues: "We were just dancing around [locally] and doing things," he explained. After the Russian debut of his company, he continued creating choreography and showcasing his dancers in Chicago, on television, in industrial shows and other European tours. Giordano's technique evolved over this time. "I guess I didn't realize I was creating a technique," he said. "I think that if you were a sculptor you know you have one because it's right there. But if you're working with dance, you're working in more of a vacuum. You don't know you're really working on a style, I guess" (GG 1998). The ongoing evolution of his style is an attestation of Giordano's commitment to the contemporariness of jazz dance:

When the technique was first developed, it looked quite different. 'Art forms go through different periods,' says Giordano. 'The 60s was a heavy time, . . . people thought about more profound things. My technique reflected it. The movement came from the soul and told a whole story. In the 70s, society lightened up. My technique did too. It was more modern ballet dance set to contemporary jazz, with just a little expression. I called it "thought" dance. The 80s is a more serious time again. We know where we're going. We take our bodies seriously. . . . The brain and body are stronger and people are better educated. The technique is more structured. (qtd. in Sanders, 39)

From the late 1960s until the late 1980s, Giordano amassed a great number of awards, distinctions, and special honors for his teaching, his choreography and for his overall contribution to the art of dance. His co-crowning achievement with the creation of his technique, however, is the establishment of the Jazz Dance World Congress. Giordano's commitment to this annual gathering of jazz dance artists is indicative of a mind capable of creative concepts with far-reaching implications and a philosophical attitude that is generous and all-inclusive. First held in the summer of 1990, Giordano brought together in Chicago a diverse list of leaders, disciples and students of jazz dance to share their knowledge and aspirations for this art form. The mission statement published for the first congress held in August of 1990 stated four main goals: 1) to assemble heretofore independently working creative and academic artists of jazz dance; 2) to benefit the entire dance community and the general public through diverse events (classes, concerts, discussion groups) led and attended by a wide variety of participants; 3) to provide a performance opportunity for jazz dance companies throughout the world; 4) to honor jazz dance as an American art form whose guardians are jazz dancers. "Jazz dance

has always crossed all ethnic, geographical, social and political barriers, bringing all peoples together in one rhythmic pulse" (qtd. in Patrick, 32). Since 1990, the Jazz Dance World Congress has convened on five more occasions: again in Evanston in 1992 and 1994, Japan in the summer of 1995, The Kennedy Center in Washington in July of 1996 (see Figure 2.5), and Wiesbaden, Germany in 1997. The 1998 Congress is planned for Phoenix, Arizona. The emphasis placed on multiculturalism and the diversity of styles and techniques is a deliberate intention of the Congress. "A wonderful aspect of jazz dance is that it's always been color blind. It's a multi-cultural art form unlike ballet" (Giordano qtd. in Stevens, 21).

Giordano has been criticized for the inclusion into the schema of the Congress what some serious jazz dance artists consider "commercialized" jazz dance, particularly during the Kennedy Center event held in 1996. I consider this inclusion not only a realistic acceptance and open-minded affirmation of contemporary culture and of living in the present, but as a path to keeping the art form alive by drawing young people into its margins and showing to them the past as they participate in the present. Giordano himself answered these criticisms by saying that "jazz dance has always been of a chameleon-like nature, changing its focus, depending on the fashion of the times. It is a living art form, always changing. The Jazz Dance World Congress is dedicated to presenting jazz dance of all the decades, from its 1920s roots to the present



Figure 2.5. Giordano surveys the eclectic gathering of jazz companies on the Program cover for the Jazz Dance World Congress '96 (Jazz World Congress Program, 1996).

contemporary movement.” While Giordano understands the inclination to hold onto classic jazz styles, “we cannot ignore,” he insists, “the popular dance explosion that is happening throughout the world in contemporary jazz dance” (Giordano, *Dancer* 28). The jazz dance idiom may already be in danger of becoming a stagnant art form by virtue of the inevitable codification of techniques that is presently occurring. It is true that without methods of systemization, the chances of jazz dance ever being taken seriously are slim. A balancing act is in order, however, that allows the input of new styles and systems along with the retention of the older or “classic” styles. Modern dance has become nearly as stagnant as ballet in this respect, because of the rigidity and the separation of the systems presently in place. In many cases it has become artifact rather than living art, which made inevitable the rebellion of forward-looking postmodern choreographers. Tolerance, open-hearts, and a belief in the future are needed first among the community of jazz dance artists and aficionados so that, unlike modern dance, this idiom can remain progressive and true to its nature. Giordano is true to the structure of his own artistic contribution, and retains his critical eye in evaluating Congress participants, but is still able to watch the future unfold with curiosity, graciousness, and, at times, a twinkle in his eye.

In the next and final chapter of my analysis, I will examine overall aspects of the Giordano technique in order to clarify his writing of the dancer’s body. By doing so, my final evaluation of the cultural implications arising from this training method will take on more relevance for the reader.

III. DECODING AND INTERPRETING THE GIORDANO JAZZ DANCE TECHNIQUE

Jazz dance celebrates sensuality. Its character is not romantic, like ballet, nor is it highly reflective, like modern dance. Therefore, jazz requires a mature body, and it is preferred that jazz training not begin until the onset of puberty. Foremost, the student must view the body as a personal instrument, as a keyboard with infinite possibilities. With this in mind, students should be groomed and dressed in a way that allows the teacher to observe all nuances in movement. (Giordano, 1994)

Jazz dance, including the jazz dance technique of Gus Giordano, has clearly drawn from ballet and modern dance as well as from culturally diverse social and religious dance traditions for the components of its training method. Giordano has written that because jazz is not a foundation art it must draw upon classical training methods. Moreover, he prefers that dancers come to jazz dance with previous training in either ballet or modern dance. Although many elements present in Giordano's system are clear carryovers from ballet and modern dance (i.e., terminology, barre material, class structure, etc.), the Giordano jazz technique can be said to be foundational, as well, in that it has evolved into a comprehensive training system for the dancer and that it makes a clear imprint on the body. Its inscriptive power comes from movements and exercises that assist in producing the jazz style, such as the forced arch position, the use of parallel fourth and fifth positions of the legs and feet, an extensive, exact and varied port de bras (placement of the arms and upper body), as well as precise positioning of the hands and fingers. When these finger and hand positions are used, they evoke many of the ethnic elements key to the formation

of jazz dance. Giordano himself acknowledges:

The fingers and hands are most often neglected, so I have described finger movements that are commonly used in jazz dancing. These are my invention in the sense that I am the first to attempt to codify jazz finger movements. Because of their novelty, they should be practiced regularly until they become a natural part of the student's vocabulary. (Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class* viii).

Giordano also incorporates the turned-in positioning of the legs and feet into his technique exercises. Most distinctively, Giordano's stylistic use of the upper torso in combination with standard ballet or modern technique work gives his approach to movement a distinctively jazz style.

In the following section I will first describe certain fundamental features of the Giordano technique. As I progress I will contrast these forms with comparable positions used in the ballet and modern idioms and discuss how these differences might be assumed through the perception of the female dancer, particularly one previously trained in a classical ballet technique. I will also draw parallels between this material and aspects of the African aesthetic that were outlined in Chapter I, to use as a point of reference for my final argument. Finally, I will embellish these descriptions with illustrations from Giordano's own text. Dance is a physical and visual art and will ultimately be understood through an analysis of diverse responses behind the physical act of looking, regardless of how scrupulously the movement is explained.

Applying the Technique

Training not only constructs a body but also helps to fashion an expressive self that, in its relation with the body, performs the dance. ... Aesthetic expression can result when a self uses the [trained] body as a vehicle for communicating its thoughts and feelings, or when the self merges with the body and articulates its own physical situation. Body and self can also coexist, enunciating their own concerns and commenting on each other's. Many other relations are also possible, each producing a specific aesthetic impact on dancer, dance, and viewer. (Foster, "Dancing Bodies" 231 & 241)

The following analysis seeks to identify the major components of the Giordano technique that become written on his dancers' bodies as they train with him over a period of time. In her article, "Dancing Bodies," Susan Leigh Foster commented on the work of dance critics to date. While she is pleased with the current interest being shown in critical writing about the body, she nevertheless calls for a more "meat-and-bones" approach to the body "based on an analysis of discourses that *instruct* it" (235). Instead, however, she feels that this new wave of dance writings either uses the body as a symbol for some theoretical concept (sexuality, for instance), or studies it historically and scientifically to discern its significance and ultimately, its relationship to power. Neither of these methods adequately addresses the kinesthetic aspect of dance, or what is the movement, precisely; what is happening physiologically, and what implications can be drawn from that?

In the following section, I wish to address Foster's desire for this "meat-and-bones" approach to dance criticism by examining more closely the aspects of his jazz dance training program that are distinctively "Giordano," and to define their effect from the female dancer's point of view. Foster continues, "The daily

practical participation of a body in any . . . discipline make it a body-of-ideas. Each discipline refers to it using select metaphors and other tropes that make it over. Whether worded or enacted, these tropes change its meaning by representing it" (236). Through a more detailed account of the physiology of Giordano's technique we may be able to determine how Giordano makes a dancer's body like Pearl Primus' characterization of the African dancer's body: that of "liquid steel."

Singular Elements of the Giordano Jazz Class

The most unique aspect of Gus's technique is that it compels the body, especially the armwork, into a rigorous relationship to space. My guess is that at least some of this derives from his own studies in modern in the Holm technique, which, emerging from the Laban-Wigman Central European dance philosophy, is strongly space-conscious, (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). (Billy Siegenfeld, 1998)

As he travels throughout the world teaching master classes in his technique, Giordano often encounters students who have had no previous contact with the Giordano technique, or even any jazz instruction at all. The dancers who have the most difficult time achieving a "Giordano" look are those with a great deal of ballet training, because the chief stylistic elements are in many ways antithetical to the classical ballet style, as discussed in chapter 1. Initially, Gus Giordano begins his workshops by invoking the African influence in the formation of jazz dance. He explains that in jazz dance, dancers work in plié (with the knees bent) a great deal because it reflects the Africans' relationship with the earth, which is in direct contrast to the ballerina's connection to the ethereal. To help them make this connection, Giordano explains that the dancer

must feel the floor beneath her and so will begin class barefoot. He makes very clear that even though jazz is derived from social forms, his style is used in concert dancing and that it requires a great deal of technique. However, he advises the class that many aspects of his technique may not be familiar to them, and therefore, may take time to apply properly. And so, with some apprehension, the “jazzzerinas,” as Giordano playfully calls his students, lie back on the floor.



Figure 3.1. Hanya Holm's mentor Mary Wigman in "Tanz der Dunklen Königin," 1939 (Tudor 116).



Figure 3.2. Dancer, Choreographer, Teacher Gus Giordano, 1975 (Giordano Anthology 144).

Positioning the head

Giordano head isolations are done initially lying on the floor. This exercise is to build neck strength as well as to train the body to find the correct placement of the head in what Giordano refers to as the body's *neutral* position (see Figure 3.3). Lying down, the neck's neutral position is with the face parallel to the ceiling, but the head off the floor. From that position the traditional set of isolations are performed: neck contracts forward and returns to neutral, bends back/neutral, looks right/neutral, looks left/neutral, then lowers to rest. This exercise is deceptively simple looking on the body of the demonstrator and the class lies back confidently to begin. Neck isolations are most often done from a standing position; performed in this way, these exercises primarily stretch the muscles of the neck with the purpose of increasing awareness and range of motion in the neck. Doing the same exercise lying on the floor requires the dancer to do battle against the force of gravity, demanding that she engage the muscles of this most lithe, identifiably feminine parts of her ballerina body used heretofore only to express grace, demureness, and docility. Suddenly her head feels heavy, the muscles of her neck barely supporting it for the length of this exercise.

The head, like a lever, controls the center of gravity. "The most prominent focal point for [any] dancer is the regal looking head on a long neck," Giordano claims. Giordano believes that where the head is placed will influence the general control and stability of the body, and that because it is the heaviest part of the body, it must be carefully prepared through exercises that stretch and

strengthen its musculature. While the look of the ballerina also displays a long neck, many ballet students will realize that the way they have habitually been placing the head is in a lower position with the chin slightly below being parallel with the floor, rather than the more open position Giordano prefers. To specify

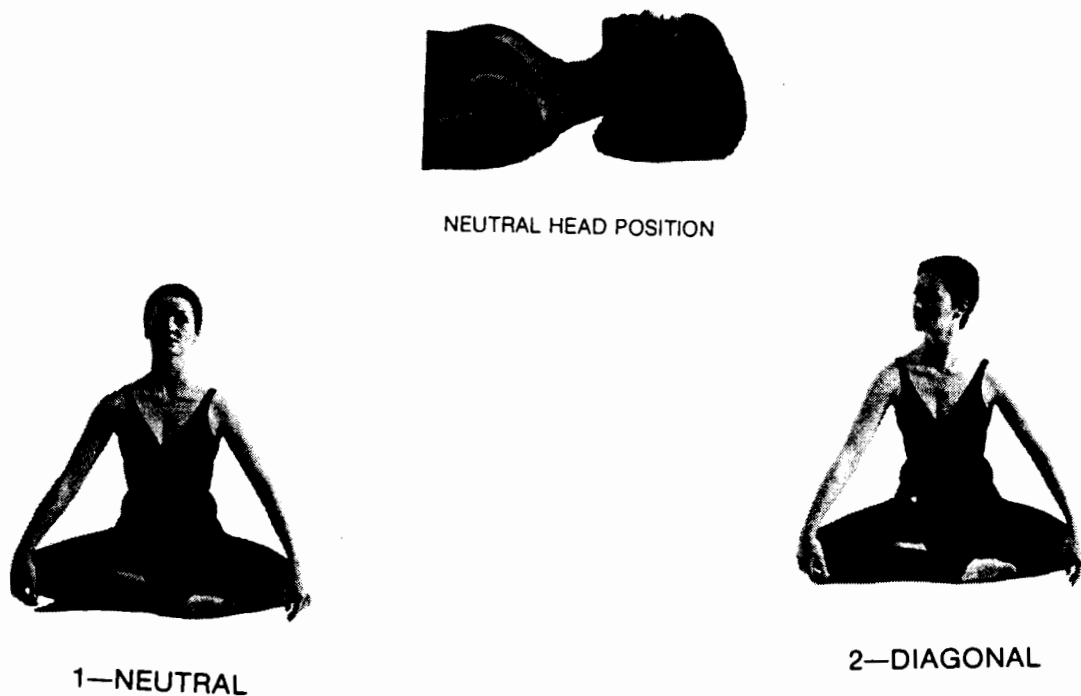


Figure 3.3. Achieving the “regal” look of the head (Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class*).

this placement on his model while in the resting position, he separates his index finger and thumb and places his thumb on the model's chest while his index finger rests under her chin. His doing this forces her to lift her face more to the ceiling, widening the space between her chin and her chest. This position immediately places the dancer “on alert,” rather than taking on the more passive

posture of the ballerina head placement. The muscles of the upper back are engaged, as are the abdominals, which act to keep the lower back against the floor. The entire spine must come alive and work in order to maintain the proper postural alignment. Psychologically, it is worth the work, for as the dancer raises her face to the ceiling above her head, her eyes widen as she perceives the vastness of the universe above her, but the delicious security of the earth directly underneath and in absolute contact with her entire physical self. Later, when the dancer rises off the floor to begin her center *barre* work, Giordano revisits this concept by once again directing the class to find the neutral position of the neck. As the dancer lifts her chin to place it parallel with the floor, this ever-so-slight lift feels unnatural, at first. Again, it engages the upper back and the abdomen, but even more profoundly, the dancer begins to feel majestic and ready, rather than genteel and passive. The body is *capable* from this place, and supremely confident. According to Giordano, "The head is the signature for the jazz style" (Giordano 182).

Positioning the arms (*port de bras*)

The most classic and distinctive aspect of Giordano's technique is its positioning of the arms and the "look" it ascribes the dancer. "The objective of *port de bras*," writes Giordano, "is the freedom of movement of the arm through discipline. In order to achieve this, the muscles and tendons in the arm are used in an oppositional manner which constitutes a counterforce. Another way of describing this would be to *press* the arms down through the air, or to move them

with the muscles and ligaments tightened, resisting the air as they move through it. Initially, Giordano has the dancer assume an open parallel position of the legs (second position parallel) with her arms stretched out to the side (see Figure 3.4). This position, called long jazz arm, utilizes the more angular look of the African aesthetic while it accepts the basic structural positioning of ballet. While this arm position coincides with the second arm position of both classical and modern



Figure 3.4. The long jazz arm position (Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class*).

dance, essentially the placement is quite different. Ballet requires a very slight semi-circular slope of the arms downward as the palms of the hands face forward and continue the line begun by the arm. Care must be taken to keep the elbow in line with the shoulder and wrist on its curved path and not to let it droop out of

line. None of the modern techniques I have studied deviated significantly from this placement of second position. Particularly in ballet, this is a position of great delicacy. Also, because of the downward slope of the arms, and because the elbows stay well in front of the shoulders to avoid the hyperextension of the spine, the energy from the body remains in check and contained within the area around the dancer. Giordano's second position, however, instead of taking a curved path downward reaches directly side from the shoulders. The palms here face the floor calling attention to ground, but rather than the elbows being fully extended they are lifted into a angle and pulled slightly back, as though one were "scooping" the elbow up with his hand. This "scoop" helps to avoid the chance of hyperextension of the elbow, which would give the arm a straight, flat, feeling of inertia.

By engaging the shoulder girdle and the muscles of the upper back of the arm, the trapezius, the biceps and the triceps, the upper body comes alive and is prepared for motion, placing her in a less familiar pro-active rather than re-active posture. The ribcage opens at the top and the chest broadens, the slightly cupped fingers of the hand reach directly out to the side and beyond the barriers of the room. There is a sensation of great expansiveness, readiness and strength—as though, like an animal of prey, the dancer is in a posture of attack. Giordano uses this arm position with a specific stance very often as a preparatory position before beginning exercises or dance combinations. The stance is derived from ballet's *coupé derrière* position: the positioning leg is behind the standing leg, the ball of the foot is on the floor with the heel lifted, and

the knees dare in a deep *demi-plié* (see Figure 3.5). The attitude expressed by this arm position and the carriage of the head corresponds to Thompson's explanation of "vital aliveness," discussed by Cheryl Willis. It incorporates intensity and strong expression. It values openness and clarity. The angularity and asymmetry of the leg position suggests the "get down" crouch position West



Figure 3.5. Giordano and students dance an example of the preparation position, reminiscent of the West African "get down" posture (*Dancer* 38, May 1996).

African dancers take before they burst into the dance. This posture "symbolizes the willingness to respond to change" (Willis 153). In order to embody these qualities, the ballerina must fully commit psychically to this way of moving, but transforming the soft dynamic of her arm placement and the demure reticence of

her demeanor will not be accomplished in only one class. Her body will require a careful “re-programming” of former proscriptions to put aside what is safe for what is so different.

The movement dynamic

As quoted above, Giordano stresses a counterforce when working the *port de bras* to achieve a “pressing style” of jazz arms. When practicing this it is helpful to think of the limbs resisting the air as they move through it. In ballet *port de bras*, dancers work with a “floating” metaphor to achieve the illusion that the arms are floating, assigning them an ethereal, unearthly feeling. When the jazz dancer’s arms press from overhead into the long jazz arm position, the muscles of the arms tighten as the palms press against the air opening to the side. The force engaged is isometric, a kind of exercise that increases muscle volume and stamina. When Giordano’s *port de bras* technique is applied properly, especially for the first time, it can be quite tiring during class, and painful for several days in those muscle groups worked, or until these muscles become accustomed to the movement. Because of this movement dynamic, however, the dancer feels, and the spectator sees, presence and competency —a feeling of advancing through “solid air.”

In addition, whenever the arm gestures in this manner, and also unless otherwise specified, it swings open from the shoulder joint. There is no lilt in the elbows and wrists as in the ballerina’s dainty hand movements. The ballerina is at first reticent to move her arms in this manner. Giordano’s unified movement of

the arm gives her a feeling of expansiveness and force as her muscles engage to resist the air. The assertive reach of her arms, as well as the foreign feeling of the swing or release it entails, will be censored by her psyche, which is most intimately familiar with control and careful placement of each body part.

A clean simplicity of line results when the arms move in this fashion; it is not identified with the kind of tiny, precise isolations and quirky abstractions, characteristic of Broadway choreographer Bob Fosse's style; nor is it the cool, limp-wristed, 1950's hep jazz look associated with Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story*. The men that we see dancing in the movie version of this play display a sporadic, bursting kind of power. The focal point of their strength is in the legs, as it is in ballet, with more of a back and forth play between relaxation or release and unconnected fits of tension or force. This is the movement style most people think of when they think of jazz dance because of the popularity of the form in the 1950s and 60s. It is also more recognizable than Giordano's style because, although it requires a great deal of technique to accomplish, it is more closely linked to social dance forms and be-bop music. It is possible to perform in this style if one is trained only in ballet but is also highly musical, and Jerome Robbins did not feel the need to develop a specific or separate jazz technique with which to train his dancers.

Giordano's movement style when traveling also resists the space as it moves through it by employing this same concept of counterforce. A simple jazz walk across the length of the floor such as a jazz triple, a forward-moving waltz-time step, takes on the feeling of a moving locomotive because of the manner in

which it is performed. The dancer is moving on the pads, or balls, of her feet, but her heels remain close to the ground, and most importantly, she remains in a deep *demi-plié* never varying her level during the progression. This motion exudes Willis' explanation of "smoothness," as well as Thompson's observations of the speed, drive, and vitality, also present in the African aesthetic. In jazz dance, movements like this—referred to as "traveling"—should cover a great deal of ground in few repetitions of a step. Within the dance world dancers are thought to be innately able or unable to cover a great deal of territory when they "travel," but the emphasis on dancing in *plié* in the Giordano technique disproves this theory of the "big mover." By building the muscles of the thigh, and maintaining a deep *plié*, wider coverage of ground is assured due to the dancer's lower center of gravity. When the female dancer performs in this fashion, she has a sense of "eating" the space. The space becomes a force to reckon with and to surmount, rather than simply to move through, in the manner of the ballerina. The ability to achieve this movement style requires a great deal of personal vitality and dynamism. The intensity of performing this style of dance is invigorating for the dancer, and highly subjective, creating a sense of autonomy within the dancer. The dancer is vitally alive and in touch with her environment.

Applying Elements of the Jazz Style

I think the essence of jazz music is personal style and expression. It has been said that a person should be able to recognize a jazz musician in just 3 or 4 bars. So strong and individual is his statement that it reveals exactly who he is as a person and what he feels about it as an artist. Jazz music by definition is personal and spontaneous. (Teacher and Choreographer Douglas Bentz qtd. in Alford 14)

Jazz . . . is difficult to categorize and doesn't fit comfortably into a simple mold or formula. . . . But whatever it means at different times to different people, it is a form that is sensual and touches the feelings and emotions. (Teacher and Choreographer Joseph Giacobbe qtd. in Alford 18)

Giordano's dancing is more abstractly stylized than other jazz styles, meaning that the forms made by the body are broader abstractions of what the music stimulates Giordano to feel. His is a diffuse and sensuous reaction, I believe, and as such is associated with a feminine rather than masculine response. Because abstractions are inherently essences, they can be more unrestrictedly shared, so performing a certain movement seems less like something the choreographer has told the dancer to perform, and more like the dancer's own response, possibly enabling the dancer to state his or her reaction even more precisely.

Giordano's abstractions are responsive specifically to jazz music and its percussive and rhythmic qualities, as well as its melodic blues base. There is room in his praxis for styles related to what is current in the pop music arena, because an important tenet of Giordano's philosophy is to train his dancers to perform a wide spectrum of styles in order to make them employable in the contemporary theatrical marketplace. The overall look of his technique, however, is predominantly reflective of the classical jazz sounds.

Styling the Technique with Isolations

Several elements of style that distinguish Giordano's jazz technique class from a strictly modern dance or ballet class are: 1) adding shoulder and hip isolations to otherwise straightforward technique exercises, such as a lateral bend of the ribcage during a *grande pli  *, or a release forward of the shoulder in a *pass  * position; 2) use of the forced arch position of the feet; 3) use of the contraction, primarily the pelvic contraction; 4) use of various hand positions with either traditional or jazz *port de bras*; 5) use of parallel and turned-in leg positions; 6) use of layout positions. I will briefly discuss the first three style elements listed above.

The addition of any of these elements, but particularly the use of isolations usually accompanies an increased sensuality in the look of the movement being performed, as well as the release of a more sensual attitude in the response of the dancer. Giordano calls the shoulder isolation "the *look* of jazz" (see Figure 3.6). While the movements are neither surface "sexy" or suggestive, they do connect more profoundly to the sexual center of the dancer, male or female, because, I believe, it taps in to the sensuous elements inherent in blues music. Rather than being objectified by this aspect of her dancing, however, the jazz dancer is empowered in the way Africans were empowered during sacred dances through the spontaneous expression of their physicality and the spiritual release produced. In his brief treatise on the profound influence of the African Ring Shout dance on the fusion of African and European culture, specifically of the blues and jazz music, P. Sterling Stuckey writes:

As [the slaveholders] stood by, or hid in the shadows, and watched slave dance, all manner of guilt and longing in some whites caused them to associate the Shout with sex. ...It is possible that the recoil of whites from sacred dance stemmed from having considered it, in some measure, profane, especially when pelvic movement was involved. Such an attitude was opposed to that of the African, who had little conception of sexual activity, in and of itself, as dirty." (58)

Stuckey invokes the enthusiastic spontaneous and unrestrained abandon of the dancers during the Ring Shout and claims "In the Shout, the Negro spiritual and

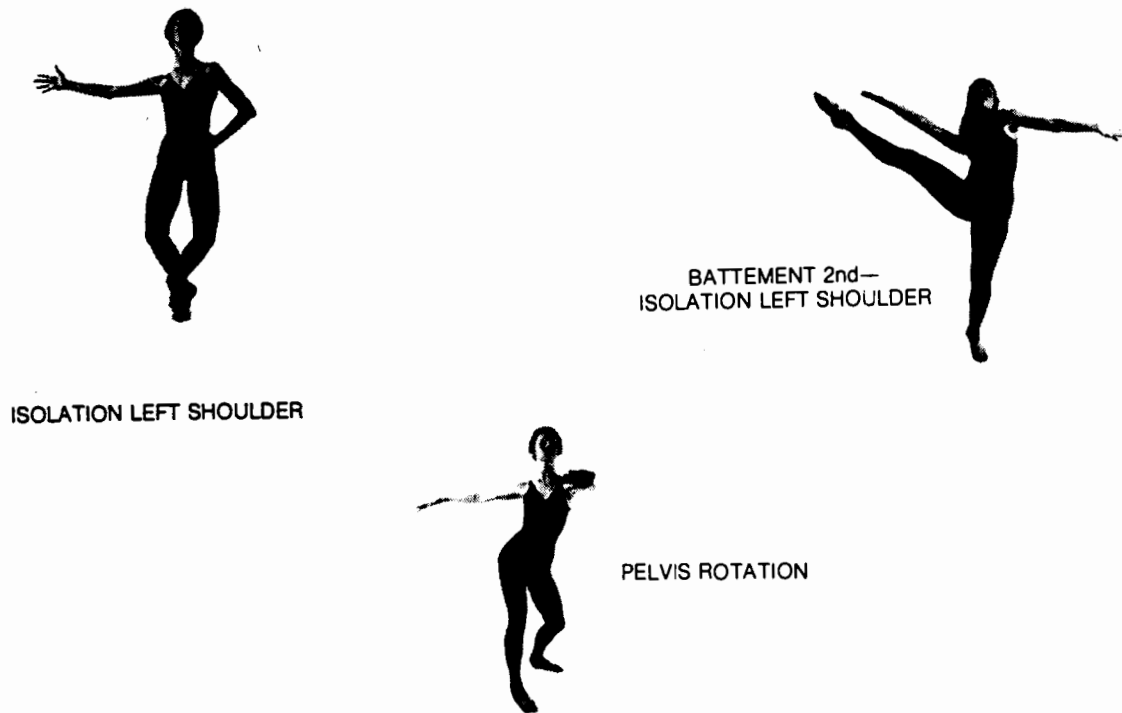


Figure 3.6. Shoulder and hip isolations (Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class*).

essentials of the jazz dance evolved" (62). The use of isolations in jazz such as the rolling, shifting or bouncing of the shoulders, swinging the neck, snapping the fingers, circling or swaying the pelvis, popping the knees or rippling the rib-cage, is what is left from the African dancer's abandoned use of the full body after the

process of hybridization. By assuming these movements, the female dancer inherits the African dancer's rhythmic reaction and intense unity of body and spirit. The sensual and personal connection of the dancer with the movements of her body create a presence that also defies the male gaze because of the agency she must assume to move in this fashion, and the un-self-consciousness of her movements.

The forced arch

The emphasis on a "forced arch" or the *relevé/plié* position of the foot points to the characteristics of African dance that nurture the dancer's relationship with the earth as well as to the oppositional attitude of the aesthetic of the cool. While this movement utilizes ballet's *relevé*, it also defies it by simultaneously bending the knee to pull the body toward the ground in a display of high affect juxtaposition or contrariety of intent.

Although I have experienced the *relevé/plié* position in modern dance training techniques as a means of strengthening and making flexible the muscles of the feet, the use of the position itself to achieve a "look," particularly when performed on only a supporting side as the opposite leg gestures, was not essentially the intent in any of these styles. The sinking from *relevé* without lowering the heel to the floor, but actually pushing it higher, requires a great deal of strength and placement to be sure, and a feeling of assertion comes over the dancer as the movement is accomplished. The look achieved is distinctly non-balletic (see Figure 3.7), where the *relevé* effects a reaching toward an elusive or

presence. Once she feels secure with the technique required to secure the forced arch in a variety of positions, the female dancer achieves an additional connection to the ground as well as to her own center, which is especially needed to achieve this balance. As soon as the balance occurs, a feeling of arrival ensues, rather than one of solicitation or longing, and carries with it a feeling of competence and satisfaction.



BATTEMENT LEFT
AND LAY-OUT



TORSO LAY-OUT BACK,
"PLIE-RELEVÉ" SUPPORTING LEG



DIAGONAL ARM STRETCH—
"PLIE-RELEVÉ" POSITION

Figure 3.7. Using the forced arch (Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class*).

The pelvic contraction

The pelvic contraction, used also in modern dance techniques, but never in ballet, is the movement most connected with Holm's abdominal "center of man" theory. In modern dance, where the body is used to express inner forces, the female dancer's body is not passive, claims Martha Graham, but dynamic, even convulsive. Author Susan Leigh Foster describes Grahams dancing the following way:

The action begins in the abdomen, codified as the site of libidinal and primitive desires. The symbolic contents of the abdomen radiate through the body, twisting and overpowering the body with their message. Graham's characters seem to be subject to the psychological mechanism of repression. The powerful message from the unconscious makes its way only with difficulty through the emotional and intellectual centers of the person and into the world. Graham depicts the tense conflict between corporeal and psychological elements. (qtd. in Dempster 29).

The pelvic contraction is possibly the Giordano technique's truest evocation of modern dance and specifically the legacy Giordano wrought from Hanya Holm. Intensity, depth of feeling, density and solidity of design—a weighted affinity to the ground—these are its contributions to Giordano's style.

The contraction of the pelvis is also closely linked to the way African dance focuses on the "behind" of the female dancer as her most highly valued physical attribute. It is also reflective of the extensive use of the pelvic area in African movement. This area of the ballerina, on the other hand, is held stationary almost continuously, nor is it directly acknowledged in any way. Swaying and circular movements of the hips create movement that is undulating and sensual. When asked to perform these actions the ballerina takes on an

uncharacteristic awkwardness and dislocation. Familiarizing herself with her creative center gives the dancer a profound sense of fulfillment and legitimacy. Putting the dancer in touch with her sensual and productive center creates in her the pro-active approach of the jazz dancer as opposed to the reactive attitude of the modern dancer or the passive demeanor of the ballerina. The pelvic contraction connects the dancer to herself (see Figure 3.8), and to the intensity of her emotional life.

The Giordano Factor

The most inspiring element of learning and assimilating the Giordano technique is Gus Giordano himself. In a 1985 interview Nan Giordano was

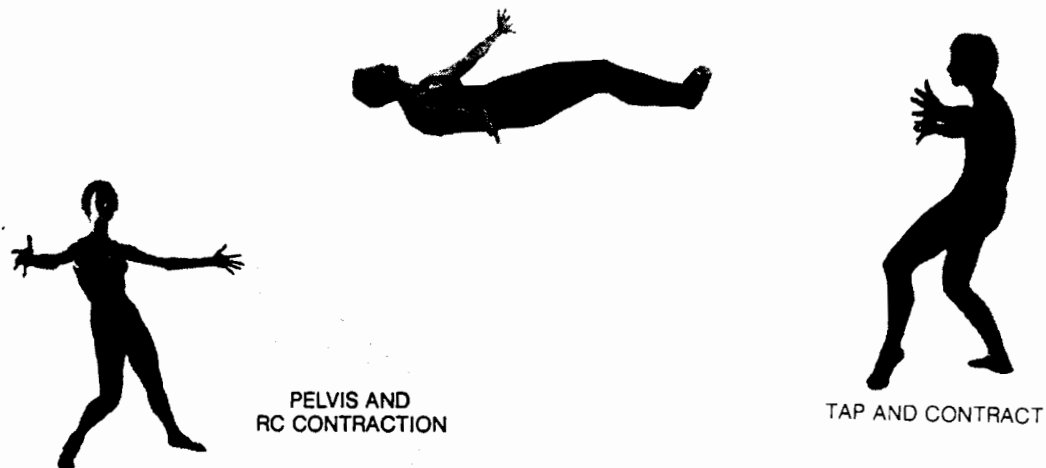


Figure 3.8. Pelvic contractions (Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class*)

questioned about her father's work. "He creates such enthusiasm among the dancers," she stated. "He wants a lot from his dancers, and he gets it" (Sanders 39). He is described by interviewer Nancy Sanders as "like a coach, constantly encouraging his dancers both verbally and by example." At workshops and conventions Giordano teaches extremely large classes of fifty students or more. In these situations he manages to maintain an immediacy of presence, even to those in the back of the class, and his focus remains on the individual. In these convention classes, teachers often deal with the magnitude of students by depersonalizing them somewhat, addressing and perceiving the class as a unit rather than made up of individual dancers. I am always personally struck by his gentleness of manner and a total accessibility that are rarely seen in many of his younger and less accomplished colleagues, oftentimes my own peers in the field. Whether the charismatic aura he exudes is innate or a characteristic he gradually acquired over time with growing confidence and an accumulation of accomplishments, I would not know. But charismatic he is, and students of all ages are drawn to him and work for his approval.

Even though Giordano is in his mid-seventies and rarely performs, he still looks the dancer. Most impressive is that while he seldom uses his own body for class demonstrations, and often travels without a younger dancer trained in his technique to demonstrate his material, his classes are still extremely demanding, and his explanations are specific and unmistakably clear. Often he chooses a dancer in class through whom to channel his movement. Very "hands-on," he will move the student's joints, limbs, and torso into positions as he explains the

technical process. Dancers are comfortable becoming his "action figure" because throughout the process, his gentle manner, personal remarks or joking, keep him respectfully in touch with the dancer's distinctiveness and individuality. Dancers feel safe enough in the class environment he creates to perform combinations alone or in small groups, which gives them confidence in their abilities to eventually master the material. Throughout his classes, he will call upon individuals he feels are accomplishing the material in an exemplary way and ask them to perform it alone, after which he leads the class in applauding the individual dancer's efforts, a feature I had never witnessed before attending class at his studio. While this could tend to foster competition, the act of physically applauding another's accomplishments becomes a trigger for the dancers to feel that response internally. Instructors at the Giordano Dance Center in Evanston are expected to be positive, encouraging and patient. This sort of guidance from a mentor fosters the kind of autonomy, self-belief, and determination that is evident in each of his disciples and of the dancers in his company.

By combining so skillfully those diverse elements of movement that are European in origin with the hybrid components seen in modern and modern jazz dance already becoming standard to this form by the 1960s, Giordano can be said to have created a new and truly American dance expression for the concert stage. His technique incorporates the verticality and straightness of the spine as seen in ballet and many European folk dance forms, as well as the flexibility of spinal positioning and movement employed in modern dance. Giordano's movements display a strong element of control, but the center of that control is in

the abdominal/pelvic area as it is in modern dance and African dance forms, whereas ballet is centered in the sternum. His technique includes exercises in parallel as well as turned out positions and work in *relevé* and *relevé/plié* (bringing that *relevé* closer to the earth). In addition, the class includes floor *études* that are based in floor work (as in modern dance), and *adagios* (as in ballet), which develop the virtuosity of the dancer and allow the strength of jazz to be seen in a sensitive and lyrical dynamic. Also present is the intricate fast-paced footwork as seen in ballet's *allégo* combinations, but with less emphasis on small jumping patterns, and more on rhythmic studies and quick directional configurations done with bent knees that keep the feet in more contact with the ground and the body closer to its center of gravity.

Giordano, who is a first generation Italian-American, once related in an interview how committed his father was to becoming "American," and the pride both of his parents had about being in this country. He said of his father:

When my father came to America, he had to speak English. ...He couldn't even understand English, but he used to sit and look at the newspaper as if he were reading. He wouldn't tell anybody that he couldn't understand it. He even went to high school as a man about forty years old. He was taking courses trying to learn to write, and to speak English better. He spoke in a very broken accent. So they were really dedicated to the fact that they were in America and America was the greatest country in the world. (qtd. in Mibopoulos 37)

Giordano's unconscious appropriation of his melting pot of influences reflects his father's pride in his Americanism by celebrating those ingredients that make America diverse but internally cohesive. Giordano's treatment of *space* as *volume* is compatible with the teachings of his German-trained mentor Hanya

Holm, but is also reflective of the expansiveness of the American terrain and the perspective of spaciousness and openness that our idea of “wide open spaces” has created in the American way of life. His facile blending of culturally diverse dance aesthetics sparked by the emergence of jazz music resulted in a genuinely American dance statement. The balanced emphasis his technique places on each diverse constituent of his technique—ballet, modern, folk, spiritual, etc.—and the amount of personal energy or commitment needed to realize the resistance, and therefore, the strength inherent in the motion of these forms, allows, or frees the spirit of the dancer in a highly structured and classic way. By permitting the female dancer to acknowledge her sensual nature through a system that still employs aspects of the European aesthetic, her agency is sanctioned by the West, while it begins to break through even broader barriers of difference.

The structure inherent in this American dance genre grants agency or speaks to the agency of the woman dancer, whereas the structure of the ballet form does not. In this style, there is no coyness or indirectness in the placement of the head or where the dancer’s eyes are cast; while she exudes an elegant and regal stature, the dancer’s carriage ultimately signals a *shared* authority rather than the kind wrought through the separation of class or aristocracy. While there is freedom and release in Giordano’s style, it is unlike that discerned in modern dance, which has either an ethereal, unconnected sense of freedom, or one deeply rooted in the exploration of an emotional state of mind. The freedom we perceive in jazz dance is connected more with the dancer’s sensual

perception of the movement and its musical stimulus, the connection she has to her center of control and to her physicality, the joy of autonomy and of a release of the spirit. In ballet the dancer is highly conscious of herself and emits an attitude of great carefulness and circumspection—of creating the proper impression. In modern the dancer's thoughts are turned inward on herself and her vulnerabilities and her ability to surmount them. In jazz dance the dancer's focus is direct and forward-looking in a way that is vitally alive. She fully experiences the movement she embodies, and whether embracing the conflict or the freedom from conflict, she very much relishes the moment of the dance (see Figure 3.9).



Figure 3.9. Giordano dancers “embracing the moment” (*Dancer* P17, 9/97).

Understanding Giordano's Influence

At the most fundamental level of analysis, dance, gender and culture are one and the same thing. (Ted Polhemus, "Dance, Gender and Culture" 3)

Social relations are both enacted and produced through the body, and not merely inscribed upon it. (Jane Desmond 33)

Investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains that distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality. (Luce Irigaray cited in R. Copeland 139)

Reading the Dancer's Body—A Worthwhile Endeavor

Why should cultural studies be concerned with dance as an applicable avenue of investigation? In his article, "Dance, Gender and Culture," anthropologist Ted Polhemus argues that Western socio-cultural traditions must equalize the significance of non-verbal communicative systems with that of verbal systems as markers of culture and the depository of a society's traditions and history. In other words, if culture encompasses "everything which the members of a social group have in common . . . which contributes to and generates their sense of 'we-ness,'" then the ways that society expresses their physical self is as significant as the way they express themselves verbally. Stylistic differences in ways of moving, the same as language or dialect differences, "are essential markers of 'Our Way of Life' and depositories of 'Our' tradition," and should not automatically be considered "natural" or inborn. According to Polhemus, this belief is predominant, not only because one's physical self is existentially omnipresent, it is also because 'the body' that is biologically and genetically produced is inevitably caught up symbolically with

'the social body' that is constructed by learning the physical culture of one's society. This "symbolic congruence" is so complete that it deceptively leads us to believe that physical differences between cultures is virtually irrelevant.

Likewise, Jane Desmond, in her article "Embodying Difference," states: "So ubiquitous, so "naturalized" as to be nearly unnoticed as a symbolic system, movement is a primary not secondary social 'text'—complex, polysemous, always already meaningful, yet continuously changing" (31). Movement serves as a "marker" of difference, (whether consciously performed or not), and a "signal" of identity distinctions (old, weak, sexy, etc.). "Dance . . . forms one subset of the larger field of movement study," she continues, the meaning for which "is situated both in the context of other socially prescribed and socially meaningful ways of moving and in the context of the history of dance forms in specific societies" (ibid.). Like Cheryl Willis in her article about the aesthetics of tap dance, Susan Foster, in "Choreographing History," cites the work done in the late 19th century by movement theorist Rudolph Laban, which determined that movement preferences indicate a given psychological orientation. These findings, claim Foster, reflect the idea that the body is "a collection of physical facts," which are deposited into it from inherent subjective responses, as well as from the political and economic forces that act upon the individual ("Choreographing". . . 13).

Furthermore, Polhemus insists that "muscular tonus, stance, basic movement styles, gestures and so forth once learned are, like any physical activity, remarkably resistant to change and constitute not only the essential

component of personal identity but of social and cultural identity as well."

Disciplines or methods that cultivate the body in this way are enumerated by

Foster to include:

All sports and physical-culture pursuits; regulations governing posture, etiquette, and comportment, and what is dubiously titled 'non-verbal communication'; habits in the workplace or place of worship; conduct in the performing arts; patterns of standing, lying, sitting, eating, walking, as well as all practices that contribute to the development of what Marcel Mauss has called 'techniques of the body. Such practices, Foucault has demonstrated, are part of the fabric of culture itself. They 'invest, mark, train and torture the body; they force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, and to emit signs.'" (236)

Style, the particular or distinctive manner in which someone or a group of people act, or the manner that characterizes how something is done, formed, created, or expressed, is the distinguishing marker of culture, of individuals within a culture, or of cultural components. Furthermore, in dance, when we speak of "stylizing" a pedestrian movement, we mean to find the essential qualities and the spirit of that movement. Like a caricature, stylized movement can function as an exaggeration of a physicality, but in that exaggeration, more profound truths can be seen – or more often and more accurately, they can be *felt*.

While physical culture is an "embodiment of the most deeply rooted ... level of what it means to be a member of a particular society, dance might be seen as a ...schema, an abstraction or stylizing of physical culture" (6-7). To support this concept, Polhemus submits also the findings of the Choreometrics Project developed by blues anthropologist Alan Lomax. Choreometrics is

defined as "the measure of dance or dance as a measure of culture." Lomax and his team reported:

In dance, those postures and qualities of movement should be discovered which are so familiar, so acceptable, or for some reason so important to a particular human community that all will take pleasure in continually watching or repeating them. These patterns of action ought to be of maximal importance to the actual physical survival of the culture and thus should be esteemed not merely as desirable, but as necessary as breath and food." (qtd. in Polhemus 7).

If a culture, as Polhemus and Lomax believe, is a blueprint for a way of living; if it consists of a learned language and a physicality which is the embodiment of a group's identity; and if dance is a stylization of that physicality or unique identity, then it is logical to assume that dance can be a penetrating reflection of cultural beliefs during its moment in time. Foster protests the lack of attention given to bodily inquiry in traditional scholarship:

The Platonic fantasy of heads unencumbered by limbs or torso or by the 'beast tethered just beneath the diaphragm' has persevered as a guiding image in academic research, one whose full power and influence come into sharp relief when bodily participation in endeavors is allowed to inform the inquiry. Are not reading, speaking, and writing varieties of bodily action? Can theory attain definition apart from the medium in which it finds articulation? Critical focus on the body forces new conceptualizations of these fundamental relations and of the arguments addressing individual and collective action that depend on them. (12)

Is dance simply a reflection of culture, as Lomax and Polhemus believe, or can it perhaps also be a catalyst to adjust cultural inequities, for instance? I believe that dance, as a stylized reflection of a cultural identity *is* so important precisely because of its capacity, as a stylization, to be *felt*, and emotions, after all, are a powerful motivating factor behind individual transformation.

Some Theoretical Implications of the Giordano Technique

Can physicality alone effect change, or must change begin in the intellect and follow the lead of language to its end? In other words, can physicality itself effect social or individual change? I believe it can. An interesting parallel to this idea can be drawn to the way in which actors work.

The great Russian actor, Constantine Stanislavski, developed an acting technique that could help actors create characters for roles they were assigned. The ultimate aim was to engage the audience in the believability of the world they created for their specific character. In the early stages of the development of this technique, Stanislavski relied most heavily upon the inner life of the character, taking for granted that a character's outward appearance was not a reliable source of that character's emotional life, but only a reaction to it. When Stanislavski's technique was brought to America, Lee Strasberg became fascinated with this psychological foundation and began teaching it himself. It became known as the Method, or method acting, and Strasberg's school, The Actor's Studio, became the ultimate actor's training ground in America during the late 1940s and 50s. What Americans refused to acknowledge about this system was the physicality Stanislavski addressed later in its development. Working from the inside *out*, American proponents of this technique placed the physicality of the character second to its psychological development believing that once the inner truths were discovered, physicality would instinctively develop around those truths.

The English actor Sir Laurence Olivier was often interviewed and questioned about his acting technique, which was always credible, perceptive, and intensely realistic. His reply was always the same and in complete opposition to what the Actor's Studio would have taught. In contrast to the method technique, Olivier worked from the outside *in*. In other words, he first made choices about the character's exterior appearance such as, what he looked like, his stature, his physical characteristics, age, habits, profession. All of these outer markings of a person the "method" discarded as surface traits that could only "indicate" a character's inner life. This attention to physicality could not help the method actor experience reality or emotional truth; they created for Olivier, however, a factual, certifiable structure around which the character's psychology could emerge, based on its physical manifestations.

By donning a wig, assuming a stance, and changing his speech and movement patterns, Olivier was able to convince himself that he was Hamlet, enough to affect the emotional and intellectual response of his audience. Because physicality is factual—seeable and assumable—it is a powerful tool used by many other directors and actors who also work in this fashion. Physical features and patterns form instantaneous impressions. Moving or standing in certain postures actually affects a person psychologically. If words have meaning, so does movement, and it is capable of creating an impression, a mood, as well as imparting knowledge about the person who is moving.

Can physicality effect social change, or is physicality effected only as a reaction to social change? Assuming, for the sake of proceeding with my

premise, that the chicken/egg theory is in order here, I might argue that both theories are possible or even that this dichotomy in structure may not exist at all. For instance, an individual or individuals within a culture can perceive, through activity or discourse they observe that a power differentiation exists within a culture. Or, some element of inequality or injustice may be perceived by a member of a society that he or she feels the need to address. That individual may then begin the process of change through methods of verbal persuasion, but it is also likely that this individual would subconsciously begin to act differently, as well. (This "practice what you preach" method is in line with the notion that *feeling is acting*.) On the other hand, I also believe that there are individuals who are innately balanced and intuitive and that, though working within the boundaries of the physical culture they are part of, move essentially to the beat of their own drummer, to coin an appropriate phrase. These are the people who are more comfortable *acting* than they are speaking or writing. Many dance artists fit this description. Innately intelligent people, they live their lives principally in their bodies, are well grounded (in the cosmic *and* African sense), and their artistic discoveries are more often inspired than specifically intended. These artists produce, often without a specific goal in mind or in aim of achieving a personal goal. Sometimes their reason is simply to produce. And yet, these people may still instigate change that has repercussive possibilities. These are the people whose "actions speak louder than words."

Artists have the potential to effect verbal or physical change, though not all do. Many reflect the tenor of their time, yet not all do. In the art of dance, a great

many physically intuitive individuals have both reflected the tenor of their time as well as pointed the way to social change and to the future. At times artistic intuition is groundbreaking and obvious, as was that of Isadora Duncan, or Martha Graham, or even nineteenth century tap dancer William Henry Lane. Sometimes, however, change is so gradual as to be imperceptible and part of a chain of artistic events that happen over an era. Classical ballet, after almost three centuries of convention and tradition, is just beginning to show signs of acknowledging the passage of time and changing social structures by allowing itself to be (even if negligibly) affected by outside influences.

Most often, artistic contribution falls somewhere between these poles of "groundbreaking" and "imperceptible". Such is the influence of the work of Gus Giordano. Giordano's instinctual way of externalizing his cultural response was always induced through jazz music. Born during the 1920s, he was a product of the Jazz Age, but he also participated in the swing era, 1950s rhythm and blues, rock and roll, the disco sound of the 1970s, and 1980s hip hop; the entire range of popular twentieth century musical styles. Jazz music persisted throughout each of these eras, and that is the musical genre that most influenced his dancing style. Giordano was also the product of a time in which great inequality between gender and race persisted. Still, from this male child raised within Western culture's patriarchal system and trained within the even more Puritan influenced and authoritarian-encumbered system of dance, emerged a stylized way of moving that favors neither gender, but acknowledges each profoundly; that celebrates sexuality without exploiting it; that neither denies the conventions

of classical ballet nor accepts them out of hand; and, although contributing to the ongoing development of an art form, in no way intends for his contribution to inhibit change or the ongoing development of that art form.

My own response to Giordano's movement, as a female dancer and professedly liberated "child of the 60s," was overwhelming in its implications. That my own perceptions of myself could be altered by a mere re-positioning of my arms, the strategic engagement of an isolation, or the increased depth of a demi-plie was a revelation to me. I had studied and absorbed the prescriptions of many genres: ballet, Graham, Humphrey, Wigman and a dazzling array of other modern dance perspectives, character, tap and, most ironically, what was called in the 50s and 60s "modern jazz." Dancing had always been my primary and most effective means of expression, but this experience in Giordano's class prompted me to examine more closely *what* I had been expressing, and what most women dancers express through the bodies they have allowed others to write. How much agency does that writing allow? Does the writing she has allowed to be inscribed on her body honor her womanhood, or merely idolize her femininity? Are her strengths celebrated or belied? What messages are encoded in her trained body? Whether or not these questions remain spoken or unsaid, deep within the dancer and the girl watching the dance, their answers can be felt.

Susan Jaeger in her article "Beauty and the Breast," focuses her analysis on an examination of the female dancer's breasts to better understand how feminine sexuality is being displayed in 3 separate dance forms: ballet, flamenco,

and African. Jaeger believes that sensuality is integral to the art of dance because it is "a manifestation of the *presence* of the body." I agree with this idea, as I have previously stated, and wish to examine Jaeger's article in more depth as an avenue to discovering the ways in which Giordano's dance technique retains the binaries of masculine and feminine, but maintains equality within that difference.

Briefly summarized here, Jaeger's article posits the following assumptions: In classical ballet's "image of perfection, we get a sense of [the dancer's] superiority of control, the mastery of her body and of the art form," but "there is something of a negation of women's carnal reality. . . . [It is] a kind of sexuality . . . that is no longer limited by her fleshy existence." (In other words, the ballerina *has* no breasts.) Conversely, Jaeger's analysis of the flamenco dancer, who is voluptuous and seductive, differentiates the sensual body from that of the sexy woman in order to show how the sexuality exuded by the flamenco dancer does not objectify her. "[This] sensual body," Jaeger claims, "is a fuller, deeper human experience that makes the objectified body possible in the first place." Finally, her analysis of the African dancer whose movements are freer, loose, and exuberant is of a "fun-loving and often brash" sexuality. Her breasts [though thrust forward of the pelvis and exposed] are not seductive in the same way as in flamenco. . . . Theirs seems a less dark eroticism. It is more the behind which is the focus of the display" (271-4). I have employed this analysis in order to shape the following brief remarks about the sexuality of the jazz dancer.

If the ballet dancer's breasts are flat and childlike, the flamenco dancer's sensual and womanly, the African dancer's wild and crazy and secondary to the pelvis, what of the breasts of the jazz dancer? In jazz, the female dancer does not strive to be an ideal of love and beauty, but displays more of the earthy, forceful bearing of the flamenco dancer, whose energy is also directed into the floor. The weight of the flamenco dancer contributes to her earthy quality, as well. Thinness is not required for either African or flamenco dancing, but is for classical ballet and concert jazz, although not as radically in jazz. In this regard, Giordano maintains that women in jazz could and should "look like women." Clearly, Giordano's meaning can be interpreted to mean that the female jazz dancer does not need to deny her intrinsic body in order to be a vehicle for the jazz aesthetic, whereas often the opposite is true of the ballerina. In her discussion of the classical dancer Janet Wolff states, "The strict limits on body size and shape for girls and women dancers reinforce a denial of the female body in favor of an ideal of boyish petiteness. The roles created for women in the classical repertoire—fairies, swans, innocent peasant girls—collude in a discourse which constructs, in a medium which employs the body for its expression, a strangely disembodied female" (95).

On the other hand, theorist Janet Wolff states that the female jazz dancer receives from the pioneer female modern dancer "a notion of the natural body." However, Wolff continues, "we must be wary of a cultural politics which is based on any notion of women's natural body, or women's universal essence," because what defines the body is not its biology per se, but its social history, social

relations, and discourses, that have constructed it (96). "Biology is always overlaid and mediated by culture," Wolff states, "and the ways in which women experience their own bodies is largely a product of social and political processes" (92). Although Wolff argues in favor of the social construction of the body, she qualifies her argument by not completely discounting the existence of biology, i.e. biology is overlaid and mediated, not erased; women experience their bodies "largely," but not entirely as a product of social processes. Culture affects biology, I agree, but biology itself continues to be a powerful presence and a persistent motivating factor. If we accept this premise, Giordano's remark can be construed as liberating for the female dancer. If history and the lived discourse of dance has constructed the female ballet dancer by using extreme and unhealthy means to cancel out her actual body in order to realize an ideal body, by legitimizing women with hips and breasts by employing them to perform in concert or serious dance venues, Giordano is affirming realistic expectations of a more common female physiology. He is also saying that, in the case of his technique, this more common female physiology enhances the expression of his particular aesthetic rather than diminishes it. By using the phrase "realistic expectations of the female physiology," am I guilty of essentializing women's bodies? Some would say I am, but, as I hope to show, essentializing could (un)wittingly be as powerful a subversive force against patriarchal repression as it has been for it.

What do women “look like”—and to whom do they look that way?

Like the body defined through the discourse of ballet or modern dance techniques, the “supervised, observed, and controlled” body of the Giordano trained dancer is brought into the discourse of the Giordano technique. To that extent it becomes Foucault’s *docile body*. Like other disciplines, the Giordano discipline “operates through internalization,” which has taken over the task of bodily control from older forms such as physical punishments, and which “becomes, to a large extent, *self-surveillance*” (Foucault 138). Self-discipline is a quality in dancers that is valued highly and required by any potential teacher or choreographer taking on the task of developing a dancer. The physical realities of the Giordano woman dancer are achieved through self-discipline.

The body of the Giordano-trained dancer is tight and compact with an overriding look of solidity. She has curves, but the body is not consistently held in the “S-curve” of the African dancer who “bends forward,” with “the behind out back” (273), although this posture is practiced and is an element of the jazz style. The accurate overall posture of the jazz dancer, like the flamenco dancer, is closer to that of the ballerina with the lifted torso, and the open feeling of the chest. Although she does not need to be born with certain innate characteristics, she is still subject to the overall aesthetic requirement of theatrical dance, to maintain herself below a maximum weight that is acceptable within her body type. However, other characteristics that she *does* share with the African dancer are as previously discussed: her weight is carried closer to the ground, her knees are often bent, and her movements descend to the ground and return

upright using the strength of the thighs and stomach (or abdominal center, which includes the back). In addition, the pelvis is the center of movement, as is the African dancer's whose pelvis and ribcage contract and release in time with the drum.

This body is achieved through a disciplined training regime. But, if (as Foucault maintains) discipline diminishes (through obedience) the same forces of the body that it has increased through utility, how do these Giordano trained jazz dancers retain *their* force, as I contend? Much of the dancers' agency is preserved, I believe, due to their ability, granted by the nature of the Giordano movement quality, to deflect the voyeuristic gaze.

As with the flamenco dancer, the Giordano-trained dancer is not objectified by the gaze because while she is sensual, she never becomes the objectified "sexy" woman. To think of either of the sexualities constructed by the flamenco or the jazz dancer in the objective sense would be to, as Jaeger says, "cover up a genuine way that the body finds itself in its sensuality and presence" (273). In addition, the sheer appearance of physical strength and power, the lived presence of the concert jazz dancer, deflects any such characterization of her impact.

Objectivity in the performing arts is a tricky concept to analyze because of the fact that the engagement of a performer in the situation of performance, immediately places her—or him—in the path of the gaze. The subjectivity discerned by the dancer herself might measure whether or not the dancer is being objectified or in any way diminished by the gaze. Susan Manning,

however, in her article "The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze," feels the key to this sort of analysis lies within the *kinesthetic* dimension of the woman's dance rather than its representational frame.

Examining the movement

Martha Graham once wrote, "movement never lies." While one could never know the truth of this statement definitively, the crux of my discussion, which is that the Giordano technique has positively affected the place of women in our society by stamping the body of female dancers with imprints of power, equality, and agency, lies within the *kinesthetic* evidence I have already presented of Giordano's movement style. In other words, I am judging Giordano's cultural statement by studying the "body language" indicated by his movement technique and how that is manifest on stage and in life, rather than assessing his choreographic themes and dramatic representations seen during performance. Centered primarily around the genres of modern and postmodern dance, the background of Manning's argument lies in between two particular controversies. The first concerns how successful or not modern dancers have been at "undermining the voyeuristic gaze." Certain critics, claim Manning, say the early pioneer modern women were productive as feminist forces in their resistance of the status quo of gender; others say that this subversion of the power structure wasn't really achieved until the middle part of this century by the postmodern dancers. Roger Copeland feels that modern dance has been affected by a much broader range of aesthetic and political influences than

feminism, but that both modern and postmodern dance “are probably the only art forms in which various stages of feminist thinking are literally embodied” (156). (Notice that jazz dance has been disregarded here.) However, Manning explains Ann Daly’s and Elizabeth Dempster’s belief that dancers like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham had essentialized notions of gender in early modern dance. According to Ann Daly, although “Duncan and Graham ‘proposed a feminist dance practice which would return the real female body to women’, . . . [both Duncan and Graham] posited a natural and interiorized body that seemed to reiterate traditional assumptions about the relatedness of women, nature, emotionality, and the body.” It was Graham’s codification of her technique, [Dempster] believes, that led to the “cooptation of modern dance” (156). Janet Wolff, agrees that “‘the notion of women’s natural body or women’s universal essence’ undercut its potential to resist the patriarchal status quo,” and contends that “‘dance can only be subversive when it questions and exposes the construction of the body in culture,’” the credit for which she ultimately assigns to postmodern dance. Critics Jane Desmond and Amy Koritz go even further to say that pieces like Ruth St. Denis’ *Rahda* and Maud Allan’s *The Vision of Salomé* dramatically essentialized notions of race and nationality, as well as gender, by performing Western stereotypes of the East.

In their judgments of these early modern dancers, the critics are divided: Roger Copeland, choosing a reflective viewpoint, i.e. art reflects culture, claims that “the evolving practice of modern dance reflects evolving notions of feminism.” As for Dempster and Wolff, Manning fears they are in danger of

“reductive generalization,” i.e. “early modern dance produced a corrupt feminism, postmodern dance is an authentic feminism.” Ann Daly, on the other hand, feels that Isadora Duncan, by allowing her body to move on stage in unconventional ways, “projected a ‘dancing subject-in-process’ . . . constantly re-imagining herself.”

These first three critics chose to view the dances of these early modern women within *representational* frames, thereby condemning the dancers for their complicity with the patriarchal system. For instance, Koritz maintains that Allen “made the East transparent to the West by representing its essence,” thus simultaneously embodying and distancing herself from her performance of the spiritual and sensual Oriental” (162). Daly, on the other hand, acknowledged the *kinesthetic* dimension of Duncan’s performances claiming that female spectators could relate to her movement innovations, which drew on physical culture trends of the time. These trends, such as aesthetic gymnastics and Delsartism, were “widely practiced among middle-class women of the time,” thereby intensifying their response to modern dance. Their responses to ballet were very different, since audiences had no real connection to the movement they witnessed. Manning asserts that some responses of those women, as shown through letters and memoirs, suggest otherwise:

[Women audiences] viewed the kinesthetic power of early modern dance as a metaphor for women’s heightened social mobility and sense of possibility. It may well be the case that the representational frames of Orientalism were less central to the responses of contemporary female spectators than they were to the responses of male reviewers of the time. (162)

In addition, Daly's argument ultimately challenged the value of applying the theory of the voyeuristic gaze to the dancing of Isadora Duncan:

The male gaze theory forces the feminist dance scholar into a no-win situation that turns on an exceedingly unproductive "succeed or fail" criterion. We expect the choreographer to topple a power structure that we have theorized as monolithic. The dancer or choreographer under consideration will always be condemned as a reinforcement of the patriarchal status quo, despite any transgressive behavior, because, by definition, that which is communicated arises from within the fabric of culture, that is to say, within patriarchy. (Desmond 159)

In searching for an effective scholarly perspective from which to view these questions, Manning proposes a careful application of *both* the representational and kinesthetic viewpoints. "To do so," she believes, is to recognize a complexity in the formal structure of early modern dance that traced a distinct ideological profile, the dismantling of the voyeuristic gaze and the reliance on essentialized notions of identity . . . [an] ideological profile that marked the paradoxical social function of the form, its ability to contest and to conform at the same time.

I believe that both of these claims can also be applied to the development of the female concert jazz dancer. The nature of her evolution is paradoxical in that it both contests and conforms to essentialized notions of women's identity, still prevalent today. While Giordano's and many subsequent jazz techniques still mark biological, instinctive and perceptive differences within the female dancer, the kinesthetic power of her movement challenges the male viewer to see her as a viable societal force. In a compatible way, a kinesthetic recognition

brought about by the use of familiar dance forms or movement ideas prevalent in mainstream culture allows the female viewer to experience an intense identification with this material reinforcement of her own authority. As Manning concludes, Duncan's dancing and that of her contemporaries project "a kinesthetic power that challenged male viewers to see the female dancer as an expressive subject rather than as an erotic object. . . . Whereas the representational frames reiterated and updated preexistent images of gender and ethnicity, the kinesthetic dimension introduced a new image of the female body in motion that was without precedent" (163-4).

Giordano's technique emulates the resistant dimensions of the modern and postmodern dance idioms, and is, most impressively, able to retain its artistic validity within the milieu of pop culture. Its ability to accomplish both tasks simultaneously makes it a powerful force in the enculturation of young women. Presently, popular media is the most potent vehicle for this task. The values that are introduced or reinforced through this source have a great advantage over more sophisticated cultural offerings because of its availability, its easy to comprehend messages and its consumer-oriented focus. Its worthiness of this task is in greater question than its effectiveness. By demanding more of jazz dance on the concert stage than is demanded by video dancing, for instance—technically, thematically, and musically—but at the same time not ignoring or in any way negating changes in popular musical tastes or in contemporary values, the art of dance can affect how women are perceived, and how they perceive themselves, in an empowering way. The art of jazz dancing does question and

expose the construction of the female body in our culture in a manner that is immediate and subversive. Giordano's rewriting of the women's body is disruptive of the traditional portrayal of the "sexy" woman and also of the demure and reticent woman. It shows us instead the "sensual" woman/person, upon whom the gaze, (of men or of other women) lies not in a voyeuristic way, but as a silent participant in the celebration either of their difference, or of their mutual promise.

IN SUMMARY

My journey into the body, mind, and spirit of Gus Giordano and the Giordano trained jazz dancer has taken me on a “fantastic voyage” through my own body, mind and spirit. My brief examination of African philosophy has only deepened my curiosity. To better understand the dominant aesthetic impact of jazz dance, it was necessary for me to understand its components, particularly the source of its most dominant strain which is Africa and the African Diaspora in the West Indies and America. A great many elements present in the African aesthetic as seen in authentic Zimbabwean dance forms, as well as in theatrical dance forms already developing in American tap and novelty dance, are also apparent in many elements of Giordano’s jazz dance aesthetic. This congruence of aesthetic components is even more evident when jazz dance is contrasted with movement elements of other dance genre. The more inclusive nature of jazz dance is realized intrinsically as it embraces innovation and change and as it celebrates difference.

My second aim was to better understand the innovations of Gus Giordano by examining his technique within a kinesthetic framework. An investigation of his background and the aesthetic qualities embedded in the Giordano technique revealed that a combination of his love of jazz music, his experiential training as a theatrical dancer, his training with Hanya Holm, and his unconscious absorption of the African aesthetic—as it was introduced to America by dancers like Katherine Dunham—most influenced Giordano’s style. From this Wigman-

trained modern dancer Giordano, dancers discovered a calm inner core from which all force emanates, a concept central to his technique. Giordano's technique selectively borrows from several other cultural sources, such as ballet, modern, social and ethnic dance forms, all of which merge to constitute a style and a training method that has lasting inscriptive power. This style is shown to imprint markers of authority and presence, strength, a regal bearing, connection to the ground, solidity, centerdness, directness, speed, vitality and ebullience. It is also clear that these inscriptions are placed equally on the male and female jazz dancer, giving concert jazz dance a sense of gender balance within difference.

Finally, I endeavored to demonstrate the importance of understanding how dance functions as a cultural process to fully comprehend the significance behind Giordano's rewriting of these values onto the female dancer's body. I chose Susan Manning's analysis of several feminist critiques of early modern dance to guide the formulation of my principal argument that Giordano's movement style has acted paradoxically to counter the voyeuristic gaze by working within essentialized notions of gender difference while simultaneously displaying the female body moving in uniquely dynamic and assertive ways. Giordano has successfully taken on and reshaped the African aesthetic of the cool in a dance studio in Evanston, Illinois. In its stylized instability, the many ways in which it displays high-affect juxtaposition, and its definitive ability to embrace (rather than to resolve) the conflict, Giordano's jazz dance technique is eminently cool, and unquestionably made in America.

AFTERWARD

*Discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, docile bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination. (Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138)*

My First Lesson: Self Control

When I was two years and nine months old, my mother dressed me up in the newest organdy dress she had sewn for me (made "tu-tu-esque" by the heavily layered petticoats that flounced beneath it), curled my hair in its best Sunday style, and took me to my first day of dancing school. It was the early 1950s and dance teachers in this small steeltown suburb of Pittsburgh did not yet require leotards for little ones. Of course, I have no active memory of that day but am told that after the baby class finished its combined sessions of ballet, tap and acrobatics this baby did not want to leave and expressed her anger in no uncertain terms. But, as others who learn through experience, I discovered then that life is not always gratifying and I might as well control my self.

My Second Lesson: It Doesn't Take Much to Become an "Other"

My first real dance memory fades into focus approximately two years later. Standing with my left hand on the ballet barre in a slightly larger flouncy big-bowed dress and watching the beautiful "Jean-lady" demonstrate a *plie*

combination, I am told to take a position standing with my heels touching together and my toes turned out to the side. Then I must bend my knees. ("This feels – yucky"!) Next, the class is told to assume second position in which the feet, still turned open, are placed farther apart. From that more open position I must again bend my turned out legs as far as I can without lifting my heels from the floor or letting my knees fall forward. ("No way," I thought.) Self-control or not, and despite the hands of my teacher's assistant pressing my thighs open, I could not make myself comply, even at the age of five. As I view the incident in retrospect, I am sure that this open positioning of my legs and hips felt unnatural and *just too vulnerable*, especially with a grown-up applying physical pressure. Or, maybe I could not see the connection between this movement and actually dancing. Or, perhaps I was simply a stubborn kid. Nevertheless, because I can still vividly recall this day in ballet class I perceive it as the instant of my definitive slide-up from baby-brain to full consciousness. That was also the last day I took ballet until my teen years. The day I decided to be an outsider

Enter my saviors. Ken, the Gene Kelly-type hero of my youth who taught me to tap, and Lois, the sweet lady who played the piano for class taught me to hear the rhythm and feel the swing of the music by the way she played it. And tap dancing was gratifying because I was good. I was very good. I know, because I got a shiny star at the end of each class. Right in the middle of my forehead.

The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'. We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Discipline and Punish 194)

The next memory that I will share is of a time approximately thirty-five years later. The girl is now a woman and a seasoned teacher of dance. I am in Evanston, Illinois attending a five-day jazz dance workshop at the school of dance that Gus built. Gus Giordano, whose book of technique I used to help structure my own college classes for many years is teaching an intermediate level class in the jazz technique that he himself designed. Here the focus of my memory is my *upper* body rather than my legs and feet. This *port de bras*, or carriage of the arms and upper body, is as specific and precise as any ballet exercise I have ever been taught, but something about the way it makes me feel is very different. My legs are wide apart in a parallel version of ballet's second position, my ribcage is under my shoulders and my shoulders are firmly set in place. While my arms are lifted and held out to my sides much as they are held in ballet's second position of the arms, my elbows are lifted and slightly angled to the back instead of being rounded and sloped, and the palms of my hands are facing the floor, fingers together. Most importantly, my chin is placed parallel to the floor so that the head has a noble, but not condescending carriage—a more direct positioning than the ballet carriage of the head.

At first I want to rebel and release my arms because this body positioning goes against every former inscription made on my ballet and modern dance-trained dancer's body. I resist releasing, however, despite the aching of my shoulder blades and the unnatural feeling of my fingers touching together, and during the next few minutes an astounding change occurs. Glancing in the mirror, I see a dancer who looks very much like me, but who shows a powerful presence and an underlying strength I had not previously owned. Even more compelling is that she is very quickly assimilating this new style. Not only was it beginning to feel natural and somehow "right," it was also making me feel very—well, very *good*. As though I were newly defining myself. As though I were present. As though I were intimately connected to the ground beneath me and I was taking energy from that place. This Lesson? I *do* have power. I have something to say. At that moment something deep inside of me "clicked," and I have never looked back.

APPENDIX A.
DANCE GENRE COMPARISON CHART

CLASSICAL BALLET**MODERN DANCE****POSTMODERN
DANCE****JAZZ DANCE**

Pictorial aesthetic

Affective aesthetic

Experiential aesthetic

Dynamic aesthetic

Synthetic

Natural

Realistic

Combination

Sternum Centered

Abdominal Centered

Center In-flux

Abdominal/pelvic centered

Precisely coded

Discover movement
organicallyDeconstructs habitual
patternsMovement musically/
rhythmically derived

Perfect form

Imperfect form

Realistic form

Combination form

Stylized gesture

Self-expressive

Movement speaks for
itselfCombination: a stylized
instability

Open/Outward

Internal/Inward

In flux

In flux

Male Influence/
AuthoritarianFemale Influence/
MaternalGender Indifference/
AutonomousGender Inclusive/
Sexual/gendered

Verticle

Floor-bound

Not fixed

Forward & earthbound

APPENDIX B.

THE DANCER'S CENTER



THE DANCER'S CENTER

Vertebrae lengthened.

Maximum separation between rib-cage and pelvis.

Rib-cage open at top, closed at bottom.

Abdominal muscles tight, as if you were wearing a wide belt at the waist of the torso to keep you pulled in, controlled and lifted.

Shoulder girdle and pelvis maintain a horizontal line.

Shoulders remain down and relaxed with shoulder blades pulled together in a closed position.

Pelvis is tucked under.

Neck is long and head is carried high and exalted.

The dancer's center is the area from which movement originates and the place from which the dancer works. If this center (or sometimes called square) is maintained, the dancer will be in control of efficient bodily motion with the absence of unnecessary or wasted movements. The result is smoothness and grace and well-coordinated energy and force.

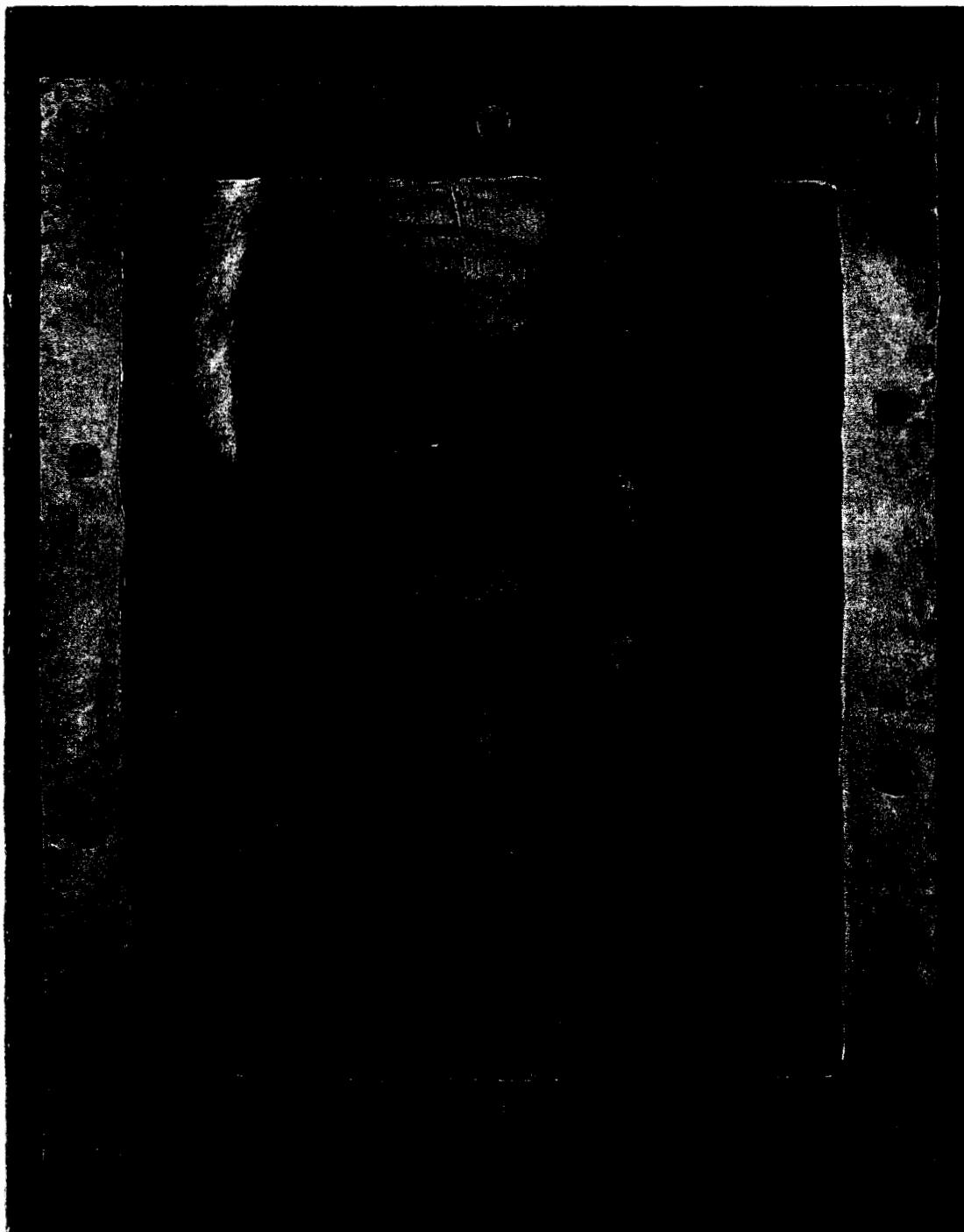
"The dancer's center is an important characteristic of skillful performance, since waste movements and unnecessary tensions not only make for awkward performance, but also hasten the onset of fatigue and increase its intensity."

Kinesiology—K. F. Wells, Ph.D.

(Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class* xxvi.)

APPENDIX C.

PORTRAIT OF GUS GIORDANO



(Tim Anderson "Danza Raffinata," 1997)

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& most importantly,
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Linda Sabo was born on December 31, 1948 in McKeesport, Pennsylvania where she studied dance at the school of Ken and Jean Phifer from age two to age sixteen. From 1967 through 1971 Sabo attended the Boston Conservatory and earned a B.F.A. degree in dance. Sabo moved to New York City in 1971 and, as a member of Actor's Equity Association worked as a professional dancer and apprentice choreographer for the next seven years. In the fall of 1977 Sabo was hired to design the dance component for the new musical theatre program at Syracuse University. In 1984, Sabo was tenured and promoted to an Associate Professor of Dance. From that time to the present, Sabo choreographed and/or directed a great many university musical theatre productions at schools like Syracuse, the University of Michigan, the University of Southern Illinois, Colgate University, LeMoyne College, Interlochen National Music Camp and Iowa State University. In addition to her academic work, she has continued to teach, perform and stage productions in the professional theatre. Sabo met Gus and Debbie Giordano while teaching at Ballet Iowa, a professional ballet company formerly situated in Des Moines.