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JAZZ DANCE VOCABULARY STUDY GUIDE

PAC 140 Jazz 1_ FALL 2018_Sarah Shouse

Jazz Dance: Jazz dance is a high energy, performance dance technique and style that emerged in America in the early twentieth century. It is often seen as the style of dance you would see in a Broadway musical and/or in commercial dance. Jazz technique includes a grounded quality, syncopation, rhythm, isolations, precision, and control. Jazz fuses elements of tap, ballet, modern, and social dance to create unlimited possibilities for movement.

“Jazz dance teaches technical precision, pelvic release, productive bound flow, rhythmic dynamics, performance principles...articulate and flexible use of the torso, direct visual focus...” (Davenport, Vaccaro).

Ball change: Two steps. A syncopated change of weight from right to left; a partial weight transfer from the ball of the foot, followed by a step on the other foot.

Chassé: Chased. A step in which one foot literally chases the other foot out of its position.

Choreographer: A person who composes a dance.

Chainé: Chains, links. A series of consecutive half turns traveling in a single direction.

Contraction: The spine is curved deeply backward with the movement originating from the pelvis muscles. The spine must grow longer, not shorter, in a contraction. The cycle of contraction and release was developed as a stylized representation of breathing.

Curve: Concept developed by Merce Cunningham: bending the body forward creating a large “C” shape from the head to the pelvis. Not a bend from the waist.

Downstage: Toward the front of the room or stage. Ex. Early theaters were raked (built on an angle with the stage highest toward the back of the space. A down stage direction would require you to walk down toward the edge of the performance space closer to the audience.

Upstage: Toward the back of the room or stage.

Forced arch: On the ball of the foot with the heel off the floor and the knee bent.

Grapevine: A series of steps that move sideways with a side back side front pattern; side steps step behind the support foot.

Isolations: Movement of only one part of the body.

Jazz square: Cross right, step side left, step side right, step together: creating an imaginary square on the ground.

Pas de bouree: Sideways step in which one-foot crosses behind or in front of the other, three steps.

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Passé: Passed. The foot of the working leg passes the knee of the supporting leg from one position to another: One leg is bent so it looks like a triangle with the foot placed near the other leg's knee.

Piqué: Pricked or pricking. A step onto half toe with a straight leg from a plié standing leg.

Plié: Bent, Bending of knee or knees. Often the beginning or ending of a movement phrase.

Pirouette: Whirl or Spin. A complete turn of the body on one foot on demi-pointe.

Soutenu: Sustained. Full turn on two legs which begins with legs crossed, legs unwind and wind up crossed the other way. Feet stay on the same spot but swivel.

Spotting: Movement of the head and focus of the eyes while turning. Having a direct focus while turning creates control and stability through the body.

Important people of Jazz Dance:

Matt Mattox: (1921-2013) A dancer, choreographer, and teacher that helped shape contemporary jazz dance in the United States and Europe. He was a Broadway performer and specialty dancer in many Hollywood musicals. Known for his “free style” jazz dance.

“The word free is used because one is left to choose any kind of move he wishes, whether it is the tilt of the head, a flick of the wrist, a rotation of the pelvis, a shuffle off to buffalo, a contraction of the body, the stance of a bullfighter, or a quick double turn and drop to the floor, or a modern fall to a completely prone position. The word “style” is used because one is left to choose whatever style of movement he wants: East Indian, flamenco, early nineteenth century contemporary, modern, old time vaudeville, folk dancing, ethnic, or a mixture of all of these.”

Luigi: (1925-2015) Born Eugene Louis Facciuto, condensed to Luigi by Gene Kelly. He developed and created a thorough warm up that consists of three essential principles:

- 1) To attain balance in the center floor: “*Your space is your barre.*” Lifted torso and a broadening of the chest and back.
- 2) “*Feeling from the inside*”: The inside implies the somatic body awareness and physical control. Example: lifting the top of the body in order to free the bottom.
- 3) “*Never stop moving*” refers to the joy of movement and the internal motivation that inspires one to dance. Full body engagement as a way to prevent injury.

Credited as creating the first formal jazz technique. “Historians have defined Luigi’s style as classic jazz, elegant, sophisticated, and even liquid fire” (Cohen).

Luigi’s movements are shape based as opposed to rhythmically driven.

“It is important to recognize Luigi’s technique and style as instrumental in providing a codified and continuous sequence of movements for theatrical jazz dancers” (Cohen).