Ethnic and Racial Formation on the Concert Stage: A Comparative Analysis of Tap Dance and Appalachian Step Dance

Dissertation

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Abstract

"Ethnic and Racial Formation on the Concert Stage: A Comparative Analysis of Tap Dance and Appalachian Step Dance" is a revisionist project that explores the shared aesthetics and historical trajectories of these two percussive dance practices, which have ultimately developed into two distinct forms of dance. This dissertation investigates the choreographic and representational strategies choreographers use to transfer the histories and legacies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance to the stage, namely through a process I call concertization. In each analysis, I pay particular attention to representations of the complex ethnic and racial identities affiliated with each form and ways concertization highlights or obscures such affiliations. Additionally, I aim to understand the relationship between the practices of tap dance and Appalachian step dance and what I see as a contested idea of "America" as it is represented through choreography. My analyses suggest the migration of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance from vernacular and social contexts to the concert stage is in tension with the ways these dance forms, as vernacular practices, also engage in the consolidation of ethnic and racial identities. As a result, concertized versions of tap dance and Appalachian step dance may inadvertently whitewash the racial projects of dancing in-situ in favor of presenting a unified vision of America. One strategy dance artists engage to disrupt whitewashed representational hegemony in concert dance contexts is to reassert the ethnic and racial affiliations of these dance forms specifically by making what I call their "dancestry" visible through their choreography and improvisation.

To undertake this investigation, I employ parallel analytical frameworks, which enable me to address the physical movement legacies of the practices within their social, cultural, and historical contexts. Examining what I call aesthetic philosophies, localized values, and dancestry, three frames that emerged through movement and historical analysis, I emphasize the importance of the past to both tap dance and Appalachian step dance. Further, these frames enable nuanced comparisons of the ways these practices conceive of historical continuity. Running parallel to this is the theoretical frame of ethno-racial projects, which enable me both to address socio-cultural and historical elements of the dance practices including their ethnic and racial inheritances as well as the representation of such legacies on the concert stage.

Engaging a range of research methods including movement and choreographic analysis, participant observation, archival research, discourse analysis, and interviews with choreographers, I address the formal, aesthetic components of choreography as well as contextual elements that inform concert dance choreography. These include the forces that shape a dance practice over time, the social and political climate in which a dance was created, or a choreographer's unique experiences and perspectives. My dissertation research contributes to a growing body of research on intercultural influences in dance practices and adds critical perspectives on two genres of dance that are not well-represented in the field of dance studies.

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Introduction

Framing the Comparative Analysis

Tap dancer and choreographer Michelle Dorrance often says, "to be a tap dancer is to be a historian." With this sentiment, Dorrance acknowledges the interconnection between past and present in tap dance, specifically highlighting that dancing in the present enlivens tap dance's past histories. In addition to having a physical knowledge of tap dance histories, dancers steeped in the form, particularly those who are lucky enough to train with the likes of Dorrance, also recognize the aesthetics of their most noteworthy predecessors. Appalachian step dancers might also be characterized as historians, but in contrast to tap dancers, they inherit their history much more covertly. As the analyses that follow demonstrate, Appalachian step dancers maintain and transmit their practice and its rich history physically, but they are less likely than tap dancers to cite—or even know—their influences. In each form, dancers physically embody complex ethno-racial histories, which the research herein aims to illuminate.

A revisionist project, "Ethnic and Racial Formation on the Concert Stage: A Comparative Analysis of Tap Dance and Appalachian Step Dance" explores the shared aesthetics and historical trajectories of these two percussive dance practices, which have been underrepresented in dance studies scholarship. I have chosen to undertake a comparative analysis of tap dance and Appalachian step dance for numerous reasons, including my own expertise as a scholar and long-time performer of each genre. While my physical knowledge of the practices informs the comparative analyses of this dissertation, I also contend that by examining similarities and

differences between tap dance and Appalachian step dance, particularly as they converge in the similar conceptual context of the concert stage, their specific ethno-racial inheritances come into greater relief.

In order to examine ways the ethno-racial projects of concert dance choreographies operate, my comparative analysis includes a three-fold agenda. First, this dissertation investigates the choreographic and representational strategies choreographers use to migrate tap dance and Appalachian step dance to the concert dance stage through a process I call concertization. My analyses demonstrate ways concertization is a whitening process that requires tap dance and Appalachian step dance choreographers to fit their practices within the structures and aesthetics of the concert stage, most of which were established by ballet and modern dance. The migration of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance from vernacular and social contexts to the concert stage via concertization is in tension with the ways these dance forms, as vernacular practices, also engage in the consolidation of ethnic and racial identities. Secondly, the analyses in this dissertation compare the histories and legacies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance in terms of social and cultural values and ethno-racial inheritances, through which nuanced contrasts between the practices emerge. I examine ways such legacies are communicated through bodily movement, particularly as they are concertized for display on the concert stage. Finally, the third aim of this research project is to understand the relationship between the practices of tap dance and Appalachian step dance and what I see as a contested idea of "America" as it is represented through choreography. I suggest concertized iterations of tap dance and Appalachian step dance may inadvertently whitewash the racial projects of dancing in-situ in favor of presenting a unified vision of America, which obscures the multi-ethnic identity of America that the practices themselves actually represent. One strategy dance artists

engage to disrupt whitewashed representational hegemony in concert dance contexts is to reassert the ethnic and racial affiliations of these dance forms specifically by making what I call their "dancestry" visible through their choreography and improvisation.

To address each dimension of this three-fold agenda, I employ parallel analytic and theoretical frameworks that address the aesthetics and values of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as well as their ethnic and racial affiliations as represented in choreography. I discuss these frameworks at length below. But first, in order to make clear the particular styles of tap dance and Appalachian step dance I engage in this dissertation, I describe the genres here, and then enrich this preliminary explanation of the history, aesthetics, and ethno-racial identities of the practices as the dissertation proceeds.

Tap dance, a percussive dance form that emerged in urban areas of the northeast United States during the 19th century, utilizes rhythmic footwork to create constellations of sound, sometimes in relation to externally produced music and at other times in relation only to the sounds of tap dancing itself. Theorized by tap dance scholar Constance Valis Hill as an Afro-Irish fusion,[1] tap dance developed over three centuries in the Americas, beginning with Irish indentured servants and West African slaves in the Caribbean during the 1600s. In the 1700s, enslaved African Americans and Irish American laborers came together in the southern United States, and during the 1800s, free African American and Irish American performers interacted in northern urban areas.[2] Over the course of those three hundred years, the dancing changed as scenarios and contexts required, but throughout, the earthbound quality of African dancing and the rhythmic articulations of Irish step dancing "rhythmetized" tap dance.[3]

As it has existed in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, I divide tap dance into two overarching styles: Broadway style and rhythm tap. Broadway style tap is exemplified by peppy,

showy jig-and-clog routines, in which the dancing is mostly done on the balls of the feet with upright posture. The dancers show the rhythms through the bouncing footwork and tightly choreographed upper body gestures. In contrast, rhythm tap is grounded and rhythmically complex, and in this style, the sounds of the rhythms are more important than what the dancer look likes performing them. Markers of race and class are also tied up in these descriptions as early Broadway shows took European stage shows as their model, featuring African American performers only in stereotypical minstrel roles.[4] Rhythm tap, also called jazz tap, is aligned with jazz music and the Africanist aesthetic, and because this dissertation is primarily interested in this style of tap dance, I focus on its particular history and practice throughout unless otherwise noted.

Whereas rhythm tap dancing coalesced in northern urban areas, Appalachian step dance comes from the Appalachian Mountain region of the United States, primarily the states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina. Developing over the course of the 19th century, the dance cultures that came together in the region and specifically influenced the footwork include Native American, African American, and European American traditions.[5] In total, the easy bounce through the knees and ankles of the Native style combined with the flat-footed, earth-bound quality of West African dance, and the quick, rhythmic footwork of the European dances all contributed to this Appalachian dance form.[6] Appalachian step dance encompasses regional varieties with identifiable stylistic differences, which include flatfooting, in which the dancer's feet stay close to the ground, buck dancing and hoedowning, in which the feet and legs move more vigorously up, down, and out, as well as clogging, which is typically choreographed for presentation and combines elements of the other styles. Whether flatfooting, buck dancing, hoedowning, or clogging, Appalachian step dances share a softness in

the knees and ankles that allows continual weight shifts from one step to the next, producing an almost constant bounce in the body's carriage. People dance in many contexts including community gatherings, music and dance jam sessions, festival showcases, and staged performances, and the styles of percussive footwork identified above are often performed with square dance figures in social and performance settings.[7] My analysis honors the historical and cultural legacies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance, particularly as the genres migrate from vernacular and folk contexts to the concert dance stage, by addressing the combination of corporeal, rhetorical, and aesthetic discourses embedded in tap dance and Appalachian step dance practice and by attending to the complex ethno-racial histories of the forms. In the next section, I introduce the particular analytic and theoretical frameworks that guide this study.

Parallel Frameworks for Comparative Analysis

Throughout my research for this project, I have maintained dancing and choreography at the center by beginning with the movement—describing it, analyzing it, and comparing movement across choreographed pieces and across genres. In the process, certain concepts have emerged as productive frames for comparative analysis, including aesthetic philosophies, localized values, and dancestry. In their own distinct ways, which I discuss at length below, these notions emphasize the importance of the past to the practices of tap dance and Appalachian step dance, and they offer nuanced variations on conceptions of historical continuity. I suggest this combined analytic framework of aesthetic philosophies, localized values, and dancestry enables a nuanced comparison of tap dance and Appalachian step dance, two very similar, yet distinct dance practices.

Running parallel to this framework is the theoretical frame of ethno-racial projects, which enable me to address particular socio-cultural elements of the dance practices, their histories, and

their choreographed representations on the concert stage. As a frame, ethno-racial projects take a forward-looking view, particularly as I engage this lens to examine contemporary concert dance choreography, which has been purposefully constructed for the stage to convey a particular story or idea. Engaging the lens of ethno-racial projects enables me to focus very specifically on ethnic and racial representation and on the socio-cultural space of the concert stage. I chose to concentrate on ethno-racial representation rather than, for example, representations of gender or class (though I address both of these to some degree) due to the limited attention given to tap dance and Appalachian step dance in both dance presenting and scholarship based upon their affiliations with marginalized ethnic and racial identities. In what follows, I describe the specific formulations of each of these frames as I engage them throughout the analyses in this dissertation.

Aesthetic Philosophies—Localized Values—Dancestry: An Analytic Framework[8]

Following dance scholar Cynthia Novack, I want to establish that dancing is "a flexible and multilayered text" that includes actual physical movements including structural and kinesthetic elements as well as more abstract socio-cultural ideas such as the values affiliated with social movements and practices.[9] While Novack makes this claim in a discussion of rock dancing, I too wish to highlight the flexible, multilayered text in my investigation of tap dance and Appalachian step dance. I do so by examining the layers and dimensions of individual style and dancestry, community aesthetics and values that are local or regional, and genre-wide philosophies of innovation and ongoingness. Each of these dimensions includes physical movements by individuals and groups as well as the socio-cultural importance of the forms to their larger dancing communities. While all three layers of this analytic framework are interrelated, I parse them out separately here to show their particularities.

Dancestry focuses on the individual in that it describes the relationship between tap dancers and Appalachian step dancers in the present moment and those from whom they learned, whether directly or indirectly. Similar to following bloodlines through biological ancestry, my formulation of dancestry traces movement legacies through the bodies of dancers. In so doing, dancestry situates individuals within longer movement legacies by connecting bodily legacies of dance forms across generations, making sense of contemporary steps and aesthetics alongside performances from the past, and processing and performing social, cultural, and historical memory through bodies. Firmly grounded in the body, dancestry also embodies ethnic, racial, and class-based cultural knowledge not necessarily transmitted by other means. While dancestry illuminates relationships between dancers in the present and the past no matter the form, this concept is especially well-suited to discussions of the percussive step dance forms of tap dance and Appalachian step dance because of the ways dancers of each form value the past.

Another way the analytic framework I employ addresses the relationship between past and present is through aesthetic philosophies. The broadest of the dimensions I propose, the aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness permeate the forms and shape the steps and values that dancers embody. These genre-wide worldviews guide the practices, the communities that dance them, and the individuals who make up those communities. As philosophies, innovation and ongoingness are abstract and attitudinal, but they also manifest materially through bodies.

As the aesthetic philosophy I primarily identify with tap dance, I define innovation as an impulse toward constant change and development, toward discovering what is new and possible so as to better one's self, to differentiate one's work from that of others, and to advance the form into the future. Through innovation, tap dancers constantly reimagine the possibilities for tap

dance in a way that honors historical figures and steps from the past while simultaneously experimenting toward the future. Even as a tap dancer corporeally cites a dancestor with a signature movement, she makes it her own through innovation. For example, when Michelle Dorrance slides across the stage, she corporeally references the late tap dance legend Jimmy Slyde and honors his enduring legacy. Whereas Slyde peppered his signature slides throughout his routines seamlessly linking them to the steps that come before and after,[10] Dorrance often ends her slides with a definitive gesture before moving on to the next step. At the end of the slide, Dorrance shifts her weight onto her back foot, which allows her to dig her front heel into the floor as she stops. In this way, she both cites Slyde and marks that move as her own.[11] Further, Dorrance expands her individual exploration of Slyde's namesake step in her ensemble choreography for "Remembering Jimmy," a piece in which a mass of dancers, clad in all white, including white sport socks and no shoes, slide throughout the space in all directions imaginable.[12] A far cry from Slyde's work as a soloist, the piece nonetheless builds upon his legacy even as it pushes tap dance forward as a choreographed, concert dance form. Embodying the specific values of individuality within community and the importance of honoring one's lineage in tap dance, Dorrance has transformed that which she has inherited through innovative physical exploration and choreography.

In nuanced contrast, I offer ongoingness as the aesthetic philosophy I primarily identify with Appalachian step dancing. I consider ongoingness as a philosophy of continuation, of maintenance, of preservation and perpetuation, an enduring practice and a constant outpouring. Ongoingness in Appalachian step dance is not about individuals standing out or purposefully aiming to be different from other dancers. Difference in style is customary within the freestyle practice of Appalachian step dance as a matter of course, but it is not something dancers

necessarily strive for. Appalachian step dancers rarely scout for new steps. Rather, physically and temporally, ongoingness as a philosophy emphasizes continuity with past, present, and future, so much so that time becomes conflated into an enduring sense of continuing on. In motion, dancers embody ongoingness through the constant flow of movement and the seemingly unending repetitions of musical phrases and rhythmic sounds. Whether buck dancing with feet lifted high off the ground or the most subtle flatfooting with feet brushing close to the floor, dancers move continuously from the start of the music to the end. They bounce, slide, drag, *chug*, *scuff*, *brush*, and step in any number of combinations, always keeping time to the music. Further, rather than directly citing dancestors in words or practice, Appalachian step dancers maintain the form and its legacy through their ongoing practice. Looking for movement evidence indicating dancestry in performances of Appalachian step dance is very unlike pointing out Slyde's influence on Dorrance. While Appalachian step dancers will discuss how they learned, from whom, and when and where they learned if they are asked, their responses tend to be vague, along the lines of "a little of this and a little of that." For example, in the documentary film *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap*, Appalachian step dancers mention learning from mothers and fathers, uncles and cousins, and siblings and friends, but it is difficult to spot the influence of John Reeves's mother or Eula Rogers's father in their buck dancing and flat footing.[13] Instead, I locate the value of ongoingness in a more general legacy of step dancing over time in the dancers' practice.

As aesthetic philosophies, innovation and ongoingness encompass the corporeal, rhetorical, and aesthetic discourses embedded in tap dance and Appalachian step dance practices. Innovation and ongoingness are the structures that tie these dance practices and performance forms to their historical legacies. They link individual dancers today with dancers from the past,

and they connect the larger cultural communities that engage in these dance forms with one another over time and across geographies. Though I affiliate innovation with tap dance and ongoingness with Appalachian step dance, the analyses within this dissertation demonstrate that choreography sometimes troubles such clear demarcations. As multi-dimensional practices, tap dance and Appalachian step dance are guided by these over-arching aesthetic philosophies, even as individual expressions of them might vary.

In order to theorize these concepts as philosophies, I follow African and African American art scholar Robert Farris Thompson, cultural anthropologist Gena Caponi, and dance scholars Sherril Dodds and Susan Spalding. Thompson's research on West African dance suggests that choreographies "constitute…complex distillations of thinking, comparable to Cartesian philosophy in point of influence and importance."[14] If choreography is a complex distillation of thinking, as Thompson proposes, then it is not devoid of meaning or of cultural importance, but rather, choreography imparts dimensions of such ideas through physical expression, through rhetoric used to talk about the work, through imagery, sound, and movement, through connections to other choreography, dancers, or dance forms, and through relationships among performers. Movement and choreography embody meaning and cultural importance. Thompson focuses specifically on the quality of balance in West African music and dance to argue that "a philosophy of the cool" is central to West African culture, and he bases this concept upon his long-standing research on music and dance in the region.[15] My research similarly identifies and defines the philosophies that guide the practices of tap dance and Appalachian step dance through close investigation of multiple dimensions of the forms, and I propose innovation and ongoingness as those guiding philosophies.

Alongside Thompson's notion of dance as "nonverbal philosophies of beauty and ethics"[16] my analysis also addresses the importance of cultural aesthetics, which Caponi describes as "a way of doing things that seems remarkably consistent over time and across different forms of cultural expression."[17] While aesthetic philosophies remain consistent over time, how they are expressed varies. Not everything about performances of tap dance and Appalachian dance are necessarily the same for all dancers. For example, an individual performer's dance style varies depending upon many factors including geographic location, training, and their history with the practice. The particular steps a dancer holds in their personal repertoire similarly depends upon when and where they learned or how long they have been dancing. However, that tap dancers value individuality even when moving together as a group is a consistent feature in tap dance practice.[18] That Appalachian dancers in social or community settings value difference in style, steps, and rhythmic structure is a feature of the form that carries on throughout the practice.[19] The emphasis on individuality and community, as well as the over-arching importance of the past in this discussion of aesthetic philosophies leads me to the notion of localized values.

I conceive of localized values as embodied social knowledge, and I specifically focus on the ways these values mediate between individual embodiment and aesthetic philosophy. The social, cultural, and geographic contexts in which dance practices develop shape the knowledge contained within the practice, and because localized values are context- and community-specific, this social component is central to my conception of them. Following Dodds who suggests that values are socially situated, "produced under specific and localized conditions," my analysis focuses on the ways context shapes a dancer's practice.[20] For example, square dancing takes place in a variety of contexts, from social gatherings to festival performances, and depending

upon the circumstances in which one dances, one's movements will embody values differently. For example, writing about a community dance at Hoedown Island in Powell County, Kentucky, Spalding connects the square dance figures a group might perform informally to the social interactions and values they promote. In her ethnographic research, Spalding observed dancers executing figures such as *circle up four* with four dancers holding hands and traveling around a circle, *swing your partner* with two dancers spinning one another in a closed hand hold, and *four hands across* with four dancers standing side-by-side to form a line. She argues these figures embody values of cooperation, stable partnerships, and individual and community unity.[21] To the people who attend the weekly event, square dancing together creates a feeling of family fun and neighborly camaraderie.[22]

In contrast, I suggest the values embodied in social square dancing shift when the dancing moves from this communal context to a performance stage. While figures such as *circle up four* or *swing your partner* may still be engaged in exhibition settings, the performance also takes on a presentational dimension. So, although dancers continue to embody community, the way they do so differs from the social setting discussed above, particularly as they blend inward-facing, circular figures such as those mentioned above with audience-oriented, outward-facing lines. In the latter formation, the dancers no longer depend upon one another for sharing weight in a partner swing or for executing a multi-person floor pattern. Instead, when such groups of cloggers face an audience, they better display their fast and intricate footwork. More to the point of localized values, their use of precision steps and choreographed footwork create community through unison.[23] In presentational contexts such as these, dancers maintain the values of their practice, but the embodiment of community through square dancing takes on localized dimensions.

In addition to being localized and social, I also conceive of values as embodied knowledge. I emphasize that the body is historical, by which I mean that an individual's embodiment develops over time, which follows dance scholar Carrie Noland's writing on embodiment.[24] In *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* Noland describes embodiment as a process "whereby collective behaviors and beliefs, acquired through acculturation, are rendered individual and 'lived' at the level of the body," which implies that the body accumulates knowledge over time through persistent training.[25] Dance scholars such as Priya Srinivasan[26] and Sharon Māhealani Rowe[27] have similarly noted the physical and socio-cultural implications of dance training in Indian bharata natyam and Hawaiian hula respectively. Similar to Srinivasan and Rowe, my research on the values of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as embodied, social knowledge attends to both cultural, community values and the movement values embodied through dancing. If localized values are embodied and social, and if they are also a kind of knowledge, as a tap dancer repeats a *time step* or an Appalachian dancer performs a *basic*, her body continually absorbs rhythmic and postural information that she eventually incorporates as bodily knowledge.

Over time, through repetition and reiteration, an individual dancer comes to embody the localized values of her community of practice. Square dancers perform the interdependence of community through square dance figures, hula dancers honor the land through their bent-knee stance, and bharata natyam dancers embody ideal womanhood through narrative role-playing. In each instance, bodies carry historical, cultural, and social legacies, no matter how fleeting a practice may seem. As performance studies scholar Diana Taylor asserts, through the repertoire, "multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, reconstituting themselves—transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next."[28] The

repertoire stores and transmits social, embodied knowledge and is one means through which localized values mediate between individual practice and aesthetic philosophy.

The specific way a dancer performs a *time step* in tap dance is another example of the embodied quality of localized values, particularly as certain characteristics (rhythms, steps, and weight placement, for example) mark the tap dancer's lineage. As I described above, I divide tap dance in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries broadly among two styles: a jig-and-clog style that originated on Broadway and rhythm tap dance grounded in Africanist sensibilities.[29] Each style includes *time steps* as a common piece of vocabulary, though these steps do not look or sound the same in each context. The visual and rhythmic variation of *time steps* indicates broader cultural values affiliated with the forms, and I suggest a fundamental step like the *time step* trains dancers in the physical and rhythmic values of a particular style of tap dance. For example, rhythm tap dancers such as those I describe in the following chapters drop their weight into their heels, and they swing and syncopate the rhythms of the phrase—*bah-dah bah-dah bah-dah-dee*. In contrast, tap dancers from the jig-and-clog tradition keep their weight over the balls of the feet, and though they might swing the rhythm, they are less likely to use syncopation than their rhythm tap counterparts. As tap dancers continually embody values affiliated with rhythm and weight placement through *time steps*, their bodies create physical connections to their particular tap dance styles that they can rely on for execution of other steps in their vocabulary. A tap dancer's rhythmic preferences also illustrate her dancestral lineage. Localized values and dancestry inform one another as dancers today dance across time with their predecessors.

Because early dance scholarship privileged dance forms associated with white aristocracy such as in ballet and white intellectual elite in the case of modern dance, tap dance and Appalachian step dance have largely been left out of dance history due to their affiliations with

popular entertainment and folk dance respectively. Folk, vernacular, and popular dance forms have only recently been considered worthy of serious academic study. The division of dance forms into high and low culture have ethno-racial implications that this project seeks to expose and problematize both historically and contemporarily. In the case of the concert dance works I examine throughout this dissertation, I attend to the beginnings of tap dance on minstrel and vaudeville stages and of Appalachian dance in social contexts and on festival stages. I further emphasize ethnic and racial representations in such contexts. These historical components are vital to representations of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance on the concert stage because, as I demonstrated above, both genres place great importance on the past. Part of my interest for this project is in how choreographers transfer the historical foundations of the forms to their concert dance choreographies, which includes attention toward ethnic and racial representation.

Ethno-Racial Projects: A Theoretical Framework

Running parallel to the multi-part analytic framework of aesthetic philosophies, localized values, and dancestry introduced above, my research also engages Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* as a framework for analyzing concert dance presentations of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as ethno-racial projects. Specifically, this dissertation explores the stage as a site where choreographers and performers negotiate intersecting and sometimes competing ethno-racial projects, which Omi and Winant characterize as linking social systems and structures with cultural representations.[30] Such representations include the ways bodies, communities, and cultures are presented in texts, on stages, and through narratives. To be a racial project, a cultural phenomenon would include both representation of racial identity *and* distribution of political, cultural, or economic resources along racial lines.

Omi and Winant also assert that racial projects can be racist or anti-racist, and as such, they can be broadly oppressive or resistive.[31] Building upon Omi and Winant's theorization of racial projects, I add ethnicity to devise ethno-racial projects because my particular investigation is as concerned with ethnic identities that are constructed and asserted from within social groups as it is with racial identities that are assigned to these groups from the outside.[32] I assert that the staged iterations of tap dance and Appalachian step dance I examine are ethno-racial projects because they represent particular cultural communities in theatrical spaces that are made possible through economic, political, and cultural structures of privilege. In part, I chose this lens for my analysis because the practices I examine descend from people and communities who have been marginalized for their ethno-racial affiliations—Appalachian step dance is associated with rural whiteness, and rhythm tap dance has developed out of the African and African American experience in the Americas. In what follows I more thoroughly contextualize the ethno-racial contexts out of which Appalachian step dance and rhythm tap dance emerge, and upon which the analyses in the following chapters are based.

Appalachian studies scholars grapple with the challenge of identifying and describing Appalachian ethno-racial identity in evocative and productive ways, and my research is in dialogue with these conversations. Sociologists Stephen E. Cornell and Douglas Hartmann define an ethnic group as "a self-conscious population that defines itself partly in terms of common descent […], a distinctive history […], and a broad set of cultural symbols […] that are held to capture much of the essence of their peoplehood."[33] I have not encountered writing or rhetoric that explicitly and self-consciously identifies Appalachianness as an ethnic identity, but from the outside, it does seem that Appalachianness fits within the three frames outlined by Cornell and Hartmann. To address a disconnect such as this, Cornell and Hartmann propose that

when an outsider labels an ethnicity for a group of which they are not a part, it might be better described as an ethnic category rather than as an ethnic identity.[34]

In addition to conceiving of Appalachianness as an ethnic category based upon the parameters described by Cornell and Hartmann, it is also necessary to bring attention to race in this conversation. Appalachian studies scholars, particularly in the last fifteen to twenty years have highlighted the importance of attending to whiteness in their writing on Appalachia, which also has implications for discussions of racializing whiteness in the broader context of the United States. Barbara Ellen Smith argues for the importance of racializing whiteness in Appalachian studies scholarship through her suggestion that "the making of Appalachia has been simultaneously the making of whiteness—not merely in popular (and inaccurate) representations of the region's racial 'purity' […], but as an internal historical dynamic."[35] Even as the Appalachian region has been constructed as white, its whiteness has not been racialized in the same way that non-whiteness has. Marked as a "differentiated whiteness,"[36] white habitants of the Appalachian region nonetheless access privileges of whiteness not afforded those racialized as non-white. Racializing whiteness illuminates such race-based power differentials. Aligning with the recent Appalachian studies scholarship that brings Appalachian whiteness into focus, my research pays particular attention to the concert stage, which has a history of whitening cultural practices of people with marginalized ethno-racial identities.

Focusing on 19th-century representations of Appalachia as constructed through writing by outside journalists, novelists, and scholars, Appalachian studies scholar Nina Silber argues that during the Reconstruction period following the United States Civil War, northern whites constructed Appalachia as white—more specifically as racially pure, Anglo-Saxons—for self-interested reasons.[37] Through discourse analysis, Silber demonstrates that northern whites

constructed Appalachia as white so it could more easily fold into a northern idea of "America," side-stepping the complicated race relations of the lowland South. In their writing on Appalachia, 19th-century commentators referred to Appalachian people as "indigenously American," by which they meant of English descent. This rhetoric separated Appalachian identity from other European and Asian immigrants and enslaved Africans. Silber points out that, in the 1890s, writing that constructed Appalachian America "helped to initiate and foster a pervasive mythology of southern Appalachia in which unadulterated Unionism, pure and upstanding patriotism, and undiluted racial purity became the hallmarks of the region's inhabitants."[38] This rhetoric also reveals parallel processes of constructing Appalachia *and* America as white.

That said, even as Appalachia could be represented as racially white, Silber explains that the region continued to be portrayed as America's other, primarily through narratives of Appalachian people as peculiar and primitive.[39] Over time, however, outsiders came to represent Appalachians as strong and capable laborers, thereby rhetorically changing the narrative of the region, which again was used to align Appalachia with America. Silber states, "once the racial wholesomeness of the southern mountaineers had been established, northern whites could embrace them, no longer excluding them as strange and alien but instead bringing them into their national heritage at precisely the same moment when northern culture had begun to cast southern black people aside."[40] Like other Appalachian studies scholars including Henry D. Shapiro, John C. Inscoe, and Gordon B. McKinney, Silber demonstrates that, from its naming as a specific region of the United States, Appalachia and the people who live there have been constructed as a homogeneous regional identity.[41] Critiques by such authors emphasize the importance of distinguishing among states and regions within Appalachia.

Arguing that the normalization of whiteness obscures the privileges of whiteness, Smith states, "To be white is in part to be not mistreated on account of race, and that very absence of racial injustice enables whiteness to be normalized, or taken for granted as an expected state of affairs rather than recognized as a form of privilege."[42] One way Appalachian studies has historically perpetuated this is by identifying mountain people by their class and region, and only acknowledging their race when they are nonwhite. To get at a race-conscious analysis of Appalachian identity, with a focus on whiteness specifically, requires scholars to "acknowledge the white racial identity of most Appalachians and seriously probe the origins and implications of that fact."[43] Like Smith, my analysis takes "a race-conscious perspective on Appalachia [in order to understand] the region as a repository for America's evasions and conflations of race and class, but refuses to participate in the obfuscation."[44] Similarly, heeding dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild's call, my analyses aim to (re)visibilize the Africanist influence upon the history of tap dance.[45]

While tap dance and Appalachian step dance are closely related physical practices in their execution, and while they share similar cultural influences, the ways those cultural influences converge and reemerge in the practices differs. One aim of the comparative analyses within this dissertation is to demonstrate the divergent ethno-racial affiliations of tap dance and Appalachian step dance. In contrast to Appalachian step dance, rhythm tap dance is not associated with a particular regional identity. Rather, the ethno-racial identity of tap dance as a practice has been broadly articulated as an Africanist dance form, particularly in scholarship by Thomas DeFrantz, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, and Constance Valis Hill.[46] Hill proposes a three-hundred-year genealogy of tap dance and ultimately argues that tap dance is an example of Afro-Irish fusion.[47] Gottschild declares, "tap dancing [is] an act of black beauty and power," adding the parenthetical

assertion, "(even when white dancers do it, it's a black form)."[48] And DeFrantz, describing Savion Glover's tap dance aesthetic specifically, labels tap dance "profoundly 'black.'"[49] The brief descriptors from Gottschild and DeFrantz shared here are only excerpts from their larger projects, which are invested in fleshing out the centrality of Africanist aesthetics in the development of tap dance as a genre. They (and I) do not mean to imply tap dance is for black dancers only, but rather intend to highlight that the importance of the Africanist influence on tap dance cannot be overstated, though it has been obscured at times and in some styles of tap dance.

Because the analyses in this dissertation address rhythm tap dance, a genre whose aesthetics can be traced back to vaudeville and minstrelsy, and even further to dancing on plantations and even through the transatlantic slave trade, I primarily engage the lens of Africanisms in my discussions of tap dance performances in concert dance contexts. Even still, I do address the complicated ethno-racial relationships between African, African American, and Irish people in the context of the Americas, which were pivotal in the development of rhythm tap dance. Though the form may be identified in contemporary scholarship as a product of Afro-Irish fusion, its history has not always been harmonious. By the turn of the 19th century, the Irish *jig* and the African *gioube* came to be viewed as a single, American percussive dance form, largely "recognized as a 'black' style of dancing."[50] However, in some instances, when one's dance was labeled as a *jig*, it was intended as a racial slur that linked the movements to the perceived lowly status of people of both Irish and African descent.[51] Still, associating *jigs* with a black style of dancing also marked the movement with particular aesthetics derived from African art and movement. [52]

Hill's research argues that jazz tap dance—a percussive form of jazz dance[53]—developed alongside of jazz music, and she unequivocally locates the development of jazz music to the aesthetics and innovations of African American musicians.[54] Hill states,

> Jazz's African heritage cannot be overemphasized. Jazz is commonly historicized as evolving from an amalgamation of elements drawn both from European-American and tribal African musics. It is usually seen as the blending in the United States of two great musical traditions—the European and the West African—over a period of three hundred years, through which time European and African strains became entwined and entangled through many stages of cross-fertilization. While it is tempting to characterize one or another aspect of jazz as deriving either from the African or European musical tradition, the question of what is "black" and what is "white" in jazz, and what influences affected which musicians and when, is enormously complex. […] But given the representation of both Africa and Europe in jazz lineage, and the contribution of both black and white artists to jazz's development, the incontestable reality is that while jazz did not completely originate with African Americans, most, if not all of its major developments, have derived from them.[55]

As Hill demonstrates, like jazz music, tap dance blends European and African influences. Her suggestion that tap dance is an example of Afro-Irish fusion is one that could only emerge as it did in the ethnic, racial, and classed context of the Americas. Following both Hill and Gottschild, as a revisionist project, my research highlights the invisibilized Africanist influence specifically on tap dance performances in the concert dance context.

A component of the ethno-racial projects of tap dance and Appalachian step dance in all contexts is their representation and framing as "American." In order to avoid conceptions of

Americanness based upon vague, nostalgic images, I describe concrete examples of the ethnic and racial particularities of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as American cultural practices. While I address representations of America most specifically in chapter 3 of this dissertation, the primary way the thread of Americanness moves through the dissertation as a whole is through the ethno-racial relations of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as presented in the comparative analyses of each chapter.

Implications and Methodologies

This research aligns with the revisionist orientation of critical dance studies. As a discipline through the mid-1990s, dance history strongly favored high art expressive dance forms such as ballet and modern dance. Acts that appeared on popular stages like the minstrel and vaudeville stages were viewed as entertainment and were largely left out of early histories. Since the mid-1990s, scholars aligning themselves with the label new dance studies or critical dance studies worked to expand the field of inquiry to include dance forms that appeared in popular settings as well as folk and social dance practices, which had previously been delegated to dance anthropologists and ethnochoreologists.[56] As scholars revised what counts within the history of dance, the wider range of dance forms under consideration has also revealed that dance history was constructed largely as a white history. The revisionist project of critical dance studies is one that seeks to represent a wider range of races, ethnicities, bodies, histories, dance forms, and settings and contexts for dancing, while attending to a wide range of attendant logics outside a Euro-American paradigm.

By positing a narrative of dance's upward mobility, the disciplinary formation of dance history obscured the importance of early popular stages to the development of concert dance in the United States. My research addresses the friction between this disciplinary formation and the

ethno-racial formation that takes place on all theatrical stages. Taken together, I argue ethnic and racial formation on the contemporary concert stage is a continuation of that which happened through the ethno-racial projects of minstrelsy and vaudeville, and I suggest that percussive step dance forms of tap dance and Appalachian step dance have yet to receive significant treatment as concert dance forms in dance studies scholarship because of their relationships to these stages. My research aims to rectify this by connecting the "high art" concert stage with the "low brow" popular stages of minstrelsy and vaudeville via percussive step dance practices and ethno-racial representation. Rather than obscuring the paths dancers traveled from vaudeville to concert dance, I aim to illuminate them.

Throughout this dissertation, I employ the methods of overreading, movement and choreographic analysis, participant observation, archival research, discourse analysis, and personal interviews with choreographers. Overreading was first proposed by political theorist and dance studies scholar Randy Martin, and it requires a scholar to address the formal, aesthetic components of a piece as well as the contextual elements out of which it comes in order to address the social forces that create difference.[57] In my research, I heed Martin's call by using movement analysis to closely examine dancers' physical movement on the stage, and I address particular qualities of movement, use of stage space, and relationships among dancers. Alongside this analysis of the formal elements of the choreography, I add historical contextualization to situate contemporary choreographies within longer legacies of the practices, and I address race, ethnicity, and ethno-racial representation in order to understand the innumerable ways choreographers represent "America" on stage. Because tap dancers and Appalachian step dancers make sound as they move, I also attend to the rhythmic, melodic, and musical dimensions of the choreography and performance.

Through interviews with choreographers and archival research I bring to light histories that have yet to be accounted for in dance scholarship. Tap dance scholarship has largely been focused on artists based in New York City, and my research expands this geography to include companies from Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Dayton, Ohio. Scholarship on Appalachian step dance within the field of dance studies is even more sparse than writing on tap dance. When Appalachian step dance is addressed it is primarily discussed as a social practice.[58] By focusing on Appalachian step dance in the concert dance context, this research both traces and contributes to an area of research where there is much more work to be done.

Chapter Outline

Throughout my dissertation, I historicize tap dance and Appalachian step dance as social communal practices alongside analyses of concert dance choreographies. Because choreographers first began staging tap dance and Appalachian step dance in concert dance contexts in the late 1970s, my project examines choreographies from then until the late 2010s. To set up my analysis of these contemporary choreographic works I refer to historical developments within each genre before and as it arrived on the concert stage. Through this research, I aim to reveal ethnic and racial histories and legacies associated with tap dance and Appalachian step dance, which may have been obscured in the migration of the forms from their social and cultural context to the stage. At the same time, I call out the power and privilege that has overshadowed such histories. Similar to scholarship by Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Anthea Kraut, Thomas DeFrantz, and Susan Manning, among others, I ask what ethnic and racial inheritances are obscured by the generalizing power of whiteness, particularly in early concert dance performances of tap dance and Appalachian step dance.[59]

As the following chapter outline details, each chapter includes a comparative analysis between one choreography each of tap dance and Appalachian step dance. And while every chapter addresses all three dimensions of the three-fold agenda outlined at the beginning of this introduction, the analyses in the first three chapters maintain one particular issue as their focus. Then, the final chapter examines all three dimensions as they unfold in concert dance choreographies of the late 2010s.

In the first chapter, "Concertizing Vernacular Dance: Jazz Tap Ensemble and Rhythm in Shoes," I historicize tap dance and Appalachian step dance on the concert stage by examining the concertization of these genres in the 1970s and 1980s. An earlier generation of black male vaudeville performers created class acts, which included markers of upper-class aesthetics that lent qualities of elegance and control to their tap dance performances via choreographed routines. When white female concert dance choreographers engaged similar representational strategies, they paired them with the "politics of power and access"[60] afforded them through their own whiteness, as well as through their knowledge of the politics and aesthetics of the concert stage. Taken together, concert dance choreographers in the late 20th century constructed ethno-racial projects that obfuscated the complex ethno-racial inheritances of the genres by highlighting class. I identify concertization as a whitening process from the beginning, and each subsequent analysis in the dissertation builds from this fundamental premise.

The second chapter, "Honoring the Past: *ETM* and *Hot Strings and Flying Feet*," historicizes the development of the localized values and aesthetic philosophies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance and pays particular attention to the ways choreographers transfer the practice-based, localized values to choreographed presentations on the stage. Specifically, I examine the staging of historic values and the ethno-racial inheritances they convey in *ETM: The*

Initial Approach by Dorrance Dance and *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* by Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble. By focusing on the ethnic, racial, and class-based implications of the migration of tap dance and Appalachian step dance to the concert stage in the first chapter and the values and philosophies embedded in the long-range histories of the practices in chapter two, the opening chapters impart important historical and aesthetic context that the following chapters draw upon.

The third chapter, "Representing America: *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*," turns to rhetoric that posits tap dance and Appalachian step dance as uniquely or quintessentially American art forms. I examine the physical practices of tap dance and Appalachian step dance, the material bodies that dance, and the choreographic and representational strategies used to stage the notion of America in order to problematize narratives of America and American exceptionalism, which rely on abstract and mythic language and which leave out peoples and practices that do not fit a particular whitewashed understanding of America. By examining choreographic strategies to ask what kind of America is represented in *Banjo Dance* by Rhythm in Shoes and *The Blues Project* by Dorrance Dance, my analysis suggests *The Blues Project* presents Americanization as a process via the aesthetics of creolization, which honors the diverse ethno-racial inheritance of tap dance. In contrast, *Banjo Dance* stages America as a collectivist, unified product exemplified by whiteness.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I turn from the ethno-racialization of America via tap dance and Appalachian step dance to specific constructions of the ethno-racial identities of Appalachian step dance in *Shift* by Becky Hill and of rhythm tap dance in *And Still You Must Swing* by Dormeshia Sumbry Edwards, Derick K. Grant, and Jason Samuels Smith. Specifically, in "Racializing Dancing: *And Still You Must Swing* and *Shift*," I suggest these pieces construct

and stabilize a black-white binary between Appalachian step dance and tap dance, though they do so on very particular terms. Engaging the frames of improvisation, choreography, and long-range dancestry, I address the ways each piece produces intertwining racialization and ethnicization processes. While I suggest *And Still You Must Swing* is an ethno-racial project that reclaims rhythm tap dance as a black performance form, I contend *Shift* is an ethno-racial project that exports Appalachian cultural knowledge to the concert stage via modern dance aesthetics, which in turn universalizes and therefore racializes Appalachia as white. At the end of chapter 4, I briefly return to the major themes of the dissertation.

Notes:

[1] Hill suggests this Afro-Irish fusion is epitomized by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson's dancing: "that Robinson, then, was both upright *and* swinging, fusing ragtime syncopations with a light-footed and vertical style of jigging, makes his tap dancing the embodiment of Afro-Irish fusions in American tap dance." Constance Valis Hill, *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 2.
[4] For more on tap dance on minstrel and vaudeville stages, see chapter 1 of this dissertation.
[5] Phil Jamison suggests the cultural groups and their dance aesthetics developed into what we recognize today as Appalachian dance during the 19th century. Phil Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 5.
[6] Janet Schroeder, "Issues in Percussive Dance of the United States: Tap Dance, Appalachian Clogging, and Body Percussion," unpublished Masters thesis, (Brockport, NY: The College at Brockport, SUNY, 2013).
[7] For additional historical context on tap dance and Appalachian step dance, see Frank X. Bonner, *Clogging and the Southern Appalachian Square Dance* (Marietta, GA: Creative Imprints, 1983); Rusty E. Frank, *Tap!: The Greatest Tap Dance Stars and Their Stories, 1900-1955* (New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1990); Hill, *Tap Dancing America*; Constance Valis Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm: The Jazz Tap Dancing of the Nicholas Brothers*, reprint (New York, NY: Cooper Square Press, 2000/2002); Phil Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*; Susan Eike Spalding, *Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014); and Susan Eike Spalding and Jane Harris Woodside, eds, *Communities in Motion: Dance, Community, and Tradition in America's Southeast and Beyond* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995).

[8] For the purposes of this analysis, I examine tap dance and Appalachian step dance through these three dimensions of the practice. Though I divide and define dancestry, localized values, and aesthetic philosophies discretely here, I do not consider them as separate entities, nor do I mean to establish a hierarchy of importance among the dimensions. Rather, I parse out the three dimensions from aesthetic philosophy to localized values to dancestry, so I might more clearly identify the ways they overlap. Additionally, as I have undertaken a comparative analysis of two very similar yet quite different dance forms, this framework enables me to examine the contrasting ways tap dance and Appalachian step dance work in each of these dimensions.
[9] Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 39.
[10] Ludovico Hombravella, "Jimmy Slyde," youtube.com, published April 9, 2009 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pXLln_n6ik&list=PLB09656E22CB6B483 (accessed November 5, 2016).
[11] The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, "Michelle Dorrance Performs Tap with Jon Batiste & Stay Human," youtube.com, published October 15, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHg96T2e32M&t=46s (accessed on November 6, 2016).
[12] Dorrance Dance, "Dorrance Dance – Remembering Jimmy (excerpts)," youtube.com https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pqSiuNqni0 (accessed Nocember 5, 2016).
[13] Mike Seeger and Ruth Pershing, dir, *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap* (El Cerrito, CA: Flower Films and Video, 1989), DVD.
[14] Robert Farris Thompson, *African Art in Motion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 73.
[15] Ibid., 73.
[16] Ibid., 77.
[17] Gena Dagel Caponi, "Introduction: The Case for an African American Aesthetic," in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed Gena Dagel Caponi (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 1.
[18] Contemporary competition dance introduces an exception to this rule, as individuality is not encouraged in such a context.
[19] This gets complicated when examining concert dance because choreographed Appalachian dance takes away much of the improvisational freedom of the form in social contexts. Even with the introduction of choreography, staged Appalachian step dance also maintains the ongoingness of steps, rhythms, and momentum, a conflation of past, present, and future through the themes of the staged work, and even occasionally, the value of difference among styles. In each chapter of this dissertation, I grapple with the complications that concert dance choreography introduces to my assertion that tap dance and Appalachian step dance are guided by their respective aesthetic philosophies.
[20] Sherril Dodds, *Dancing on the Canon: Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 99.
[21] Spalding, *Appalachian Dance*, 169.
[22] For more on the dance at Hoedown Island, see Spalding, *Appalachian Dance*.
[23] For more on how innovations by the Blue Ridge Mountain Cloggers changed team clogging performance, see Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*, 156-158.
[24] Noland draws on Bourdieu's theorization of habitus, which Bourdieu describes as taken-for-granted knowledge of the body, which is constructed through processes of sedimentation, repetition, and social training. Not only is embodiment historical, so too are the cultural values that are stored and transmitted through embodiment. As Bourdieu argues, habitus shapes everything, including the physical, material body and one's cultural attitudes. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1977, reprint 2013).

[25] Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures / Producing Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 9.
[26] Srinivasan addresses the physical effects of dance training, the skills a dancer learns, and above all, the social conditioning that dance training imparts through physical repetition and social sedimentation. While bharata natyam training builds muscles "in odd places like the hands, fingers, toes, soles, pelvis, eyes, eyebrows, cheeks, mouth, and neck" (31), and while dancers develop rhythmic sensibilities and important language skills through continual practice, beyond all of this, Srinivasan also sees "evidence of national codices imprinted on women's bodies" (32). Srinivasan's project suggests this training creates ideal Indian female bodies, both in India and in the diaspora (30-37). See Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012).
[27] Rowe illuminates the taken-for-granted social knowledge embedded in hula dancing through her suggestion that a hula dancer's body holds "a complete philosophy with its own epistemology" (37). She contends, "from a Hawaiian perspective knowledge is embodied and situated, contextualized by time and place and knower" (39). See Sharon Māhealani Rowe, "We Dance for Knowledge," *Dance Research Journal* 40, no. 1 (2008): 31-44.
[28] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 193.
[29] In the last 30 years tap dance on Broadway has also included rhythm tap dance, with shows like *Jelly's Last Jam* featuring Gregory Hines and *Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk* with choreography by Savion Glover. The showy jig-and-clog of Broadway can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th century when men like Ned Wayburn trained dancers.
[30] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 125.
[31] Ibid., 128-130.
[32] For my explication of ethnicity I draw on Stephen Ellicott Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2004); David Roedinger, "Whiteness and Ethnicity in the History of 'White Ethnics' in the United States," in *Race Critical Theories: Text and Context* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); and Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[33] Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 34.
[34] Ibid., 20.
[35] Barbara Ellen Smith, "De-Gradations of Whiteness: Appalachia and the Complexities of Race," in *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, no. 1-2 (2004): 38-57, 43.
[36] Emily Satterwhite, "Romancing Whiteness: Popular Appalachian Fiction and the Imperialist Imagination at the Turns of Two Centuries," in *At Home and Abroad: Historicizing Twentieth-Century Whiteness in Literature and Performance*, ed. Delois Jennings (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 94.
[37] Nina Silber, "What does America Need so Much as Americans?": Race and Northern Reconciliation with Southern Appalachia, 1870-1900," in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed John C. Inscoe (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).
[38] Ibid., 248.
[39] Ibid., 249.
[40] Ibid., 250.
[41] John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); Gordon B. McKinney, "The Political Uses of Appalachian Identity After the Civil War" *Appalachian Journal* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 200-209; and Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). It is also important to note that conflicting

representations of Appalachia as America's "other" and at the same time as purely American have enabled extractive industries to decimate the region's mineral and economic wealth. See Mary K. Anglin, "Lessons from Appalachia in the 20th Century: Poverty, Power, and the 'Grassroots,'" *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 2 (2002): 565-583.

[42] Smith, "De-Gradations of Whiteness," 43.

[43] Ibid., 51.

[44] Ibid., 53.

[45] See Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

[46] Thomas DeFrantz, ed, *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Gottschild *Digging the Africanist Presence*; Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Hill *Brotherhood in Rhythm* and *Tap Dancing America*.

[47] Hill, *Tap Dancing America*.

[48] Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body*, 120.

[49] Thomas DeFrantz, "Being Savion Glover: Black Masculinity, Translocation, and Tap Dance," *Discourses in Dance* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2002), 7.

[50] Hill, *Tap Dancing America*, 6.

[51] Ibid., 1.

[52] The first chapter of Hill's *Tap Dancing America* examines various threads of African and Irish aesthetics as they intersected and fused to create tap dance. Similarly, Gottschild discusses the merging of Irish *jig* and African *juba* to create tap dance alongside a similar Afro-Euro blending of minstrelsy in *Digging the Africanist Presence* (97-98). Both Hill and Gottschild build upon Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance.*

[53] Constance Valis Hill defines jazz tap dancing as "the most rhythmically complex form of jazz dancing." See Hill, *Tap Dancing America*, 388.

[54] Charles Hersch emphasizes the importance of creole musicians in the development of jazz in New Orleans. See Charles Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[55] Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm*.

[56] Dance anthropologists include Deirdre Sklar, Cynthia Novak, Brenda Farnell, Andrée Grau, Adrienne Kaeppler, Joann Kealiinohomoku, Frank Hall, and Anthony Shay. For a collection focused on dance ethnography, see Theresa Buckland, ed, *Dance in the Field: Theory, Methods, and Issues in Dance Ethnography* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999). See also, Janet O'Shea, "Roots/Routes of Dance Studies," in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, second edition, eds. Alexandra Carter and Janet O'Shea (New York, NY: Routeldge, 2010).

[57] Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

[58] See Spalding, *Appalachian Dance* and Jamison *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*.

[59] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*; Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright*; DeFrantz, ed., *Dancing Many Drums*; and Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*.

[60] Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 4.

Chapter 1

Concertizing Vernacular Dance: Jazz Tap Ensemble and Rhythm in Shoes

After a resurgence in popularity for tap dance in live performance, rhythm tap dance emerged on the concert stage as an ensemble form in the late 1970s, an era often referred to as the tap dance renaissance.[1] In the late 1960s, many black male tap dancers from the vaudeville era began appearing at jazz music festivals,[2] and upon seeing them perform, young female dancers such as Brenda Bufalino, Jane Goldberg, Dianne Walker, and Lynn Dally began to seek them out for lessons.[3] Thanks to their professional networks, these women also created more performance opportunities for the veteran tap dancers so that even more people might experience the men's incredible skill and artistry while they were still able to perform. As part of this resurgence, white women such as Dally, Bufalino, and others established dance companies for which they devised ensemble choreographies to stage in the concert dance context. Around that same time Eileen Carson Schatz, Livia Vanaver, and Sharon Leahy similarly began dance companies that focused on staging Appalachian step dance and other percussive dance practices on concert stages. In each instance, choreographers engaged a process I call concertization in order to migrate their dance practices to the concert stage from social or folk contexts and from festival, exhibition, and popular stages. In this chapter I demonstrate ways concert dance choreographers in the late 20th century, following the class act performers of the vaudeville era, utilized markers of class to circumscribe the racialized history of tap dance and the ethnicization of Appalachian step dance. In each instance, performers engaged class-based markers of dress,

comportment, and rhetoric to portray themselves and their dance practices as respectable, which enabled them to improve their social, cultural, and professional standing.

While the (mostly) white female choreographers who staged tap dance and Appalachian step dance in the concert dance context brought their ideas and expertise to their work, such as their earlier experiences with modern dance, part of my aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that the aesthetic strategies they used to concertize tap dance and Appalachian step dance were not entirely new, but that they were actually built upon the labor of black men who were tap dancers and artists themselves. One strategy of concertization employed by choreographers was to incorporate upper class aesthetics into their tap dance and Appalachian step dance choreography, aesthetics I suggest they borrowed from an earlier generation of black male vaudeville performers such as the class act of Coles and Atkins. Vaudeville class acts engaged aesthetic strategies including choreographed routines, synchronized styling of upper and lower bodies, close integration of music and dance, and costumes that referenced high-class status. When concert dance choreographers borrowed these strategies in order to stage tap dance and Appalachian step dance on the concert stage, these white women were celebrated for moving tap dance into new directions, which rhetorically separated their concert dance presentations from those of vaudeville.[4] While the shift in performance contexts was innovative in that tap dance and Appalachian step dance were rarely, if ever, seen on the concert stage previously, I suggest that by engaging class act aesthetics established in vaudeville in order to migrate tap dance and Appalachian step dance to the concert stage, the choreographers also engaged in a dimension of ongoingness. Further, on each stage—the concert stage and the vaudeville stage—the aesthetic strategies of the class act distanced tap dance and Appalachian step dance from their ethno-racial affiliations by highlighting notions of respectability and perceptions of propriety and decorum.

Concertization is thus at the intersection of race and class, as were respectability politics and the rhetoric of racial uplift that shaped vaudeville era performances.[5] In the analysis in this chapter, I demonstrate that concertization of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as well as the class acts of vaudeville are ethno-racial projects cloaked in the rhetoric and aesthetics of class. As ethno-racial projects, vaudeville performers incorporated upper class aesthetics into their acts in order to resist and revise negative representations of blackness established on the minstrel stage. In a similar way, the process of concertization engaged to stage tap dance and Appalachian step dance in concert dance contexts is a whitening process that obscures ethno-racial specificity through upper-class aesthetics. However, the concert stage is also a space where tap dance and Appalachian step dance choreographers can revise or offer alternative narratives and presence previously invisibilized aesthetics within their practices. So, while I critique concertization for creating the context in which ethnic and racial specificity is invisibilized, I also acknowledge the concert stage as a space for revising negative historical narratives.

In the comparative analysis of this chapter, I examine Appalachian class acts staged by Rhythm in Shoes, and the combination of class acts and specialty acts staged in early concerts by Jazz Tap Ensemble. To contextualize the aesthetics of concertization they engage alongside the class act aesthetics of vaudeville, I also introduce the class act duo Greenlee and Drayton, who early jazz dance scholars Marshall and Jean Stearns identify as the first of the class acts, and Coles and Atkins, who the Stearnses have deemed the last.[6] In my analysis, I detail particular aesthetic and structural strategies the dancers and choreographers engaged in their acts to point out ways such representation of refinement revised 1) negative stereotypes of blackness as portrayed in minstrelsy; 2) negative images of Appalachians as lazy, ignorant, and buffoonish; and 3) perceptions of both tap dance and Appalachian step dance as not serious or not art.

Specifically, I suggest the Appalachian step dance class act of Rhythm In Shoes most closely followed the aesthetics and structures of the vaudeville class act. In part, Appalachian step dance had to overcome multiple barriers for entry to the concert stage including its affiliation with a marginalized region and population of the United States and its limited purchase on popular or well-known stages. In order to stage Appalachian step dance in the concert dance context, choreographers have to present something recognizable as Appalachian, but it also had to be organized in a contained structure that would be legible in this context. Though class act aesthetics obscure the ethno-racial inheritance embodied in Appalachian step dance, through the ongoingness of the aesthetic strategies of the vaudeville class acts, Appalachian class acts in concert dance contexts are historically and aesthetically connected to tap dance's past. In contrast, by incorporating markers of high-class aesthetics into Jazz Tap Ensemble's ensemble choreography, their performances partially obscure the Africanist roots of rhythm tap dance. However, by combining class acts with complex rhythmic-based specialty acts, Jazz Tap Ensemble also stages dimensions of the Africanist roots of tap dance. Thus, in the spirit of innovation, Jazz Tap Ensemble borrows aesthetics of the class act and at same time revisibilizes Africanisms in their specialty acts.

In the first section of the chapter, I discuss the aesthetics of respectability choreographers like Leahy, Dally, and others engage, aesthetics that derive from modern dance and ballet as well as from the vaudeville class act. In the sections that follow, I examine the construction of Appalachia via the Appalachian class act of Rhythm in Shoes and the reframing of Africanist aesthetics of tap dance in early Jazz Tap Ensemble repertoire. While this chapter most directly addresses the engagement of class act aesthetics to concertize tap dance and Appalachian step

dance in order to gain entrée to the concert stage during the late 20th century, the following chapters of this dissertation demonstrate ways that concertization continues today.

Concertization and the Aesthetics of Respectability

Central aesthetics of both vaudeville class acts and concert tap dance companies include tight integration of music and movement as dancers tap out swing and jazz rhythms with a coolness and respectability while dressed in suit jackets and pants befitting their high-class status. While this connects contemporary tap dancers to tap dance historically, tap dancers in the late 1970s and early 1980s also made this move to demonstrate the form's compatibility with concert dance as a high art form, a designation rife with class- and race-based associations. The concert stage has a history of privileging whiteness and of catering to middle- and upper-class audiences with expectations of propriety and decorum, and the aesthetics of respectability established in vaudeville and engaged by concert dance choreographers were constructed to satisfy a similar clientele. In order for tap dance and Appalachian step dance to be accepted in the concert dance context, choreographers have to fit their practices within these expectations. I suggest they do so through concertization, a process that reduces markers that affiliate tap dance and Appalachian step dance with their rich ethno-racial inheritance and instead highlights upper-class aesthetics and whiteness.

While many women created tap dance companies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in this chapter I focus on Lynn Dally and the Jazz Tap Ensemble (JTE), which Dally created in 1979 along with dancers Camden Richman and Fred Strickler and musicians Paul Arslanian (piano), Tom Dannenberg (bass), and Keith Terry (drums). In its early years, JTE did not subscribe to distinct musician/dancer roles, but rather, dancers and musicians crossed over—dancers played music, and musicians danced. It seems everyone was interested in exploring

complex rhythms and musicality through unison and counterpoint. In their performances, JTE made dynamic use of the stage space by purposefully creating movement phrases that traveled through space, shifted directions and facings, and played with the movements and qualities that make tap dance a distinct art form. Over its more than 30-year lifespan, the company included many dancers who continue to teach and perform today such as Linda Sohl-Ellison, Heather Cornell, and Sam Weber. JTE alums Derick K. Grant, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, and Jason Samuels Smith co-created the piece I focus on in chapter 4, *And Still You Must Swing*. And many luminaries of rhythm tap dance performed with JTE as guest artists including Harold Nicholas of the Nicholas Brothers, Jimmy Slyde, Honi Coles, and Dianne Walker, to name only a few.[7] The company's repertoire shifted and changed over time, following the interests of the performers, and tap dancers continue to *slide*, *wing*, and *timestep* in carefully choreographed explorations of music and dance, following the legacy of groups such as JTE. My focus in this chapter is on concerts by the founding members of JTE.

Appalachian step dance followed a different path to the concert stage. In contrast to tap dance, which had appeared on vaudeville stages before being presented on the concert stage, Appalachian step dance, historically a more social form, first emerged in exhibition settings in the late 1920s, where it continued to appear throughout the 20th century even until today. One of the first recorded square dance competitions took place in 1928 as part of the Rhododendron Festival (eventually renamed the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival) in Ashville, NC.[8] Dancers in this early competition engaged square dance figures and smooth, gliding steps. Over time, clogging groups embellished their figures with percussive freestyle footwork, which then evolved into precision clogging with choreographed footwork.[9] In the early 1970s a group of young hippies started an ensemble called the Green Grass Cloggers (GGC) in Greenville, NC

after seeing precision clogging groups performing at folk festivals. The GGC were different from earlier clogging groups in that they were not from Appalachia, nor did they dance in "a traditional style."[10] Rather, they devised their own "unique eclectic style" based upon steps they learned at festivals and from the traditional flatfoot dancers they sought out as teachers.[11] Because they were so popular among audiences at festivals, GGC eventually became a full-time touring ensemble, traveling around the United States and abroad, and their influence continues to be felt among square dance performance ensembles.

It was during her tenure with GGC that Sharon Leahy learned how to clog, which is one form of many percussive dance vocabularies she engaged in her choreography for Rhythm in Shoes (RIS). After just one year with GGC, Leahy left the group in 1980 to join Vanaver Caravan, a New York City-based performance company which, at the time, staged Appalachian step dance as well as reconstructions of Denishawn choreographies, both of which Leahy participated in. In 1987 Leahy went on to found RIS with her husband, multi-instrumentalist and songwriter Rick Good. The company's repertoire blended rhythm tap dance, Appalachian step dance, traditional English dances like sword and maypole dances, body percussion, and even modern dance compositions. RIS concerts tended to include examples of each of these genres. In this chapter I focus on what I have identified as their Appalachian class acts. In addition to performing on concert stages, RIS toured to music festivals and produced nightclub-style cabarets. After 23 years of touring internationally, RIS disbanded in 2010.

Both RIS and JTE engaged representational strategies that they adopted from the class acts of vaudeville in order to concertize Appalachian step dance and tap dance. Such strategies were first established by the class act duo of Greenlee and Drayton in the first decade of the 20th century.[12] Early jazz dance scholars Marshall and Jean Stearns suggest, "by combining true

elegance with precision dancing…[Greenlee and Drayton] attained a new degree of acceptance for Negro performers."[13] This original class act established expectations for precision dance, which required duos or trios to dance the same steps simultaneously with coordinated upper and lower body stylization.[14] Further, thanks to traveling with live orchestras that could play the musical arrangements the acts carried with them, class acts included close "integration between music and dance."[15] Building upon their predecessors, Charles "Honi" Coles and Charles "Cholly" Atkins teamed up as Coles and Atkins and further developed the aesthetics of respectability that Greenlee and Drayton had established.[16]

One strategy Coles and Atkins used to elevate perceptions of themselves and of their vaudeville act during the middle of the 20th century was to connect their tap dance performances to dance genres recognized as upper class. Specifically, they integrated what Atkins identifies as "ballet moves."[17] In a video in which Marshall Stearns interviews Coles and Atkins, he prompts Atkins to demonstrate what this might look like and, before Atkins begins to dance, he tells Stearns that he will incorporate a turn and "a ballet move."[18] While Atkins dances, he calls out the "ballet move," which looks nothing like the *grand jeté* or *arabesque* conjured by the promise of ballet. Rather, it is a *bell kick*—he brushes one leg up off the ground and lifts the other up to meet it, heel-to-heel, in the air. He follows the *bell kick* with a turn, which is not a *pirouette* or even a *chaîné*, but rather, it is an unembellished three-quarters rotation that shifts his facing from the front of the space to the side. While his movements are not drawn from the codified steps of ballet vocabulary, Atkins engages a broad notion of ballet as being full bodied and including leaps and turns. This aesthetic certainly informs the style of the Coles and Atkins choreography as they employ sweeping movements of the legs, lingering brushes, spins, and circles of the arms, and subtle leaps and jumps executed with pointed toes. Their dancing qualitatively

captures the grace and lilting nature of ballet along with movements that float or flutter across the stage. More pointedly to a discussion of constructing respectability through the representational strategies of the class act, however, is that by labeling these aesthetic stylings "ballet," Atkins rhetorically elevates perceptions of him and his performance to the status of art, which at the same time suggests respectability.

Similarly Leahy and Dally rhetorically connect their percussive dance choreography to modern dance to lend artistic authority to their endeavors. On her Appalachian step dance choreography, Leahy states that she combines "clogging footwork with modern dance compositional techniques," which is one way that her early performance experiences in modern dance shaped the work she did with RIS over the company's lifespan.[19] Based upon Dally's modern dance training and her experiences with her modern dance company, Lynn Dally and Dancers, composition techniques from modern dance also shaped the repertoire of JTE.[20] Further, Dally refers to modern dance to suggest that, like modern dance and ballet, tap dance "is serious."[21] In each instance, modern dance serves as an indicator of significance to these concert dance choreographers much like markers of class lent the appearance of respectability to the class act of vaudeville.[22]

By rhetorically and choreographically connecting their concert dance work with modern dance, Dally and Leahy concertized tap dance and Appalachian step dance. Choreographic strategies they engage include choreographing steps, generating movement through space with intricate stage blocking, and devising suites of dances and full concerts to create optimal audience experiences of the art of movement. Such strategies enable Leahy, Dally, and others like them, including their class act predecessors, to give predictable structure to otherwise improvisatory forms by organizing bodies in space and by choreographing much of their

footwork; to give attention to an audience as opposed to focusing primarily on one another as they might in social settings; and to engage processes of reconfiguring, reconceptualizing, and reimagining their dance practices for their particular social, cultural, and historical context.

By focusing on class through the aesthetics of respectability, class acts on vaudeville and concert dance stages obfuscate connections between the practices of tap dance and Appalachian step dance and their ethno-racial inheritances. I suggest vaudeville class acts staged racial projects that paired elegant dress with graceful precision dancing to stage respectability, which revised the oppressive ethno-racial projects mobilized in minstrelsy, which had constructed unflattering stereotypes of blackness.[23] Racial theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant define racial projects as combining racial representation with a distribution of resources along racial lines, and they assert that racial projects can be resistive or oppressive.[24] The stakes for staging representations of respectability in vaudeville class acts were high, not just for individual dancers and performers, but also for African Americans broadly. Writing on the Whitman Sisters, a black performance ensemble of the vaudeville era, theatre and dance historian Nadine George-Graves states, "The importance of [high-class] status should not be understated. Not only did high-class troupes command higher salaries, they also commanded the respect of audiences and critics. To reach high-class status, performers had to prove their respectability by exuding sophistication, elegance, and morality…."[25] Class acts relied on the power of the stage to amplify this image of blackness as a stark alternative to the debased portrayals in minstrelsy. However, no matter how classy they appeared, black male vaudeville performers like Coles and Atkins did not have access to the concert stage during their era.

In the case of Appalachian step dance, a folk dance form that typically only appeared on stages at festivals and in exhibition contexts, concertizing Appalachian step dance meant

choreographers had to overcome barriers of class and ethnic affiliations imposed by concert dance. In the United States the concert stage had long been a space for ballet and modern dance, two dance forms affiliated with white, upper-class patronage and white, so-called "universalized" bodies that were allegedly capable of expressing themes all audiences could relate to, no matter their social, cultural identity.[26] In contrast, dancers and movements that were marked as non-white were read as culturally specific and therefore not universally accessible.[27] While Appalachia is popularly imagined as a being a primarily white region, it has also been popularly represented in travel writing and broadcast media as being populated by poor, ignorant people who are racially off-white and who do not create art.[28] As the class act of vaudeville revised images from minstrelsy that Harlem Renaissance scholar Nathan Huggins describes as "the shuffling darky, the uncle and aunty, the subservient and docile retainer, the clown," the Appalachian class act revises similar such popular images of working-class whites in Appalachia.[29] Representations of blackness in minstrelsy and the representation of Appalachia in popular media today run parallel to one another, and in each instance, narratives that would revise such (mis)representations often rely on notions of respectability and the rhetoric of racial uplift.

The understated respectability and control of the class act, which presented blackness as quiet, subdued, and in complete control, translated to respectability and respectability politics, which were a part of the rhetoric of racial uplift to which some African American philosophers, activists, and leaders subscribed in the decades following the Civil War and into the 20th century.[30] Middle and upper-class black elites suggested that, to uplift the race, lower-class black people would need to do as the middle and upper-class did[31]—aim for propriety and respectability through "self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity,

patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth."[32] It is also important to address respectability politics and racial uplift when talking about Appalachia because the region and its people have been similarly marginalized economically and socially. Rhetoric of racial uplift suggests that "marginalized classes will receive their share of political influence and social standing not because democratic values and law require it but because they demonstrate their compatibility with the 'mainstream' or non-marginalized class."[33] While initially a collectivist notion, racial uplift developed into an individualistic, self-help ideology that has been critiqued for its reliance on character and behavioral reform by marginalized people, which takes responsibility away from the oppressors and the systems that maintain such conditions of oppression.[34] Even still, as noted in the quotation from George-Graves above, vaudeville era performers who represented themselves through high-class aesthetics had much to gain economically and in terms of social standing.

Ethno-racial representation in performances by JTE and RIS was much more subtle than that of minstrelsy and vaudeville, largely because of what dance historian Susan Manning terms the "generalizing power of whiteness."[35] Rather than staging overt (mis)representations of any racial or ethnic group, these companies aimed to celebrate tap dance and Appalachian step dance as art, an objective in line with the project of whiteness. Dally and Leahy emphasized markers of high-class status in order to represent tap dance and Appalachian step dance as art, thus minimizing associations with the ethnic and racial inheritances of the practices. Though the dancers' movements, rhythms, and aesthetics embody this inheritance, by focusing on rhythm and musicality and by infusing "the spirit of traditional dance and music with a thoroughly modern sensibility,"[36] JTE and RIS left dimensions of the rich ethnic and racial affiliations of their dance practices on the sidelines. Because markers of class minimize ethno-racial aesthetics

and because the companies primarily stage white bodies, the concertization of tap dance and Appalachian step dance by JTE and RIS obscures the complex ethnic and racial dimensions of the practices. Not meant to be a critique of the dancers' training or an indictment of their particular choreographic projects, my analysis points to the project of concertization as an inherently whitening process. The upper-class aesthetics from vaudeville class acts complemented the whitening project of concertization. Paired with the personal lineages of white female choreographers, their knowledge of the concert stage, and their white bodies on stage, this complex of issues created a context in which the ethno-racial affiliations of tap dance and Appalachian step dance came to be obscured, as demonstrated in the following analyses.

Constructing Appalachia via Rhythm in Shoes's Appalachian Class Act

As mentioned above, Sharon Leahy and Rick Good founded Rhythm in Shoes (RIS) in 1987. Throughout its existence, RIS staged tap dance and Appalachian step dance, and they engaged the structure and aesthetic devices of the class act, especially in the early years. To add variety to their programs, they shifted back and forth from tap dances, Appalachian step dances, and songs sung by soloists as well as the whole company. While the company's repertoire broadly followed the variety format of vaudeville, which included various examples of class acts,[37] in this section I discuss their particular staging of Appalachia as an Appalachian class act in the three-piece suite of "Tacit," "Shortnin' Bread," and "Mississippi Lawyer." By viewing this suite of dances as a class act, I aim to make visible a connection between Appalachian step dance and the history of tap dance that the whitening of concertization might erase. My analysis suggests the Appalachian class acts are ethno-racial projects that resist and revise negative representations of Appalachia, which, as a form of ongoingness, connects them to the ethno-racial projects of the class acts of vaudeville. Simultaneously, by engaging the aesthetics of

concertization, RIS's Appalachian class acts are ethno-racial projects that continue to reify the relationship between Appalachia and whiteness.

Before addressing the specific elements of class acts that "Tacit," "Shortnin' Bread," and "Mississippi Lawyer" embody and the implications of such references, I briefly introduce each piece. Tacit is a musical term that means "silence." While the musicians of RIS do not make a sound during RIS's "Tacit," the dancers fill the space with coordinated rhythms and movements, particularly highlighting formations of lines—horizontal, vertical, and diagonal. After a series of unison phrases and overlapping rhythmic phases at the end of "Tacit," the dancers perform eight *basics*—a foundational step for team clogging—as a way of counting the band in for the next piece, "Shortnin' Bread." This second piece, performed to an old time tune by the same name, has a driving tempo and includes energetic footwork. The dancers lift their knees high, fling their lower legs out side-to-side, cross their feet, and kick up their heels in frequent *bell kicks*. Whereas "Tacit" emphasizes rhythm, "Shortnin' Bread" highlights action. The third piece of the suite, "Mississippi Lawer," is more subdued energetically, but it combines characteristics of the two preceding pieces and ends the suite on an introspective note. The "synchronized style of clogging"[38] in "Tacit," "Shortnin' Bread," and "Mississippi Lawyer" and in much of the RIS repertoire could be labeled precision clogging, which according to Appalachian step dance scholar Phil Jamison, was introduced in 1942 to create "a well-rehearsed, choreographed dance show."[39] Precision clogging, like the precision dancing the Stearnses discuss in their explication of class acts, gives the impression of skill, polish, and a commitment to excellence, all qualities that help to move RIS's representation of Appalachia to the concert stage.

One characteristic of the class act that imbues the movement of both "Shortnin' Bread" and "Mississippi Lawyer" is the close integration of music and dance, as the musical and

choreographic arrangements for these dances are artfully combined. For example, the tune for "Shortnin' Bread," as arranged for this piece is twenty-four measures long, and the musicians repeat it three times through. Similarly, the choreography is twenty-four measures long, and the dancers repeat it three times through. The piece begins with all six dancers of the ensemble dancing in unison and all five musicians playing their parts. The second time through, three dancers drop out and so does the drummer, which leaves three dancers and four musicians. The final time through the tune and movement phrase, only one dancer remains along with the banjo and fiddle players. The thoughtful integration of music and dance is also present in "Mississippi Lawyer," but it builds in the opposite direction. The piece begins with only two dancers and one musician, and by the end, four dancers and all of the musicians participate. Once everyone has joined in, the musicians fade in and out over the course of the dance, but all of the dancers and the musicians finish the piece together. While this reading is a bit mathematical, I mean to demonstrate the dynamic relationship between sound and movement in "Shortnin' Bread" and "Mississippi Laywer." Stearns and Stearns suggest the close relationship between music and movement gave the class acts of vaudeville "new distinction," which is demonstrated by the creativity, skill, and rehearsal required to produce such integration of music and precision dancing both by RIS and by the class acts of vaudeville.[40] The performers in each context set themselves apart from other dancers who may not have the same abilities to create such choreographic and musical arrangements and the finesse to perform them.

To make an even more particular connection between class acts of vaudeville and RIS's Appalachian class act, I consider "Mississippi Lawyer" as a kind of soft shoe because of the ways it contrasts the rest of the dances in the suite in tempo and swinging musicality and for the ways it mirrors the function and aesthetics of the Coles and Atkins soft shoe. While Coles and

Atkins epitomized the characteristics of the class act identified herein, they also worked to surpass all those who came before them through one particular innovation in their act—the slowest soft shoe of tap dance.[41] Atkins recalls three characteristics they had in mind in building this dance: "It had to be slower than anybody else's; at the same time, it had to be really interesting; and finally, it had to be so lyrical that it could stand by itself, that is it had to *sound* just as good with or without accompaniment, so we could do it without music" (original italics).[42] In order to accomplish each of these aims, the Coles and Atkins soft shoe requires exceptional physical control.[43] In part, they achieved such an appearance of physical containment by blending the on-the-toes buck-and-wing style of their predecessor Bill "Bojangles" Robinson with the rhythm tap, close-to-the-floor style of John "Bubbles" Sublett, which enabled Coles and Atkins to be both up and down, and swinging and syncopated in one step.[44] Add to this an intention to create a lingering, languorous dance, and the Coles and Atkins soft shoe is the epitome of restraint. For example, when they blend a leap up into the air with an ever-so-brief moment of groundedness at the end, their weight not only shifts from one foot to the other, but it also swings up and down—*ba-da-dee-dah ba-da-dee-dah*, which is only possible because the dancers exert so much control that they hang in the air and their weight hits its lowest point only after they make the final sound of the steps. Such moments of floating or hanging above the ground are arresting visually, rhythmically, and kinesthetically, particularly paired with conscious coordination of upper and lower body movements as well as leaps and spins that hint at the aforementioned vocabulary of ballet. This certainly is dancing for looking and for listening.

As a soft shoe, "Mississippi Lawyer" similarly presents the Appalachian class act as easeful and cool. "Mississippi Lawyer" combines steps from Appalachian dance with the

musicality of tap dance, and at a slower tempo than both "Tacit" and "Shortnin' Bread," the rhythmic syncopations and inventive step patterns of "Mississippi Lawyer" make it look and sound new and distinct. Like the Coles and Atkins soft shoe, "Mississippi Lawyer" *sounds* good. Additionally, though not as slow as that of Coles and Atkins, for a clogging piece, "Mississippi Lawyer" is quite languid. As the dancers enter for "Mississippi Lawyer," they embody the constant bounce so common in clogging, but the gentle energy with which they dance sets this piece apart from the two dances earlier in the suite. The dancers ride this modulated momentum throughout the piece, and since the footwork at the start is very simple, the bounce seems quite subtle as it blends in with the complex patterns created by the dancers moving through the space. "Mississippi Lawyer" opens with a sweeping circular pathway around the dance space, and as dancers travel through this and other figures and formations in the dance, they do so without effort. Their formations are certainly choreographed, but the dancers perform them as though these spatial arrangements were inevitable, all with an even-keeled energy matching an upper-class aesthetic. As the Coles and Atkins soft shoe stages the aesthetic of the cool through control and swing, so too does "Mississippi Laywer."

In addition to movement and musicality, the dancers' costumes also add to depictions of refinement in both vaudeville and Appalachian class acts. Drayton describes the costumes he and his partner Greenlee wore on their first European tour: "We each had a hand-tailored full-dress suit—white tie, tails, and all. […] We also had a monocle, a white flower, white gloves, white socks, and a cane."[45] Such costuming presented class acts as dignified, which was a response to the minstrel representations of black men as wild, ridiculous dandies.[46] In contrast to the eveningwear of the tap dance class act, the Appalachian class act costumes of RIS seem fairly everyday—not too fancy, but still composed and coordinated. The women wear short, floral

dresses with collared, denim shirts over them, and the one male dancer wears black pants with a dark blue button-up, collared shirt. Compared to other costumes worn by RIS such as their multi-colored cotton clogging dresses, which make the dancers look more like country bumpkins, these costumes are polished—a kind of country "Sunday best" that presents Appalachia as clogging-chic, dressed up for their appearance on the concert stage.

This suite of Appalachian step dance follows many general characteristics of the class act including engaging qualities of grace and elegance, even in dances that are quite fast and vigorous, which is in contrast to pieces in the RIS repertoire that include the get-down, down-home feel of square dance figures. The Appalachian class act suite is choreographed and executed largely in unison, save for the occasional phase in which the dancers perform the same movements and rhythms but begin at different times so the sounds overlap.[47] As in the class act of vaudeville, the choreography of RIS's Appalachian class act is front-facing and audience-focused, which is in stark contrast to choreography that engages square dance figures, which require dancers to face inward and attend more to one another than to the audience. Further, in the Appalachian class act, dancers smile and appear to move with ease throughout the performance, which is notable because clogging requires a lot of strength, energy, and breath with its non-stop bouncing, kicking, and stepping. In the Appalachian class act suite, the dancers look effortless in their execution of the steps and movements. Further, contrasted with square dance figures in which dancers grab one another by the forearm to quickly pass by, revealing their effort as they maneuver through patterns, the dancers' arms in the class act suite are not choreographed. In this case, the freedom of the upper body is an important component of the elegance the dancers embody, and it reveals that the refinement the class act strives for is accessible through dancing separate-yet-together.

Adding elements that index high-class distinction such as those described thus far enable Leahy and Good to stage their representations of Appalachia in the concert dance context. Even as the aesthetic markers of concertization minimize the ethno-racial specificity of Appalachian dance, by pairing the music and dance of Appalachia with the qualities and characteristics of the class act as devised in vaudeville, RIS presents an optimistic representation of Appalachia. As an artist who has a deep respect for the Appalachian culture, Leahy asserts, in creating compositions such as this "the expression of the group and the individual in the culture [being represented] needs to carry over with the actual physical vocabulary. […] You need to bring the real relationships of the culture with the footwork."[48] At the same time that she choreographically constructs a class act representation of Appalachia for the stage, Leahy aims to continually engage the ethos of Appalachian values of community, which I discuss further in the following chapter.

Even as the image of Appalachia conveyed through the class act is positive, I contend that, as an ethno-racial project, RIS's representation is simultaneously oppressive and resistive. I critique RIS's representation of Appalachia for not including Appalachian people and for not addressing the ethno-racial diversity of the region. However, I also highlight that, as an ethno-racial project, RIS's Appalachian class act revises negative representations of Appalachian people, who have been portrayed as ignorant, lazy, and wild. This perception of Appalachia has persisted for more than a century alongside another not-wholly accurate view of the region, which Appalachian studies scholar David E. Whisnant addresses. Writing about "popular understanding of the Appalachian South" at the start of the 20th century, Whisnant states that, at that time, "for some [people outside the region], mountain people were 'backward,' unhealthy, unchurched, ignorant, violent, and morally degenerate social misfits who were a national

liability, [and] for others they were pure, uncorrupted 100 percent American, picturesque, and photogenic pre-moderns who were a great untapped national treasure."[49] Whisnant's point is that neither of these views were accurate representations of the region. At the end of the 20th century and into the 21st, the former notion of Appalachians as uncivilized has been a common narrative spread in the media, as the following examples demonstrate.

In 1992 playwright Robert Schenkkan produced his Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Kentucky Cycle*, which reified stereotypes of Appalachian people as poor, lazy moonshiners who destroy the environment, kill their neighbors and family through feuds, and cannot hold a job. Schenkkan's text *minstrelized* Appalachians through its misrepresentations. As the class acts of vaudeville performatively refuted misrepresentations of blackness in minstrelsy, the text *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region* (1999) uses personal narratives to counter received stereotypes of the Appalachian region and to demonstrate the dynamic complexity of the people, their practices, and their history. Written in response to Schenkkan's play, one primary contention of *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes* is that perceptions of Appalachia are the result of the way the region has been written about more than as it actually is. To combat this, the contributors to this text expand and complicate the typical narrative of Appalachia using their own Appalachian voices to tell personal stories, to question literary and dramatic representations of Appalachia, and to illuminate the long history of resistance and activism in the Appalachian region. In this instance, Appalachians speak back to Schenkkan's outsider representation.[50]

Another unflattering representation of Appalachian people is featured on the documentary film *The Wild and Wonderful Whites of West Virginia*, which follows members of the White family from Boone County, West Virginia and discusses "shootings, armed robbery,

embezzlement, forgery, drug cases, burglary, fights, [and] things like that."[51] The patriarch of the family, Donald Ray, also known as D. Ray White, and his son Jesco, were (in)famous mountain dancers, and it was their dancing skills that first brought the family to the media's attention. The elder was one of many Appalachian dancers featured on the documentary film *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Flatfoot, Buck and Tap*, a folkloristic collection of dance steps and styles from dancers across the southern Appalachian Mountain range.[52] The younger White is the central figure in the original film *Dancing Outlaw* and its follow up, *Dancing Outlaw II: Jesco Goes to Hollywood*.[53] Narratives spread about Appalachian step dance through media representations such as the films about the White family present Appalachia as wild, dangerous, backwoods, and dirty. While this might be one family's experience of Appalachia, there is no singular narrative of the Appalachian experience. RIS's Appalachian class act presents a stark contrast to the "Wild Whites," one that offers viewers an alternative understanding of Appalachianness.

At the same time that Leahy's choreographic rendition of Appalachian cultural material revises negative stereotypes, it simultaneously reifies the relationship between whiteness and Appalachia, which is a product of concertization. Engaging concertization, Leahy choreographically organizes what might otherwise be un-composed movements of a freestyle practice and revises characteristics of a practice that might be illegible to or somehow unacceptable to concert dance consumers. Such compositional strategies are part of the larger legacy of whiteness. For example, during the early decades of the 20th century, white dance instructors such as Vernon and Irene Castle modified African American social dances for white socialites, and white instructors of ragtime dancing "refined" its blackness by "containing its exuberant physicality and sexuality, among other aspects."[54] In each instance, such containment of perceived excess or chaos suggests control is required to be respectable. In the case of the

Appalachian class act, refinement includes engaging tactics such as forward-facing precision dancing and unison, rather than freestyle individuality; soft shoe dancing, rather than stomping, rumbling footwork; and dancing in spatial formations without physical contact, rather than partner-dependent square dance figures. Markers of upper-class aesthetics, especially in representations of RIS's Appalachian class act, actually contribute to whitewashed narratives of Appalachia. While the tap dance class act was a form of resistance used by African American performers in vaudeville to control representations of themselves, by engaging strategies of the class act to represent Appalachia, RIS harnesses the power and upward mobility of high-class aesthetics to gain entrée onto the concert stage. The cost of entrance, however, is a white-washed version of Appalachian dance that excludes non-white participants and histories.

Reframing the Africanist Roots of Tap Dance in Early Jazz Tap Ensemble Repertoire

Like minstrelsy and vaudeville, Jazz Tap Ensemble (JTE) generally relied on the variety format, but unlike representations of racialized stereotypes in blackface minstrelsy of the 1830s and 1840s, the objective of JTE was to demonstrate that tap dance is an art form, which required elevating its perceived status. This does not mean that racial representation was absent from JTE performances, but rather, staging tap dance as art in the concert dance context reversed the negative representational project of blackface minstrelsy, even as early JTE members were white performers representing dance practices rooted in African American cultures. Whereas minstrels used movement, comedy, caricatures, songs, and speeches to make social commentary, which namely staged blackness as inferior to whiteness, and whereas class acts in vaudeville used precision, grace, and elegance to stage African-American respectability, JTE used variations on rhythm and movement through space to construct tap dance as high art. In its early years as a dance company, JTE presented tap dance through the class act, which they paired with specialty

acts that added vaudevillian humor and workman-like investigations of rhythm to their concerts. Through such variety in their programs, JTE concerts were structurally similar to the variety format of vaudeville and aesthetically aligned with the vaudeville class act, characteristics which I suggest mark a relationship of ongoingness across stages.[55]

By following the model established in vaudeville and engaging representations of class, which obscured though did not completely erase the Africanist roots of tap dance, JTE more easily moved tap dance to the concert stage, which has historically privileged whiteness. Representational strategies such as elegance of dress and unison choreography demonstrate the versatility of tap dance as a medium of artistic expression, thus enabling the company—and the genre of tap dance—to be accepted on the concert stage, which is to say, accepted by upper and middle class audiences. At the same time, as ethno-racial projects that emphasized upper-class aesthetics, the class acts of JTE centered whiteness and only subtly addressed the Africanist aesthetics of the form.

"Jam with Honi," a staple of the early JTE repertoire, closely resembles the aesthetics of the class act of vaudeville, though its emphasis on individuality also differentiates it from the synchronized expectations of class acts. Referring to Honi Coles of Coles and Atkins in its title, early JTE used "Jam with Honi" to close most concerts, which enabled them to leave audiences with a positive, upbeat impression of tap dance. The piece also served as a danced bow. "Jam with Honi" begins with the last step of the *Shim Sham*, an historic tap dance that developed during the 1920s,[56] and that is known by rhythm tap dancers all over the world today, which I discuss further in chapter 2. In "Jam with Honi," the dancers repeat the final step of the *Shim Sham* four times—the length of a chorus—and then one dancer takes their solo. They repeat this process until all of the dancers have danced their bow. At the end, the dancers linger on stage,

keeping time with simple steps as the musicians each take a solo break as their final moment in the show. The piece ends with the dancers performing unison choreography in a line facing the audience, which indexes the standard aesthetic format of vaudeville class acts. This finale not only pays tribute to Honi Coles by name, but through movement, the piece also honors the class acts of vaudeville from whom this ensemble takes its inspiration. However, though there is unison choreography near the end of "Jam with Honi," unlike Coles and Atkins, the JTE dancers rarely stand side-by-side and execute that movement in such close unison. Instead, early JTE relies on individuality, so most of JTE's repertoire is much more loose than the class acts of vaudeville.[57]

An Africanist quality JTE class acts share with their predecessors is the embodiment of the aesthetic of the cool, a subtle characteristic that dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild has identified as being invisibilized in American culture.[58] One way Coles and Atkins presented themselves as cool was through movements and qualities that were controlled, deliberate, and in in opposition to the limbs all akimbo movements of minstrelsy. Though Atkins names ballet as an influence, as described above, like other class acts, Coles and Atkins aimed for "'pure' tap," which means dancers eliminated the acrobatics of so-called flash tap dancing seen in other vaudeville acts.[59] Aesthetically, JTE similarly performs with a commitment to the cool. In pieces such as the duet "After Hours," Lynn Dally and Camden Richman, dressed in black pants and blazers over jewel-toned tops, dance with their hands in their pockets and their gaze down. This choreographic motif generates an aloofness that translates to detached cool, which is in contrast to the cool of vaudeville class acts that more confidently met the audience's gaze. I suggest larger implications of this contrast may be that in vaudeville cool confidence helped performers assert ownership of self, of act, and of personal respectability. In contrast, JTE aims to

choreographically demonstrate compatibility between tap dance and genres such as modern dance on the concert stage, a genre which values choreography that considers audience experiences, though that does not necessarily attend to making interpersonal connections between performers and audience members.

Maintaining the choreographic integrity displayed in the carefully coordinated integration of music and movement in class acts of vaudeville, JTE's "After Hours" similarly pairs tap dance steps and movements with music from the electric bass to generate qualities of coolness and control, both musically and in terms of rhythmic footwork. Over the course of the piece, the ensemble repeats the following structure four times: it begins with a groovy bass line paired with syncopated footwork, progressively builds in speed and complexity both musically and choreographically, and eventually decrescendos to stillness and silence. With their hands in their pockets, the dancers' syncopated *chugs* alongside the bass player's rhythmic pulse exude a calm, measured energy that befits the Africanist aesthetic of the cool. In one repetition in particular, the dancers execute a sequence of *slides* and *chugs* without ever lifting their feet fully off the floor as they move in perfect unison, dancing side-by-side, and frequently shifting facings. Though the dancers avert their gaze from that of the audience, the synchrony of their movements, the unity of their footwork, and the coolness of their expression is the closest analogue in the concert to the class act of vaudeville. As the music and movement pick up speed, the grace and elegance of the class act is replaced by more hurried execution of choreography, which invites more individuality of expression from the two dancers, a value aligned with tap dance in more social contexts.

Whereas the class acts in vaudeville exuded an aesthetic of control in the stylization of their upper and lower bodies, which were impeccably coordinated, JTE seems to exercise much

more freedom in such physical aesthetics. While the hands-in-pockets and downward-focused gaze of "After Hours" creates unity in physical expression of the dancers, in "Caravan" the dancers express more freedom of movement as they engage all sorts of facings and expansive movements through space and as they emphasize their individuality through upper body gestures. The blocking for "Caravan" rarely positions the dancers in forward-facing arrangements as had the choreography for vaudeville class acts. Rather, JTE dancers shift positions and facings as they trace pathways such as figure eights, circles, diagonal lines, and snake-like spirals. Further, JTE dancers seldom maintain synchronized upper body and arm gestures, like those described in the slow soft shoe of Coles and Atkins. Instead, the dancers of JTE exercise their freedom of expression by extending their arms to the sides or in diagonals and by reaching skyward. They spiral their upper bodies in opposition to the stability of their lower bodies.

Each of these dimensions contrast the controlled unison of footwork and expression engaged by the class acts of vaudeville. Dancing by the performers of JTE is full-bodied, like that of the class act of vaudeville, but the movements through space seem to add another, maybe fourth, dimension that vaudeville performers did not, perhaps could not, access while maintaining expectations of respectability. I ascribe such freedom in performances by JTE to the dancers' modern and postmodern training and to freedoms associated with whiteness. At the same time, I suggest that by embracing individual expression in performance, JTE perhaps reinserted the importance of individuality of Africanist dance practices that vaudeville class acts had to eschew.

In contrast to the focus on representations of class in JTE's class acts, in their specialty acts, Africanisms are much more pronounced as dancers and musicians move and make rhythms

together to create complex polyrhythms using feet, hands, sticks, and bells. By reframing tap dances' Africanisms for this particular context, early JTE stages complex, yet entertaining rhythmic investigations to showcase the performers as diligent musical laborers. Dressed in coveralls and focused on the mundane task of making rhythms with multiple parts of the body and props, the specialty acts stand out because these pieces are distinctly different from those costumed in tuxedos and suits and marked by movements of elegance and refinement that came to be affiliated with tap dance class acts. The utilitarian nature of the coveralls and of the movements themselves enable the performers to keep rhythm at the forefront of the representation in the specialty act. Pieces like "Tune for K.B." include multiple inroads into rhythm, and the layers of polyrhythm in duo and trio sections suggest that, thematically, this piece is *about* rhythm. For example, in the final movement of this nearly thirteen-minute dance, the three performers, Keith Terry, Paul Arslanian, and Fred Strickler embody four layers of rhythm. Throughout the piece, all three performers maintain a simple step pattern of syncopated quarter notes as they move through the space to create lines and circular patterns. Musicians Terry and Arslanian divide a rhythmic run of quarter-note triplets on handheld cowbells, and Strickler maintains a sixteenth-note clapping pattern. On top of all of this, near the end of the section, they also add singing and chanting with their voices. As workman-like explorations of rhythm that integrate music and dance, pieces like JTE's specialty act "Tune for K.B." illuminate the Africanist influence on tap dance.

"Out There," another of the specialty acts, similarly highlights the complexity of making rhythm that class acts tend to obscure. Because class acts are meant to execute their movement with grace and elegance, they never let on how difficult the dancing is. However, "Out There," composed by percussionist Keith Terry, introduces the audience to the complexity of movement

and rhythm the performers engage in performance. The dancers enter in one line, following one another on to the stage while performing many different rhythms strictly using steps and claps, which come together to make the score. Though this has the potential to be cacophonous, the sound is actually quite clear. Some voices come through occasionally as dancers count, whoop, and make comments to one another. The logic of the rhythms becomes more transparent when everyone is on stage and groups break out of the line to come forward in pairs. This is also a moment that reveals, in JTE, everyone is a dancer and a musician. They end the piece with one complex rhythmic phrase and a succinct, sharp *clap*! The polyrhythms of "Out There" stand out since the performers' bodies, which are making the music, are at the forefront of the piece. Whereas tap dancers and musicians often work together to create layers of rhythm and music, in this instance, there are only bodies and sound. Polyrhythm is an element of the Africanist aesthetic central to JTE's specialty acts and precision is central to the class act. Each of these dimensions is prominent in JTE's repertory, and the combination of them highlights race- and class-based influences on the music and dance of the company. While precision of the class act may obscure Africanist individuality, polyrhythm revisibilizes it.

JTE's repertoire, with its balance between class and specialty acts, seems both to embrace and to resist expectations of precision and control as established in the class acts of vaudeville. In the whitened, concert dance context, JTE is able to reframe and stage tap dance's Africanist roots, something even black male performers in vaudeville were expected to obscure through the aesthetics of respectability. Though performers and choreographers innovated in each context, I suggest JTE was able to take more liberties with their innovations than were their vaudeville predecessors, and I attribute this to the privileges of whiteness. Vaudeville performers created innovative choreography that integrated the aesthetics of respectability with tap dance steps, and

they used the platform of the stage to revise negative stereotypes of blackness established in minstrelsy. JTE built upon the work of such vaudeville performers who had already begun the process of staging tap dance through respectability politics. As JTE migrated tap dance to the concert stage via the aesthetics of concertization, they simultaneously amplified Africanist qualities of individuality of expression and complex polyrhythmic compositions. That said, such Africanisms may have remained concealed for most audiences since the qualities were enlivened by white bodies in a whitened, concert dance context.

Staging an Ongoing Legacy

The concertization of tap dance and Appalachian step dance by choreographers like Lynn Dally and Sharon Leahy was innovative in that it enabled them to migrate their forms to the concert stage, but the aesthetics of respectability the choreographers utilized stem from those devised in vaudeville. This chapter connects the aesthetics of respectability initiated in vaudeville class acts with similar aesthetics staged in concert dance contexts in order to give credit to the black men of vaudeville for establishing the aesthetic strategies that would eventually mark tap dance and Appalachian step dance as concert dance forms. Rather than positing work such as that by Dally and Leahy as wholly innovative, by connecting the aesthetics of respectability established by vaudeville performers to those engaged by concert dance choreographers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this chapter also illuminates qualities and characteristics of ongoingness. While the representational strategies used to stage respectability were the same, the stakes and the context were different. In vaudeville, the dancers worked to change perceptions of themselves and of other African Americans after minstrelsy forwarded disparaging stereotypes. In the case of choreographies by Dally, Leahy, and other tap dance and Appalachian step dance choreographers of their generation, staging respectability enabled them

to present their work on the concert stage. In each instance, the ethnic and racial particularities of the practices were concealed by representations of upper-class aesthetics.

Concertization is an aesthetic necessity for migrating tap dance and Appalachian step dance to the concert stage, and through concertization shifts in the aesthetics of the genres are inevitable. In the next chapter, I look more particularly at components central to the history and legacy of tap dance and Appalachian step dance including aesthetic philosophies, localized values, and dancestral connections to the past in order to ask how these conventions are migrated across contexts through the process of concertization.

Notes:

[1] Jenai Cutcher, dir, *Thinking on Their Feet: Women of the Tap Renaissance*, DVD (Columbus, OH: JamJam Productions, 2010).

[2] In *Tap Dancing America*, Hill traces the appearance of tap dance at the Newport Jazz Festival over the course of the 1960s. Tap dancer Baby Laurence appeared with Charlie Mingus's jazz group at the 1960 festival. In 1962 an entire afternoon of the festival was dedicated to tap dance, and it featured Laurence, Bunny Briggs, Pete Nugent, Cholly Atkins, and Honi Coles, as well as early jazz dance scholar Marshall Stearns, who narrated tap dance history from the stage. According to Hill, the performances at the 1962 Newport Jazz Festival "marked the beginning of the return of (black) rhythm dancers to the stage" (2010, 202). The following year similarly included tap dance by Coles, Atkins, Nugent, Charles "Cookie" Cook, Ernest "Brownie" Brown, and Chuck Green. Writing in *Dance Magazine*, Letitia Jay claimed this appearance at the festival as "the one event that revived tap dancing" (Hill 2010, 203). For more on tap dance at the Newport Jazz Festival see Constance Valis Hill, *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010) 199, 201-204, 211-212, 219-220.

[3] See Hill, *Tap Dancing America*; Brenda Bufalino, *Tapping the Source: Tap Dance Stories, Theory, Practice* (New Paltz, NY: Codhill Press, 2004); Jane Goldberg, *Shoot Me While I'm Happy: Memories from the Tap Goddess of the Lower East Side* (New York, NY: Woodshed Productions, 2008). I regret that I do not discuss Bufalino, Goldberg, or Walker more in this dissertation. By limiting my focus to the concert stage, I had to leave out Walker and Goldberg, who did not produce ensemble choreography for this particular context. While I could have focused on Bufalino's work with her American Tap Dance Orchestra, which performed in concert dance contexts, I chose to write about other companies based upon access to their repertory.

[4] In a review of Jane Goldberg's 1979 *Steps in Time: A Tap Dance Festival*, *New York Times* critic Barry Laine wrote, "Given [Goldberg's] modern dance background, tap with her was bound to be different from what it was. […] While the hoofers are mostly older black males, today's crop of new tappers seem to be

mostly young, white women. Many are taking tap in new directions." Laine cited in Hill, *Tap Dancing America*, 241).

[5] Stewart Hall demonstrates ways race and class are articulated through one another. He states, "race is […] the modality in which class is 'lived,' the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through.'" Stewart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance" in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, eds. Houston A. Baker et al (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 55.

[6] Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, reprint (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1968/1994).

[7] Jazz Tap Ensemble, "About," jazztapensemble.org http://www.jazztapensemble.org/about/ (accessed on April 14, 2017).

[8] Phil Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 151-152.

[9] Ibid., 153-156.

[10] Ibid., 159.

[11] Ibid., 160.

[12] Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*.

[13] Ibid., 297.

[14] Ibid., 291, 301.

[15] Ibid., 299.

[16] Coles and Atkins teamed after serving in the army during World War II. Both men had worked with other groups and as soloists before they met. As Coles and Atkins they performed at the Apollo Theatre, on the vaudeville circuit, in Broadway shows such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and on television variety programs such as Jack Haley's *Ford Hour*. Though they choreographed their act for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Agnes de Mille was listed as choreographer in the program, which was a common practice on Broadway. Choreographers like de Mille couldn't choreograph a tap dance, so the performers would create their act but not be given credit for it. See Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 309.

[17] Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 310.

[18] Mikey Pedroza, "Over the Top Be-Bop: Honi Coles and Cholly Atkins," youtube.com https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DJPusWF_-4 (accessed on April 7, 2017).

[19] Sharon Leahy, in discussion with the author, July 13, 2017, Spring Valley, Ohio. Though the company disbanded in 2010, Leahy's legacy lives on in concert stage productions. See chapter 4 for an analysis of *Shift*, choreographed by Leahy's protégé Becky Hill.

[20] The three dancers of Jazz Tap Ensemble—Lynn Dally, Fred Strickler, and Camden Richman—had extensive and varied professional experiences, which informed the company's repertoire. Dally ran her own modern dance company called Lynn Dally and Dancers for five years before she shifted her focus to tap dance and the Jazz Tap Ensemble. Strickler had performed with the modern dance troupe, Bella Lewitzsky Dance Company for seven years before joining Jazz Tap Ensemble. And Richman had studied tap dance with a number of masters including Eddie Brown and Honi Coles. All three of the dancers have received choreography fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts, which indicates their commitment to creating lasting dance compositions. See Hill, *Tap Dancing America* for more information on the founding members of Jazz Tap Ensemble.

[21] Lynn Dally quoted in Martin David, "'New' Lynn Dally: A Serious Tapper," *LA Times*, October 4, 1981. In box 4, folder "Actual Programs 81-85," Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, Lynn Dally Papers, The Ohio State University Libraries.

[22] Commenting on a performance by Coles and Atkins at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1962, *New Yorker* critic Whitney Balliet stated that their soft shoe was "an intensely serious performance that never takes itself seriously for a moment." Balliet quoted in Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 310). Coles and Atkins

continue to be known for this routine, and it carries on through tap dancers like Brenda Bufalino, a long-time protégé of Coles. Each of these references to seriousness implies such a sentiment is an important component of respectability.

[23] White minstrel performers engaged the platform of the stage to construct misrepresentations of blackness through songs, dances, and speeches performed in blackface in order to malign African Americans and to elevate the white performer's own economic, social, and racial capital. See Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds, *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Reading in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974). By presenting over-blown, stereotypical depictions of African Americans on stage, white minstrel performers constructed African Americans (slaves, in particular) as lazy, buffoonish, ignorant, happy-go-lucky, and childlike. At the same time, these mostly Irish and Jewish immigrants solidified their own ethno-racial identities as white. See Richard Dyer, *White* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York, NY: Verso, 1991); and Michael Paul Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996). In *Waltzing in the Dark*, Brenda Dixon Gottschild contends, the people who saw minstrel depictions of blackness, many who had never encountered African Americans before, took these to be real and true representations, images that audience members then carried out into the world with them, thus shaping their understanding of racial others as inferior. Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark*, 103. Stereotypical notions of blackness first staged in minstrelsy in the middle of the 19th century continue to shape perceptions of African Americans today, nearly 200 years later. Though such representations of blackness were powerful, class acts of vaudeville managed to revise the caricatures of minstrelsy by representing blackness as refined, dignified, and composed.

[24] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 125-126, 128-130.

[25] Nadine A. George, "Dance and Identity Politics in American Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters, 1900-1935," in *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*, ed Thomas F. DeFrantz. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 76.

[26] The notion that dance could express universal themes derives from the project of dance modernism established in American modern dance from the early to mid-20th century. Dance modernism emphasized abstraction as a way to create universally accessible choreographies that all audiences could relate to, particularly as modernist dance eschewed anything that marked movement or themes as coming from a culturally specific point of view. For one example of this representational convention, see Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 66-67.

[27] For an intercultural historiography that traces shifts in representational conventions of culturally specific and so-called universalized dance practices, see Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

[28] See Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004) and David E. Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[29] Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.

[30] Kevin Kelly Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[31] Early debates about racial uplift were between Booker T Washington (an accommodationist) and Du Bois (a radical).
[32] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 2.
[33] Michelle Smith, "Affect and Respectability Politics," *Theory & Event* 17, no. 3 (2014).
[34] See Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*; Frederick C. Harris, "The Rise of Respectability Politics," *Dissent* 61, no 1 (Winter 2014): 33-37; and Mikaela Pitcan et al, "Performing a Vanilla Self: Respectability Politics, Social Class, and the Digital World," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 23, no. 3 (2018): 163-179; Smith "Affect and Respectability Politics."
[35] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 208.
[36] Rhythm in Shoes, "Rhythm in Shoes," leahygood.com http://www.leahygood.com/rhythm-in-shoes (accessed on July 15, 2017).
[37] To be financially successful, the variety and minstrel shows of the 19th and early 20th centuries relied on a combination of form (many acts strung together) and content (acts featuring different performance genres), as well as a variety of tones, themes, narratives, and other novelties. The form was constructed and the content ordered in such a way as to entertain as many tastes as might be in an audience. For example, the *olio* section of the minstrel show "offered a wide range of entertainment to the audience…Song and dance men, acrobats, men playing combs, porcupine quills, or glasses, and any number of other novelties might appear in this miscellaneous section" (Toll, *Blacking Up*, 55). Similarly, vaudeville was fast-paced and structured so that audiences would not get bored. The action on stage was constantly changing by combining comedy, musical acts, dance acts, and short skits or impersonations. Staging such a range of entertainments ensured that audiences would stay for the whole show and return for the next. Performances in vaudeville were methodically constructed so that they balanced the levels of talent and the kinds of acts that appeared over the course of the evening's entertainment. According to dance and theatre scholar Nadine George-Graves the formula of a vaudeville show "provided rhythm, pace, and a sense of unity" even though there was no connective plot (2000, 38). Because of their nature as "entertainments," which were often filled with gimmicks, tricks, and flash, the acts in these shows were not necessarily considered serious art. See Nadine George-Graves, *The Royalty of Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters and the Negotiation of Race, Gender, and Class in African American Theatre, 1900-1940* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
[38] Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*, 156.
[39] Ibid., 158.
[40] Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 299.
[41] Coles and Atkins appeared on a CBS program called *Camera 3* in 1965, and as part of this performance, they danced their soft shoe, "Taking a Chance on Love" (Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 311). I base my analysis on this particular performance and what others have written about them.
[42] Atkins, quoted in Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 307.
[43] Such physical control physically distinguished performances by Coles and Atkins from the "anatomical distortions" of dancing in minstrel shows. See Christopher J. Smith, *The Creolization of American Culture: William Sydney Mount and the Roots of Blackface Minstrelsy* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 175.
[44] For additional information on Robinson and Sublett, see Hill, *Tap Dancing America*.
[45] Drayton, quoted in Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 293.
[46] In a playbill of Bryant's Minstrels from 1859, a group of men are portrayed cavorting together on stage wearing ripped tailcoats and pants covered in patches. One man does seem to be all buttoned up with no holes in his clothes, but others wear partially buttoned jackets or no jackets at all. In various stages of undress, the dancers are physically represented as off-center and angled, which adds action to the images much like the image of Jim Crow. Adding more movement to this drawing, the dancers' arms are in the air, their jackets and tails are flowing, and their knees are bent whether turned in or out. Presented as

bouncing, jumping, and high stepping, the dancers are having a good time. Buttoned up, though possibly in a mocking way, these blackface characters are portrayed as carefree and happy, satisfied with their lot in life as long as it can include music and dancing. See Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 233-234.

[47] In percussion this is called a phase, and it is executed much like singing in the round or dancing in canon.

[48] Sharon Leahy, in discussion with the author, July 13, 2017, Spring Valley, Ohio.

[49] Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine*, 110.

[50] While none of the narratives in the book are about dance, they do raise questions about the power of dance to stage (mis)representations of the Appalachian region. Examples include Ronald L. Lewis who argues Appalachia has been literarily (and wrongly) constructed and he presents counter arguments to narratives such as the myth of isolation, single race, and always economically challenged. Denise Giardina looks at an image of her family to find clues indicating the barbarism allegedly inherent in Appalachia. She studies missionaries and speculators to point out the ways the narratives they pushed of Appalachia were untrue. Eula Hall's is the voice of a survivor. She tells her courageous story of helping people (especially women and children) even as her life was sometimes hard as she endured an abusive relationship, while also raising four kids in poverty. Hall started a health clinic for her community, first in her home and after that one burned down, she got a grant and raised the matching funds necessary to build a new facility. Hall's story challenges stereotypical notions of Appalachian people as lazy and helpless. See Eula Hall, "If There's One Thing You Can Tell Them, It's That You're Free," in *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region*, eds. Dwight Billings et al (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

[51] These descriptions come from a lawyer, a county sheriff, and other commentators from the community, and this particular quotations comes from the film's trailer. See YouTube Movies, "The Wild and Wonderful Whites of West Virginia (Trailer)," youtube.com, published May 4, 2010 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q6G_WqLp1w (accessed July 15, 2017).

[52] Mike Seeger and Ruth Pershing, dir, *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap* (El Cerrito, CA: Flower Films and Video, 1989), DVD.

[53] Jacob Young, dir, *Dancing Outlaw* (American Moviefish Independents, 2002), VHS and *Dancing Outlaw II: Jesco Goes to Hollywood* (Morgantown, WV: WNPB-TV, 1994), VHS.

[54] Danielle Robinson, *Modern Moves: Dancing Race During the Ragtime and Jazz Eras* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 92.

[55] Over the course of a typical JTE concert, the company performed a range of racial and class-based identifications, which offered audiences multiple points of entry into rhythm tap dance. Concert programs from this era indicate that JTE followed a standard format for structuring an evening-length performance. The shows opened and closed with a body percussion riff that included all of the musicians and dancers working together to create music and dance simultaneously through patting, clapping, stepping, and sometimes chanting. Each performance included a solo for each dancer, duets between two dancers or one dancer and one musician, and choreography for the three dancers to the music of the band. The musical trio also played one instrumental tune in each act of a performance. Lynn Dally, email correspondence with author, July 1, 2017. Concert programs, boxes 3, 4, and 5, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, Lynn Dally Papers, The Ohio State University Libraries.

[56] Constance Valis Hill notes there is debate about who created the *Shim Sham*: "While Leonard Reed claims to have created this routine combination with his partner Willie Bryant, it is more likely that it evolved in collaboration with the female chorus of the Whitman Sisters troupe." See Hill, *Tap Dancing America*, 80.

[57] Another example of a piece in JTE's repertoire that honors tap dance masters from vaudeville is "Doxy," a piece that Eddie Brown began to create for the company. Brown passed away before he could

finish the piece, so company dancer Sam Weber and musician Jerry Kalaf arranged what they had already learned to complete the piece. The company went on to perform "Doxy" for more than 20 years. See Lynn Dally, *Masters and Mentors: Rhythm Tap Legends* (Los Angeles, CA: Jazz Tap Ensemble, 2014), DVD.

[58] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*.

[59] Hill, *Tap Dancing America*, 162.

Chapter 2

Honoring the Past: *ETM* and *Hot Strings and Flying Feet*

Who knew there could be so much to learn from a *shuffle*? When I first joined the music and dance company Rhythm in Shoes, I had long been a tap dancer, first at a local studio as a child and eventually experiencing rhythm tap dance in college with teachers like Lynn Dally and Julie Cartier. However, I had never done any Appalachian step dancing, and since it is an important thread in the Rhythm in Shoes repertoire, I started training in it immediately. The first step I learned was the *basic* which shifts side to side with a driving, bouncing rhythm—*shuffle step, ball change, shuffle step, ball change*. I quickly learned the step as each of those foot articulations and weight shifts was very familiar to me, but I did run into one hiccup. In tap dance, that *shuffle* typically involves a *brush* of the ball of the foot to the front and then back—a *toe-toe shuffle*. In the Rhythm in Shoes *basic*, the *shuffle* was performed with a heel *scuff* forward and a toe *brush* back. After a lot of repetition, I incorporated that *heel-toe shuffle* into my body's repertoire.

At the same time that I physicalized this movement, I also cognitively interpreted the *heel-toe shuffle* as being part of the larger clogging tradition. I assumed all Appalachian step dancers performed *heel-toe shuffles* in their *basics*, and it was years later, in conversation with step dancer Nic Gareiss, that I learned that the *heel-toe shuffle* is only really a fixture of clogging technique in Rhythm in Shoes, not beyond. While this was astonishing to me at the time of the revelation, it is now one way I can make sense of the localized nature of embodied values in

dance. Sharon Leahy, the artistic director of Rhythm in Shoes, uses this minor adjustment in dance technique—using the heel *scuff* rather than the toe *brush*—to make a corporeal assertion of force. When dancers perform *heel-toe basics* in unison as a group, they present not just community, but one that might appear a stronger, more powerful community accessed through the deep and robust quality of the *heel-toe shuffle*. This localized expression of the value of community through *heel-toe shuffles* is specific to Rhythm in Shoes, and it continues on through dancers like me who still embody this technique, whether freestyle dancing or creating choreography for others.

In the analysis in this chapter, I hope to show that localized values, as embodied, social knowledge, carry more profound cultural significance than a focus strictly on physical execution illuminates. In order to access the knowledge and values contained in the body, dancers rely on their kinesthetic senses, which dance theorist Carrie Noland argues is central to one's embodiment of cultural meanings and values, whether one conforms, modifies, resists, or experiments with those values and norms. Noland contends the kinesthetic experience—the body's experience of itself through this sixth sense—enables agency through embodiment, in part, because through kinesthesia, "the subject becomes an object (as body) of her own awareness."[1] So though localized values may be taken for granted, often unspoken knowledge held within the body, these unstated, implied rules build, guide, and inform day-to-day movements and sense experiences that then guide and revise that knowledge. Through kinesthesia dancers can access this knowledge in order to perpetuate it or to revise it. In my own experience of learning the *heel-toe shuffle*, over time, I developed a new kinesthetic understanding of *shuffle step, ball change, shuffle step, ball change*. In order to incorporate the heel *scuff* at the start of the phrase, I had to drop my weight, which generated a sense of

groundedness in that step. Once I had developed that piece of kinesthetic information, I had a much easier time transferring it to other clogging steps. Over time, through repetition and practice, I developed an understanding of Appalachian step dance as being very rooted and connected to place, an understanding that arose in relation to the performance of this foundational step.

In this chapter I explore the aesthetic, social, and historical significance of tap dance and Appalachian step dance to investigate localized values beyond the *shuffles* I have just discussed. In this context, I use the term "values" to refer to the layers of significance or worth that are embodied in a dance practice by individual dancers and by communities of practice. To enrich this analysis of values as embodied through dance, I follow Sherril Dodds to examine physical movements as "localized expressions of value."[2] Specifically, in my project, I argue that as tap and Appalachian step dancers develop their practices in particular local contexts—neighborhood studios, geographic regions, or percussive dance companies, to name a few—they come to embody the idiosyncrasies of their communities. Examples of these might include dropping one's heels when tap dancing or keeping them up off of the floor, using *heel-toe shuffles* in a *basic* clogging step or using *toe-toe shuffles*, practicing improvisation regularly or never doing it at all. Taken together, a group develops its own identity by embodying specific physical movements and habitual practices that are part of the genre but also unique to the community. In this way, localized values are situated, social, and embodied knowledge that physicalize characteristics and traits that communities affiliated with a form find significant. Analyzing dance practices and performances through the lens of localized values illuminates a depth of context-specific knowledge that is also situated within longer legacies of practice. Thus, by describing ways the localized values of tap dance and Appalachian step dance manifest

historically and choreographically, my analysis further illuminates innovation as the aesthetic philosophy of tap dance and ongoingness as that which guides Appalachian step dance.

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, I suggest localized values emerge on many levels including through the execution of individual steps, choreographic investigation of particular themes, commentary from dancers and choreographers, and even my own analysis. My experience as a tap dancer and Appalachian step dancer has illuminated three particular realms of value—individuality, community, and respect for the past, which I briefly introduce here. The localized value of individuality primarily manifests through stylistic freedom as dancers develop their own characteristic style within the confines of the rules of their practice. Through individuality of style, a dancer asserts agency over a practice that she shares with others. The value of community appears through relationships among dancers. The third localized value I propose is respect for the past, which is performed through continued play with historic practices and through corporeal and rhetorical citations of dancestors, a term I use to understand the relationships between dancers and aesthetics in the present and the past. Depending upon the form and the context, these values come together in different ways, and they frequently overlap. While I acknowledge that another scholar might identify a different set of values depending upon their own practice or preferences, the values I have identified as central to tap dance and Appalachian step dance are based upon my own experience and relationships with practitioners in the present and the past. Throughout the chapter I examine corporeal and rhetorical statements of value to reveal contrasts between tap dance and Appalachian step dance.

The chapter is organized around localized values as they mediate between aesthetic philosophies and individual practice, which enables me to compare recent concert dance choreographies to the genres' long-term legacies. Specifically, I ask whether it is possible for

choreographers who stage tap dance and Appalachian step dance in the concert dance context to convey aesthetic philosophies and localized values in a way that maintains the historic integrity of the practices. This is an especially important question based upon my contention that the ethno-racial inheritances of tap dance and Appalachian step dance are transmitted through the aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongingness as well as the localized values of individuality, community, and respect for the past. Further, by engaging comparative analysis between tap dance and Appalachian step dance, I highlight ways these inheritances differ in the practices.

The localized value of respect for the past is a vital component for formulating the aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness in tap dance and Appalachian step dance. Respect for the past demonstrates that history is not just the story tap dancers and Appalachian step dancers tell themselves about their past, but it is actually something they dance, feel, and live. In tap dance, the notion of innovation implies that tap dancers today build upon that which their predecessors had developed, and ongoingness suggests Appalachian dancers in the present are in continual relationship to those from the past. In other words, the importance of long-term legacy in tap dance and Appalachian step dance is embodied in aesthetic philosophies and localized values. Individual dancers transmit innovation, ongoingness, individuality, community, and respect for the past through the performance of steps and aesthetics that are tied to specific historical legacies and experiences. Tap dancers and Appalachian step dancers appreciate the people, places, practices, and aesthetics of the past that inform the practices as they are today. Dancers understand that single people alone cannot build and maintain an entire genre of dance on their own.

As ethno-racial projects that value the past, though differently, tap dance and Appalachian step dance and their aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness insist that history and legacy persist through bodies and genre-specific practices. To combat rhetoric that posits such physical knowledge as fleeting or even unfounded, performance theorist Diana Taylor devised the notion of the repertoire, which she describes as "all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral and invalid forms of knowledge and evidence."[3] She goes on, "there is a politics behind notions of ephemerality, a long tradition, which in the Americas dates back to the Conquest, of thinking of embodied knowledge as that which disappears because it cannot be contained or recuperated through the archive. Nonetheless, multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, reconstituting themselves—transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next."[4] Like the repertoire, innovation and ongoingness transmit the historical legacies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance over time and across bodies.

Because I conceive of localized values as embodied, social knowledges that mediate between an individual's physical, material embodiment of a dance practice and the over-arching, genre-wide aesthetic philosophies that guide dance practices, I organized the following sections around the three localized values I have proposed above. As the chapter proceeds, I briefly introduce the two recent concert dance choreographies upon which the analyses in this chapter are based: *ETM: The Initial Approach* by Dorrance Dance and *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* by Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble.[5] Whereas the previous chapter addressed concertization as a process that introduced tap dance and Appalachian step dance to the concert stage via the aesthetics of the class act of vaudeville, in this chapter, I examine the choreographic mediation of the history and legacy of the practices via the expectations of concertization. First, I address the

expression of the value for the past through dancestral citations by tap dancers and Appalachian step dancers rhetorically as well as physically, both in situ and on stage. Because individuality and community function differently in tap dance and Appalachian step dance, I divide that part of the analysis by dance style. Individuality and community come together in my analysis of tap dance and they are separate in the analysis of Appalachian step dance. In each section I move back and forth between examining historic practices like the *Shim Sham* and communal square dancing and choreographic manifestations of aesthetic philosophies and localized values in current concert dance work.

Throughout the chapter I show that as dancers reimagine the practice of tap dance while honoring its past and as they persistently maintain the legacy of Appalachian step dance, they uphold historic continuity in the practices even as they perform in the present. At their core, concert dance choreographies that sustain and uphold the aesthetic philosophies and localized values of tap dance and Appalachian step dance convey elements of the ethno-racial inheritances of the forms.

Concertizing Localized Values and Aesthetic Philosophies

Though they share localized values, the differing histories and aesthetic philosophies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance means the shared values manifest differently in the practices. Further, even within the genre the values may be physicalized differently depending upon the context. Tap dance, the beginnings of which can be traced to interactions between enslaved Africans and Irish indentured servants in the Caribbean in the 1600s, really coalesced as a distinct genre through 19th century minstrelsy and early 20th century vaudeville performance.[6] As discussed in chapter 1, tap dance choreographers of the late 1970s and early 1980s utilized similar representational strategies as those of vaudeville, which indicates there is

continuity between the stages. This chapter addresses other historical practices and aesthetics that similarly shape tap dance on the concert stage. In contrast, Appalachian step dance has had a dual existence as an improvisational, social practice and as an exhibition form at festivals and fairs, where it first appeared in the 1920s. In the early years of Appalachian dance as an exhibition form, dancers tended simply to transfer their social square dance practice to the stage with very little revision or change. However, as I discuss at length in this chapter, over time distinct styles of team clogging developed for the stage. This chapter addresses such staged presentations of Appalachian step dance as well as characteristics from social settings in the transference of the genre to the concert stage.

The concert dance examples explored in this chapter include *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* by Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble and *ETM: The Initial Approach* by Dorrance Dance. I introduce each piece briefly here, and over the course of the chapter I examine particular sections of them in depth. Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble's *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* includes a great variety of percussive step dance forms including Irish *sean-nós*, Cape Breton *strathspey* and *gigue d'isle*, English clog dancing, Hungarian boot dancing, South African gumboot dancing, tap dancing, and more, all performed with live music by the Footworks band. While the variety of dances presented is varied, my analysis focuses on the Appalachian dances, the majority of which are examples of team clogging, though the dancers perform freestyle flatfooting in a couple of instances. Presented as a collection of dances from around the world that influenced the development of Appalachian step dance and tap dance in the U.S., the concert has an educational tone about it, particularly as individual sections are narrated from an onstage microphone. That said, the music and dance staged in *Hot Strings* generate an enthusiastic response from audiences as they tap their toes, clap their hands, and sing along with the

performers, thus generating a broad sense of community that includes concert viewers alongside the performers they witness.

The title of Dorrance Dance's *ETM* stands for "electronic tap music," and is a play on EDM, the acronym for electronic dance music. As dancers *shuffle*, *step*, and *chug* atop electronic dance boards that were conceived of and engineered by Dorrance Dance Associate Artistic Director Nicholas Van Young, the audience hears anything from a simple tone to a cymbal crash to the sound of a deep breath. The wired dance boards function like an electronic drum kit that is programmed with hundreds of sounds on different loops, and each of the more than twenty-five boards has its own series of sounds and tones associated with it. The music created in the piece is multidimensional as, in addition to the wired dance boards, the dancers also incorporate acoustic dance boards, tap shoes, leather soled shoes, and corporeal accents such as clapping and patting various parts of the body. In one riveting scene, the acoustic boards are fitted with a piece of corrugated metal along one side, and the dancers drag their feet across this rough surface and manipulate giant metal chains, adding even greater dimensions to the soundscape. Engaging each of these surfaces and tools, dancers access a range of sounds. Further, utilizing Ableton computer software manipulated by a controllerist,[7] and in some instances Wii remotes[8] controlled by the dancers, the sounds are mixed and looped live to create a new soundtrack during each individual performance. As expected in tap dance, the performers in *ETM* are both dancers and musicians, yet in this 21st century format, the ways the dancers create and interact with the music is innovative and sometimes electronic.

Hot Srings and *ETM* are markedly different choreographic projects, yet each both honors and diverges from the roots that guide the practices. In the next section, I specifically compare the way the choreographers reference their particular relationships with the history of tap dance

and Appalachian step dance while at the same time negotiating the expectations of the concert stage.

"I Am in Your Shuffles": Citing Dancestors, Honoring the Past

In her remarks upon winning the Big Apple Tap Festival award in 2016, tap dancer Brenda Bufalino looked out at the dancers in the audience and said, "Whether you know it or not, I have history with you. I am in your shuffles."[9] Bufalino's comment characterizes dancestry, which I connect with the localized value of respect for the past and with the aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness. In what follows, I demonstrate ways tap dancers and Appalachian step dancers pay tribute to their histories by honoring their dancestry. Whereas tap dancers often explicitly name and sometimes physically cite the dancers whose legacies their bodies carry, Appalachian step dancers honor their dancestors less overtly and instead allow their continued practice to connect them to the ongoing legacy of Appalachian dance. In this section I illustrate the localized value of respect for the past by contrasting the subtle differences between ways percussive step dancers reference and cite their dancestors.

Tap dancers honor their pasts by citing their dancestors rhetorically and corporeally, which enables them to claim membership in and allegiance to a particular legacy of tap dance. Because individuals have been noted throughout the history of tap dance, from William Henry Lane who was known as Master Juba to Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, from Gene Kelly to Fred Astaire, contemporary tap dancers can align themselves with the particular styles of these noted dancers. If a dancer cites Honi Coles, Dianne Walker, Gregory Hines, or Savion Glover as among their dancestors, she is aligning herself with the legacy of rhythm tap, whereas another list—Ned Wayburn, Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Vera Ellen, or Eleanor Powell—might connect her to Broadway or Hollywood tap styles. Claiming association with one or the other of these

styles also indicates particular distinctions of race and class, as the syncopated rhythms and groundedness of rhythm tap dance is affiliated with the African American experience as compared to Hollywood and Broadway tap, which have long been associated with whiteness. Dancers carry a broad legacy of the dance form in their bodies, and they perform their personal lineages with each iteration of their practice.

Tap dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of Dorrance Dance, Michelle Dorrance is affiliated with the legacy of rhythm tap dance, which is apparent in the varied ways she cites her dancestors. Dorrance, the artistic director and choreographer of Dorrance Dance, which she founded in 2011, cites her dancestry rhetorically in interviews, program notes, and pre- and post-performance discussions as well as corporeally in performance. In the early 1990s Dorrance began her training in rhythm tap dance with Gene Medler's North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble. Medler understood the importance of tap dance masters, and he instilled this value in his young charges by introducing them to living legends whenever possible. Dorrance has danced with prominent tap dance figures from Jimmy Slyde to Peg Leg Bates, Gregory Hines to Fayard and Harold Nicholas and contemporary masters Savion Glover, Brenda Bufalino, and Dianne Walker, to name only a few. Dorrance lists these tap dancers as influences in her biography in concert programs,[10] and on her company website, she states that she "wishes to credit the master hoofers from whom she studied with in her youth for constant inspiration and influence."[11] She also physicalizes steps and rhythms she learned from them in performance, like when she skims across the stage during a solo referencing Jimmy Slyde. In addition to honoring these celebrated tap dancers, Dorrance, a white woman, does not shy away from the complicated racial history of tap dance, which she talks about in interviews and which she formally researched through a self-created undergraduate major in American democracy and race in the

arts at New York University. This historical and theoretical grounding alongside her long-time physical practice informs the choreography Dorrance creates today.

That tap dancers like Dorrance cite their dancestors illuminates one way tap dance also aligns with the aesthetic philosophy of ongoingness. By referencing dancers from the past, dancers in the present locate their work within a particular landscape of movement and musicality and demonstrate the ongoingness of tap dance practice. At the same time, this also allows dancers to point out the ways their work is distinct from their predecessors. By working within the legacy they inherit, tap dancers also establish their own voices within it, through which they may make innovative contributions. By directly citing her dancestors, Dorrance clearly marks her place in the legacy of tap dance history, she links her current practice with that of the past, and with Dorrance Dance's piece *ETM*, she offers an iteration of tap dance for the 21st century.

ETM engages with the tensions between honoring the past and choreographing to the future, and one distinct movement legacy Dorrance has inherited that plays a central role in *ETM* is her performance experience in the Broadway show *STOMP.* While above and in my historical overview of tap dance styles in the introduction I suggest tap dance on Broadway stages is more closely aligned with the Irish jig and clog legacy, *STOMP* is one exception to this (as is Glover's *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*), as *STOMP* embraces many Africanist aesthetics including polyrhythm, groundedness, and the inseparability of music and dance. In most of her choreography, Dorrance draws on the legacy of making rhythms with found objects such as trashcans, brooms, and buckets. Here, I examine Dorrrance's citation of her dancestral tie to *STOMP* through the incorporation of *patting juba* in *ETM*.[12]

Patting juba, which is also referred to as body percussion, is a practice long-associated with tap dance, and in *ETM* it complements the electronic music created through the interactions between bodies and technology. Historically, *patting juba* was used as musical accompaniment for dancing when instruments were unavailable, forcibly removed, or to augment other musical accompaniment. In *ETM*, body percussion is similarly used to accompany the dancing but here it is choreographed and used compositionally to set up a distinction between Dorrance and the ensemble, an individual and her community. Midway through the performance, the bass player, Greg Richardson, lays down a simple, swinging groove that four dancers play along with through choreographed clapping, patting, and *stamping* in unison. They incorporate their leather-soled steps with body percussion to augment Richardson's groove.

With bodies and bass, this group of five performers creates the soundscape for a solo by Dorrance, and at the same time, they unite as a community. Initially when Dorrance enters for her solo, she and the ensemble all dance together, with Dorrance acting almost as the lead to the ensemble's back-up, but eventually, Dorrance and the ensemble take turns taking breaks. In tap dance, when dancers take breaks, a practice that is also referred to as trading or trading-eights, one dancer performs solo, improvised footwork for a set amount of time, alternating with other dancers or musicians in the session. In this section of *ETM*, Dorrance solos in the silences left as the ensemble pauses. Some of Dorrance's breaks are quite clever, making the audience chuckle as she responds to her fellow dancers' music—stealing their steps,[13] challenging them to be faster, higher, smarter than she.[14] After a number of exchanges, Dorrance exits, twisting her lower body against her torso in her signature *suzie-q*, and the ensemble then takes turns soloing in the breaks of Richardson's music before eventually exiting. At the end, just one dancer finishes the piece with Richardson. Dorrance's choreographic and musical use of *patting juba* is

one example of the ways her choreography physicalizes tap dance's value for honoring the past. At the same time, she and the ensemble also incorporate the importance of individuals and the community to tap dance by putting individual solos against choreographed group movement, values I discuss in more detail below. *ETM* does not narrate this past nor these values, but rather, the piece stages it through choreographed body rhythms and interpersonal interactions.

As Dorrance embodies her dancestry, so too do Appalachian step dancers. However, in contrast, solo Appalachian step dancers are much less likely to name their teachers—to announce their dancestry—than tap dancers. In situ, naming dancestors seems less important to Appalachian step dancers,[15] and while I would argue that dancers perform their dance lineage, I acknowledge the difficulty in identifying it from the outside. Unnamed corporeal inheritances are rhetorically invisible, even as they are physicalized through the body, and I connect this lack of dancestral specificity in Appalachian step dance to the notion of tradition and to the aesthetic philosophy of ongoingness. Such unnamed alliances with dancers past embody the localized value of difference, which means that each solo dancer has freedom of style, never having to match her fellow dancers. In this way, passing on the legacy of Appalachian step dance does not require special training. Instead, as dancers dance, they carry on the practice.

In contrast, when clogging teams and exhibition groups formed, dancers started to name names in order to give people credit for their work and influence, particularly referring to the men who organized clogging groups and dance festivals. Examples include Dudley Culp who founded the Green Grass Cloggers, Sam Queen who began the Soco Gap Cloggers, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford who established the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival.[16] These men pulled the dancing out of social contexts and organized it to put it in front of large groups of viewers, some of whom may not have heard of or seen this dancing in other contexts. This naming and staging

disrupts the notion of ongoingness as something unnamed, but the legacy created by Culp, Queen, and Lunsford continues today, particularly through the concert dance choreography of people like Eileen Carson Schatz.

Carson Schatz comes out of the legacy of team clogging, but interestingly, this founding artistic director of Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble tends not to cite the people from whom she learned her Appalachian step dancing. Born in Maryland where her parents had moved from Tennessee, Carson states that her mother and aunt would flatfoot around the house when she was a child, but she does not directly indicate that this is where she learned to dance.[17] In fact, it was not until 1970 that Carson Schatz first embraced old-time music and dancing as a style with which she wanted to engage. In 1974, she joined the Green Grass Cloggers (GGC), a team clogging touring ensemble, and in 1979, Carson Schatz split away to begin the Fiddle Puppet Dancers, a quartet of dancers also formerly with the GGC. Though inspired by her time with the GGC, Carson Schatz's aim with the Fiddle Puppets was to explore more creative compositions for the quartet, which could be staged in concert venues. Due to an expanded repertoire of step dance forms and additional company members, Carson Schatz renamed the group Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble in 1994.

Throughout her career, educating audiences about the history and cultural roots of Appalachian dance has been a central element of Carson Schatz's philosophy of dancing and of staging percussive step dance forms. She suggests when GGC began, the members of the group were not interested in "clogging correctly" but rather, they were eager to "bust loose."[18] Carson Schatz had a similar mentality when she began dancing with the group, and these intentions suggests she and her peers were interested in innovating within the genre of Appalachian team clogging. However, she describes herself and others as eventually identifying as "partially

preservationists," as they developed the desire to share and teach the dance form so it might be respected and supported.[19] Though preservation does not perfectly align with ongoingness, it does indicate an intention toward maintaining a relationship to the practice as it had historically been performed. Carson Schatz's choreography and concert dance performances continue to embody this conflict between preservation and busting loose, between a desire to maintain tradition and to invent it anew. The concertized choreography of *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* is a blend of dances presented almost as "found" artifacts, which she learned from others and inserted into her concert, and pieces Carson Schatz created herself.

Carson identifies as a folklorist and a creative performance artist, and the opening suite of dances for *Hot Strings* embodies this combination of motivations. In contrast to Carson's personal dancestral elisions of her Appalachian dance history, the opening suite overtly traces the cultural dancestry of Appalachian dance through a theatricalized danced encounter between European American, African American, and American Indian people in the Appalachian Mountains. The suite includes "Celtic Connections," which features Irish *sean-nós jigs* and *reels*, and "Roots," which includes a *gumboot* dance inspired by a South African traditional dance and a Cherokee chant that is accompanied by a "dance to the four directions."[20] The suite ends with "Crossroads," which includes three dancers who, according to the program, "[portray] the meeting of Irish, Native American, and African cultures meeting [*sic*] in America, resulting in new traditions of music and dance, such as Southern Appalachian music and dance…"[21] To physicalize such an encounter, one dancer enters with upright posture while executing the fast-clicking footwork of the Irish reel, another performs grounded footwork with flexed, angular arm gestures earlier associated with the Cherokee chant, and the third hunches forward at the waist while jabbing her flexed elbows toward the ground to reference the African *gumboot* dance.

Once the three dancers meet at center stage, they continue their individual movements until the music shifts into an old-time Appalachian tune, and at that moment, the dancers perform choreographed clogging steps in unison.

Important in this discussion of citation, Carson Schatz explicitly names her sources for the Irish dances. In a sort of museumification of percussive dance, it is as though the steps were plucked from other bodies, installed into the bodies of the Footworks dancers, and then transferred into this theatre space for the audience's inspection. The introduction to the Cherokee chant was similarly presented as a stand-alone item for us to observe.[22] In contrast, the choreography for "Crossroads" is noted as coming out of her creative process, though she does not indicate the inspiration or sources of her creative contributions. Even still, "Crossroads" blends her interest in folkore and choreography, and I would suggest that her choreographies that more overtly stage Appalachian dance practices of square dance and flatfooting, which I discuss in the following section, similarly require her to bring together her artist and folklorist selves. Such pieces are not removed from some isolated mountain home and staged in concert, but still, they are created upon a notion of authentic Appalachia. Carson does acknowledge her own creative contribution as she is listed in the program as the choreographer for those pieces. However, whereas she associates particular people with the other dance forms represented in this concert, she never names the people who have been part of her experience with Appalachian dance, which invokes a kind of timelessness and placelessness of her practice that I associate with ongoingness. With ongoingness, there is contentment in dancing right now, with staying alongside the music and maintaining a relationship to the pulse of the music in the present—physically and metaphorically.

Individuality and Community: Physicalizing Relationships among Practitioners

Because tap dance and Appalachian step dance perform the localized values of individuality and community in very different ways, the analysis in this section is divided by practice rather than by value. In tap dance, individuality and community almost always co-exist together, which Dorrance Dance demonstrates very clearly in the opening of the concert and the section entitled "Boards and Chains." In contrast, in Appalachian step dance individuality predominates in freestyle dancing whereas community is prominent in square dancing and team clogging. Though the two dimensions do interface in particular contexts, as in the Footwork's piece "Jubilation!" the analysis herein largely addresses them separately. By dividing the investigation in this section by dance practice, I honor the distinct history of each practice, and I highlight particular ways choreographers negotiate the expectations of concertization with the importance of practice-based localized values and aesthetic philosophies.

Individuality within Community Inflect Each Other in Tap Dance

In general, shared choreography serves as a social and technical structure around which groups of dancers can cohere in the moment of performance.[23] In tap dance specifically, at the same time that dancers embody the notion of community through shared choreography, individual expression within choreography is also encouraged. To illustrate ways individuals are always in relation to their larger communities of practice, I examine the performance of individuality through shared choreography of the historic tap dance the *Shim Sham* and the apart playing required to execute the choreography of Dorrance Dance's *ETM*. As the following analysis demonstrates, depending upon the context, the interconnection of individuality and community is facilitated through experimentation in the moment of performance, individual execution of inter-locking rhythms, and physiological necessity based upon physical needs of

different dancers. Importantly, I demonstrate that Dorrance's concertized iteration of tap dance translates social values to this performance context in savvy ways.

Most rhythm tap dancers know the *Shim Sham*, which is a simple piece made up of four steps that extend the length of a standard musical chorus.[24] Also called the *Shim Sham Shimmy*, the *Shim Sham* is considered the "national anthem of tap dance," and because dancers all over the world know the *Shim Sham*, this choreography unites the larger "community" of tap dance even when not physically in the same geographic space. However, just because the dance has existed relatively stably since its inception in the late 1920s and just because masses of tap dancers know it, does not mean we all know it or perform it exactly alike.[25] When a group of dancers comes together for the *Shim Sham*, there is some variety of stylistic performance through placement of weight in certain steps, rhythmic accents, and even minor variations of steps. This variety is, in part, an effect of the oral transmission of historic dances such as the *Shim Sham*.

In certain contexts, this contrast of stylistic execution—of the performance of individuality alongside other members of the community—is an effect of bringing together a group of soloists. Often used to conclude performance showcases, which largely feature soloists, the *Shim Sham* unites disparate groups of performers. Videos of such finales are accessible on YouTube, including one from the 2013 Stockholm Tap Festival, which includes some of the most sought after teachers and performers of tap dance today.[26] I chose this video specifically because, across the stage, the dancers' performances epitomize the notion of individuality in community in which the choreography unites a group of people but each dancer's performance of the choreography also showcases their personality and style within the group. The rhythms of the *Shim Sham* are simple—*doo-be-da, doo-be-da, doo-be-da-ba-doo-be-da*. Repeatable—*doo-be-da, doo-be-da*. And they swing—*doo-be-da-ba-doo-be-da*. Fast or slow, tap dancers appear

relaxed throughout, repeating a single phrase three times before ending the step with a break—*boop bah beee-da-beee-da-be boop bah*. For most of the performance in the video, the dancers maintain an easy-coolness in their countenance, and their footwork does as well. It appears that the *Shim Sham* has been a part of their vocabularies for ages, so the most interesting moments are when they break away from the simple, repeatable, rhythms into unpredictable syncopations.

Performing the *cross-over* step, dancers shift their weight right to left, right to left with a rocking motion—*deet-dah, deet-dah*—before walking out the rest of the phrase—*dee-da-dee-da-dah*. While dancers Nicholas Van Young, Sam Weber, and Andrew Nemr keep it classic with a wide-legged stance and easy, flowing arm gestures, a few of their dancing counterparts get funky with the *Shim Sham*. For example, Michelle Dorrance is playful as she breaks away from the group with syncopated *suzie-qs*, swiveling her knees side-to-side and playing double-time triplets with each step—*deet-deet-dah deet-deet-dah ah*. After a pause, she adds a visual accent with a quick flick-kick as she leaps into the next phrase—*ba-dah*! Nearly at center stage, Dorrance's expressions are hard to miss. Similarly, in the spirit of rhythmic play, Jason Samuels-Smith adds extra *heels*, *toes*, and *stomps*, and he enlivens the musicality of the dance by pushing the already swinging steps with his own syncopated accents. More subtly, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards' *Shim Sham* sizzles. Rotating her hips, twisting them side-to-side, and swiveling figure eights, Sumbry-Edwards dances from her pelvis rather than her feet in the *cross-over* step. She squeezes her shoulders up and in toward her ears as her entire upper body counters the rotations of her hips, and she allows her arms to float along as though riding the wave of motion. Her legs also respond to the shifting, twisting of her pelvis with wide, long-legged, turned-out steps on the balls of her feet. Keeping her feet close to the floor, Sumbry-Edwards also keeps close to the standard rhythms of the phrase—*deet-dah, deet-dah, dee-da-dee-da-dah*. Just at the end,

however, Sumbry-Edwards lifts her right knee to visually accent the syncopated—*ah-ah*—that follows. This subtlety of movement and rhythm is the perfect balance of hot and cool, an embodiment of the Africanist aesthetic of the cool.[27]

As a structure that has united tap dancers for nearly a century, the *Shim Sham* has been an enduring practice, and it complicates my assertion that tap dance is guided by the aesthetic philosophy of innovation. This long-time choreography reveals a dimension of ongoingness in the legacy of tap dance and illuminates the flipside of innovation: in order to innovate, one must have something to work from. For each of the performers described above, the steps of the *Shim Sham* are always clearly the inspiration for their playfulness. The dancers take what they know about the steps, about rhythm and musicality, and about weight shifting, and they use this knowledge to make the dance their own in the moment. Further, the contrasting styles across the stage establish the distinctiveness of the individual dancers, and the shared vocabulary of the choreography connects them as a community. Even as the *Shim Sham* endures, with each performance of it, tap dancers may take liberties in their stylistic execution of it and continually access innovation through their individual embodiment.

The choreography in Dorrance Dance's *ETM: The Initial Approach* similarly brings individuals into a communal relationship, specifically as they work together to create the musical soundscore of the piece through their dancing. At the start of the show, the low tone of a bowed bass fills the darkened theatre before being interrupted by what sounds like a cackling, digital laugh. Soon, light and legs break through the darkness, and as a dancer steps on a small wooden platform the sound of a tone that complements the first fills the space. After a beat, another pool of light, a different pair of legs, and a new, lower tone add to the score. Soon, four such collections of legs, light, and sound stretch across the series of platforms that flank the upstage

area of the performance space. Certain pitches come to be associated with particular pairs of legs, and they establish a sparse, yet hummable melody. As the light opens to illuminate the whole stage, another performer appears on a drum set in an upstage corner. Throughout this introduction, the dancer/musicians slowly and simply introduce the audience to the sound score and the technology they use to produce it.

Each dancer stands atop one large acoustic board with four smaller, wired boards lined up across the front, as though each individual has his or her own tap dance drum kit upon which they may play their part. Depending upon which small board they step or tap on, they produce a different tone. Some sound like notes from an organ, others like the cymbals or bass drum attached to the upstage drum set. Once the dancers have introduced the technology they will use to make music throughout the evening, they shift to the acoustic boards and perform a long series of steps that are familiar to a tap dance audience—accented *paddle and rolls*, *heel drops*, *spanks*, *steps*, *cramp rolls*, *chugs*, and more. These steps are not flashy, but the sounds roll quickly off the dancers' feet as they execute them in tight unison. After tapping out a series of rhythms and steps in analogue, the dancers step onto their digital boards to combine sounds from the two. This opening sequence introduces a central element of the show: *ETM* takes it as a fact that tap dancers make music[28] and adds a new dimension through technology. More specifically to the point here, because of the particular kind of technology the dancers engage, the music is only possible through communal labor.[29]

Like a bell choir, each dancer is responsible for certain notes and not others, and the melody is only accessible when the dancers are in sync. This combination of individuals dancing their own parts yet coming together to create one unified piece of music and dance aligns closely with the notion of apart playing as discussed by Robert Farris Thompson in his essay, "The

Aesthetic of the Cool: West African Dance."[30] In West African drum choirs, musicians play apart from one another in that each performs their own rhythm and then these rhythms add up to one polyrhythmic whole. Thompson addresses multiple dimensions of apartness—the separation of musicians and dancers as well as of master drummer from other musicians—noting that "a certain amount of performing together balances the apartness."[31] *ETM* embodies the notion that, by dancing apart, musicians and dancers "ensure a dialog between movement and sound."[32] As dancers simultaneously create music and movement, they do so apart, yet together.

Such apartness introduces both innovation and choreographic complications in the context of *ETM*. In order to execute the melody that the boards enable, and to still maintain largely unison choreography, each individual dancer has a singular chorographic score. What I mean by this is, while all of the dancers might be turning or executing a shared underlying rhythm, there are moments when individuals need to break out to hit their melodic note on the wired board and then jump back into the unison choreography. Sometimes this happens in the matter of a 16^{th} or 32^{nd} note. Such individual precision within the group also creates a dynamic sense of community. As each individual plays his or her notes, the group movement adds up to a melodic phrase. Thus this choreography creates a dynamic, multidimensional community and enables innovation through introducing the melodic possibilities of tap dance.

The choreographic dimension of individuality and community also emerges in the "Boards and Chains" section of *ETM*, but it differs from the opening sequence described above in terms of technology, use of props, and an intention toward highlighting individual physicality. In most of Dorrance's choreography, dancers attend to the space around them with an expansive use of the body by crouching down, extending their limbs to far reaches, and visually punctuating accents made with their tap shoes to show that the feet work in tandem with the rest

of the body. “Boards and Chains” is no different, as the dancers execute the unison choreography with their whole bodies, thus adding three-dimensional shape to the aural dimensions of rhythm and musicality. Performed completely in analogue atop wooden boards at center stage, the dancers hold long lengths of heavy, metal chains in one hand while tap dancing with their feet below. Maintaining their grip on the chain with the right hand, each dancer allows the weight of the chain to pull the right side of their bodies down so that as the metal hits the wood, the sound of the chain adds to the rhythm and soundscape of the piece. As the dancers bend their torsos forward and simultaneously drop their right shoulders, they also amplify the appearance of the rhythm by creating a twist through their torsos, weighed down by the chain on the right, as the left side of their bodies float up. They create three-dimensional accents with spirals through their spines. In between these moments, which happen once every two measures, three of the four dancers on stage perform choreographed footwork in unison, but it can be difficult to discern whether or not they are actually doing the same steps because they are so committed to their individual expressions of these shared steps. Throughout the choreography, dancers are faced with nearly impossible sequences of movement, so when they need to execute something like a *pull-back/turn/jump/cramp-pull-back/wing-triple-shuffle/stomp* in 2.5 counts, dancers have to negotiate their individual, physical needs and sense of space, weight, and time to execute the choreography, and they seem to have this freedom of individual expression by design. Even when executing unison choreography, such performances by Dorrance Dance highlight individuality of expression in shared choreography.

Such freedom is vital to the continued legacy of innovation in tap dance. As Dorrance honors her dancestors in words and in physical citations, she has made tap dance choreography her own, which is especially clear in *ETM*. The combination of individuality and community is

much like the relationship between innovation and respect for the past. Tap dancers are meant to be themselves as they follow their own individual creative expressions of rhythm and movement, and at the same time they maintain a connection to the community via tap dance's long-standing legacy. In *ETM*, Dorrance and her company of dancers certainly do so.

Individuality and Community as Distinct Values in Appalachian Step Dance

In Appalachian step dance, expressions of the localized values of individuality and community are context-specific and frequently appear separately. To illustrate this contention, I examine the performance of individuality in solo, freestyle flatfooting and expressions of community in team clogging. As the following analysis demonstrates, individuality and community do not solely exist separately, but even when they overlap, typically one value stands out more so than the other. Further, by examining examples of freestyle dancing and team clogging in Footworks's *Hot Strings and Flying Feet*, I suggest expressions of the localized values of individuality and community are not easily transferred to the concert stage.

Solo, freestyle forms of Appalachian step dance such as flatfooting, buck dancing, and hoedowning value individuality and difference. I distinguish a contrast between individuality and difference in this way: When dancers share steps or even a general style, they access individuality by making their performance of what they share their own, which is similar to the performance of individuality noted above in the description of the *Shim Sham* and *ETM*. In contrast, difference in Appalachian step dance implies that all kinds of dance are valid. For example, in some instances of freestyle step dancing, the only connecting factor among dancers is that they move their feet in response to the music. To further demonstrate what I mean by difference as a kind of individuality, I turn to the documentary film *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap* in which dancers explain this characteristic through their words

and their movements.[33] A collection that features more than 20 dancers from across Appalachia, *Talking Feet* demonstrates that vast stylistic possibilities for this form. Many of the interviewed dancers commented on the philosophy that though everyone dances differently, everyone is right. For example, when buck dancer Burton Edwards calls Appalachian step dances "freedom dances," he means not only that dancing is time for relaxation and celebration, but also that the dances are freeing because, "you're never wrong. You can be taught, or you can watch, and you can do this, and everybody's different but everybody's right."[34] Flatfoot dancer Rodney Sutton also states that buck dancing in Appalachia is not standardized, emphasizing that people dance and express themselves individually and that there is no right or wrong way of dancing. Instead, by reacting to music and letting rhythms come out of the feet, people find enjoyment. Edwards, Sutton, and other voices in the documentary suggest that difference in dance style is the result of difference in people, personalities, experience, and even geography. Similarly, as a result of Susan Spalding's ethnographic study of dance in six communities across Appalachia, she contends that dancing freestyle "reflects an inner sensibility."[35] In Appalachian step dancing, dancers have the freedom to expresses themselves and the music as fits their preferences and experience.

Difference is not just a value expressed rhetorically, so *Talking Feet* also displays a range of styles. For example, Willis Fields's hoedowning is less about foot articulations and more about responding to the music by keeping his feet moving, his arms pumping up and down, and his body shifting side to side. In her buck dancing, Algia Mae Hinton keeps her feet close to the floor with smooth, sliding, gliding *chugs* and *heel drops* with an occasional *stomp* to accent the music. And dancers like Gussie Lane and Pheobe Parsons look almost as though they are walking, stepping side to side, subtly lifting the toe of the standing leg and occasionally inserting

a *scuff* of the heel as they swing a leg forward. As demonstrated in these examples, freestyle flatfooting is based upon personal expression of the music, so in this genre of step dance individuality as difference emerges through each dancer's own physical interpretation of the music through movement.

Such an emphasis on difference manifests ongoingness in Appalachian step dance. Freestyle dancers who respond to music with improvised movements rather than with choreographed steps do come together as a community. When people dance near one another in a group, with many people moving their feet to the music, bouncing, kicking, and patting though not necessarily in unison, they share the music and the floor, and their unity is epitomized and maintained through difference. Because no two people need to look the same, the value of difference cultivates the aesthetic philosophy of ongoingness, as dancers are not pressured to match one another or to recreate specific steps and styles. Expectations of similarity among dancers might hamper dancing and interrupt the ongoingness of the practice. The freedom afforded through the value of difference means that two dancers can dance side by side in their own ways, that their dancing is aesthetically and culturally valid, and that they are carrying on their community, their tradition, and their culture through dancing.

However, this valuing of difference does not mean that style in Appalachian step dancing is a free-for-all, particularly in some specific contexts. While attending the Appalachian String Band Music Festival in Clifftop, West Virginia in 2012, I took a solo freestyle step dance workshop from West Virginia clogger, Lou Maiuri, who at the time was 84 years old. Maiuri instructed us that the preferred style for flatfooting in this region included keeping the feet close to the ground and under the body with absolutely no rhythmic syncopation in the steps. In this case, individuality of style as expressed within these constraints was acceptable, but expressions

of difference by doing one's own thing were not. Of course dancers all around the festival grounds broke Maiuri's rules many times over the course of the weekend, but in the context of the festival dance contest, those who deviated did so at the risk of losing the competition. In order to win, a dancer had to abide by these particular movement values and expectations, which continue to be advanced by an aging generation of West Virginia cloggers. This example of following long-established and continually perpetuated rules is one way through which values as embodied social knowledge contribute to the aesthetic philosophy of ongoingness. Though dancers attending the festival may have preferred to relate to the music using differing kinds of rhythms and steps, within the constraints of the festival contest, they also learned to embody the local movement values. Further, the festival community enforced these values through the regulatory rules and expectations of the contest.

The difference that is accessible through freestyle footwork is not so easily transferred to the concert stage, where audiences often expect unified, structured choreography and where company dancers share many steps and stylistic attributes. In *Hot Strings* Carson seems to suggest it is possible to stage freestyle individuality, but only in a limited way. While the piece "Jubilation!"[36] engages individuality through freestyle dance breaks by each of the dancers, it also requires choreographic and structural innovation in order to set up the context in which those solo moments appear. Typically used as the final piece of a concert program, "Jubilation!" riles up the audience with hooting and hollering from the dancers as they stage a communal relationship with one another through unison footwork and square dance figures. The unison choreography extends through one round of the old-time standard "Arkansas Traveler" before the dancers begin taking their individual solos. These solos serve as danced bows, and as individuals dance, their personalities and their styles tend to come out. For example, an easy

gentle energy pervades the solo by dancer Agi Kovacs, even as she moves through tricky twists of her ankles and long-legged high kicks. In contrast, dancer Emily Crews cultivates a lively vitality through fast, high-stepping footwork. However, because the company is united around the shared project of making Appalachian step dance legible in the concert dance context, and because these dancers train together, they largely share style and steps, which makes the value of difference as I define it difficult to discern. Still, in their solo dance breaks, the dancers do demonstrate the value of individuality.

All of this said, there is one moment in *Hot Strings* where I note the value of difference, though fleetingly. In an unstructured moment listed in the program as "Flatfooting," two musicians take center stage and begin to dance. While the musical director Mark Schatz's dancing looks much like that of the other dancers, guitarist Danny Knicely stands out as different. Wearing heavier boots than the dancing shoes of the others, Knicely's steps have less of an intention toward hitting the heel and toe on particular musical beats and instead look as though he is performing an aestheticized and bouncing walk with occasional *chugs* and accented lower-leg flairs. Knicely's dancing has an immediacy about it, as though the music really is directing his movement whereas solos by other dancers seem to be more premeditated and performative. As the freestyle practice of Appalachian step dance is transferred to the concert stage, staging the value of difference is quite challenging. In contrast, transferring the value of community to the stage seems more straightforward.

In team clogging, a staged form of Appalachian step dance, dancers build community through constant physical interaction with their partners, which is in contrast to community created through the apart dancing of tap dancers and difference in freestyle Appalachian dancing. Team clogging, which emerged out of dancing in social contexts and appears in exhibition

settings,[37] features square dance figures and percussive footwork in the form of flatfooting and buck dancing.[38] The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, established by Bascom Lamar Lunsford in 1930,[39] was the first to offer a platform for team clogging to be displayed as an exhibition form, and a variety of team clogging styles developed in this context including: clog, which used improvised percussive steps, smooth in which dancers moved through figures with simple walking steps, and precision clogging, which utilized choreographed percussive unison footwork.[40] In each of the three styles of team clogging—clog, smooth, and precision—individuals have varying degrees of autonomy or opportunities for expressing their individuality through style, with clog as the most free and precision the least. Still, though individuality is a factor in team clogging, the most important value in this form is community. While the shift from being a social, communal, participatory dance form to an exhibition style is significant, the communal qualities of square dancing are maintained through the family-like relationships created within performance groups and the enthusiasm that unites the crowds who view this dancing.[41]

As in square dancing, in team clogging each dancer depends upon a partner to execute the figures and each figure requires multiple pairs to complete, thereby creating a collaborative environment. Further, the continual play of weight shifting and sharing throughout the patterns requires that dancers maintain an awareness of their own physicality in relation to their partner's and the group's. Figures such as *swing-your-partner*, *grand right-left*, and *promenade* require the push and pull of a partner. For example, to execute a *balance-and-swing*, two dancers in a pair face one another while holding hands between them. As they lean in toward one another, they need softness in their arms, wrists, and elbows, and then as they shift their weight backwards, each dancer leans away from and pulls on the hands of their partner. The tension this creates

makes it so the two dancers do not fly backwards and completely disengage from one another, and at the same time, by harnessing the balance between leaning out and pulling in, the pair can then launch into a momentum-filled *swing*. The collaboration between two dancers in a pair and multiple pairs of dancers in a set physicalizes the value of community in team clogging. And in the instance of precision clogging, which is the style most prominent in *Hot Strings and Flying Feet*, square dance figures such as the *balance-and-swing* include unison rhythmic footwork.

Multiple pieces in *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* engage social dimensions to stage community including "River Root," which features team clogging choreography and aesthetics, particularly square dance figures and audience-facing choreography, all with unison footwork. Dancers even extend the community from the stage to include the audience as they shout out to the theatre with commentary about their experience onstage. "River Root" begins with a resounding "Woooo!" from the dancers as they throw their arms in the air and move to a new position on the stage, where they perform a series of square dance figures. Dancers physically connect with one another, passing shoulders and crossing back-to-back in the *do-si-do*, holding hands to create archways for other pairs to cross through, and they engage in partner work that also requires hand-to-hand connections such as the *balance-and-swing*. Throughout, the dancers smile, talk with one another, and seem to enjoy each other's company, which is quite similar to the experience of participating in a square dance in a social setting. In this context, while the audience seems like it is only looking on, the dancers sometimes shout out to the audience, calling, "Isn't this fun!?" or "We could do this all day!" In so doing, they invite the audience in to the performance, even if only from afar. This social element between dancer and dancer as well as between dancer and audience gestures toward the value of community as inclusion. As

the dancers work together to complete the figures and to create music with their feet, they also embody community in motion.

As the analyses of "Jubilation!" and "River Root" demonstrate, the relationship between individuality and community in staged Appalachian step dance is largely divided. Because of what "Jubilation!" aims to do—namely to highlight the individual expression that freestyle flatfooting values, the piece is able to engage both individuality and community, though it is not effective in communicating the particular quality of difference found in Appalachian dance in social settings. In contrast, there is little space for individuality in "River Root." The tempo is fast, and in their urgency to get through the piece, the dancers have little time for extra individual flair. Further, because dancers are often connected to one another or at least in close relationship physically to a partner, their movements center around that connection. This is not to say there is not individuality in team clogging. Interestingly, every dancer's experience of a dance is their own. By this I mean no two dancers trace the same pattern through the figures. Additionally, because each dancer has a different sense of weight and momentum, the amount of push and pull in the execution of partnered figures differs for each person. But, even as this is true of an individual's choreography and execution, in the presentation of the dance itself, particularly in the case of "River Root," little space exists for expressing one's own voice or experience.

Concert Dance Choreographies Stage Innovation and Ongoingness

Throughout this analysis, I have focused on ways tap dance and Appalachian step dance embody the localized values of individuality and difference, community, and a deep respect for the past. I examined the practices historically and through contemporary choreographic pieces. Additionally, I have attempted to link these values to the aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness so I might develop more bodied explanations of these notions. As I bring this

chapter to a conclusion, I want to address the ways that *Hot Strings* and *ETM* directly stage ongoingness and innovation. Specifically, I suggest that by staging the legacy of team clogging, *Hot Strings* directly stages ongoingness. Similarly, by experimenting with her own experiment, Dorrance's follow up to *ETM: The Initial Approach*, its sequel *ETM: Double Down* stages innovation.[42]

The energy and enthusiasm for dancing and socializing engaged by the dancers in the group choreographies in *Hot Strings* is quite like the team clogging that appears at festivals and fairs and at social events where clogging teams might be featured between other informal, social dancing.[43] In each of these settings the team performs set choreography. Individuals on the team might add flair and panache during the performance that regular folks do not have, which is especially impressive when the footwork is also tightly choreographed. The team will likely wear matching costumes, which people who dance socially might not. At the same time, these settings are social, so there is some informality to the performances including hooting and hollering from the dancers and the audience, an occasional wave from the stage out to a dancer's friends or family, and even moments during which performers talk amongst themselves. Carson stages all of these dimensions in *Hot Strings*, and in the process, she stages the legacy of team and precision clogging, thereby accessing another dimension of ongoingness.

Team and precision clogging are precursors to Appalachian step dance on the concert stage, and if Carson were to cite her own experiences with Appalachian dance that inform her choreography, she would include her time spent performing with the Green Grass Cloggers, a group that continues to stage Appalachian step dance at festivals and fairs today, after more than 40 years. Clogging teams have been staging Appalachian dance since at least the 1920s.[44] The Appalachian step dance presented by Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble in *Hot Strings and*

Flying Feet is a part of this enduring legacy, and I suggest that, by staging the legacy of team and precision clogging Carson directly stages the aesthetic philosophy of ongoingness. While her choreography does engage the localized values of community and communal support, and while the momentum, energy, and motion created by the material bodies of the dancers do also perform a kind of embodied ongoingness, the way that Carson stages this legacy anew after a century of previous stagings is an *act* of ongoingness.

Whereas dancers embody ongoingness through the constant bounce and *chug* of Appalachian step dance or through the momentum created by swinging a partner in a square dance, Carson consciously participates in perpetuating the legacy of team and precision clogging through her work with Footworks. Early on, when the company was still known as the Fiddle Puppet Dancers, Carson created choreography with her colleague Amy Fenton-Shine, and they were deliberate in their choreographic constructions so that the work would be interesting to an audience, but also have an authentically Appalachian feel.[45] Their barometer was that the choreography couldn't get "too cute," because as Carson states, "there was an immediate awareness of staying true to the tradition…And that is still to this day a guiding principle for me is to stay true to the feel of it."[46] Carson acknowledges that by staging Appalachian dance in the concert setting, she is constantly innovating, but her commitment to tradition actually keeps the legacy alive and ongoing.

Similarly, Michelle Dorrance and her collaborator on *ETM*, Nicholas Van Young directly stage the aesthetic philosophy of innovation. Building upon the structure they established in *ETM: The Initial Approach* in 2014, Dorrance Dance unveiled *ETM: Double Down* in 2016. In *Double Down*, Dorrance and Van Young amplify the rhythmic and compositional contrasts they set up in *The Initial Approach* as described throughout this chapter. While the underlying

technology did not change from one show to the next, the physical structures increased, as Van Young asserts that they literally doubled-down on the number of wired boards they use.[47] They also modified ways the dancers engage with these wooden drum pads. Whereas in *The Initial Approach* the wired boards are mostly stationary, in part due to the complex system of cables and sensors attached to each individual board, in *Double Down*, dancers move them all over the performance space. Negotiating the cables choreographically, this mobility enables Dorrance and Young to create differing landscapes in which they can move. Dancers also demonstrate that they have deeper physical knowledge of the technique required to play Van Young's innovative tap dance instruments. So, in *Double Down*, not only has the physical infrastructure of wired boards expanded, but the dancer's facility at engaging with it has also increased, which opens up the potential for sonic, melodic, and rhythmic innovation within the choreography. Over time and with more experimentation and play, the musical and choreographic compositions in *Double Down* enrich the already innovative foundations established in *The Initial Approach*. In a program note about *Double Down*, Constance Valis Hill asserts that, in each iteration of *ETM*, dancers "[push] the limits of improvisation to create an extemporaneous, in-the-moment happening," and in *Double Down*, the compositions are "infinitely more complex and cogent."[48] While *The Initial Approach* staged individuality, community, and respect for the past, and while these values are just as lively in *Double Down*, I suggest Dorrance Dance's experiment with their earlier experiment directly stages innovation.

Each of the choreographies discussed in this chapter negotiate between the expectations of the stage imposed by concertization and the practice-specific localized values and aesthetic philosophies. Even as concertization necessitates alteration, the choreographers manage to translate some dimensions of individuality, community, and respect for the past as well as the

aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness. In the next chapter, I maintain attention toward concertization, localized values, and aesthetic philosophies, while I specifically address ways choreographers stage tap dance and Appalachian step dance as representative of America. Attending to processes of concertization, I note strategies choreographers engage to negotiate its whitening hazards through the inclusion of historic ties to tap dance and Appalachian legacies.

Notes:

[1] Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures / Producing Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 10.
[2] Sherril Dodds, *Dancing on the Canon: Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 101.
[3] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 193.
[4] Ibid., 193.
[5] I viewed *ETM: The Initial Approach* live at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 2014, and I also worked with a video of the performance that Dorrance shared with me. I viewed *Hot Strings and Flying Feet* live in 2017. Dorrance Dance, *ETM: The Initial Approach*, live concert, private vimeo link courtesy of Dorrance, July 19, 2014, presented by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Doris Duke Theatre. Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble, *Hot Strings and Flying Feet*, live concert, February 18-19, 2017, Dance Place, Washington D.C.
[6] Constance Valis Hill, *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[7] This is a term devised by Dorrance and Young to name the role of the person who manages the electronic components of the piece.
[8] The Wii is a gaming system by Nintendo that uses wireless remote controls colloquially known as Wiimotes. The Wiimote connects to the game via multiple sensors and responds to gestures as well as the standard buttons.
[9] Jazz Tap Center, "The Big Apple Tap Festival 2016 – Award Ceremony for Brenda Bufalino," youtube.com, published December 16, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99j9TltCbIQ, 4:50 (accessed on December 20, 2016).
[10] Two examples of concert programs include *ETM: The Initial Approach*, concert program, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival: Becket, MA. July 16-27, 2014 and Dorrance Dance, concert program, Cleveland Public Theatre: Cleveland, OH. April 7-9, 2016.
[11] Dorrance Dance. "Michelle Dorrance, Artistic Director." dorrancedance.com. https://www.dorrancedance.com/artistic-director/ (accessed April 25, 2017).
[12] Stearns and Stearns describe *patting juba* as "any kind of clapping with any dance to encourage another dancer, [which] becamse a special routine of slapping the hands, knees, thoughts, and body in a rhythmic

display" (29). See Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, reprint (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Inc. 1968/1994).

[13] Reputations are also at stake in the practice of "stealing steps," a process through which dancers acquire new material, though not always with the permission of the owner. No matter the context, when a tap dancer steals another's moves, the expectation is that they will make the step their own, that when one shows up with a stolen step in a performance, it will be different. This practice of stealing steps physicalizes individuality within community and it generates innovation. For more on stealing steps, see Anthea Kraut, ""Stealing Steps" and Signature Moves: Alternative Systems of Copyright" in *Choreographing Copyright: Race, Gender, and Intellectual Property Rights in American Dance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016). Chorus line dancer Marion Coles describes her tactics for stealing steps backstage at the Apollo Theatre in Heather MacDonald, *Been Rich All My Life* (New York, NY: First Run Features, 2006), DVD.

[14] The tap dance challenge is a practice that has played a vital role in the development of the dance form, particularly as it lends itself to innovation. In a challenge dance, two tap dancers take turns dancing, as in a face-off, continually trying to one-up their opponent through complex rhythmic footwork and new combinations of steps—the more intricate and inventive the arrangements, the better. In most rhythm tap challenges, rhythm and musicality are the most important elements, and thus these are the factors that determine the winner. For more on challenge dancing, see Hill, *Tap Dancing America* and Marian Hannah Winter, "Juba and American Minstrelsy," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask*: *Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, eds. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University, 1996).

[15] Because the dancers featured in *Talking Feet* were asked in their interviews "how, where, when and from whom they learned," the dancers discuss it (8). They mention learning from mothers and fathers, uncles and cousins, and siblings and friends, but often the references are vague and sound like "a little of this and a little of that." Looking for linage in performance of Appalachian step dance is very unlike pointing out Slyde's influence on Dorrance's performance. It is difficult to spot the influence of John Reeves's mother or Eula Rogers's father in their buck dancing and flat footing. For more on ways Appalachian dancers talk about how they learned, see Mike Seeger and Ruth Pershing, *Talking Feet: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap: Solo Southern Dance of the Appalachian, Piedmont, and Blue Ridge Mountain Regions* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1992).

[16] See Phil Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

[17] Eileen Carson Schatz, in discussion with the author, July 28, 2017, Crownsville, MD.

[18] Seeger and Pershing, *Talking Feet: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap*, 78-79.

[19] Ibid., 79.

[20] *Hot Strings and Flying Feet*, concert program, Dance Place: Washington D.C., 18-19 Feb 2017.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Interestingly, in her onstage narration, Carson Schatz stated that she created the dance movements that accompanied the Cherokee chant, but according to the program, "this chant and dance are likely centuries-old gems from the North American continent."

[23] I follow Ben Spatz and Pierre Bourdieu and the ways they discuss the relationship between technique and social structures. Spatz suggests technique is the structural underpinning—the "*knowledge content*"—of all iterations of practice (41). Bourdieu posits the habitus as the "structuring structure" that informs an individuals social practices (72). See Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1977, reprint 2013).

[24] The four steps according to Hill include "the double shuffle, crossover, Tack Annie, and falling-off-the-log." Hill, *Tap Dancing America*, 80.

[25] Ibid., 80.
[26] Tap dance festivals bring together groups of master tap dancers who offer classes for a week or weekend (or longer). These festivals also often include concerts in which the faculty perform tap solos, typically 7-10 minutes long. At the end of the showcase, the performers gather together on the stage to finish the concert with a group *Shim Sham*. This video features: Chloe Arnold, Michelle Dorrance, Dormeisha Sumbry Edwards, Jason Samuels Smith, Sam Weber, Nicholas Young, Ksenia Parkhatskaya, Andrew Nemr, and two other people I cannot identify. Sergey Ostapenko, "Stockholm Tap Festival 2013—Teachers' Shim sham, jam and BS Chorus," youtube.com. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfRUkl6jlMQ (accessed April 1, 2017).
[27] For more on the aesthetic of the cool see Robert Farris Thompson, "Chapter One: African Art in Motion," in *African Art in Motion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974) and Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996).
[28] About Master Juba's dancing during the mid-19th century, one critic noted, "The dancer is equivalent to a musical instrument." See Winter, "Juba," 231.
[29] Dorrance and her collaborators are not the first tap dancers to try such an experiment. Tap dancer Anita Feldman created and patented her "Tap Dance Instrument," which she describes, as "a multi-pitched, acoustic modular floor made of various woods and metal." Anita Feldman, *Inside Tap: Technique and Improvisation for Today's Tap Dancer* (Pennington, NJ: Princeton Book Co., 1996), 191.
[30] Robert Farris Thompson, "An Aesthetic of the Cool: West African Dance," (1966), reprinted in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed. Gena Dagel Caponi (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).
[31] Ibid., 80.
[32] Ibid., 80.
[33] Mike Seeger and Ruth Pershing, dir, *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap* (El Cerrito, CA: Flower Films and Video, 1989), DVD.
[34] Ibid., 6:28.
[35] Susan Eike Spalding, *Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 57.
[36] In a conversation with Carson Schatz, she also referred to this piece as "Skeet Shoot," the title by which this piece has long been identified, though it is called "Jubilation!" for *Hot Strings*. Eileen Carson Schatz, in discussion with the author, July 28, 2017, Crownsville, MD.
[37] Two early groups include the Soco Gap Cloggers and the Blue Ridge Mountain dancers. See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*.
[38] For detailed descriptions of the three styles of step dancing addressed in this discussion—flatfooting, buck dancing, and various styles of team clogging, see Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*, Seeger and Pershing, *Talking Feet: Buck, Flatfoot, and Tap*, and Seeger and Pershing, *Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance*.
[39] A precursor to the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival was the Rhododendron Festival established in Asheville, NC in 1928. This festival featured music and dancing alongside parades, pageants, and costume balls. When the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival split off in 1930, it focused on square dance team competitions. See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*.
[40] Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*.
[41] Appalachian dance scholar Phil Jamison suggests this shift to an exhibition style dance form made clogging into something more like an organized sport. Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*, 156.
[42] I viewed *ETM: Double Down* live at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 2016. Dorrance Dance, *ETM: Double Down*, live concert, August 12, 2016, presented by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Doris Duke Theatre.

[43] See Spalding, *Appalachian Dance*, especially chapter 7.
[44] Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*, 151. Additionally, my research suggests precursors to Appalachian step dance appeared on minstrel and vaudeville shows.
[45] In an interview with Carson she declared, "I claim authenticity. I claim it!" Eileen Carson Schatz, in discussion with the author, July 28, 2017, Crownsville, MD.
[46] Eileen Carson Schatz, in discussion with the author, July 28, 2017, Crownsville, MD.
[47] Nicholas Van Young in *ETM: Double Down*, videographer Ben Richards, ID 5784, Ted Shawn Theatre, August 12, 2016, DVD.
[48] Constance Valis Hill, "PillowNotes," in *ETM: Double Down*, concert program, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival: Becket, MA. August 10-14, 2016.

Chapter 3

Representing America: *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*

Performers and scholars alike often tout both tap dance and Appalachian step dance as "uniquely," "quintessentially," or generically "American." Examples of these claims include a 2015 profile of tap dancer Michelle Dorrance, which states that she is "breathing new life into a uniquely American art form."[1] Dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild describes the tap dancing of William Henry Lane, the man often recognized as the first tap dancer, as "definitively American."[2] And Appalachian dance scholar Phil Jamison asserts that dancing in Kentucky, whether flatfooting or square dancing is "uniquely American dance."[3] These rhetorical assertions bring the dancers, practices, and communities from which they come into the fold of some intangible definition of American culture. Whereas tap and Appalachian step dancers and their practices may not otherwise be included—racially, ethnically, economically, geographically—by declaring their Americanness, the people and their dancing become necessary, significant, and even critical to the maintenance and continuation of American culture. In the words of American studies scholar Warner Sollors, tap dance and Appalachian step dance are American by consent.[4] Simultaneously, in the context of the United States, naming these practices American has the potential to render invisible their cultural and ethno-racial particularities.[5] In this chapter, I examine *The Blues Project* by Dorrance Dance and *Banjo Dance: A Celebration of the American Spirit* by Rhythm in Shoes for the particular narratives of America they choreographically

advance.[6] I view these staged choreographies as ethno-racial projects in order to identify the ethnic and racial inheritances that appear in these theatrical representations.

While I doubt most U.S. citizens would claim "American" as their ethnic identity, and instead conceive of it as their national affiliation, in this chapter I propose that assertions of the Americanness of tap dance and Appalachian step dance suggest Americanness is an ethno-racial identity enacted through performance. In order to link ethnic and racial identity with the nation, I follow Benedict Anderson who suggests that we think of the nation not as a capital-N "Nation," but that we might better understand nations in ways similar to kinship and religion.[7] In this formulation the people who make up the nation relate to one another based upon shared practices and values. Further, in his influential text *Imagined Communities*, Anderson's particular focus is on the role of language and print-culture in creating communities among people who may never know one another. In this chapter I suggest vernacular dance has the potential to unite communities in a similar way.

Even as communities may be united through dance, I do not mean to assert that Americanness, as a unified identity, is actually possible. According to racial theorist Étienne Balibar, such a shared ethnic-national identity is a political project and a mythical proposition, which he refers to as fictive ethnicity. Balibar states, "No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally […]. As social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized—that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions."[8] In order to accomplish such a project, nations model national fictive ethnicity on those in power, so in the United States, Americanness as a fictive ethnicity would center English-speaking and whiteness, identity

markers which do not match that of all citizens of the U.S. While nations may cultivate, or rather, fabricate, shared identities, which are meant to produce national citizens, ultimately Balibar argues such a categorical grouping of peoplehood does not actually represent the populace. Specifically in contexts such as the United States, citizens are not united through shared ethnicity, but they are in fact, disjointed by racial and class-based hierarchies.

Holding this tension—that being American unites citizens into an imagined community and yet, Americanness as a shared (fictive) ethnicity is impossible—I suggest as scholars and performers, we need to be more explicit in what we mean when we use "American" as a descriptor for people and practices. In Michael Omi and Howard Winant's theory of racial formation, they discuss the rhetorical construction of Americanness as an ethnicity based upon nostalgic, vague language and images that are anything but inclusive. On racial formation in America, Omi and Winant state that, "for five centuries the phrase 'the American people' has been understood as an implicitly white designation."[9] This way of framing the image of the nation has material consequences, and in my analysis I aim to disrupt such assumptions about "American" as an implicitly white identity. To do this, I follow dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild who engages a particularist approach to analyzing dance in her text *Digging the Africanist Presence in Dance and other Performance Contexts* and her research agenda more broadly.[10] This strategy enables Gottschild to reveal what she describes as the invisibilized influences of African and African American aesthetics on performance in the United States. For example, speaking of jazz dance specifically, Gottschild argues that, "it is too easy for the African American part of the equation to become invisible when jazz dance is described as an *American* folk dance" (my emphasis).[11] As Gottschild's project disrupts the "diffused stamp of Americanness" on modern and postmodern dance in the United States, so too does my project

aim to get at the ethno-racial particularities of tap dance and Appalachian step dance as American cultural practices, specifically as they are staged in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*.[12]

Banjo Dance: A Celebration of the American Spirit, with choreography by Sharon Leahy and music direction by Rick Good, premiered at the Boll Theatre at the University of Dayton on September 27, 2007. Rhythm in Shoes performed this evening-length work until the company disbanded in 2010. *The Blues Project*, co-choreographed by Michelle Dorrance, Derick Grant, and Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, premiered at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival on July 24, 2013. The piece was created in collaboration with composer Toshi Reagon, who also appeared in the show with her band BIGLovely. Dorrance Dance continues to tour *The Blues Project*. Through a comparative analysis, I argue that *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* assert their Americanness through concertizations of vernacular dance forms with popular appeal including square dancing, lindy hop, and tap dancing among others. As discussed in previous chapters concertization is a process through which tap dance and Appalachian step dance choreographers reconceptualize and reimagine their social and vernacular practices to situate them within the aesthetic and structural expectations of the concert stage, which includes creating choreography that engages the stage space in dynamic ways and attending to audience experiences of viewing the work.

Through the blending of vernacular dance with the aesthetics of concert dance, *Banjo Dance* presents a collectivist vision of what they purport to be "the American spirit," whereas *The Blues Project* stages a much more individualist America in which individuals figure as prominently as the group. In particular, *The Blues Project* stages a representation of a creolization process of intercultural exchange, introducing individual cultural dances that blended to produce tap dancing, and the piece continues to celebrate individual contributions to

the community through full-length solos by the featured dancers, shorter improvisational solos within pieces by the ensemble, and unison choreography. By staging the creolization process and by honoring the individuality of the dancers, *The Blues Project* dispels the myth of Americanness as a unified fictive ethnicity. In contrast, rather than emphasizing creolization and intercultural exchange as coming together, the collectivist image of America that *Banjo Dance* presents is more like a rural, agrarian utopia in which coming together through dance—specifically, square dance figures and unison footwork—creates a cohesive communal collective. In *Banjo Dance*, frontier nostalgia mingles with the imagined contained specificity of Appalachia to stage, not America, but a prepackaged and whitewashed Americana.

In order to make such an argument, this chapter is divided into three sections. I begin the analysis by addressing the steps and rhythms inherent to these dance practices—what I call the materials of the mediums—to ask what sort of America the dancers express as they engage these materials in the choreographies. The opening section aims to add material evidence to rhetorical claims of the Americanness of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance. Next, I examine the process of concertization the choreographers engage to bring the vernacular practices of tap and Appalachian step dance to the concert stage. The second section also demonstrates that concertization and creolization are parallel creative processes with diverging political agendas. In the final section of the chapter I further address conventions of the concert stage as deployed in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*. In particular, I consider theatrical devices such as costuming and lighting design, characterization and relationships among dancers, and thematic choreography enacted through both percussive dance and modern dance movement vocabulary. Each of these added theatrical dimensions extends the narrative accessible through the materials of tap dance and Appalachian step dance alone. Throughout my analysis in this chapter, I

maintain that identifying one's self or one's cultural practice as American is an ethno-racial project. Further, I begin with the assumption that tap dance and Appalachian step dance are American practices, so instead of asking whether or not *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* represent America, I investigate how they represent America and what kinds of America the choreographers stage through them.

Expressing Americanness through Steps and Rhythms

As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance are often rhetorically identified as "American." In this section, I investigate the materials of the mediums of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance to ask what kind of America these materials convey. When I use the phrase "materials of the medium," I refer to the steps and rhythms that make up tap dance and Appalachian step dance—their lexicons.[13] These genres share fundamental components such as *brushes* in which the ball of the foot strikes the floor as it swings from back to front; *scuffs*, which move in the same direction with the heel striking the floor rather than the ball; *spanks*, which swing front to back and are performed with the ball of the foot; *chugs*, which require dancers to push their weight forward on one or both feet thus scooting forward a little each time; and toe and heel *digs* and *taps*, to name a few. Not all dancers might name them as such, but these are some of the basic actions found in both genres. Steps also include longer sequences of these fundamental components such as the *shuffle* and the *scuffle*—found in both tap dance and Appalachian dance; *pullbacks* and *cramp rolls*—both from tap dance; and the *Tennessee walking step* and the *basic*—both found in clogging. In my analysis, steps also include the phrases created by the choreographers specifically for *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*, which could be identified as the choreographic vocabulary of the

pieces.[14] In addition to the actual movements and sounds created by the steps, I also address the rhythms they produce as part of the materials of the medium.

Though it is unlikely that most viewers would take such a close look at individual steps and rhythms when viewing a percussive dance concert, I undertake this analysis here in order to address the ways particular steps and rhythms in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* express their Americanness. Gottschild describes tap dances as "constellations of polyrhythmic, polycentric steps…that *may* refer to a theme, but *the real story told is about the dancing itself*—the steps, rhythms, movements, and the dancing body that generates them" (my emphasis).[15] For the sake of this analysis, I extend Gottschild's statement on tap dance to include Appalachian step dance—both square dancing and footwork dancing. The tasks of Appalachian footwork dancing are much like those of tap dancing in which dancers integrate movement and rhythm with the music. Square dancing differs slightly in that dancers primarily connect with other dancers through execution of complex figures and spatial patterns. While *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* might address Americanness as a theme, the steps and rhythms themselves, as materials of these American mediums, also convey something about America.

While rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance are made up of similar fundamental components, and while each form engages a sense of groundedness in the ways dancers relate to the earth and to gravity, by looking at particular steps and rhythms and their execution in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*, the contrasts stand out. In this section, I compare Sharon Leahy's freestyle flatfooting solo with Michelle Dorrance's rhythm tap dance solo and the group clogging piece "Six Hand Reel" with the ensemble tap dance piece "Black Man over the Ocean." My analysis of the materials of these mediums in these four pieces adds physical, rhythmic evidence to rhetorical claims of the Americanness of tap dance and Appalachian step dance. I focus on the

ways choreographers and dancers string individual steps together and the rhythms that guide their performance to highlight differing relationships to groundedness between tap dance and Appalachian step dance, which I connect to place and ways of being in various American environments.

Examining the materials of these four pieces enlivens a contrast in rhythmic variety in the tap dancing and a rhythmic consistency in the Appalachian dances. Further, while the particular steps that make up the tap and clogging pieces are rooted, the vocabulary of the tap pieces include a combination of downwardly focused as well as air steps, whereas the clogging dances engage a regular, consistent bounce in and out of the floor, up and down. For example, Leahy's solo, which is just under one minute long, primarily comprises consistent bouncing footwork emblematic of the physicalized ongoingness inherent in Appalachian step dance. Leahy stays mostly in place as she shifts her weight back and forth from one foot to the other, *scuffing* and *chugging*, occasionally *stamping* one full foot on the floor and lightly *tapping* a toe. Each step reverberates off of the last. Leahy's footwork includes small details of rhythmic accents and subtle weight shifts, which add texture to her dancing, and which communicate her expertise through the dexterity of her foot patter. There are only three moments in this minute long solo that stand out as distinct from the otherwise persistently ongoing footwork, which include two instances during which Leahy interrupts the ongoingness of the rhythm with a long *brush* of one foot while the other foot remains still. Also, near the end of the piece, Leahy performs three jumps, each time clicking her heels together directly under her body and landing with her feet spread wide. While these rhythm disruptions are notable, the rhythmic consistency of her footwork in the majority of the piece engenders a liveliness in Leahy's dancing and a sense of persistent resiliency, which *Banjo Dance* associates with Appalachian and American identity.

Whereas Leahy's flatfooting solo maintains a continual bounce, pulsing in and out of the floor, Dorrance shifts from rootedness—as when she performs an accented, rolling *paddle* step, inching backwards with each heel *drop* and *spank* step—to launching herself from the earth to take flight in one-legged *wings*, two-legged *double-wings*, and forward hopping *pullbacks*. The rhythmic density of Dorrance's dancing also shifts, largely in response to the music. Whether the rhythm is densely packed or breathy and open, Dorrance adds accents of heel *drops*, periodic rests, and hand claps. As Dorrance shifts from rootedness to hanging in the air, from rhythms with space for more open expressions to rhythmically dense and pressing passages, she creates an environment in which it seems anything might happen. Her dancing is unpredictable. Dorrance's solo is imbued with a quality of readiness and responsiveness—an ebb and flow as she follows the weight and rhythm of her steps along with the impetus of the music—qualities Dorrance's movement specifically and *The Blues Project* generally suggest are representative of America.

To consider the broader implications of this analysis of the materials, I connect both the variety and consistency of steps and rhythms to place and to metaphors of belonging. I do not associate these directly to America. Rather, I connect them to environments in the United States that create the context for certain ways of being, of living, and of relating to others and to the environment, such as the urban setting in which tap dance has thrived and the rural, mountainous region from which Appalachian step dance comes. Each of these places has distinct associations—urban as loud and uproarious, as always changing, as living in close quarters and sharing resources yet maintaining autonomy; rural as communal in that neighbors support neighbors across great distances, as literally sustaining life from the land. Rootedness is not something I necessarily affiliate with urban environments given the impulse toward constant

change, but tap dance certainly has a close connection to the ground. At the same time, the steps and rhythms of the two tap dances studied here suggest that tap dance's connection to place is wily and tenuous—the dancers are in a constant state of readiness.

As in Dorrance's solo, the syncopation of the rhythms in the group piece "Black Man Over the Ocean" creates unexpected spaces between sounds and generates some anticipation about what will come next or how the steps will continue. The rhythms vary—some steps leave a little space for breath between beats while others jam an impossible number of sounds together, but in each case, each strike of the foot on the floor is articulate and persistent. Like Dorrance's solo, the steps in this group piece are similarly diverse in their relationship to the ground. Most of the steps in "Black Man Over the Ocean" are connected to the earth, such as flat-footed *stamps*, *crawls* that move quickly along the floor as the dancers heel-toe themselves from one place to another, and phrases during which one foot remains rooted to the floor as the other *shuffles* to the side, back, and even around the supporting leg. Because so much of the choreography is grounded downward, the rare air steps in this piece—*wings* with arms and legs spread wide, *heel clicks* in front of the body as dancers swing the legs forward and up, and scissors-like movements in which one foot *pulls* backward as the other *brushes* forward—stand out in opposition to the earth-bound steps. These two examples from *The Blues Project* demonstrate that the variety of steps and rhythms in tap dance might serve as a metaphor for the diversity of experience in the United States. As tap dance is connected to urban environments, which are always changing, tap dance metaphorically demonstrates that in the United States, one must always be ready for new challenges as well as new opportunities.

In contrast, the Appalachian dances seem to have more faith in the support of the earth—the ongoing bounce assumes the ground will continually be there. Whereas the consistency of

rhythms and steps in Leahy's solo demonstrate an assuredness of belonging, in the group clogging piece, "Six Hand Reel," the urgency of the square dance figures stage a vital commitment to community. "Six Hand Reel" is an example of team clogging, a genre in which the fundamental components are a blend of precision footwork with square dance figures. The majority of this piece engages the simplest clogging step, what is called the *basic—shuffle step ball change*—with an occasional *paddle* step or high kick. Because the footwork is in precise unison, the dancers' *basics* must be perfectly synced. One of the many square dance figures included in "Six Hand Reel" is the *grand right-left*. In this figure dancers travel in two circles, moving in opposite directions. They weave as they pass one another taking the right hand of the person in front of them, passing by and approaching the next person to grasp left hands, and so on. Such figures require the dancers to maintain a continual connection with others throughout the dance even as they also maintain the persistent, driving rhythm of the *basic*. In "Six Hand Reel" the commitment to the group, which is symbolized through square dance figures, requires dancers both to always arrive to a new position on time so the figures proceed without interruption and to maintain shared, consistent footwork. Whereas Leahy's energy throughout her solo is easeful and pleasant as she is responsible only to the tempo of the music, the energy of the group in "Six Hand Reel" is much more urgent due to such speed and precision. This combination of belonging and keeping up is emblematic of ways Appalachians are represented as being made up of insular communities who support one another and as a region a world apart from an allegedly inclusive United States society.

Other dances and sections of *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance* add to the analysis I have offered thus far, as they blend the materials of the mediums of tap dance and Appalachian step dance with characteristics and aesthetics of concert dance and with other theatrical

conventions. In the next section, I examine the concertization of creolization and community in *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance* respectively to understand the ideas they convey about America.

Concertizing and Creolizing: Staging Vernacular Dance as American

As creolized dance forms, rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance are constantly evolving. Writing about creolization as a creative, cultural process, scholars Robert Baron and Ana C. Cara describe creolized cultural forms as "never static. They are at no time fully formed; their protean nature continuously adjusts to their immediate interactive context, often improvising as they adjust."[16] Even as cultural forms respond to the contexts from which they come, rhetorically and nostalgically, it can be tempting to imagine that they are unchanging, particularly when referring to folk practices like Appalachian clogging. In his chapter "The National Longing for Form," cultural theorist Timothy Brennan argues that cultural practices and forms participate in the creation of nations, and he points out that often in discussions of "the folk," people and practices are imagined as having some sort of primordial connection to a specific place. From this point of view, we might conceive of "rural areas as a source of authenticity," as though they do not have contact with the outside world.[17] Rhetoric such as that which Brennan analyzes has been used to characterize Appalachians in particular as embodying an unbroken line from European settlers.[18] When Appalachia is characterized as representative of America, this rhetoric also perpetuates perceptions of America as descending strictly from European influences and aesthetics. While outsiders have propagated this myth about Appalachia,[19] scholarship on the region has demonstrated that many ethnic and racial influences have moved into and out of the region.[20] For example, Susan Spalding's survey of dance in six Appalachian communities highlights the continually evolving nature of traditional dance

practices, whether as a result of cultural exchange among ethnically and racially diverse populations, the effects of industrialization, institutional support for certain kinds of dance, or policies and trends at the national level.[21] Like practices from urban environments, which involve a constant influx of new ideas that reshape the dancing done in that setting, rural Appalachian dance is also lively. In the spirit of dynamic processes, rather than maintaining distinctions between folk and vernacular in this chapter, I refer to both tap dance and Appalachian step dance as vernacular dance practices.[22]

In my conflation of the labels of folk and vernacular, I also critique assumptions that would connect concert or art dance with whiteness and equate folk and vernacular practices with non-white people or others who might be considered cultural outsiders in the context of the United States. In *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (2008), dance scholar Anthea Kraut outlines the pitfalls of identifying vernacular dances and literary texts with African Americans because it sets up a false dichotomy between African American and European American practices. Kraut acknowledges, "a focus on the vernacular illuminates the presence and tenacity of a transmissible tradition of African American dance production apart from codified Eurocentric movement systems."[23] However, she further suggests that this dichotomy simultaneously limits black and white performers and practices that transgress such boundaries. Julie Malnig's definition of folk dance similarly limits the flexibility of dance practices in her suggestion that folk dance "tend[s] to involve like-minded or homogeneous communities of dancers interested primarily in the preservation of heritage and group traditions."[24] Through the aesthetic philosophies of innovation and ongoingness, I aim to avoid assertions of preservation and tradition as static, and rather, to acknowledge the ever-changing nature of cultural practices. Engaging aesthetic philosophies as a frame of analysis and

collapsing the categories of vernacular and folk, my research demonstrates that both tap dance and Appalachian step dance are lively and tenacious as they look back to move forward.

As popular practices, vernacular dance forms can connect to a sense of "the people" that feels familiar and accessible as American cultural practices, and the dancing in *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance* appeals to such a sense of shared connection. Writing about the incorporation of tap and clogging steps into early modern dance choreography by leftist choreographers such as Sophie Maslow, dance scholar Ellen Graff states:

> Because the staged people's culture blended differences between audience and performer, the performance itself carried the message of egalitarianism. [The] deceptively simple choreography appealed to members of the audience, in part, because they could imagine themselves performing the infectious moves. It was a way for audience members to be participants as well as spectators, joined in [a] kind of communal movement experience… At the same time, the hoedowns and grapevines became "art" when performed on a proscenium stage and framed within a section of choreography, making the performance simultaneously an expression of the "people" and a professional artistic effort.[25]

By rousing the feeling of connectedness and community through folk dance steps and aesthetics, such choreography galvanized audiences. Staged tap dance and Appalachian step dance similarly excite audiences, often inspiring them to tap their toes and clap along with the dancers.

While modern dancers in the early 20th century incorporated folk dance aesthetics into their choreography to create an ethos of Americanness, the dance companies Rhythm in Shoes and Dorrance Dance begin from the premise that their percussive dance practices are American. They actively refute categorical distinctions between vernacular dance and concert dance

through their concertized renderings of Appalachian step dance and tap dance. Further, *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* use dance genres that epitomize the notion of America, not as a singular culture, but rather as a creolized, or ethnically- and racially-blended, culture. They are considered social or popular, associated with large groups of people and theorized as more democratic than their academic, codified counterparts. The dance genres included in these concert dance productions implicitly embody inter-ethnic and racial integration, and they are fertile ground for representing the diverse, ethno-racial character of Americanness, which close movement and choreographic analysis can illuminate. As Baron and Cara note, "Frequently taking the guise of the dominant other, creole formulations nevertheless remain intimately grounded and entwined in the everyday exigencies of their own creole communities. In this respect, creole enactments are counter-hegemonic in their challenge to cultural dominance, making creolity nothing but revolutionary."[26] As creolization may take the shape of the dominant even as it remains grounded in the creole community, in the case of *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance*, concertization of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance both aligns with aesthetics and expectations of the concert stage and simultaneously maintains connections with these genres in other contexts.

Creolization in The Blues Project

Dorrance and her collaborators understand that calling tap dance "American" without direct reference to the role of race, which is embedded in the practice, might obscure this most central element—the role of race relations and the material realities of life as shaped by one's race in America. *The Blues Project* foregrounds the Africanist influence in its depiction of Americanness through its association with the blues, and early in the show, it overtly stages the ethnic and racial mixing—the creole synthesis—that produced tap dancing. Though *The Blues*

Project does not shroud itself in rhetoric of "the American spirit," as does *Banjo Dance*, after this staging of intercultural exchange, *The Blues Project* then allows the dancing to express its American self through its material components of rhythms and steps and its values of individuality and community. As "race shaped the music" in the instance of jazz, in the context of tap dance, race, race relations, and racial expectations played a significant role in the development of this dance genre.[27]

As a representation of Americanness, the piece I call the "creolization scene" acknowledges that tap dance is both American and a blending of West African-Appalachian-creolized culture, and that America is also made up of such a blend. The piece, the second of the show, starts as the fiddler, Juliette Jones, steps down from the upstage bandstand, which stretches across the width of the stage. As she approaches center stage, Jones begins to play the opening strains of a tune, and dancers enter from the wings, waving hello and hugging one another. As the music picks up, the dancers clap along and create a semi-circle at center stage. It feels like a party where everyone is invited to share their style. First, dancing barefoot, Karida Griffith moves to the center of the group, swinging her arms from back to front, swooping them down, forward, up and out. Her movements reference the West African dancing that contributed to the origins of tap dance. Griffith makes small circles with her forearms until her palms face the sky. Her footwork is simple—*step, ball change*—but the rhythm and execution of these basic movements shifts over the course of her dancing. Before long dancers Byron Tittle, Elizabeth Burke, and Nicholas Van Young join Griffith briefly until the focus shifts to another style of dance that *The Blues Project* suggests influenced rhythm tap dance—Appalachian clogging. Griffith, Tittle, and Young move to the side and Burke takes center stage for a solo that includes a little bit of clogging and a lot of fast footwork and arm gestures. When Young rejoins Burke,

the two perform specific clogging steps including *chugs*, which drop the weight of the body down into the heels and back up to the balls of the feet as dancers shift forward and back, the *Tennessee walking step*, a rhythmic, aestheticized walk, and the unfortunately named *Indian*, a step that alternates side-to-side with one leg *chugging* while the other lifts to create 90 degree angles at the knee and ankle. To complete the survey of tap dance's influences, Christopher Broughton and Claudia Rahardjanoto take center stage to buck dance, quoting classic tap dances such as the *Shim Sham* and the *BS Chorus*. In total, this section of *The Blues Project* stages intercultural interactions and celebrates difference and coming together through through dancing.

I call this the creolization scene because it focuses on the blending of rhythmic and aesthetic influences that created tap dance, but the creolization of cultural practices in the context of the United States also depended upon something less immediately apparent—the racial dynamics that profoundly impacted the creolization process and the challenges posed to cultural dominance through ethnic and cultural mixing. The study of creolization emerged through analyses of language development in colonial contexts and has since expanded to address other creative cultural processes. Today, creolization is "a critical term for conceptualizing the emergence of cultural phenomena borne out of the necessity to rise above dominance."[28] As the creolization scene in *The Blues Project* imagines and theatricalizes cultural encounters that may have formed tap dance as we know it today, it does not directly address dynamics of race- and class-based inequality, which would have significantly influenced this process.

While this creolization scene introduces multiple aesthetic and cultural influences on tap dance, it quickly minimizes difference through gestures that call to mind the notion of America as a melting pot. For example, after each pair of dancers performs particular steps and aesthetics related to West African culture, Appalachian culture, and the already-culturally-blended buck

dancing, they use their hands to gesture as though they are sprinkling their individual cultural spices into a big pot that another dancer stirs. The metaphor of the melting pot is meant to suggest that American culture is a blend of many influences, but as jazz music scholar Charles Hersch puts it, rhetoric of the melting pot "ultimately celebrates an assimilation to dominant (white, Protestant) culture rather than an appreciation of differences."[29] Hersch suggests rather than a melting pot, culture might be better understood as "polyphony, in which each new voice changes the whole."[30] In this case, attending to creolization acknowledges that cultural practices that emerge from contact between disparate groups both embody their sources and simultaneously create something new.[31] That said, in the case of *The Blues Project,* by blending vernacular dance practices with concert dance conventions and aesthetics, particularly theatrical conventions that insist on narratives and storytelling, the choreography risks minimizing the polyphony of tap as American and instead generalizing or whitewashing its cultural variety.

In general, it is difficult to parse particular movements from the cultural influences that contributed to tap dance, which is true of the rest of the dancing performed in *The Blues Project*. While the specific West African, Appalachian, and buck dance steps disappear, the physical quality of groundedness, rhythmic dimensions of syncopation and swing, and complex sequences of rhythmic heel and toe articulations remain as central elements of tap dance. After the creolization scene, the dancers do not remain cordoned off as West African dancers, Appalachian cloggers, and buck dancers, but they all come together as an ensemble of dancers. Still, even as I critique the potential whitewashing of tap dance through the gesture of the melting pot and the blending of tap dance and concert dance aesthetics, one way *The Blues Project* eschews characteristics of concert dance such as the unified precision of a *corps de ballet* is through an emphasis on individuality. For example, in *The Blues Project*, even when dancing in rhythmic

unison, each dancer maintains his or her individuality in the full-bodied execution of the choreographed steps. *The Blues Project* does not dissolve difference in this blending and coming together that we see in the creolization scene, but rather it celebrates the individuals within this community, and by extension, diverse experiences within the frame of "America."

This section of *The Blues Project* choreographically represents creolization in the Americas, and while this overtly representational scene differs from the rest of the concert, I identify it as central to the ethno-racial project of *The Blues Project*, which refuses to reduce tap dance to a generic Americanness or the representation of Americanness as implicitly white.[32] In *The Blues Project*, the unique contributions of individual dancers do not disappear, nor do they become subsumed into a singular aesthetic. Each dancer maintains their individuality of style, specialty, and racial experience and representation.

Concertizing Community in Banjo Dance

In contrast to *The Blues Project*, which indirectly asserts its Americanness but overtly stages intercultural exchange, *Banjo Dance* claims a connection between Appalachia and America in its subtitle, "A Celebration of the American Spirit." The choreography of *Banjo Dance* exemplifies the American spirit in collectivist images of coming together through movement in square dance figures and unison footwork. Even as *Banjo Dance* proposes the American spirit as a collective, this visual and physical rhetoric has the potential to mischaracterize the experience of America as well as the cultural history of Appalachia. Rather than explicitly addressing the intercultural ethnic and racial mixing of Appalachian practices choreographically, as does the creolization scene in *The Blues Project*, in its concertization of Appalachian dance, *Banjo Dance* assumes that the ethno-racial identity of Appalachia is a blend of cultures. Concertization in this case does the opposite of creolization by generalizing

Appalachian dance's ethno-racial inheritance through the aesthetic and structural expectations of the concert stage.

Creolization is not a priority in *Banjo Dance*'s choreographic representation of the American spirit. A brief program note mentions "a coming together—some might say a collision" of cultures from the British Isles and Africa in Appalachia.[33] The note leaves out the Native American influence on Appalachian culture, and it assumes only first-generation people contributed to the genre, which limits understandings about the dynamic nature of dance in Appalachia over time. This is not a choreographic critique or a suggestion that *Banjo Dance* should include a dramatization of the moment of encounter between cultural groups. Rather, in terms of cultural representation, of staging "the American spirit," *Banjo Dance* relies on over-simplified narratives about Appalachia as a cultural region. The choreography assumes the ethnic and racial diversity infused in the dancing, and perhaps in the process perpetuates misconceptions of Appalachia as exclusively white. Following the logic of the title and this representation, therefore America is also exemplified by whiteness.

Rather than emphasizing creolization as a process through which cultures blend together, *Banjo Dance* stages an already-formed, long-propagated collectivist image of America through coming together via square dance. Like the localized value of community discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, in the context of staging America, the communal practice of square dance might also represent democratic relationships among peers as well as a commitment to cooperation in the successful execution of figures. For example, the opening scene of *Banjo Dance* stages a party atmosphere similar to the creolization scene of *The Blues Project*. After an on-stage jam session with musicians playing tunes and dancers freestyle dancing alongside, banjo player Rick Good calls out, "Get out the way, Old Dan Tucker," the

first lyrics of the old-time tune by the same name.[34] The dancers and a few musicians scurry to their positions on stage. They know that call indicates the music is about to pick up, and it is time to dance.

A product of concertization, this particular square dance is crafted to display the potential of the figures to create interesting patterns in space. As staged in *Banjo Dance*, figures such as the *grand square* and *box the gnat* create side-to-side, front-to-back, and diagonal pathways in space. The *right hand star* creates a wheel-like rotation, and as couples split off, they continue to revolve around one another but now in a two-person *swing*. Throughout the weaving patterns and interlocking of arms and bodies, the dance is choreographed to accentuate the forward motion and ongoingness of momentum. Taken together, this represents a social context in which square dancing might appear, and it stages an "ideal" community in which teamwork and collaboration are necessary for the successful completion of the dance. Watching this piece, it is clear that these are trained dancers who know the routine. In this concertized square dance, the performers are not dependent upon a caller, who in social contexts would lead the dancers by shouting out the figures they were to execute.[35] In the opening square dance of *Banjo Dance*, even as the onstage dancers perform the figures without verbal prompting, there are still democratic qualities embedded in the choreography, which contributes to the collectivist image of America staged in *Banjo Dance*.

An example of the commitment to the communal creation of the dance and the teamwork required in square dancing is the *balance and swing*, which is used to counter the constant forward motion produced through choreographed square dance figures. In the *balance and swing*, a pair of dancers holds hands and each maintains tension in the arms as they lean away from one another. Then, using that tension, they each pull on the hands of the other to create a

force that brings them back together. Throughout the figure, they maintain a closeness that enables them to move quickly around one another. If one member of the pair has jiggly arms, neither will make it around in time for the next movement. Or if they each maintain tension in their arms, but different degrees of tautness, they will be off balance. And each pair has to work similarly so at the end of the swing, all eight dancers are ready to move on to the next figure. In either case, lack of commitment to the figure or engaging movements that dominate one's partner threaten the balance of community. Instead, the give-and-take of weight, momentum, and tension of the *balance and swing* embodies an expanded sense of working together. Physically, in terms of patterns and sharing weight to help partners through figures, this square dance performs a democratic community that works together to complete the task, and it demonstrates *Banjo Dance*'s vision of America as a collective community.

Even as the dancers work together in the community we see on the stage, they are allowed some freedom and individuality, which aligns with the localized values of Appalachian step dance, which is especially evident in the performance of the *grand square*. To execute this figure, which creates a complex floor pattern, each dancer has to follow their own spatial pathway, and in the performance of the figure in *Banjo Dance*, the dancers engage in independent freestyle flatfooting. Rather than performing the same choreographed, precision steps as they do in other square dance pieces in *Banjo Dance*, the freestyle footwork in the opening square dance allows the dancers to move through the established shapes of the figure with their own individual expressions of foot patter and interpersonal engagement. They maintain an embodied ongoingness through the bounce and constant shifts of weight that epitomize Appalachian step dancing as they express their individuality.

While there is an interplay between individuals and the group in *Banjo Dance* as demonstrated in the *grand square*, square dance certainly privileges the collective. Square dance tends to invoke utopian ideals, as I note in Susan Spalding's ethnographic study of a square dance event in Powell County, Kentucky. She suggests the combination of figures and freestyle footwork common in square dance "represent the variety and stability of the group, and perhaps of the ideal community."[36] In this example from *Banjo Dance*, performance of the ideal community includes trust in one another as the momentum of the movement builds and also a certain responsibility to know and perform your part with accuracy.

Zooming out from square dancing in *Banjo Dance* to such performances in Appalachia, square dancing also rehearses the values of a community that has to rely on each other in order to survive. Describing a square dance event at Beechwood in northeast Tennessee, Spalding states, "the dancers enacted their understanding of community as cooperative and secure, with everyone accepted and contributing to the common good, supportive of individuality and of friendships, and enjoying variety and small surprises within an established framework."[37] Spalding demonstrates that, as a social form, square dance is an aesthetic performance of rural sociality among mountain communities in Appalachia.

Both Appalachian step dance and tap dance generate feelings of community, and performances of these genres such as those in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* offer audiences opportunities to identify with the movements they see on stage. The opening square dance of *Banjo Dance* is simple and does not include unified footwork, and in this way, audience members might have been able to imagine their own participation in the dancing. Similarly, during the creolization scene in *The Blues Project*, while the dancers on stage perform specific choreographed steps, others huddled around them clap along and cheer the individual dancers on.

Audiences could similarly participate in this vocal and rhythmic encouragement, or at least imagine themselves as part of it. As in choreography by early the modern dancer Sophie Maslow referred to above, concertization of vernacular dance in *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance* invite the audience in, particularly in these scenes and moments of encounter.

That said, the tap dance and Appalachian step dance staged in *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance* is quite complex and technical. While the dance genres featured in *The Blues Project* and *Banjo Dance* may evoke egalitarianism and invite audiences to feel as though they could participate in some way, concertization is not just about staging a participatory dance practice. The process of concertization, like that of creolization, creates something new. The characteristic values and steps of the forms both remain and are simultaneously transformed. The virtuosity of the performance and the integration of concert dance aesthetics in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project* put these practices out of the reach of most. Even still, the spirit they stage invites viewers into a shared experience of the feeling of movement, particularly through steps and rhythms that evoke a shared, communal ethos.

Theatrical Realism and Representations of America

With a strict focus on steps, rhythm, and musicality—the materials of tap dance and Appalachian step dance—these genres largely refer only to themselves, to the music, to the dancers, and to their own histories and values. This is plenty of information to create an engaging performance piece, particularly for audiences who are in the know about each of those dimensions. However, in *Banjo Dance* and *The Blues Project*, concertization of Appalachian step dance and tap dance is not just a matter of putting steps on stage and arranging them spatially. Choreographers also add narrative dimensions through characterization, and designers contribute to the narrative through costuming, lighting, and other scenic elements. These

components, combined with multiple performance practices such as tap dance, *lindy hop*, and everyday gestures in *The Blues Project* and freestyle flatfooting, team clogging, and movement I identify with modern dance in *Banjo Dance*, create a kind of theatrical realism through which choreographers convey ideas about America they might not access through percussive step dancing alone.[38] In addition to portraying characters in these pieces, the dancers often perform as themselves, and their particular outward-appearing ethnic and racial identities shape the representations of the practices on the stage. Through costuming and physical characterizations, *The Blues Project* affiliates the blues with interactive practices and interpersonal relationships, and the particular bodies on stage portray an ethnic and racially diverse America. In contrast, *Banjo Dance* complicates representations of Appalachia as a seamless, communal collective by addressing themes of migration, religion, and death. At the same time, *Banjo Dance* perpetuates representations of Appalachia as ethno-racially white, a depiction that extends to representations of America.

Characterizing the Blues

Most of the dancing in *The Blues Project* combines subtle characterization through costuming with dancers performing theatricalized representations of themselves, both of which highlight the ethno-racial diversity of America. First, the costuming of the show situates America and the blues as set sometime in the early- to mid-twentieth century. The men wear long pants and vests over bare chests, and the women of the ensemble wear knee-length dresses with cinched waists, and they style their hair in similar period up-dos. As featured dancers, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards and Michelle Dorrance contrast the women of the ensemble in their appearance, which enables them to comment on race and gender. For example, Dorrance's costume choice refuses the gendered distinction of women in dresses and men in pants. Though

Dorrance begins the concert in a cinched-waist dress of blue and white gingham, for the second half of the show, she wears a gray collared-shirt, tucked in to similarly toned high-waisted pants. In contrast, Sumbry-Edwards wears a dress similar to the other women, but she wears her hair long and in braids. By wearing her hair in this way, Sumbry-Edwards, a black woman, holds her hair back and out of her face so as to not be distracting, but she refuses social and aesthetic conventions that would have her style it in a way that matches the white women of the company. While the costumes mark *The Blues Project* as set in a particular time period, the choices made by Dorrance and Sumbry-Edwards refuse racial and gendered expectations of that period, instead highlighting their particular personal characteristics.

The individuality of the ensemble dancers also comes through in section of *The Blues Project* that I refer to as "The Road Trip," which also demonstrates ways, in the context of the concert stage, tap dancers "[redefine] performance as playing oneself, rather than a role," as had postmodern dancers in the 1960s.[39] In "The Road Trip" dancers perform over-the-top, hyper-representations of themselves vying to be the center of attention, thus representing America as a place that values individual freedoms and commitments to communal well-being. In "The Road Trip," the majority of the group is set up as a foil to the soloist at the front, presented specifically by one dancer performing intricate rhythmic footwork downstage while the upstage group performs simple back-up steps and poses. They *step touch*, while robotically twisting at the torso. They bow at the waist and come back to vertical, repeating this again and again in an even rhythm. As each member of the ensemble takes a moment to solo at the front, the large-scale movements of the group contrast the nuances of the tap dancing soloist. And in a few instances, the dancers come together to execute unison choreography. At the same time that dancers are set apart as one dances lead and the others back-up, they are not completely physically independent.

Contained within a small pool of light, the dancers physically touch one another, pushing and shoving as they fight to get to the front of the huddle.

By dramatically juxtaposing individual ensemble dancers alongside the others in the group, "The Road Trip" also exemplifies apart playing, a characteristic of African and African American music and dance that permeates rhythm tap dance generally and that the choreography in *The Blues Project* engages specifically. African and African American art scholar Robert Farris Thompson describes West African drummers as playing apart in that "each is often intent upon the production of his own contribution to the polymetric whole."[40] I connect this practice to tap dance's localized values of individuality and community. The way "The Road Trip" engages apart playing illuminates the localized value of individuality. The interplay between the soloist and the group certainly allows the soloist to stand out rhythmically, but the individuals in the upstage group also have a significant amount of freedom in the visual movements and accents they produce with parts of their bodies other than their feet. In *The Blues Project*, this relationship between soloist and group, individual breaks and unison choreography, as well as the way pieces like "The Road Trip" highlight the personalities of each dancer, stages an America that values both independence and inter-group relationships. This physicalization of the localized values of individuality within community conveys an America with an egalitarian ethos.

Perhaps it is this typical tendency of tap dancers to play and dance apart that makes the moments of couple dancing in *The Blues Project* stand out, even as it adds another example of interpersonal relationships lived out in America. In *The Blues Project*, couple dancing connects tap dance to the blues, which also associates tap dance with a particular racialized experiences of America. As a musical form, the blues emerged in jook joints of the late 19th and early 20th

century where free lower- and working-class blacks gathered to dance.[41] Among other partner dance styles, the *grind* was common in jooks, and the dancers in *The Blues Project* briefly demonstrate this connection. While Dorrance and Sumbry-Edwards trade short solos on one side of the stage, three couples dance together on the other side. The women stand in front of the men, and each pair steps side-to-side, shifting their hips in a subtle figure-eight pattern. They eventually change directions, thrusting their hips front-to-back. This partner dancing is very brief, but notable for the physical interaction between the dancers. Much like in the jook joints and honkey tonks of long ago, dancers socialize and build relationships through touch in couple dancing, and they also build community through group dancing in which they dance apart.[42]

Another couple dance featured in *The Blues Project* is the *lindy hop*, a social dance that, like tap dancing, emerged out of African American social interactions and that similarly allows dancers individual expression at the same time they are supported by a partner or a group. In *The Blues Project*, the cast performs a *lindy hop* that includes physically dependent movements like flips and lifts and some closed partner holds. Dancers also swing out away from their partners, dancing in relation to one another but not actually in physical contact. Including the *lindy hop* and the *grind* in *The Blues Project*, the choreographers situate tap dance in relation to other music and dance forms to offer viewers a different way of witnessing relationships between individuals and groups in dance practices, in musical forms, and in America.

The inclusion of couple dancing in the performance of the *lindy hop* and the staged iteration of the *grind* also add to the theme of the concert—that tap dance and the blues continually represence Africanisms as fundamental components of American cultural practices. The creolization scene reminds viewers that tap dance, the blues, and American culture broadly is always, already blended and at the same time, continually in a process of further mixing. The

value of individuality within community is analogous with the always-already blended culture in that individuals and community are interrelated but sometimes one stands out more than the other. Similarly, the cultural contributions that combined to create the blended Afro-Irish fusion of tap dance and Africanist-rural-Southern blues are integrated, yet "it is possible to tease apart some of the component strands and designate them as recognizably or predominantly" coming from one stream or another.[43] In fact, couple dancing in *The Blues Project* actually draws out the *American* component of the African-American equation—apart dancing comes from Africa, and in the Americas, couple dancing took shape as African dancing engaged with European cultural influences and as contexts for dancing changed.[44] *The Blues Project* stages a theatrical, yet realistic rendering of America through tap dance and blues music. The varied bodies and styles of the individual dancers on the stage and the loose relationship to narrative via characterization and costuming in *The Blues Project* creates an image of the blues and of America, that is diverse, democratic, and built around individuality.

Characterizing Appalachia

In *Banjo Dance*, choreographer Sharon Leahy combines percussive footwork with representational and full-bodied expressive movement to create scenarios in which representations of America connect to something more concrete than abstract themes of democracy, liberty, or freedom.[45] Specifically, *Banjo Dance* communicates a varied picture of Appalachia as America by theatricalizing everyday contexts and themes of migration, religion, and death, among others. The themes and scenarios *Banjo Dance* presents are indicative of the Appalachian experience, though because of the nature of concertization, they sometimes read as nostalgic. A premise like four women on church benches imbues a sense of the religiosity affiliated with Appalachia. The opening jam session followed by a square dance stages a version

of Appalachian social life. The couple *waltzing* and tumbling, loving and fighting stage the complexity of romantic relationships. Through such theatrical, thematic choreography, *Banjo Dance* complicates the utopian, collective image portrayed through square dance and unison step dance choreography alone.

Travel and migration, particularly for work, are important themes in *Banjo Dance* and in Appalachian experiences. Appalachian studies scholars and social scientists have demonstrated that out-migration from Appalachia to urban centers such as Detroit and Chicago was common between 1900 and 1970, as Appalachians moved to mid-western cities in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois for social and economic opportunities.[46] There was an especially active migratory flow during World War II when industrial jobs were plenty. Examining out-migration from Appalachia during the 1950s and 1960s, Brown and Hillery note, "for many, migration [offered] the only alternative to a life of material and cultural poverty."[47] Migrants did not just travel the "hillbilly highway" out of the region, but they also moved within the region, similarly searching for better economic opportunities, whether in seasonal work or for opportunities in more lucrative coal fields.[48] In most depictions of Appalachian out-migration, people travel by car, but in one piece in *Banjo Dance*, "Blue Railroad Train," travel is represented by train.

In "Blue Railroad Train," Leahy uses full-bodied movement vocabulary to illustrate the theme of migration, which disrupts narratives of Appalachia as a coherent, ongoing cultural group. The lyrics of the song pervade the space throughout the piece, portraying the melancholy feeling of leaving: "I've got the blues…It's many miles from where I am to the only one for me." The dancers spin and swoop, swinging the small suitcases they carry through the air, at times appearing hurried and even a little harried, anxiously anticipating their travels. The piece also includes many moments of stillness as dancers look into the distance, waiting for their train.

Only at the very end, when the dancers line up to slowly exit off the stage in a formation that resembles a train do the dancers perform any percussive footwork. In this instance, their constant footfalls—*1ee&ah-2ee&ah-3ee&ah-4ee&ah*—are meant to echo the sounds of a train as it moves down the track. At the same time, one dancer makes big circles with her legs like the engine of the train while another waves goodbye in slow motion as though she is leaning out of the back of the train. The shift in movement vocabulary from percussive dance in most of the concert to incorporating modern dance vocabulary in "Blue Railroad Train" enables Leahy to choreographically convey a narrative, particularly the account contained in the lyrics of the song and representationally, a story of Appalachian migration.

In order to address "all of the ups and the downs, the hills and the valleys, the births and the deaths of a community that made [the northward] migration [out of Appalachia]," *Banjo Dance* also engages storytelling through scenes and monologues.[49] In a song and monologue combination called "When I Leave Kentucky," the lone male dancer in the company, steps up to the microphone to deliver a monologue about moving north through Ohio and then to Detroit in order to escape the hard and dangerous labor of coal mining and to find work in automobile manufacturing. This narrative is all too familiar to Appalachians, particularly after WWII. The theme comes back near the end of the show when, in characterizing an Appalachian family, one dancer reads a letter from Will, a family member who left home for work. Because he is doing so well, Will sent his family a fifty-dollar bill, which is portrayed as a significant amount of money. The narratives of travel, of migration, of leaving home for a better life staged in "Blue Railroad Train," "When I Leave Kentucky," and various monologues at first seem counter to representations that present Appalachia as a collective. However, in these characterizations of Appalachia, staying together is not in the best interest of the community. While the character of

Will does not physically return home to Kentucky and thus disrupts physical cultural continuity, by sending money to his family, he continues to stay connected to his Appalachian family and its roots in the region.

Another way *Banjo Dance* disrupts narratives of Appalachia as a cohesive, continuous regional population is through the themes of religion and death. The hymn "No Tears in Heaven" refers to the glory of death with lyrics such as "Glory is waiting, waiting up yonder, where we shall spend an endless day. There with our Savior, we'll be forever, where no more sorrow can dismay." The entire cast of *Banjo Dance* sings the song, which foreshadows the representational deaths that follow in "Death by Ballad." Pairing Appalachian murder ballads with square dance figures, percussive footwork, and simple, slow walking, "Death by Ballad" begins with four dancers who move through a brief square dance at about half the tempo of the square dance that opens the concert. The music and dancing abruptly stop, and the lighting shifts so the stage is completely dark except for one bright light. One dancer walks very slowly toward that light as one of the musicians sings an unaccompanied death ballad. These ballads are exemplified by lyrics such as: "She took the dagger, and plunged it through her lily-white breast. Goodbye mama. Goodbye papa. I'll die with the one I love best." The piece continues on in this manner until all of the dancers have moved toward the light. The dancer's slow walk and the lighting design theatricalize the notion that we move toward the bright lights of heaven when we die. At the same time, the song lyrics signal despair. While the dancers could use clogging footwork as they travel, the reverence of the slow walk stages a kind of Appalachian religiosity and in this way, Leahy's choreography honors the sorrow of death and the belief that glory awaits the dead.

The dramatization of religion, death, and migration in *Banjo Dance* spread the labor of representation away from percussive dance exclusively by engaging other genres of dance and

modes of storytelling. Even still, such pieces also have the potential to portray nostalgic or sentimental images of Appalachia. In the program, the artistic directors suggest *Banjo Dance* has been a work in progress throughout the company's 20 year history, and they also acknowledge their role in constructing this particular representation: "We present [elements of old-time music and dance] to you as wild flowers picked from the field and carefully arranged for the stage."[50] The directors see the themes of religion, death, and migration as being important components of presenting Appalachia on the stage. At the same time, by evoking frontier nostalgia through the thematic pieces in this representation of Appalachia as America, *Banjo Dance* suggests these themes are universalizing forces that equalize other identifying factors like race and ethnicity.

Such nostalgic representation combined with the imagined contained specificity of Appalachian ethno-racial identity stages a whitewashed Americana, one that doubly reflects Omi and Winant's assertion that the phrase "the American people" implicitly refers to whiteness. Appalachia has long been portrayed as white but in a way that obscures whiteness as a racial identity.[51] In the early 2000s, Appalachian studies scholars gathered together to address the racialization of Appalachian whiteness, and my analysis follows their call.[52] With the exception of one Latina woman, the ethno-racial makeup of the performers on the stage in *Banjo Dance* is entirely white. Additionally, the choreography engages abstract movement associated with early modern dance, which, in the 1930s was used by white dancers to "[make] reference to nonwhite subjects."[53] In the decades that followed, dancers marked as culturally other because of their race or ethnicity were read as culturally specific, but overtime whiteness and abstract movement associated with modern dance came to be read as unmarked, privileged, and capable of representing universal themes.[54] The way *Banjo Dance* engages abstract movement similarly

minimizes the ethno-racial specificity of Appalachia and therefore seems complicit in rendering Appalachia and America as ethno-racially white.

Whereas the abstract movement in *Banjo Dance* creates some characterization through the themes of the music and the physical movements of the dancers, near the end of the concert, *Banjo Dance* introduces the character of Pappy. Pappy does not address the central themes of *Banjo Dance*, but rather, this masked old man adds a touch of humor and contributes to an entertaining, variety show conclusion of *Banjo Dance*. When Pappy first appears, he is dressed in a starched white collared shirt and overalls and wearing a mask, and he rests peacefully in a rocking chair downstage. The mask over-accentuates the features of an old white man, as his face, painted a pinky-peach color, is extended beyond normal proportions with a long beard and a hairdo fashioned in a tall comb over. Pappy does not speak, but he does dance in oversized black tap shoes. He starts slow, with a simple toe-heel-toe-heel *crawl* step that moves him away from his chair. As he gets going, he hunches forward and pumps his arms up and down while executing clear and articulate flatfooting rhythms. He even performs a few trick steps like *bell kicks* in which he jumps and clicks his heels together while hanging in the air and *wagon-wheels*, which require him to keep his knees together as he swings one of his lower legs in circles behind him. Eventually, when he slows down, he shows the laboriousness of his breathing by lifting his shoulders and depressing his chest and then relaxing them both again and again. This clever caricature draws laughs from the audience throughout his comical dance.

On his own, Pappy is not such a nefarious character. He dances and then he falls asleep in his chair. He does not say anything offensive, nor does he use problematic gestures. But in the context of this concert and its representations of Appalachia and America, the mask and the over-the-top characterization mark this as a kind of minstrelsy. The mask the old man wears parallels

minstrel structures and conventions that ridiculed African-American people, but in this case, southern rural whites are the minority population represented as the butt of the joke. These parallels make Pappy potentially offensive to Appalachian people, and they run the risk of advancing mis-representations of Appalachia.

In general, Leahy and co-director Rick Good are committed to conveying Appalachian cultural knowledge onstage in a way that honors the practices and the people from whom they come. On staging ensemble choreography in concert contexts, Leahy states, "one of the most important things when you're using, what you call 'cultural vocabulary' is that the expression of the group and the individual in the culture needs to carry over with the actual physical vocabulary. …How the people treat each other. What kind of self-esteem they have individually. How solo versus group stuff works. […] Bring that with the footwork and […] it's much more authentic."[55] Following Leahy's own principle that the cultural expression of the people a choreographer represents should carry through, she and Good use Appalachian folk practices like storytelling to portray Appalachia on concert dance stages.[56] But Rhythm in Shoes has also long been a rather vaudevillian performance troupe.[57] The combination of staged square dances and team clogging, thematic pieces using modern dance movement vocabulary, and this comedic old man Pappy mark *Banjo Dance* as a continuation of their legacy of blending multiple performance genres in their concerts. Overall, *Banjo Dance* approaches Appalachian music, dance, and themes with the kind of respect Leahy advocates and at the same time, by representing the piece as representative of "the American spirit," it perpetuates whitewashed renderings of a richly diverse culture.

The Limits of Ethno-Racial Representation

Representations of the cultural histories of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance may not be apparent to audiences through the materials of the mediums of the genres, nor through their concertization. The genres of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance connote particular relationships to race and ethnicity—Appalachian dance is linked to rural whites in the Appalachian Mountains whereas rhythm tap dance has come to be identified as an urban practice, derived particularly from African-American aesthetics. However, historically and culturally, this white/black binary does not hold. Appalachia is not of the pure Anglo-Saxon stock it was represented as through song and dance collectors such as Cecil Sharp, and rhythm tap dance is not solely connected to African American dancers but has been theorized as an Afro-Irish fusion.[58]

While *Banjo Dance* proposes the American spirit as a collective, the particular representation of this on stage has the potential to whitewash the experience of America as well as the cultural history of Appalachia. Even as the representation of Appalachia as America onstage in *Banjo Dance* presents themes of migration and religion, which are important elements of Appalachian experience, the choreography assumes the audience understands the ethnic and racial diversity infused in the dancing. Further, because there is limited ethnic and racial diversity in this cast, the cast itself continues to extend a white image of Appalachia. Following the logic of the title and these dimensions of representation, America seems also to be exemplified by whiteness according to *Banjo Dance*. In contrast, through its staging of a community of individuals, *The Blues Project* honors tap dance as an intercultural and collective representation of Americanness. Dorrance often rhetorically names tap dance as "American," and based upon the representation of it in this piece—through its association with the blues, through an overt staging of intercultural exchange in an early scene in the concert, and through

relationships between individuals and groups—to Dorrance and her collaborators, "American" includes the role of race relations and the material realities of life as shaped by one's race in America. In *The Blues Project*, there is no singular, shared American experience, but rather, each individual experiences America alongside others.

Notes:

[1] MacArthur Foundation, "Michelle Dorrance," macfound.org. https://www.macfound.org/fellows/935/ (accessed December 7, 2016).
[2] Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 110.
[3] Phil Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 5.
[4] In *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* Werner Sollors examines consent and descent to address definitions of American identity more clearly than terms/ideas such as "melting pot," "regionalism," and even "ethnicity." Throughout the text he examines different literary texts and reveals ways they shaped American notions of racial and ethnic belonging. Sollors uses the phrase "ethnicity by consent" to address the construction of American identity through experience. He suggests that rather than studying group formation, myths of origin, or cultural markers through ethnicity, it would be more useful to consider relations of kinship and cultural codes as they bring about an American ethnicity. See Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[5] Writing on the *Jarabe Tapatío* (the Mexican Hat Dance) in Mexico, Gabriela Mendoza-Garcia suggests Mexican government cultural officers created programming for teaching this dance to school children all over the country to unite the culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse nation. In so doing, they produced the Mexican hat dance as a national dance rather than the local, ethnically specific dance it was. Mendoza-Garcia, "The *Jarabe Tapatío*: Imagining Race, Nation, Class, and Gender in 1920s Mexico," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Ethnicity*, eds. Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[6] I viewed *The Blues Project* live at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 2014. To enrich my analysis in this chapter, I also worked with a video of the concert that Dorrance shared with me. I was a member of Rhythm in Shoes from 2005-2010, and I was an original dancer in *Banjo Dance.* I performed in it throughout its three-year run. It is impossible to completely separate myself from the concert, but eight years removed from it, I try to maintain an objective perspective in my analysis. Dorrance Dance, *The Blues Project*, Michelle Dorrance, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, and Derick K. Grant, choreographers, live concert, private vimeo link courtesy of Dorrance, July 25, 2013, presented by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Doris Duke Theatre. Rhythm in Shoes, *Banjo Dance: A Celebration of the American Spirit*, Sharon Leahy, choreographer, DVD, University of Dayton, Boll Theatre, September 27-30, 2007, author's personal collection.

[7] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Verso, 2006).
[8] Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein*, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York, NY: Verso, 1991), 96.
[9] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 75.
[10] See Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996); Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body*.
[11] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 49.
[12] Ibid., 49.
[13] Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).
[14] Ibid.
[15] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 57.
[16] Robert Baron and Ana C. Cara, "Introduction: Creolization and Folklore—Cultural Creativity in Process," *Journal of American Folklore* 116, no. 459 (2003): 4-8, 4.
[17] Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 53.
[18] English dance collector Cecil Sharp was guilty of this generalization during his 1917 trip to Appalachia. See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*.
[19] Cecil Sharp collected folk dance from the Appalachian region during the early 20th century. According to Appalachian dance scholar Phil Jamison, Sharp's "Anglocentric bias and his self-admitted nationalistic agenda to promote English music and dance" (77) informed his pronouncements that Appalachian dances were ancient European dances. Appalachian studies scholar David E. Whisnant describes "systematic cultural interventions" (13) by well-meaning outsiders that continue to influence both inside and outside perceptions of the region, and Sharp's influence could be described as such. See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*; and Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).
[20] See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*; Susan Eike Spalding, *Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), and Dwight B. Billings, Edwina Pednarvis, and Mary Kay Thomas, eds., "Whiteness and Racialization in Appalachia," *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, 10, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall, 2004): 1-228.
[21] Spalding, *Appalachian Dance*.
[22] Vernacular dance—including folk dance—is non-academic, as in, not codified and without a regimented syllabus or training method. As "a dynamic process," vernacular dance is constantly changing, which is also true of folk dance (Ralph Ellison quoted in Malone, 2). For more on vernacular dance see Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Katrina Hazzard-Gordon, *Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formation in African-American Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990); Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (Reprint, New York, NY: Da Capa Press, Inc, 1968/1994); Julie Malnig, ed., *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
[23] Anthea Kraut, *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 19. Kraut both appreciates and critiques Marshall and Jean Stearns's *Jazz Dance* and Jacqui Malone's *Stepping on the Blues* for the ways they separate African American and European American practices.

[24] Malnig, *Ballroom, Boogie*, 4.
[25] Ellen Graff, *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 151.
[26] Baron and Cara, "Introduction: Creolization and Folklore," 5.
[27] Charles Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 208.
[28] Baron and Cara, "Introduction: Creolization and Folklore," 4.
[29] Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*, 204.
[30] Ibid., 134.
[31] Baron and Cara, "Introduction: Creolization and Folklore," 4.
[32] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 75.
[33] *Banjo Dance: A Celebration of the American Spirit*, 2007, concert program, The Boll Theatre: Dayton, OH. 27-30 Sept.
[34] Phil Jamison suggests this song was adapted as an Appalachian square dance tune in the early 20th century (109). Robert Winans identifies "Old Dan Tucker" as a "hit" song of early minstrelsy. See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*; Robert Winans, "Early Minstrel Show Music, 1843-1852," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy, eds. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara* (Hanover, HK: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 147.
[35] Appalachian dance scholar Phil Jamison suggests callers democratized square dancing because with a caller, a group did not need to know the moves in advance. In European quadrille dancing of an earlier era, people of financial means employed dancing masters to teach them dances so when they were out in public they could perform them from memory. See Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*.
[36] Spalding, *Appalachian Dance*, 183.
[37] Ibid., 61.
[38] Veta Goler, writing on Dianne McIntyre's choreography says McIntyre blended modern dance and African-American social dances and that her compositions were both theatrical and realistic. Goler, "'Moves on Top Of Blues': Dianne McIntyre's Blues Aesthetic," in *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).
[39] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 54.
[40] Robert Farris Thompson, *African Art in Motion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966/1999), 79.
[41] Hazzard-Gordon, *Jookin'*, 83. Jones demonstrates that early manifestations of the blues have been traced to cotton fields on southern plantations, which spread to other African American sites of labor. See LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1999).
[42] In Hazzard-Gordon's account, which traces jook joints, honkey tonks, after-hours parties, and rent parties, she examines ways physicality of dancing changed in each context as lifestyles changed and as dancing came to be more connected to secular life. In discussing dancing at after-hours parties, Hazzard-Gordon states, "dances became more upright and less flat-footed, with fewer agrarian references, subtle changes that indicate a movement away from agricultural labor. As dance became more associated with sexuality and the free consumption of pleasure, the partnering relationship, which in the jook still had some communal ties to group dancing, became more isolated and individualized" (93). See Hazzard-Gordon, *Jookin'*.
[43] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 7.
[44] See Hazzard-Gordon, *Jookin'*, 81, 93; Danielle Robinson, *Modern Moves: Dancing Race During the Ragtime and Jazz Eras* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 80; and Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*.

[45] In an interview with Leahy, she stated that modern dance movement enables her to use dance in multiple capacities including dance for movement's sake, as a storytelling devise, and as a vocabulary that communicates emotions. Sharon Leahy, in discussion with the author, July 13, 2017, Spring Valley, Ohio. Interestingly, early modern dancer Doris Humphrey once suggested democracy is best represented through abstraction. She stated, "Four abstract themes, all moving equally and harmoniously together like a fugue would convey the significance of democracy far better than would one woman dressed in red, white and blue, with starts in her hair." Humphrey quoted in Deborah Jowitt, "Form as the Image of Human Perfectibility and Natural Order," in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 301.
[46] See Ronald Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004); Phillip J. Obermiller and Michael E. Maloney, "The Uses and Misuses of Appalachian Culture," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 22, no. 1 (2016): 103-112; William Philliber, *Appalachian Migrants in Urban America: Cultural Conflict of Ethnic Group Formation?* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1981); William Philliber, Clyde McCoy, and Harry Dillingham, eds., *Invisible Minority, Urban Appalachians* (Lexington, KY, University Press of Kentucky, 1981).
[47] Brown and Hillery are quoted in Clyde B. McCoy and James S. Brown, "Appalachian Migration to Midwestern Cities," in *Invisible Minority, Urban Appalachians*, eds. William Philliber, Clyde McCoy, and Harry Dillingham (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 39.
[48] Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 20, 22.
[49] Sharon Leahy, in discussion with the author, July 13, 2017, Spring Valley, Ohio.
[50] *Banjo Dance*, concert program.
[51] An influential text that shaped outside perceptions of Appalachia as poor, rural white is Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1969). Harrington's text portrayed Appalachia as an ethno-racially homogenous region that is both in America but also apart from America. Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1969).
[52] See Mary K. Anglin, "Erasures of the Past: Culture, Power, and Heterogeneity in Appalachia," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, No. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 73-84; John Hartigan, Jr., "Whiteness and Appalachian Studies: What's the Connection?," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 58-72; John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); Nina Sibler, "'What Does America Need So Much as Appalachians?': Race and Northern Reconciliation with Southern Appalachia, 1870-1900," in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South From Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001); Barbara Ellen Smith, "De-Gradations of Whiteness: Appalachia and the Complexities of Race," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 38-57.
[53] Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004),10.
[54] Ibid., 118, 180.
[55] Sharon Leahy, in discussion with the author, July 13, 2017, Spring Valley, Ohio.
[56] In addition to dance, *Banjo Dance* engages monologues and scene work in its portrayal of Appalachia. Future research could address the relationship between the comedic dialogues of *Banjo Dance* with skits from country music performances and variety shows of vaudeville and minstrelsy.
[57] In 2003 as part of the city of Dayton's Centennial of Flight Celebration, Good and Leahy staged *Doctor Goodfellow's Traveling Vaudeville Entertainment*, for which they undertook a significant amount of research to create scenes, costumes, and playbills much like those one might have seen 100 years earlier.
[58] Constance Valis Hill, *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Chapter 4

Racializing Dancing: *Shift* and *And Still You Must Swing*

Throughout this dissertation, each chapter compares two dance practices that have historically been racialized into a black-white binary—rhythm tap dance as black and Appalachian step dance as white. In my analyses, I aim to complicate such generalizations and to reveal ways the ethnic and racial inheritances associated with the practices are not so distinct. However, in this chapter, my comparative analysis of the rhythm tap dance show *And Still You Must Swing* (*ASYMS*) and the Appalachian step dance show *Shift: An Original Music and Dance Work Inspired by Appalachia* suggests these pieces construct and stabilize the black-white binary, albeit on very particular terms.[1] I examine *ASYMS* and *Shift* through the frames of improvisation and choreography with a focus on long-range dancestral legacies to address ways the performers and choreographers racialize these dance practices and the cultural knowledge affiliated with them. I further evaluate the implications of such racialization. Ultimately I suggest *ASYMS* and *Shift* offer revisions to innovation and ongoingness as the aesthetic philosophies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance.

Both *ASYMS* and *Shift* stage cultural knowledge through dance practice, but they do so with different emphases. In the case of *ASYMS*, the cultural knowledge embedded in tap dancing is a way of being tied to the performers' ethno-racial identities. The performers and co-creators of *ASYMS*, "icons of American tap dance" Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Derick K. Grant, and Jason Samuels Smith identify as African American, and each is invested in honoring the

Africanist legacy of the dance practices they perform.[2] Their identities as African American dancers are central to their corporeal assertions of ownership and authorship via a practice they call improvography, and through citations of dancestors that are direct, as in the title of the show, which is attributed to the late tap dancer Jimmy Slyde, as well as indirect, as in references to ancestors' labor in Antebellum slavery. *ASYMS* further illuminates a connection between tap dance and the epic memory of black histories and experiences in the United States through the inclusion of contemporary dancer, Camille A. Brown, who performs a range of social dance styles and the *buzzard lope*, a ritual dance performed by enslaved Africans on plantations in the southern United States during the Antebellum era. Brown's performance alongside the tap dancers illuminates resonances across movement styles and suggests tap dancestry extends kinesthetically through time. I argue that *ASYMS* is an ethno-racial project that reclaims rhythm tap dance as a specifically black performance form, which privileges the ongoingness of tap dance's cultural history rather than emphasizing tap dance's legacy of innovation. In this performance piece, the performers control the narrative of the racialization of tap dance as well as their own.

In contrast, I conceive of the Appalachian cultural knowledge performed in *Shift* as a possession tied less to the performers' ethno-racial identities and more to their identities as artists. *Shift*, as the subtitle states, is an original music and dance work inspired by Appalachia, through which artistic director and multi-form percussive dancer Becky Hill aims "to present both the lightness and the dark within ourselves and Appalachia."[3] Rather than aiming for cultural authenticity, *Shift* choreographs Appalachia and reimagines tradition, presenting an artistically mediated, symbolic rendition of social and participatory dance practices. Through this project that privileges choreographic innovation, I contend that *Shift* disassociates Appalachian

cultural knowledge from the material, embodied experience of Appalachia and from the specific ethno-racial identities of Appalachian people, and instead stages an abstract and generic whiteness. While it is difficult to trace Hill's in situ experiences of Appalachia in *Shift*, her concert-based dancestry is readily apparent, particularly through the mediation of Appalachian dance practices via modern dance aesthetics and abstraction. As an Appalachian outsider with insider knowledge, Hill stages her cultural knowledge of Appalachia in a way that both honors and reimagines tradition through choreography. I suggest *Shift* is an ethno-racial project that exports Appalachian cultural knowledge to the concert stage via modern dance aesthetics, which in turn universalizes Appalachian specificity and racializes Appalachia as generically white.

Taken together, these two pieces represent a paradox in ways black and white identities have been constructed and staged in the concert dance context. In *ASYMS*, black performers represent themselves and dance forms largely associated with black bodies and identities. This self-representation is notable in the concert dance context, particularly when situated within a longer legacy of concert dance stagings of rhythm tap dance that has represented black themes through white bodies, such as the example of Jazz Tap Ensemble discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. In contrast, the performers in *Shift* do not stage their own identities, nor do they attempt to stage Appalachian identity specifically. Instead, Appalachia becomes a symbolic place rather than an embodied, material place. Choreographically, *Shift* generalizes, universalizes, and constructs this marginalized identity as generically white, minimizing difference and eliminating cultural specificity, which are all central tenets of concert dance and concertizing as a whitening ethno-racial project.

ASYMS and *Shift* engage in racialization and ethnicization, two social processes that link social meanings and group formation to characteristics of identity—whether phenomic markers

in the case of racialization or shared cultural symbols and historical legacies in the case of ethnicization.[4] My analysis examines racialization in *Shift* and *ASYMS* through the lenses of choreography-improvisation and dancestry, suggesting that these generate intertwining racialization processes. In the next section of the chapter, I define racialization and discuss ways dancers and dance scholarship have addressed racialization. Within this section I also take up a comparison between choreography and improvisation, or improvography, as the tap dancers of *ASYMS* identify it, to address the historic racialization of these terms.

As the chapter proceeds, I enter into extended close readings of each piece individually focusing specifically on dancestral legacies and continuing to address improvisation and choreography as they relate to dancestry. As performed in *ASYMS*, dancestry functions like epic memory that connects dancers' identities with Africanist ways of being and of knowing. In *ASYMS*, cultural knowledge of rhythm tap dance is tied to the performers' identities as elders in the genre of tap dance, as tap dance artists, and as African American people generally.[5] These dimensions of the dancers' identities support and fuel their reclamation of rhythm tap dance as a black performance form. In contrast, in *Shift*, Appalachian cultural knowledge is not tied to the performers' ethno-racial identities, but rather, it is a possession acquired and displayed. Hill's dancestry is a concert dance legacy of mediation between dance in situ and dance on the concert stage, which connects Hill to a legacy of constructing "others" on stage. I suggest this combination of cultural knowledge as a possession separate from ethno-racial identity inspires Hill's choreographic freedom to reimagine Appalachian traditional dance for the stage. At the end of the chapter, I bring the two pieces back into conversation to discuss ways *Shift* and *ASYMS* revise the aesthetic philosophies of ongoingness and innovation in Appalachian step dance and rhythm tap dance respectively.

Racializing Practice: Choreography and Improvisation

This dissertation is in conversation with dance scholarship that has addressed racialization through performance practices and material structures, and the analysis of *Shift* and *And Still You Must Swing* (*ASYMS*) in this chapter draws ethnicization into the discussion in order to address both in- and out-group demarcations that link people and practices with particular meanings and associations. Sociologists Cornell and Hartmann describe racialization as "the process by which certain bodily features or assumed biological characteristics are used systematically to mark certain persons for differential status or treatment."[6] Along with developing these categories and assigning people to them, racialization implies expectations of behavior toward and by each group. Racialization develops through social relations.[7] Further, racialization is an aggregative process through which perceptions about people and behaviors accumulate over time based upon any number of factors. In the case of dance, racialization happens through what people already know or believe about dancing, about the stage, or about the particular practice they view or participate in; what people write and say about dancing; who is permitted to dance; and how people make associations with racialized words and images, to name just a few influences on racialized perceptions. The constant reification of racialized perceptions builds up systemically.[8] In contrast to racialization, ethnicization is based upon shared, in-group identifications. Cornell and Hartmann define ethnicization as "the process by which a group of persons comes to see itself as a distinct group linked by bonds of kinship or their equivalents, by a shared history, and by cultural symbols that represent…their peoplehood."[9] Importantly, racialization involves insiders and outsiders, whereas ethnicization, according to Cornell and Hartmann, happens from within, which is not to say that outsiders do

not influence the ways a group identifies itself, but to emphasize that ethnicization is a self-conscious in-group development.

The racialization of modern dance performers and their practices from the 1930s to the 1960s are the focus of dance scholar Susan Manning's influential text, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion.*[10] Manning focuses on the representational conventions that white and black modern dancers engaged during this period and the ways performances were read by concert dance audiences. She identifies and defines shifting representational conventions employed by white modern dancers over the course of the time frame she examines suggesting that in the 1930s, white modern dancers engaged in a practice she calls metaphorical minstrelsy, "a convention whereby white dancers' bodies made references to nonwhite subjects."[11] After WWII, white modern dancers revised their mode of representation to what Manning calls mythic abstraction, which "staged universal subjects without the mediation of bodies marked as culturally other."[12] She suggests that as white dancers shifted from direct references to nonwhite subjects into more abstract movements and themes, black modern dancers did not change their representational strategies, but they came to be read differently. No longer conceived of as derivative of their white counterparts nor as representing some sort of authentic primitiveness as earlier rhetoric had suggested, black dancers were acknowledged for their artistry. Even still, black modern dancers were marked as the white modern dancers' "other," racialized by the label "Negro" dance while white modern dancers were read as racially unmarked. Part of Manning's project and of many dance scholars, is to racialize whiteness in the same way that spectators and critics racialized blackness in their viewings of concert dance.[13] Through abstraction and themes identified as "universal," white modern dancers obfuscated their own racialization. Dance studies

scholarship continues to address racialization through performance practices in historical and socio-cultural studies.[14]

Like Manning, dance scholar Priya Srinivasan attends to the process of racialization through performance practice in her 2012 text *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor*. Srinivasan examines dance by Asian American performers as a form of labor to understand how audiences and the state racialized these dancing bodies in the ethno-racial context of the United States. Though my interest is in the racialization of black and white performers, Srinivasan's project illuminates similar themes as my own. In one example, Srinivasan suggests that when female Indian dancers first appeared on stages in the United States, "audiences' primary interest was not in aesthetic form but in deciding how to categorize the dancers [racially]."[15] Though the women's racial status was unclear at first, critics found ways to fit them within the racial frameworks already established in the United States, with one reviewer engaging familiar racial rhetoric of the time that connected the women's dark complexions with low intellectual abilities.[16] Srinivasan states, "Indian women found themselves located racially somewhere between African Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese. There was never a possibility in 1881 that these women…might be mistaken as white."[17] Reactions to the Indian women on stage suggested audiences in the United States preferred performances by white woman in brownface who mimicked Indian dance practices, which highlights two processes of racialization—that which marked the Indian women as "other" and that which normalized whiteness as capable of universal representations. Srinivasan, Manning, and scholars like them demonstrate that representational conventions enacted in performance do not work alone to construct meaning in what one witnesses. To best understand these conventions, one

must also attend to social, cultural, historical context in which the dancing appears and from which it comes.

My analysis of *Shift* suggests its incorporation of aesthetics from modern and contemporary dance is part of a legacy of similar work that racialized the performers as white and the culture they draw on as marked culturally "other." However, the challenge in making this argument is that Appalachia has been represented as racially white and simultaneously "other" since at least the 19th century.[18] Nineteenth-century literary representations of Appalachia that implicitly constructed the region as racially and ethnically white include writing by local color writers. Following this trend into the 20th century, novels such as Thomas Wolfe's *The Hills Beyond* painted a picture of Appalachian people as of pure Anglo-Saxon stock through its claim that people of color had not existed in the Appalachian Mountain region before the Civil War.[19] Such representations continue through contemporary novels and memoirs (*Fair and Tender Ladies* by Lee Davis; *The Coal Tattoo* by Silas House; *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance), theatrical productions (*The Kentucky Cycle* by Robert Schenkkan), and popular culture (*Beverly Hillbillies* and *Hee Haw*, for example).[20] In each of these examples and many more, an Appalachian character's race is only noted if that person is not-white.

In representations of Appalachia, "Appalachian" is generally understood to be a shared, regional identity, and it also functions like an ethnic identity. According to Cornell and Hartmann, ethnic identifications often cohere around common descent, shared and distinctive history, and cultural symbols (such as a shared dance practice) that epitomize the particularity of the group's peoplehood.[21] As a regional identity, Appalachians share a history rooted in exploitation and poverty as a result of extractive industries, as outsiders have pillaged their land for mineral resources, which they then exported out of the region along with the economic

wealth those resources produce.[22] As jobs and economic resources have dried up, Appalachia also experienced waves of out-migration to urban industrial centers in the north (such as Detroit) for work, thus creating an Appalachian diaspora. I acknowledge that building an ethnic identity based upon a shared history may be tenuous, particularly as different sections of Appalachia experience social, economic, and cultural shifts differently. That said, "regionalism…can play a powerful role in shaping events" even if "Appalachian" is not an ethnicity proper.[23] To identify diasporan urban Appalachians as an ethnic group, texts such as *Invisible Minority, Urban Appalachians* draw on social science research about migratory patterns from Appalachia to northern cities, neighborhoods within those cities made up primarily of Appalachian people and the customs they maintain through neighborly relationships, and northerners' conceptions of their new Appalachian neighbors.[24] In the case of *Shift*, which exports Appalachian culture to the stage, and thus far only to stages outside the Appalachian region in Nashville, TN and Remus, MI, understandings of Appalachian culture in these settings function much like that of ethnicity.

Shifting from ethnicity and region to race, recent Appalachian studies scholars have demonstrated that writing on the region ought to address white racialization in order to disrupt perceptions of the place as being absent of race. For the purpose of my analysis, I propose Appalachianness as an ethno-racial identity in order to address in- and out-group categorizations of peoplehood in the region. I follow Appalachian studies scholars such as Barbara Smith who refuses to obscure the "predominantly white regional context" of Appalachia, choosing instead to address the racialization of the region head-on.[25] While much of the Appalachian studies scholarship I draw on addresses textual and literary representations of the region, I attend to cultural practices, specifically dance, in my analysis of the implicit racialization of Appalachian identity and practices as white in *Shift*.

My analysis names the traits of whiteness that have always been there but have previously gone unnamed because our systems, education, and "hegemonic mind[s]" have not been trained to see it.[26] Instead, whiteness has been neutralized and naturalized, particularly in the context of the United States,[27] which is in itself a kind of racialization—a process through which people "are socialized into a set of assumptions and beliefs about race."[28] In my analysis I follow dance scholar Anthea Kraut, who in her research of choreographic copyright attempts "to racialize whiteness—to treat whiteness not as the absence of race but, rather, as a powerful and historically contingent racial formation."[29] Appalachian studies scholar Emily Satterwhite suggests Appalachian whiteness has been constructed as a "differentiated whiteness," which is marked by ethnic particularity—identifying someone as Celtic or Irish, for example.[30] Whether constructed through racialization or ethnicization, Appalachians are simultaneously embraced as quintessentially American as demonstrated by the attempt to name Appalachian square dance the national folk dance, and at the same time Appalachian alterity is marked by their not-quite-whiteness.[31] Racializing Appalachian whiteness requires attention to each of these dimensions. Situated on the concert stage and engaging conventions associated with this site such as modern dance movement and abstraction, I contend that *Shift* contributes to the continued normalization of Appalachian whiteness.

My analysis of *ASYMS* similarly addresses ethnic and racial identifications as performed by the dancers, which they control through their own self-representation, and in my reading of *ASYMS*, I conceive of African-Americanness as an ethno-racial identity. As Cornell and Hartmann demonstrate, the African-American experience in the United States has united around the three-part rubric of ethnic identification introduced above. Though Africans who arrived in the Americas through the North Atlantic slave trade had distinct ethnic affiliations, over time,

they came to be united around the shared experience of oppression through chattel slavery. Through this process of coming together, they developed common cultural symbols, which included ritual dance practices. Though African Americans are categorized from the outside as a racial group, they also cohere around a group identification aligned with ethnicity.[32] In *ASYMS* the dancers present rhythm tap dance and swing as shared cultural practices around which their ethno-racial and artistic identities cohere.

Tap dance has undergone multiple processes of racialization, including on minstrel, vaudeville, and concert dance stages, as discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation. The difference between each of those instances and that which I discuss in this chapter is that, in *ASYMS*, the performers control their representation as tap dancers and as African American people—working within the aesthetic expectations of the concert stage, the dancers control the representation of blackness and of rhythm tap dance as a black performance form. Addressing the communicative power of black performativity, dance scholar Thomas DeFrantz states, "gestures of black expressive culture […] perform actionable assertions," and in my analysis I argue that remembrance and resilience are actionable assertions that racialize this work as black.[33]

As concert dance productions, *ASYMS* and *Shift* engage in processes of ethnicization and racialization, but the ways these concerts and choreographers ethno-racialize themselves, their practices, and, in the case of *Shift*, the regional identity they represent, differ. In my analysis I address ethno-racialization primarily through improvisation and choreography. Both *ASYMS* and *Shift* engage choreographed steps and unison dancing, and they also honor the values of rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance by including improvisation. Though each concert engages both methods of composition, *Shift* primarily stages Appalachian culture through choreography, while *ASYMS* communicates African diasporic culture via improvisation, or what the program

identifies as improvography. As practices, choreography and improvisation have been racialized over time. As Kraut demonstrates:

> 'choreographer' has historically been a term of privilege and power, functioning to authorize and to exclude. Accompanying the separation the term marks between the artist/creator and the dancers/performers has been a division between choreography and improvisation, with the former perceived as predicated and intentional and the latter seen as impromptu and haphazard… In the early twentieth century, the constructed opposition between the choreographed and the improvised served to elevate white creative artistry, which implicitly—and often explicitly—defined itself against the putatively 'natural' expressive behavior of black performers.[34]

The implications of the distinction between improvisation and choreography raised by Kraut for the ways these practices have historically been mobilized physically and rhetorically to construct ethnic and racial identifications is central to my analysis in this chapter. I contend that improvisation in *ASYMS* and choreography in *Shift*, while partially party to such divisions, actually disrupt 20th century binaries of black and white, so-called natural behavior and artistic expression.

Improvisation in *ASYMS*, for example, enables the African American performers to control the narrative of their racialization and of the meanings embedded in the performance practice of improvisation. At its core, improvisation offers dancers a great deal of freedom in performance, because, in a sense, they could really do anything they want. However, to be clear about the impetus of the movements and rhythms in *ASYMS*, the program identifies much of the dancing in the concert as "improvography," a term Sumbry-Edwards, Grant, and Samuels Smith inherited from their predecessor, the late Gregory Hines. Hines was the first tap dancer to

identify his dancing as improvography, though many tap dancers before him similarly considered the composition of their dance improvisations. In a brief video posted to YouTube by the Joy2Learn Foundation, Hines describes this method of in-the-moment composition as a process of discovery. He says, "I'm always tap dancing and doing things that I know and things that I discover. […] If I'm doing a step that I know, and I make a mistake, sometimes that leads me to something new. If I'm doing a step that I know, sometimes all of a sudden I find myself doing something new and I don't even know how I got there."[35] Each of the improvised solos in *ASYMS* illustrates Hines's words to some degree. For example, in Grant's improvised solo in *ASYMS*, he performs a few steps tap dancers would recognize as classroom exercises—*crawls* as he heel-toes one foot away from the other, *buffalos* that leap and *shuffle* from side to side—but he quickly moves away from the familiar. He syncopates the *buffalo*, adding full-footed accents and speeds the tempo of the *crawl* until it is impossible to parse it into counts. Grant blends familiar, recognizable tap dance vocabulary with new steps he constructs on the spot to create a dynamic rhythmic and movement composition. Naming their dancing improvography enables Sumbry-Edwards, Grant, and Samuels Smith to show their values, as this label honors the dancers who initiated this practice before them. This label also indicates the dancing performed in the moment is not at all arbitrary, but rather, that it is intentional and a product of each individual's experiences in tap dance.

Tap dance historian Constance Valis Hill identifies multiple dimensions of performance qualities embodied by Hines in his improvisation, qualities that demonstrate that tap dance improvisation is not a free-for-all, but a complex, rule-bound, multi-form process. Valis Hill states that Hines's improvography demanded "the percussive phrasing of a composer, the rhythms of a drummer, and the lines of a dancer."[36] Improvography thus involves creative

authorship.[37] Hines could name his dancing improvisation as others had before, but by calling it improvography, he identifies his practice as a kind of choreography, which imparts authorial intention to his composition and situates himself as an improviser alongside other choreographers.[38] Kraut discusses the implications of such labels stating, "Calling someone a 'choreographer' assigns credit to that individual for a given dance production; the term thereby serves as an assertion of authorship."[39] Similarly, as improvographers, the dancers of *ASYMS* author dance compositions in real time.

More to the point of racialization and resistance to oppressive binary structures, by naming their practice improvography, the tap dancers of *ASYMS* refuse a choreography-improvisation binary, which rhetorically has set intentional movement against that which is impromptu and simultaneously racialized choreography as white and improvisation as black.[40] Further, *ASYMS* pushes back against rhetoric that casts improvisation as natural and choreography as the product of artists and creative geniuses. The dancers in *ASYMS* make very clear their "history of labor": they have long studied tap dance as a musical and movement form; they are the creators of the movements and rhythms they perform; and they are designing them in the moment of performance.[41]

Further, naming their tap dance practice improvography is an assertion of ownership over their performance practice and product as well as a declaration of the black performers' subjectivity. In Kraut's analyses of choreographic ownership through copyright, she suggests copyright offered choreographers status as possessive subjects rather than possessed objects. The importance of this in the context of United States history, particularly for African Americans, is that, under slavery, "those who were excluded from full white subjecthood, and thus rendered objects, were capable of being possessed and 'enjoyed' as property."[42] The property rights of

whites even encompassed African American cultural displays, which would have included dancing.[43] For the performers of *ASYMS*, claiming ownership of their performance through improvography is an assertion of self-representation and the black imperative of rhythm tap dance. Through improvography, the dancers of *ASYMS* declare that no one else made these steps, and no one else will perform them in quite the same way—ever. In the instance of tap dance, given its history in minstrel and vaudeville shows and in movies, self-representation by these black tap dancers in the 21st century is profoundly important. That the dancers emphasize improvography is even more meaningful in this context as rhythm tap dance expresses itself through its execution—through improvisation, through rhythm and in the instance of *ASYMS*, particularly through swing. *ASYMS* is a declaration that rhythm tap dance is a black performance form, which is an especially important statement given the context in which *ASYMS* premiered—on the concert dance stage, a space that has historically been coded as "white," and which valued choreographed compositions by those deemed as "artists," a term also coded as "white."

ASYMS's engagement with improvisation is an important reclamation for rhythm tap dance in the concert dance context. During the tap renaissance of the late 1970s and early 1980s, choreographers, most of whom were white and female, created dance companies and repertoires of choreographed dances, which I discuss in more detail in chapter 1 of this dissertation. While they used improvisation, it was not the primary mode through which they performed. In the 2011 documentary, *Thinking on Their Feet: Women of the Tap Dance Renaissance*, Brenda Bufalino, one of the matriarchs of tap dance in concert dance contexts, bemoaned improvisation in performance because of her concern that, without repertory—that is, without choreographed dances—tap dance cannot survive.[44] Hines and the dancers in *ASYMS* suggest this is a narrow view of how dance works, that choreography is only one way of "writing" dance, that, in fact,

through improvography, tap dance persists, and that improvisational style is itself a kind of repertory.

While some Appalachian step dancing similarly employs improvisation as a way of communicating cultural knowledge and values, in *Shift,* Hill primarily engages choreography to accomplish her aim of representing the "lightness and the dark" of Appalachia. In her introduction to the concert, Hill describes particular instances of the former as "the rolling mountains, the beautiful streams, the fact that if a tire blows out…five cars are pulled over within five minutes trying to help you out, and…the kindness that people share."[45] In contrast, the darkness includes "extractive industries, …poverty, …and…hardships in education."[46] Hill experienced these specific elements of Appalachian culture during the 8 years she lived in West Virginia. While she lists them explicitly in program notes and in her spoken introduction to the concert, the choreography for *Shift* evokes them symbolically—metaphorically through energy and rhythm, lights and costumes, and relationships among dancers, structurally through the progression of the concert from darkness to light, and technically through blending percussive dance and modern dance genres. In order to make a show that brings together the things Hill loves about Appalachia and the hardships Appalachians face, *Shift* largely abstracts the mountain traditions through its incorporation of choreography that engages modern dance movements and aesthetics, which I suggest contributes to the racialization of *Shift* as white.

The choreography in *Shift* aligns with a general understanding of modern dance, which dance scholar SanSan Kwan describes as "following a high art, conceptual, avant-garde concert dance tradition and set of values."[47] In the early 20th century, the self-reflexive nature of what we now identify as modern dance "called attention to the values, qualities, and dimension of movement," and it also enabled affiliations and constructions of notions such as national identity

and feminism.[48] Hill uses a kind of modern dance movement vocabulary to connect dancing to regional Appalachian identity. For example, in the piece "Born to Die," which I discuss in greater detail below, dancers embody two different qualities of movement—with a downward gaze, one group holds their arms close to the rest of their bodies, containing their movement while another dancer moves freely, taking up space as she skips and runs all over the stage with arms and legs outstretched. Through this movement vocabulary, Hill physicalizes an Appalachian tension similar to the tension inherent in the notion of lightness and dark in the Appalachian region. In the close reading of *Shift* that follows, my analysis attends to the representations and political interpretations Hill's choreography enables.

The Appalachian dance presented in *Shift* has been mediated choreographically and aesthetically in order to stage it in the concert dance context.[49] The nature of the full-bodied movements in *Shift* incorporate a range of movement influences including contact improvisation, floor work, and a gestural vocabulary that emphasizes linear shapes. Hill's percussive dance practice similarly blends genres—tap dance, *Québécois*, and Appalachian, among others—but it does not stand out as any one in particular. Whereas the rhythm tap dancers of *ASYMS* included contemporary dancer Camille A. Brown whose individual performance contributed many dance styles beyond tap dance to the piece, in *Shift* the aesthetic of blending is essential to the movement vocabulary for the entire cast, which shapes the representation of a generalized Appalachianness. By staging this range of movement styles and genres in *Shift*, square dances take on a presentational quality, footwork is choreographed, and the dancing also incorporates arm and leg gestures, torso articulations, and physical contact between bodies that are not inherent to Appalachian dance practices.

Speaking about creating choreography, Hill acknowledges that she is interested in creating thematic dance works using percussive footwork as her medium, but she does not limit herself to a single palate.[50] In fact, her choreography for *Shift* suggests Appalachian dance alone cannot express her ideas about this region and its people. By blending various movement vocabularies in this piece, Hill obscures Appalachian specificity, purposefully manipulating it to create an aesthetic representation for the stage. The subtitle of *Shift* is "an original music and dance work *inspired by* Appalachia" (my emphasis),[51] which indicates Hill does not intend to produce something "authentically" Appalachian. Her choreography purposefully engages the tension between art and tradition.[52] I think Hill is aware of the artistic stakes of incorporating abstract, universalizing, modern/contemporary dance movements for her rendering of Appalachia on stage, as these aesthetics legitimize her work as "art" rather than as "tradition," much like the work of her choreographic mentor, Sharon Leahy, as discussed in chapters 1 and 3 of this dissertation.

Framing my analysis through improvisation and choreography also enables examination of how these modes of composition communicate cultural knowledge. As I discuss in chapter 2 of this dissertation, within cultural knowledge, I include the values and aesthetic philosophies affiliated with rhythm tap dance and Appalachian step dance, and I also refer to the particular ideas these concerts stage about the history, legacy and ethnic and racial inheritances affiliated with these dance practices. In the close readings of each piece that follow, I focus on dancestral inheritances as part of the cultural knowledge staged in both *ASYMS* and *Shift* to point out the differing ways dancestral legacies connect performers' identities with long-term kinesthetic and artistic inheritances. Specifically, I contend that dancestry in *ASYMS* is epic, diasporic, and profoundly black, which contrasts that of *Shift*, which is tied more directly to a legacy of staging

Appalachia on the concert stage through universalist movement vocabulary that normalizes whiteness.

Enacting Remembrance, Resilience, and Racialization in *And Still You Must Swing*

Through the notion of dancestry, I suggest *And Still You Must Swing* (*ASYMS*) performs resiliency as it recuperates the long history of tap dance. I conceive of dancestry as the collective cultural memory that connects bodily legacies of dance forms across generations, makes sense of contemporary steps and aesthetics alongside performances from the past, and processes and performs social, cultural, and historical memory through bodies. Though the dancers of *ASYMS* do not call it dancestry, this concept is central to *ASYMS* as noted in the program's epigraph, which reads: "Swing / swiNG/ v: 2. move by grasping a support from below and leaping. 'We grasp for our ancestors in order to rise…'."[53] By blending swing, an imperative in tap dance, with reference the notion of ancestry broadly speaking, this epigraph indicates the dancers conceive of their dance practice as tied to a long and expansive (d)ancestral legacy. Further, by including contemporary dancer Camille A. Brown, *ASYMS* prompts an expanded investigation of dancestry that includes attention to an Africanist, diasporic legacy and a consideration of how characteristics of certain dance practices transfer to others. Brown illuminates the need for this expansion in *ASYMS* through her staging of the *buzzard lope*, which calls ancestors from Antebellum slavery into the space and through her ability to transfer the beat from tap dance into the rest of her body, which demonstrates rhythmic connections across dances of the African diaspora. Brown's participation alongside tap dancers Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Jason Samuels Smith, and Derick K. Grant illuminates epic dimensions of dancestry. Through dancestry, *ASYMS* performs resilience and remembrance, both of which racialize the piece as black.

Resilience and the Swing Aesthetic

To address the resilient quality of swing, my analysis engages Brenda Dixon Gottschild's framework of the swing aesthetic, which she introduces in her text *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era*. Gottschild characterizes the swing aesthetic as "a paradigm of liberation," that is revelatory, resilient, revolutionary, and simultaneously forthright and subtle, among other descriptors.[54] Throughout the text Gottschild demonstrates that as the black swing aesthetic took shape over the course of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, it became a marketable commodity that was taken up by white musicians and dancers who modulated movements and rhythms to suit the tastes of their white audiences. As this happened, black performers continually created new sounds and aesthetics to express their experiences.[55] In this way, innovation was imperative for African American performers to keep their acts fresh and new, but more importantly, it was also a practice of resistance. Through constant innovation of steps and rhythms, swing era performers continually asserted ownership of their moves and continually performed their own self-representation. The aesthetic philosophy of innovation in tap dance follows a similar impetus.

The performers of *ASYMS* engage multiple dimensions of the swing aesthetic, but this show seems unconcerned with innovation. While rhythm tap dance has historically been invested in innovation as the primary aesthetic philosophy of the practice as discussed throughout this dissertation, *ASYMS* seems much more engaged in staking a claim in tap dance as it is right now, both as a dance form and as a cultural practice in the United States in 2016, when the show premiered. One way *ASYMS* engages the swing aesthetic, which Gottschild characterizes, as "process-oriented, rather than fixated on the end product," is through improvisation, as discussed above.[56] Though the concert has a clear, established structure as indicated in the program and

performed through choreography, *ASYMS* balances coherent organization with in-the-moment improvisation. Through this balance, the dancing in *ASYMS* closely aligns with Gottschild's definition of swing music, which she describes as "a democratic equation of tight rhythmic structure and organization balanced against improvisation as its equal partner—or improvisation within an arranged rhythmic structure."[57] The first piece of the show, "Just Swingin'" exemplifies the blending of improvisation and choreography, freedom and structure, setting the expectation that this is how the performance will continue. "Just Swingin'" begins with three brief improvised solos by the tap dancers, each illuminated by an overhead spotlight for the duration of their break while the others keep time in the dark. As Samuels Smith finishes his solo, the lights come up on the stage, the dancers form a line downstage, and they launch into choreography by Sumbry-Edwards. The majority of the piece is choreographed, but moments of individuality pop up throughout. In one subtle example, the dancers execute simple *shuffles* and steps but at lightening speed, and while the steps and rhythm are in unison, each dancer points their *shuffles* in the direction of their choosing—side, front, and even behind the supporting leg. This moment stands out for the contrasting choices made by the dancers, but this similar sort of individuality pervades the piece as each dancer brings their own physicality and expression to the choreography.

Throughout the entirety of *ASYMS*, the structure of the program order and choreographed steps as well as through improvisation, the dancers physically enact the program epigraph's symbolic reference to ancestral support. Structure does not indicate fixity on an end product, but rather it metaphorically gives the dancers something from which to swing. As a liberating force, improvisation and the swing aesthetic support the dancers by holding them accountable to the rhythmic swing and also by giving them the freedom to speak through their rhythms and steps.

Further, because of the nature of improvisation, which enables dancers to respond in the moment to a variety of influences—those in the room such as fellow dancers, sounds made by the body, and music, as well as those outside of the performance space such as larger societal issues—dancers have a great deal of freedom of expression. DeFrantz aligns this notion of dance as a kind of communication with black expressive culture, which values process over product, signification over the signified. DeFrantz states, "Black expressive cultures value […] talking *by* dancing rather than talking *about* dancing" (my emphasis).[58] *ASYMS* is filled with examples of performers talking through dancing. In the next section I focus on interactions in the finale between the tap dancers and Brown, their dancestor, to illuminate the potential of improvisation as a means of communication across dance genres, through space and time in a diasporic sense, and in in-the-moment encounters between dancers, all of which engage the resilience of swing.

Diasporan Dancestry: Talking by Dancing

While tap dance is the impetus for *ASYMS*, it is not the only genre of dance included in the concert. When Sumbry-Edwards conceived the show for its premiere at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, she invited Brown to join the cast, which in turn introduced numerous improvisational dance forms. Brown works across dance genres and performance platforms from musical theatre to concert dance to social dance, drawing on a vast repertoire of movement idioms for the particular task at hand.[59] In all of her work, she aims to promote black creative expression.[60] Recently Brown completed a concert dance trilogy that included *TOL E. RAncE*, *Black Girl: Linguistic Play*, and *ink*. Through these pieces respectively, Brown progresses through representing outsider perceptions of blackness, particularly as they have been represented in media and entertainment, an insider perspective of the black female experience, and finally reclamation of African-American narratives. In *ASYMS*, Brown contributes her distinctive

aesthetic of black self-representation through characterization and her extensive repertoire of black social dances, which she performs to the music created by the tap dancers. As the dancers communicate across genres in the finale, which looks more like a dance party than a dance concert, they enact their dancestral connection, one dimension of which is based in improvisation.

The finale demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between Brown's social dancing and tap dance, and through this structured yet improvised interaction, the dancers also stage a social interaction enlivened through black vernacular dance. The tap dancers create a kind of half-cypher, with Grant and Samuels Smith on the edges and Sumbry-Edwards in the center. Throughout the piece, Brown moves around the center of the cypher, facing each tap dancer as she exchanges movements and rhythms with them. The tap dancers take turns dancing and witnessing exchanges between the others as they wait. They cheer and goad their peers, and though they are on stage while the audience observes, it is easy to imagine that we are in fact, not there. I imagine the dancers in rehearsal, working up choreography and in the process sharing improvisatory, social moments like this one, and perhaps that kind of interaction led to restaging their social engagement in this scene at the end of the show. When Grant lays down a groovy beat, Brown responds with the *cabbage patch*, the *bop*, the *dougie*, and the *bee's knees*.[61] Each of these social dances involves bent knees moving toward one another and back out to the side. She sometimes steps side to side at the same time, or keeps her feet planted yet twisting. When Samuels Smith takes up a groove similar to Grant's, Brown's movements take an up-and-down shape as she runs in place with her knees lifted high. When Brown shifts into the *running man*, a social dance from the 1990s, Samuels Smith responds with tap steps that mimic the forward-and-back shape of this step. In these exchanges the dancers see and feel with one another, matching

rhythms, complementing physical shapes with their bodies, and at the same time they demonstrate the openness of communication enabled through improvisation and swing.

The finale also illuminates potential limits of sharing rhythms across forms, as in Brown's second exchange with Sumbry-Edwards. Though they begin together, before long, as Sumbry-Edwards dances Brown suddenly stops to stare. She points at Sumbry-Edwards and looks at Grant and Samuels Smith as if to say, "Are you seeing this?" In the moment that gave Brown pause, Sumbry-Edwards had shifted her rhythms from quarter notes to triplets. Rather than responding to Sumbry-Edwards's complex rhythmic play, Brown steps aside to witness Sumbry-Edwards's mastery of her genre. This moment not only illuminates Sumbry-Edwards incomparable prowess as a tap dancer, but it also seems to indicate both Brown's appreciation of Sumbry-Edwards' genius and a limit to the sharing of rhythms across forms. Brown's performance in the finale of *ASYMS* connects tap dancing with other physical expressions of rhythm, but when she stops dancing, her stillness alongside Sumbry-Edwards's action also demonstrates that tap dance is a distinct form of expression with limits to its transference. This momentary hiccup did not stop Brown nor the tap dancers, but rather, it propelled them into the next encounter between Grant and Brown.

The finale exemplifies the resilience of the swing aesthetic. When the dancers encountered a rhythmic interruption, rather than creating an energetic disturbance, it seemed to ignite a new level of enthusiasm for all of the dancers. While it may not be possible to translate fully across these dance forms, the exchanges between Brown, Sumbry-Edwards, Grant, and Samuels Smith enliven histories, interactions, and relationships between past and present and across dance genres. Throughout this piece, the dancers communicate rhythmically, physically through gestures and facial expressions, and verbally. If social dance incites action, as DeFrantz

asserts, improvisation in this finale reminds viewers and performers alike of the communicative potential of dancing in real-time encounters and the broader historical imperative of resilience as people of color engage with one another and navigate systems of oppression and control in the United States.[62]

Epic Diasporic Dancestry

As mentioned earlier, Brown's inclusion in *ASYMS* highlights the centuries-long dancestral legacy of tap dance through her performance of various African American social dances and of the *buzzard lope*, a ritual dance performed by enslaved Africans in the United States South during the Antebellum era. The concert also stages the generational legacy of rhythm tap dance through references to tap dancestors particular to the performers. This combination of dancestral influences proposes that tap dancestry is epic and diasporic. Diasporic dance practices are, by definition, always already dislocated from any sort of geographic home. Though the practices the tap dancers and Brown perform are Africanist, they have long since separated from African-specific contexts, which makes the role of the body in them all the more profound. Rather than being geographically situated in Africa, diasporan practices are physically located in the bodies of the dancers—these dancers and the bodies that have long danced these forms. The body and its movements become the hub of cultural memory for diasporan dance practices. Practices that came to the Americas via the transatlantic slave trade did not bring with them documentation that dictated how to do them. There are no texts, handbooks, or other documents that might be located in an archive, but rather, they persist through what Diana Taylor identifies as the repertoire: "all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral and invalid forms of knowledge and evidence."[63] The dance practices Sumbry-Edwards, Grant, Samuels Smith, and Brown enliven in *ASYMS* are examples of the "multiple forms of embodied acts [that] are always

present, reconstituting themselves—transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next."[64] In this instance, the body is the archive and the practices document histories that otherwise might be forgotten.[65] In addition to staging the resilience of swing, improvisation, and interpersonal encounters, *ASYMS* also performs remembrance as a way of racializing this show as black.

The dancestral legacy collected and staged and performed in *ASYMS* is a similar diasporic genealogy to that which dance scholar Anthea Kraut describes in a 2003 article entitled "Between Primitivism and Diaspora: The Dance Performances of Josephine Baker, Zora Neale Hurston, and Katherine Dunham." By tracing a three-part genealogy that examines representational practices employed by these three women in their stagings of African diasporic folk dances during the interwar years, Kraut reveals an "unmistakable, if at times precarious, emergence of diaspora as both a method for staging and a way of reading black vernacular dance."[66] Staging diaspora is an act of remembrance, and in *ASYMS*, remembrance through the continual references to black experiences and the combination of dance styles, rhythms, and gestures racialize the show as black. An exchange between Brown, Grant, and Samuels Smith enlivens the connection to diaspora vividly.

Early on in the concert, Brown performs a solo through which she harnesses ancestral energy before inviting Grant and Samuels Smith to join her on stage for the *buzzard lope*. At the beginning of Brown's solo in *ASYMS*, the gestures she performs take very clear physical shapes—stirring a pot, wringing a towel, fanning herself, among others—and over the course of the repetitions, her energy changes. It expands. The movement becomes less precise in its replication of movements from the real world, and focuses more on generating feeling and sensation within Brown's own body. One way this could be described is through the Africanist

characteristic Gottschild identifies as ephebism.[67] For example, as Brown increases the tempo and range of motion with which she performs the gestures, she produces "power, vitality, flexibility, drive, and attack…a kinesthetic intensity that recognizes *feeling as sensation, rather than emotion*" (my emphasis).[68] Brown rises out of the chair she had been sitting in, her legs take a wide stance, she reaches up and out, and she projects her energy out into the space through her gestures rather than containing her energy within the gestures. While emotion is ephemeral, sensation lives in the body, and Brown's solo generates energetic, material feelings. Throughout her solo, Brown connects with the ancestors via sensation, and she communicates with and through them via movement, feeling, embodiment, and kinesthesia.

In all of her work, Brown honors her ancestors through movement, which is a trait of many African diasporan practices.[69] As compared to dancers calling on ancestors in a ritual context, however, in Brown's performance she is not necessarily calling particular ancestors or dieties, but rather, she is re-enlivening all those who move through gesture and through dance—ritually and socially, historically and contemporaryily. While ancestors may not be physically present, they are present in memories and through continued physicalization of their movements and practices by dancers in the present. African and African American dance scholar Kariamu Welsh-Asante explains this when she states, "the ontological aspect of African aesthetics is memory."[70] If memory is a way of being, re-enlivening the ancestors as Brown does is an enactment of memory through which she and the ancestors come into being together. As Welsh-Asante asserts, this engagement with epic memory is not a historical reenactment, but rather, Brown embodies gestures related to labor in order to "[deliver] to the viewer the pathos, feeling, and experience without telling a literal story. …It is nonspecific, pertaining only to the illusion of experience and not the actuality of it."[71] Calling forth the ancestors through gestural vocabulary

as Brown does enables her both to embody cultural memory and also to be with those from the past, in the present.

Once Brown's expansive gestural energy has taken her out of her chair, she moves off of the platform upon which she dances, and down to the center of the stage where a small white cloth rests. Again, Brown repeats the series of gestures with which we have become familiar, but here, they resonate differently. The size of the gestures and the space they take up now continue to reach beyond Brown's physical body, and her focus seems also to be redirected. Her energy and focus expand out from her physical body, reaching up and down and all around, and at the same time, she finds a direct line of connection between her body and the cloth. The relationship between Brown, the cloth, and the energy she generates are fundamental components of the *buzzard lope*. As part of this historic dance, Brown's dynamic energy leads her into a circle around the cloth. She folds her torso forward at the waist and points her elbows back behind her, flapping them like a bird. As she begins to trace a circular path around the stage, Brown's energy is contained within her small frame, and her focus is on the cloth. She makes one trip around the cloth with footwork that looks sort of like a forward-moving *moonwalk*. Near the end of her lap, Brown performs intentional heel and toe articulations, which look like tap dance. By tracing a path around this small circle, it is as though Brown lassoed in all of the energy she had generated earlier, containing it within her physical body and within this ring on the floor. When she reaches the center of the stage again, she picks up the cloth and transfers that ancestral energy into it. This moment also introduces Grant and Samuels Smith to the circle.

As I examine Brown's dancing alongside the tap dancing of Grant and Samuels Smith, I make a broad argument that in African diasporic practices rhythm and movement are carried out in different parts of the body and that dancers with deep practices can transfer these rhythms and

movements adeptly. In the case of the specific dances on the *ASYMS* program, the transfer of rhythm across bodies and practices is played out through tap dance, lindy hop, the *buzzard lope*, and Brown's contemporary dance aesthetic, which is already a blending of many Africanist forms. When Grant and Samuels Smith join Brown in the space she has just blessed, all three dancers share an audible movement—two grounded, full footed steps on counts *a1*. Grant and Samuels Smith each have an opportunity to solo with the cloth in hand, and they engage in rhythmic tap dance footwork to honor the ancestors. Grant is the first to dance after Brown, and his rhythmic footwork leaves a lot of space for breath. He uses simple steps like *heel drops*, *brushes*, *spanks*, and weight shifts from one foot to the other, feeling out his relationship with the cloth, with the beat of the drum, and with Brown. Like Grant, Samuels Smith also keeps his steps simple, but the rhythms he produces express an urgency through running, overlapping phrases. During their solos, while Grant stays low to the ground and Samuels Smith is more upright with arms spread wide, their engagement with the rhythm is located primarily in their feet. Brown, on the other hand, takes a more full-bodied approach to the rhythm in her movement.

Between each solo, the tap dancers return the cloth—and ancestral energy contained in it—to Brown. After Samuels Smith finishes, all three dancers together engage more fully with movement and rhythm. While Grant and Samuels Smith circle around Brown, maintaining a downward focus with their entire bodies—their gaze, shoulders, and feet—Brown waves the cloth up and around, she seems to summon the ancestors through the cloth and through her movement. She twists in the torso, throws her hands and arms up and spreads them out wide. Brown does use her legs, bending at the knees, kicking out her feet and stepping down onto them, but her lower body is less central to her expression of the beat than it is for the tap dancers.

As a lively extension of her body, the cloth is a means through which she can express feeling and rhythm.

As the dancers transfer rhythm and energy across bodies and genres, their engagement with the cloth in the *buzzard lope* demonstrates a similar transference, but in this case, the energy is ancestral. In a post-show conversation, Brown describes the *buzzard lope* as a ritual dance that "honor[ed] the ancestors that had been discarded as slaves."[72] As a symbolic representation of the ancestors that wields incredible power, the cloth contains the lives and memories of many, and through the *buzzard lope*, these performers' bodies similarly honor the ancestors. Brown's appearance in *ASYMS* reminds us that the relationship between dance and ancestors is not just about tracing a dance legacy through one particular genre, either *buzzard lope* or tap dance, but that the Africanist legacy unites all dance practices of the African diaspora.

The contrast in expression between the tap dancers and Brown illustrates a point Gottschild makes about Africanist forms expressing themselves through movement. Compared to some Europeanist dance forms, tap dance and African dance are "not a psychological reenactment of emotional expression but…a constellation of steps and/or tasks with feeling as a kinesthetic concept intimately connected to the movement itself."[73] As noted above, in Africanist forms, dancers access feeling through sensation rather than through emotion. The importance of the body in this formulation, particularly in the context of the United States, relates to the history of African American autonomy, or lack thereof. Whereas African American people were treated as objects in chattel slavery, for example, feeling and sensing through movement when dancing enabled them to embody a kind of ownership of one's self and of one's experiences of those movements. The body and bodily practices are central to the survival of African histories in the

diaspora, which is not to imply that bodies and practices are stable, but rather is to point out the materiality of bodies that continually enliven histories and memories affiliated with them.

Further, to Gottschild's contention that "expression comes from feeling for, with, and through the movement, rather than the movement serving as a vehicle for expressing emotion," I would add, in the instance of tap dance, this expression also comes from feeling for, with, and through the rhythm.[74] The pieces in *ASYMS* that include Brown make this relationship between movement and rhythm all the more lively because Brown and the tap dancers express movement and rhythm so differently. In a public conversation after one performance of *ASYMS*, Brown talked about how challenging and scary performing with Sumbry-Edwards, Grant, and Samuels Smith was for her. She says she constantly had to tell herself: "live in your skill. Live in your skill, because they're living in their skill. …It's not about you being a tapper. It's about you honoring who you are and how rhythm lives in your body and how that connects to them."[75] Even as the dancers express rhythm through different body parts and with a different relationship to gravity, these dance forms are connected through a diasporan legacy that manifests in black vernacular dance. Putting Brown's dancing alongside tap dancing illuminates a kind of unison—an Africanist unison—in which the dancers' performative energy matches, even if the formal elements of shapes and steps do not.

Near the end of the trio between Brown, Grant, and Samuels Smith, they illustrate what Africanist unison looks like. The dancers join together in forward-facing, choreographed steps, with Brown dancing between Grant and Samuels Smith, and throughout this sequence, Brown mimics the men's bodily shapes and integrates their rhythms into the rest of her body. For example, when tap dancers step forward with a *riff*, which produces a flexed foot, and then draw backwards with multiple steps, Brown matches the shape of their tap dance steps by doing

something that looks like a half *box step*. These shared shapes mostly appear in the dancers' legs, as when Brown turns with the tap dancers to face the side of the stage and makes angular shapes with her lower body. When the dancers match energetically and rhythmically rather than in terms of shape, the tap rhythms move into Brown's shoulders and down through her arms. The rhythms organize the movement and their execution by the dancers.[76]

Brown's performance is a reminder that tap dancestry extends well beyond tap dance and tap dancers to include music—jazz, swing, funk—and to include musicians—Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Nina Simone.[77] And beyond swing, jazz, and funk, Brown's dancing connects tap dance to many African diasporic forms which descend from Africa, from the transatlantic slave trade, from the spectacle that was the coffle and the auction block of slavery,[78] from ring shouts and early jam sessions/cyphers, from minstrelsy and vaudeville, and from social dancing at juke joints and clubs. Tap dance is part of this long dancestral legacy. Situating it within this context reveals the knowledge and history it shares with this wide range of practices and also the knowledge and history it holds that is particular to it as a form. As an ethno-racial project of resistance and reclamation, *ASYMS* performs tap dance's epic Africanist legacy. The concert also stages the resiliency enabled through swing and the swing aesthetic.

Remembrance and Resilience

Through my focus on the resilient qualities of swing movement as well as what Gottschild describes as its "melding of tight rhythmic structure and organization with improvisation as its equal partner," I suggest *ASYMS* is a racial project of resistance that reclaims the swing aesthetic as a black expressive idiom.[79] In *ASYMS* the dancers embody the up-and-down, give-and-take pulse of swing and demonstrate that improvisation in swing is a sustaining force that undergirds the resiliency of the spirit. Following DeFrantz, who argues that black

social dance incites action, I conceive of the resilience accessed through the swing aesthetic as an "actionable assertion," and I contend that *ASYMS*, through its focus on swing, is a revelatory performance of resiliency and liberation that is situated within its particular historical context.[80] Remembrance and resilience are the actionable assertions that racialize this work as black, which is particularly distilled in the social context in which *ASYMS* preimered.

ASYMS premiered in July 2016, the week that Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, two black men, were gunned down by police in two separate incidents. The weight of the news from the week, the grief, anger, fear, frustration, helplessness, or perhaps something else entirely that I, as a white woman, miss or cannot understand, came into the performance the evening it was recorded for the Jacob's Pillow archive.[81] The dancers were visibly affected by the tragedy, and they supported one another as they worked through their feelings and reactions on stage. After the performance, in a public, post-show talk, Samuels Smith referred to Sterling and Castile as "our extended family members, our cousins, our uncles, our brothers, our fathers," and he said it was impossible not to be affected by these incidents.[82] Even as these dancers experienced the trauma of the violent loss of their extended family, they managed to perform that night. I propose that improvisation as a mode of expression in tap dance enabled the dancers to respond to their feelings that night and to dance them out together. Their interactions reveal the actionable and resistant potential of swing.

This particular performance was filled with powerful, teeming energy.[83] Sumbry-Edwards's emotional and rhythmic progression over three consecutive pieces during this concert illuminates the communicative and resilient potential of tap dance. We do not see Sumbry-Edwards during Brown's performance of the *buzzard lope*, nor during Brown's exchanges with Grant and Samuels Smith described above. However, I imagine Sumbry-Edwards backstage,

witnessing this piece not only as honoring enslaved ancestors, but also as acknowledging the wave of black men and boys murdered by police that week, that year, this century. Immediately following the *buzzard lope*, Sumbry-Edwards takes the stage for her solo, "Dormeshia Swings," which builds slowly, playing off of and inspiring the scales and trills from pianist Carmen Staaf. Sumbry-Edwards's opening steps are rooted, grounded, and while they swing rhythmically, they do not bounce physically. At one point, Sumbry-Edwards seems to gesture toward Staaf to stop playing. In silence, as Sumbry-Edwards rubs her palms together, she paces, and after a pause says, "it's not easy when your people are being killed in the streets." The audience responds with umm-hmms, and we hear Grant shout from back stage, "Speak!" Sumbry-Edwards continues, "I can't apologize because it's real, y'all." She begins to dance again, after pacing across the floor and then back to the band to set the tempo for the rest of her solo. She, again, begins slowly with a simple, brief step and more walking, but once she opens up, she swings with *time steps* and other traveling movements. As her solo goes on, Sumbry-Edwards maintains an internal focus and a downward gaze, even as the relationship between her feet and the floor lift her up as she engages the up and down bounce of swing. One *New York Times* critic described her performance as "a quietly seething solo."[84] In "Dormeshia Swings," Sumbry-Edwards uses improvisation to work through her frustration and anger with the audience as her witness.

As the dancers shift into the next piece, Grant and Samuels Smith join Sumbry-Edwards on stage, one on either side of her for a piece called "Swingin' the Miles." Their presence seems to lift her up, especially once they start their rhythmic conversation via call and response. The first few exchanges at the start of the piece feel muted, repressed, contained, but little by little the responses from Grant and Samuels Smith seem to nudge Sumbry-Edwards out of her funk—not completely, but with the sort of ebb and flow that is inherent in the notion of resiliency. Here, the

dancers engage the playfulness of the swing aesthetic and connect with one another through movement and rhythm. A series of calls and responses between the dancers exemplify the camaraderie of dancers talking it out through dance. Sumbry-Edwards suggests these honest moments of expression are made possible through the form. She says, "it's what we do […] in tap dance. We have a lot of freedom to express and if you are really in tune with yourself and with what's going on, then it's really hard to leave that at the door when the form allows you that freedom."[85] As a form, through its blend of improvisation and choreography, tap dance not only enables expression through rhythm, but through the lens of resiliency and swing, as dancers talk *by* dancing, they also express and build support for one another. In the next section, I shift my focus from the enactments of resilience and remembrance in *ASYMS* to the choreographic abstraction staged in *Shift*.

Concert Dance Dancestry: Abstracting Appalachia

Based upon choreographer Becky Hill's varied encounters with Appalachian dance, I conceive of her dancestry through two separate strains—her choreographed and staged concert dance legacy and her social, participatory, in-situ experiences—both of which inform her concert dance rendering of Appalachia. Hill hails from Michigan and first encountered Appalachian team clogging as a young person. In her late teens, she apprenticed with both Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble (Footworks) (2004-2005) and Rhythm in Shoes (RIS) (2005-2006), two companies discussed in detail in earlier chapters of this dissertation.[86] Not long before she produced *Shift*, Hill had spent 8 years living in Appalachian West Virginia first as a student at Davis and Elkins College and eventually working for the Augusta Heritage Center and the Mountain Dance Trail. Both of these organizations focus on cultural programming that celebrates Appalachian culture. This collection of experiences offers Hill a deep appreciation for

the Appalachian cultural knowledge she possesses, and she draws on this knowledge in her choreography for *Shift*.

In *Shift*, Hill's cultural knowledge of the region is mediated through choreographic aesthetics much like those of her mentors, particularly that of Sharon Leahy, artistic director of RIS. Leahy has been a mentor to Hill since Hill's apprenticeship with RIS in the mid-2000s. In 2012 Hill and Leahy's relationship shifted from one focused on Hill's performance of percussive dance to focusing on Hill's choreography when Leahy recruited Hill to choreograph three ensemble pieces as part of "Carry it on," a project that Leahy directed, which celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Wheatland Music Organization in Remus, MI. Leahy and Hill worked closely throughout the "Carry it on" project. Then, during the summer of 2017, both Hill and *Shift* performer Kristen Andreassen attended a week-long workshop about ensemble choreography for percussive dance at Augusta Heritage Center, which was guided by RIS artistic directors Leahy and Rick Good. Some of the choreography that appears in *Shift* began in this choreographic lab. After the workshop, Leahy continued on as a choreographic advisor throughout Hill's process of making *Shift*. Based upon Leahy's mentorship and my analysis of Leahy's choreography in chapters 1 and 3 of this dissertation, I contend Hill's exploration of the lightness and the dark of Appalachia is mediated through similar choreographic and aesthetic lenses that Leahy engages in her choreography. *Shift* also includes direct quotations from Leahy's choreography in the pieces on the concert that represent the light in Appalachia. Hill's choreographic in(ter)vention, which is built upon her dancestral inheritance, produces aestheticized iterations of Appalachian dance for export to the concert stage, which illuminates a range of moods affiliated with Hill's experience in Appalachia. Like other cultural representations of the region that construct

Appalachia as racially white, Hill's dancestral legacy of staging Appalachian dance in concert contexts is similarly complicit in generically representing the region as white.

The persistent nature of racialization as aggregative means that perceptions of Appalachia as a region with a homogeneous white population have built up over time. Nineteenth century local color writers, music and dance collectors of the same era, popular media representations from the 19th and 20th centuries, and even Appalachians themselves have perpetuated this image.[87] Appalachian studies scholar David E. Whisnant refers to the continual representation of Appalachia as such as "a selective version of local culture" (97), one that highlights cultural survivals such as ballad singing and basket making rather than honoring the "complex dynamics" of traditional culture and cultural change.[88] In my analysis of *Shift*, I contend that Hill's concert dance dancestry is based upon such constructions of "received culture"[89] as it blends representations of shadowy, nostalgic Appalachian culture with the legacy of modern and contemporary dance that has a history of staging a purportedly "neutral universal, which is able to contain all difference."[90] Racializing Appalachian whiteness both as an identity marker within the region and in the representation of Appalachia in *Shift* recognizes the powerful force such a racial category holds.

Choreographic Abstraction, Universalizing Appalachian Specificity

In *Shift*, Hill engages culturally marked movement practices including square dance figures and percussive footwork, but she cloaks the cultural specificity of these practices through choreography and abstraction, which the analysis below describes. When early modern dancers similarly engaged social or ritual dance in their modern dance compositions, their choreography legitimized their work as art and themselves as artists, whereas the people who practiced those forms in ritual or social contexts were perceived as untrained, natural dancers. The categories of

"art" and "natural" racialized the dance practitioners as "white" and as "other" respectively. In *Shift*, Hill creates an artistic rendering of Appalachian dance via aesthetics of art, of power and privilege, and of whiteness by integrating modern dance abstraction. With its all-white ensemble, Hill's work "[figures] a universal subject" and normalizes Appalachian ethno-racial identity as white.[91] As the analysis in this section demonstrates, through choreographic abstraction, *Shift* presents an interpretation of Appalachia that symbolically evokes a place or a people rather than staging Appalachian folklore as a collection of cultural practices.[92] Abstraction also enables Hill to communicate her accumulated cultural knowledge of Appalachia in the concert dance context.

Of all of the choreography in the show, "Born to Die" most coherently addresses the Appalachian tension of both darkness and light simultaneously, which it achieves through full-bodied, gestural movements and bodily shapes that contrast one dancer to the other three on stage.[93] The soloist, Sarah Morgan, is dressed in pink and seems to represent the light in Appalachia. Morgan is an apt body for the task of universalizing Appalachia through abstract, modern dance-resonant movement: she is white, pretty, and fit. She is also clearly a trained contemporary dancer, which is evident in her physical execution of these full-bodied movements. When she extends her arms up and out, the integration between her back and her finger tips is notable—she does not just lift her arms, but she uses the full width and length of her back to support them. Morgan does not make shapes but rather her dancing is about movement. As she moves and reaches and stretches, Morgan passes through the forms she wants us to see. Skipping, stretching, taking up space, and rolling on the ground in the opening of "Born to Die," Morgan seems to soak up and live what is good.

The other three dancers, all dressed in blue, contrast Morgan's movements and energy, occasionally producing percussive sounds with their feet, which Morgan reacts to. These three

dancers stick together in a clump, hovering upstage like a dark cloud, and their movements are contained, mostly upright though occasionally hunched over at the waist. One dancer in blue does cross over to dance with Morgan, but only briefly before returning to the others. In all of this, the women in blue seem to push Morgan around, to energetically challenge her, which results in a shift in Morgan's dancing over the course of the piece. Morgan's movement gets weaker, more labored, more anguished. As two women in blue *stomp* their feet three times in succession, with each *stomp*, Morgan sinks further into the floor. Near the end, Morgan seems to fight back, pressing through challenges presented to her. By juxtaposing Morgan against the group—pink against blue, light against dark—Hill illustrates tensions between darkness and light in Appalachia.

Another piece that incorporates contemporary dance movements and aesthetics is "How the Water Walks," which is especially evocative of the darkness of Appalachia based upon the tone of the song and the slow, laborious movement, but it also calls to mind pastoral images of Appalachian rivers and streams. In the piece, the performers progress along a diagonal across the stage with singer/dancer/musician Kristen Andreassen leading the way. As Andreassen sings this song which she wrote and which has a dirge-like quality, she walks slowly, simultaneously patting a simple percussive rhythm with her hands on her chest and thighs. As other dancers in the cast follow her, they lean into one another for support in slow, steady movement that looks like contact improvisation. As they follow Andreassen, dancers fall out of line and sink into stillness on the floor, leaving a trail of bodies lying along her path.

Both "Born to Die" and "How the Water Walks" evoke a kind of Appalachian tension in the way they engage both the darkness and the light, life's challenges alongside its joys. As personal narratives from Appalachians describe lives filled with challenges and at the same time

emanate the good found in Appalachian generosity, opposition is constant in the choreography of "Born to Die."[94] Morgan's pleasant and easeful dancing is in contrast to the grim, contained movements of the women in blue. At times, the women in blue physically confront Morgan, manipulating her movements to their desire. Even the conclusion of the piece introduces a lyric conflict, as the ensemble enters the stage to sing the hymn by the same name as the dance. The lyrics state that though we may die, "[we] from [our] grave shall rise and see the judge with glory crowned."[95] This piece takes the persistent tension between living and dying as its focus. The conflict in "How the Water Walks" is much subtler. The tone of the song and the line of still, seemingly dead bodies indicate darkness, but this collection of bodies at the end also reminds me of the streams Hill mentioned in her introduction to the concert. This piece combines voice, subtle body percussion, simple contact improvisation, and walking to produce an image of Appalachia that embraces the contradictions of life in the region. Though both pieces abstractly address the themes of darkness and light, they correlate with tensions of life in Appalachia such as living on land rich with mineral resources, but not actually owning the rights to those assets; holding tightly to the land one loves at the same time outsiders exploit it for its resources.[96]

While musical artists make social commentary and explore life's challenges in Appalachia overtly through song lyrics such as "I hate the capitalist system" by Barbara Dane and Appalachian murder ballads such as "Down in the Willow Garden" and "Poor Ellen Smith," this approach is less available to Appalachian dancing, or at least Hill's choreography suggests this is so. On representing the lightness and the dark of Appalachia, Hill states, "so often when we put this on stage, we either focus on one or the other, and I really wanted to create a show … that sort of brought both of those things to light in a way that honored the mountains and honored the traditions."[97] In order to expand the cultural and aesthetic reach of Appalachian dance, Hill

seems to incorporate this abstract movement vocabulary we see in "Born to Die" and "How the Water Walks," almost as though she does not trust the medium of Appalachian dance to represent the ideas she stages on its own. She abstracts the specificity of Appalachian dance by incorporating gestures and movements that align with modern and contemporary dance. Dancing barefoot in these pieces further separates the dancing from its Appalachian specificity. In a critique of the label "contemporary dance" for the Western/European aesthetics it actually implies, dance scholar Ananya Chatterjea states that movement affiliated with this genre maintains "its Eurocentric orientation" even as it allegedly represents universal themes.[98] Though *Shift* does not identify as "contemporary dance," but rather as percussive dance, it does rely on "the signifiers of the Euro-American modern/postmodern."[99] Further, through this universalizing aesthetic, this all-white cast of dancers, most of whom do not hail from Appalachia, engages in a kind of mythic abstraction that both does and does not represent Appalachia.[100]

Whereas the ongoing bounce and energy of most Appalachian dancing—whether figure or footwork dancing—creates a joyful feeling in dancers, abstraction in *Shift* produces a ghostly, haunting quality, especially in the first half of the concert, which primarily addresses the darkness. In the program notes, Hill says her goal with *Shift* is to present both the darkness and the light "within ourselves and Appalachia…in a way that honored the region, and those who shared their stories and steps with [her], while not trying to ignore the darkness that lingers."[101] That last line, like the word it ends with, lingers without particular indications about what it refers to. Representations of darkness in the piece are similarly subtle, emerging out of halting rhythmic footwork, melancholy music, dim lighting, and navy blue costuming. This darkness is

haunting, a ghost whose presence pervades the culture, and whose ominous aura hangs over the show, even as *Shift* transitions into representations of the light.

Hill's rhetoric of expressing the darkness and the light "within *ourselves* and Appalachia" further illuminates her intention to expand the expressive potential of *Shift* to address a broad, possibly universal, experience of sadness and joy, conflict and triumph, loss and love. While "Born to Die" and "How the Water Walks" primarily engage non-percussive choreography, the majority of the dancing in *Shift* privileges the percussive in this percussive-modern dance blend, which I suggest stages a "differentiated whiteness."[102] By this I mean, in *Shift* Appalachia is represented or imagined as white through modern dance and concert stage signifiers of whiteness, and adding (Appalachian) percussive dance to this context maintains its whiteness, but shades it in a bit.

Hill does not identify as a clogger, nor as a tap dancer, but as a multi-form percussive dancer who, in recent years, has developed an interest in combining these varied forms into her own idiosyncratic percussive dance style, which she also engages in her choreography. Hill purposefully blends dance styles and representational conventions in *Shift*, and her solo "Elk River Blues" highlights a blending of percussive dance styles that reduces the ethno-racial specificity of the practices themselves. Watching and listening to Hill's solo "Elk River Blues," I note *toe knocks* from *Québécois* step dancing, *brushes* that scrape against the floor with a sensitivity to sound I attribute to body percussionists, rhythmic bouncing reminiscent of clogging and flatfooting, fast double *shuffles* that might come from Irish dance, and a few steps such as *drawbacks* and *cramp rolls* that are recognizable as tap dance vocabulary. I only parse these steps out so specifically to point to Hill's multiple influences, but taken together, the steps and rhythms add up to a unique blend that is none of those genres and all of them at the same time. In

Shift this blend of percussive step dance practices all come under the umbrella of Appalachia based upon the impetus of the show. Following the logic of the historic ethno-racial representation of Appalachia as generically white, the steps lose their ethno-racial specificity and take on a generalized Appalachian whiteness.

Hill's commitment to engaging multiple genres of percussive dance within her individual style and in her choreography produces a play with rhythm that I think is distinct to Hill and that I identify as a kind of percussive-rhythmic abstraction. During her time in West Virginia, Hill served as co-founder of the Mountain Dance Trail, a heritage tourism trail that connects 16 communities across West Virginia. Hill traveled around the state to each of these communities to facilitate local square dances. Also as part of her Mountain Dance Trail responsibilities, Hill, along with folklorist Gerry Milnes, created a documentary called *Reel Em' Boys, Reel Em'*. In the process of filming, Hill noted an important contrast between the legacy of steps she learned through the performance ensembles with whom she first studied and the kinds of steps dancers did at the West Virginia square dances. Whereas choreography by Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble and Rhythm in Shoes largely relies on codified steps from the folk festival scene of the 1960s and 1970s, Hill said at the square dances, "a bunch of people had different base steps."[103] To Hill's eye, these dancers seemed to have more freedom in the steps they performed, "which was intriguing to [her] in terms of Appalachian dance," which she had previously come to know through a specific vocabulary.[104] This seemed to be revelatory for Hill as a dancer, because it inspired her to find her own steps. Further, her interest in percussive dance broadly has moved Hill to study privately with percussive dancers whose work she admires, including Sandy Silva from Canada and Yiota Peklari from Greece. Each of these women engages percussive footwork—Silva blends percussive dance from Hungary, Appalachia, Cape Breton and

Andaulsia, and Peklari begins with Spanish flamenco[105]—to build full-bodied rhythmic compositions. Hill incorporates aesthetics and steps from these dance mentors into her own dynamic percussive dance vocabulary.

Rhythmically, Hill's solo "Elk River Blues" is particular to Hill, but I also attribute structural and compositional elements in this piece to Leahy's influence, particularly Leahy's piece "Locust." Specifically, I note Leahy's sense of choreographic timing, which emerges in the way the piece builds from something very simple to dancing that is much more rhythmically complicated and full. "Locust," which is an ensemble piece, builds over time, beginning first with one dancer and then adding another, replacing dancers onstage as others exit. Only near the end of the dance are all of the performers on stage together. The correlation in "Elk River Blues" is instead of adding more dancers over the course of the piece, Hill adds more steps and complicates the rhythms she plays. "Elk River Blues" also resonates with "Locust" through its use of the entire stage space and bodily facings in all directions over the course of the piece.

While "Elk River Blues" draws on a variety of percussive dance vocabularies, which moves the dancing in *Shift* away from Appalachian-specific dance steps and styles, abstraction in this show does not completely dissociate dancing from cultural specificity. Rather, abstraction enables Hill to highlight an Appalachian tension, which is symbolically represented by her objective to stage the lightness and the dark of Appalachian experience. As discussed above in the analyses of "Born to Die" and "How the Water Walks," full-bodied movements abstract Appalachian specificity. In contrast, the duet "Green Corn" abstracts the rhythm of ongoingness found in most Appalachian step dancing and thus disrupts a typical rhythmic flow. However, in following the structure of the music, the choreography for "Green Corn" aligns with such

standard practices in Appalachian square dance. This combination of formal elements in "Green Corn"—rhythm and structure—also embodies an Appalachian tension.

Rhythmically, "Green Corn" represents darkness by generating feelings of frustration and challenge via halting, disrupted rhythmic footwork. Rather than engaging the ongoing bounce typically found in clogging, the rhythmic footwork of "Green Corn" is divided between the two dancers, so neither dancer performs the full sequence of steps. Instead, each only performs intermittently. If I close my eyes, the sound and musicality of the rhythm is coherent and consistent, but when I watch, because each dancer only plays some of the beats and not all, I note that each individual dancer has to constantly start and stop in order to properly execute her part. The dancers rarely get into a bouncing flow, and when they do, the flow is brief. Then, when they return to this broken rhythm it takes them back to having their feet firmly grounded, which in turn, produces a different kind of relationship to the floor. In bouncing, ongoing clogging, the floor gives life to that bounce, but here the floor seems to hold the dancers down. Still, this groundedness and the sound of the sand they sprinkled on the floor at the start of the piece bring out an important dimension of Appalachian connection to the earth, to land, to place.

Even as the flow of clogging is disrupted, the footwork the dancers perform is dynamic both in relationship to one another and to the music. Like square dance figures and patterns, the percussive choreography for "Green Corn" is in close relationship with the music. As with most old time tunes, this piece has an "A part" and a "B part." The A part here is higher than the B part, which I would describe as having a lower pitch and a bouncier rhythm. The form of the song is AABB, and the choreography matches this in structure and in tone. The steps for the A part do not bounce, as the dancers step in place and *brush* the opposite foot forward. They move forward and back with a series of additional steps, but none of this has any bounce—at least one

foot is always firmly connected to the floor. Even still, we continue to hear the sand as it scrapes beneath their feet. The steps the dancers perform with the B part are more even, and they include more sounds and instances of contact between foot and floor than the steps of the A part. While this piece does not engage the typical ongoingness found in Appalachian step dance footwork, by holding tight to the structure of the music as square dancing figures do, "Green Corn" both breaks away from and embraces Appalachian dance tradition.

Even as I critique the potential whitewashing enacted through rhythmic and symbolic abstraction in *Shift*, I also acknowledge what choreographic abstraction in *Shift* enables. Unlike texts that attempt to faithfully portray Appalachia as it is, which in turn leave out Appalachians whose experiences do not align with the narrative presented,[106] abstraction leaves a lot of space for identifying with a range of Appalachian experiences. In this way, *Shift* is more like a novel or a poem that creatively stages a perceived essence of Appalachia through dancing rather than like a work of non-fiction that tries to accurately represent the region. Nowhere does Hill claim this piece will authentically represent Appalachia, but rather that *Shift* is "inspired by Appalachia."[107] The concert stage offers a context in which creative artists have a lot of freedom to explore ideas through movement, and Hill engages this freedom to reimagine Appalachian dance in this context. At the same time, *Shift* glosses over the complexities of race, ethnicity, and class in the Appalachian region, and thus participates in the covert racialization of the region, normalizing but not naming whiteness.

Staging a Recognizable Appalachia, Constructing Cosmopolitan Whiteness

By focusing on Hill's concert dance dancestry, which includes long-standing professional dance companies, I can also examine *Shift* as a professional endeavor. This concert is a far cry from the local square dances Hill coordinated in West Virginia, for West Virginians as part of

her work on the West Virginia Mountain Dance Trail. In *Shift*, I suggest that Hill and her collaborators, as professional musicians and dancers, are "public exponents of the received culture"[108] who, like bluegrass musicians and other performing artists, engage their "power to represent and evoke the past" on stage.[109] The received culture in this instance is that which the performers know of Appalachian identity via their music and dance practices and via other myriad representations of the region they have encountered. My analysis suggests Rhythm in Shoes's repertoire is one example of the received culture that intersects with Hill's staging of Appalachian culture in *Shift*.

Professional performers who stage practices identified as "traditional," whether the dancers in *Shift* or generations of folk musicians before them, constantly have to balance producing material that is recognizable as Appalachian with their own creative interests and impulses. Robert Cantwell, writing on the commercial viability of bluegrass music, reveals a tension between attempts at being true to something (a quality, a time period, or an essence, for example) and the necessity to cultivate something recognizable, repeatable, and marketable.[110] As a result of similar such purposeful organization in *Shift*—what I have previously identified as concertization—the material on stage projects a kind of cosmopolitan whiteness, which the performers construct through abstraction as described above and through the parts of the show that are more closely indexed to old-time Appalachian music and dance. Part of the project of whiteness vis-à-vis dance has always been about cleaning and smoothing perceived rough edges of dances from ethnic and racial minorities in order for white people to perform or appreciate them.[111] In *Shift*, the result of such refinement via concertization is a representation that is not *not* Appalachia, but it is a shinier, glossier rendition of the region's practices.

Nearly all of the music included in *Shift* is traditional, meaning it is part of the long-standing old-time repertoire, which is most often passed down through oral history, which means it is learned by ear and rarely written down. The dancing, however, is all invented for the stage, though some have more clear correlations to dancing in Appalachian social contexts than others. For example, the opening group dance, "Last Chance," looks much like a square dance one would encounter in a community as dancers *swing* their partners and *do-si-do* their neighbors. They weave around the circle sometimes taking hands in a *grand right-left* and sometimes simply passing other dancers without touching physically but acknowledging them with a nod or a smile. Dancers yip and holler as they move through the complex patterns of the dance, interacting with nearly every other person in the circle by the end of the piece. This opening piece invites audiences in with something recognizable as traditional, Appalachian square dancing.

Also recognizable as square dance is the piece "Twin Sisters," which certainly relates to the opening square dance and other community square dances like it, and which compositionally creates community in a similar way. However, through the aesthetic expectations of concertization, the choreography of "Twin Sisters" purposefully expands the energy and focus of the dancers to create a concert dance piece that is distinct from square dancing in situ. For example, the four dancers of "Twin Sisters" maintain the forward motion of ongoingness common in square dancing as they move through expansive square dance figures with a simple phrase of footwork, which they repeat throughout—*step, step, step, hop*. This sequence of steps enables the dancers to move swiftly and lightly through space. The hop at the end also lightens the mood from the grounded, downward-focused foot articulations of the clogging pieces that appear elsewhere in the show. The virtuosity displayed in this piece is understated, as dancers

seem only to be skipping and hopping around the stage, but in fact, the choreography requires an incredible amount of control and stamina. The dancers perform the simple skipping step throughout the dance, except for a few instances where they momentarily shift into a different footwork sequence, but no matter the footwork, they are bouncing and moving constantly. Also, because of the nature of the square dance figures they engage, the dancers have to be in very specific places at certain times. For example, early in the dance, one pair of dancers takes hands to make an arch that the other pair of dancers passes through. The second pair then lifts their arms and the first pair skips backwards to move under this new arch. Each element of that particular figure as well as of other patterns that appear in "Twin Sisters" require dancers to be in a certain place and also to be aware of where the others are at all times. "Twin Sisters" indexes square dancing, but choreographically and performatively, it has been aestheticized for the stage.

I connect Hill's project of staging Appalachian dance as aestheticized art object that is performed with elegance and grace to her dancestral legacy with Sharon Leahy, as discussed earlier in this analysis. As this section proceeds, I examine particular steps, choreographies, and design elements that I contend Hill derived from her mentor's influence in order to stage percussive-based dances that are recognizable as Appalachian. Having performed with Rhythm in Shoes for five years, I have deep familiarity with Leahy's repertoire and I am thus in a privileged position to analyze Hill's choreography with reference to Leahy's. As I watch Hill's choreography, I recognize particular phrases of steps, hear familiar rhythms, and even note similar conventions of composition, which I discuss in the close reading that follows. Interestingly, the choreographic abstraction I discussed in the section above includes fewer explicit references to Leahy, but the part of the concert that focuses on the light in Appalachia emphasizes group clogging choreography which contains distinct citations of Hill's

choreographic dancestor. These pieces—"Old Beech Leaves," "Mississippi Lawyer," "Dance All Night," and "Freestyle"—also most directly resemble team clogging and include steps standardized at folk festivals in the 1960s and 1970s. In my interview with Hill, she very explicitly stated that she is not, nor has she ever been, on a clogging team.[112] Given this information and Hill's citations of so much of Leahy's particular footwork, it seems Hill has gleaned much about staging Appalachian clogging, particularly as it is performed by teams in the Appalachian region and outside the region, from Leahy's choreography. Therefore, my analysis suggests Leahy's iterations of Appalachian dance are the "received culture" (Whisnant 1983, 97) upon which Hill conceptualizes her rendition of Appalachia staged in *Shift*.

One piece on the *Shift* program, "Old Beech Leaves," begins and ends with a direct rhythmic quotation from Leahy's piece "Locust," and while this theme step stands out immediately, upon further observation, even more echoes and citations of Leahy's choreographic imprint emerge in Hill's "Old Beech Leaves." When I saw *Shift* during its premiere weekend, another former Rhythm in Shoes dancer was in the audience, and when the show was over, we noted the brief citation from "Locust" —*step, step, step shuffle ball-change; step, step, step shuffle ball-change*. While it only lasts one measure, as a theme in "Locust," the step is repeated numerous times over the course of the dance and is therefore quite memorable. As in "Locust," in "Old Beech Leaves" the dancers sometimes perform the step together in unison, and sometimes they dance it in a phase, or what a dancer might call a canon or a singer would call a round. "Old Beech Leaves" even ends as "Locust" ends—with a phase of that step, repeated numerous times until the last dancer emphatically steps for the last time.

Another step in "Old Beech Leaves" resonates rhythmically and structurally to a step from Leahy's choreography for "Mississippi Lawyer," which I discuss in chapter 1 of this

dissertation. Near the end of Leahy's "Mississippi Lawyer" the dancers perform a sixteen-count phrase that moves side to side, which they repeat four times. With each repetition, the dancers make a quarter turn, so by the end of the section, they have faced all four sides of the stage. They return to the front to end the section with a unison step. The analogous section in "Old Beech Leaves" similarly moves side to side and is performed in a phase four times, facing all four sides of the stage. The only difference here besides not being the exact same steps is that the phrase in "Old Beech Leaves" is only eight-counts long, rather than sixteen. Shortly after this section, the dancers make an even shorter reference to "Mississippi Lawyer" through a series of *chugs* forward that ends with a *double pullback*, a tricky step that produces four sounds in fast succession. These references of Leahy's "Mississippi Lawyer" in "Old Beech Leaves" foreshadow what follows.

While "Old Beech Leaves" cites specific steps and mimics choreographic construction from Leahy's repertoire, the piece that follows it on the program is Leahy's "Mississippi Lawyer" in its entirety. Through her mentorship of Hill and other choreographers, Leahy is ensuring that her dancestral legacy will endure, and by sharing "Mississippi Lawyer" and giving permission for the cast of *Shift* to perform it, she also attempts to keep the RIS repertoire alive. For Hill's part, including Leahy's choreography in *Shift* legitimizes her own inaugural concert dance project, as Leahy is one of only a few people who create such work for concert dance contexts. Hill is a descendent of this legacy of exporting Appalachian cultural material to the stage.

The final piece on the program, "Freestyle," further connects Hill to her dancestral lineage as it mirrors a typical "closer" in a Rhythm in Shoes concert in title, tune, and structure. However, in contrast to Hill's citations of Leahy in "Old Beech Leaves" and "Mississippi

Lawyer," in "Freestyle" Hill's particular voice and values stand out. Danced to the old time tune "Fly Around," in both Rhythm in Shoes and Hill's "Freestyle," dancers perform individual improvised solos in between more organized, group choreography. Each includes unison movement between the solos, though the make-up of these solos also differs. In Leahy's choreography, non-soloing dancers form a line upstage, keeping time with the music by shifting side to side. When the group joins the soloist, the unison lasts only four counts and seems to function like a reminder that the soloists are part of the larger group. In contrast, the unison sections in Hill's choreography include longer phrases of dancing that feature square dance figures and other movements that propel the dancers through space. A significant choreographic difference between the two iterations is that Leahy's "Freestyle" begins and ends with audience-facing choreography for the ensemble, whereas Hill's begins with freestyle solos and ends with a group dance made up primarily of square dance figures.

These contrasts between Leahy and Hill's "Freestyle" pieces highlight the choreographers' values. Whereas Leahy's is structured and organized, which makes it very easy to see the steps and formations, Hill's "Freestyle" is much more loosely organized, and it looks and feels more like a party. Taken together, I suggest Leahy's more closely aligns with the values of concert dance and the aesthetics of concertization wherein choreography organizes what might otherwise be an improvised or free-form dance experience. Hill's "Freestyle," on the other hand, aligns with the social values of Appalachian dance in situ by allowing more space for interactions among dancers.

My focus on *Shift* as a professional, concert dance production addresses ways the choreography mediates Appalachian cultural knowledge, and in this way, I also conceive of this knowledge as a possession acquired through practice. As discussed above, Hill is an Appalachian

outsider with insider knowledge. By tracing her dancestry, I reveal her connection to Appalachia via practice, but it does not extend to also include her ethno-racial identity. Hill can separate herself and her identity from this cultural knowledge in a way that people in Appalachia may not have access to. In an analysis of Appalachian musicians Josiah Combs and Jean Ritchie, who grew up in the mountains but who moved out of the region for their careers as professional musicians, Whisnant similarly proposes Appalachian cultural knowledge as a possession. He states, "in the urban, middle-class world into which its professional carriers moved there was space, leisure, and money to promote, acquire, and 'appreciate' [Appalachian culture] as a cultural icon or possession—as one would a Navajo drum or a Wedgewood plate."[113] In the case of *Shift*, the performers stage their knowledge of Appalachia in a way that celebrates and honors the Appalachian culture they embody.

Collaboration and Egalitarianism: Blending Art and Tradition in Shift

In addition to staging the social values of Appalachian dance in the square dances and the freestyle finale, Hill engages practices of collaboration and egalitarianism behind the scenes, which is reflective of her experience as an Appalachian step dancer. In an interview with Hill, she discussed the creative process of composing *Shift* as a collaborative, communal endeavor, describing it as "a sort of improv, social,…exchange type of cypher thing" to which all of the dancers contributed. For example, she might lead a rehearsal by bringing an idea to the group, which she teaches everyone and then they "jam on it and explore what the next thing is."[114] Hill calls the performers in *Shift* her collaborators, which acknowledges their contributions to the show, and through the creative process, the community of performers in *Shift* work together to create the final product. Even the audience participates in completing the production when, at the

end of the show, they are invited to dance along while a few members of the band play Andreassan's song, "Come out on the dance floor?"

As a concert dance piece, *Shift*'s collaborative, egalitarian ethos presents a significant challenge to long-standing associations with the labels of modern or contemporary dance, which through their affiliation with Western/European hegemony have often indicated individual creativity and inspired genius. In contrast, the labels traditional and folk are identified as the result of collective voices merging together, as though they are without authorship. *Shift* engages both of these characteristics as it includes creative invention as Appalachian dance is filtered through concert dance aesthetics and specifically through movements that come out of Western contemporary, high art, avant-garde dance genres. But through her ardent acknowledgment of shared creative credit for this piece with her "fellow collaborators," Hill maintains a relationship to the collective authorship of traditional dance.[115] Presenting this collectively created concert as a self-conscious piece of art, Hill's broad project of abstracting Appalachian dance in order to explore the darkness and the light in Appalachia produces a piece that honors her dancestors—both her choreographic mentors and "those [West Virginians] who shared their stories and steps with [her]"—and at the same time establishes her voice as a concert dance choreographer.[116]

And Still You Must Swing and *Shift*: Revising Aesthetic Philosophies through Performance

The analyses of the pieces presented above reveals that *ASYMS* and *Shift* do not align with the aesthetic philosophies of tap dance and Appalachian step dance I proposed in the introduction and second chapter of this dissertation, but rather, they suggest revisions to these philosophies might be in order in the second decade of the 21st century. For the cast of *ASYMS* the piece is not at all about innovation, nor is it about about ongoingness. Rather, *ASYMS* is about right now, about what remembrance and resilience have to say about being black in 2016,

and also about the state of tap dance in 2016. Through the swing rhythms and musicality of their tap dancing the cast of *ASYMS* not only stages the resilience of swing, but also of spirit, and their performance implies resilience is a present-focused quality. While this might be a claim one could make about tap dancing no matter the ethno-racial identity of the performer, with *ASYMS*'s focus on remembrance and resilience, the show specifically comments on the experiences of blackness today. By evoking ancestors from Antebellum slavery, citing their rhythm tap dancestors, and including a range of black expressive practices, *ASYMS* engages black diasporan memory to assert the importance and value of tap dance as it is right now.

In contrast to the presentist ethos of *ASYMS* and in opposition to ongoingness, which I have previously proposed as the aesthetic philosophy of Appalachian step dance, *Shift* seems most interested in innovation. Hill sees herself as an innovator in terms of percussive dance and she uses that philosophy to stage something unique and new and also to say something about Appalachia. In Gottschild's description of the black swing aesthetic in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, she suggests that black performers had to innovate for artistic survival. They had to constantly reimagine their work to maintain control over their artistic expression, whereas for white performers innovation is a matter of power and of privilege.[117] In the instance of *Shift*, Hill does engage dimensions of ongoingness by building upon steps and dances she inherited from other concert dance choreographies, but she also engages her social and cultural status to stage a representation of Appalachia in the concert dance context through her own blending of a variety of percussive step dance genres. Innovation in Hill's rendering of Appalachia in *Shift* is an expression of white privilege.

To draw this chapter and this dissertation to a close, I return to the notion of concertization, which the analyses herein have shown to be a whitening process that tends to

obscure the ethno-racial specificity of tap dance and Appalachian step dance by highlighting upper-class aesthetics. Choreographers began concertizing tap dance and Appalachian step dance in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and they continue to do so nearly 40 years later, as demonstrated in the analyses of *Shift* and *ASYMS*. However, at least one analysis in this chapter suggests that it is possible to reframe the whitening effects of concertization, and in the context of the United States in the late 2010s, the implications of this are profound. Whereas *Shift*'s representation of the lightness and the dark of Appalachia seems to perpetuate the whitening project of concertization through its emphasis on innovation and choreographic abstraction, which in turn also stabilizes misrepresentations of Appalachia as white, *ASYMS* dances against the historical formulation of concertization and proposes anew the possibilities of staging the specificity of African American experience and expression in the context of the concert stage. In particular, the evocation of (d)ancestors in *ASMYS* disrupts the whitewashed hegemony of the concert stage and simultaneously migrates the history and legacy of tap dance practice to the stage. By emphatically declaring that rhythm tap dance is a black performance form in ASYMS, the dancers take control of the narratives that might racialize the practice differently.

Further, as practices that have been mobilized as representative of America, the black-white binary established by *ASYMS* and *Shift* could be representative of conversations about race in the politicized climate in the United States as I write this in 2018. By relying on long-held aesthetics and structures of concertization, *Shift* perpetuates over-simplified images of Appalachia and of America as generically and nostalgically white Americana. In contrast, by engaging improvography and by evoking a long legacy of African (d)ancestors, *ASYMS* resists the conventions of concertization that would minimize the Africanist roots of tap dance. At the

same time that *ASYMS* fits itself into the frame of the concert stage, it does not sacrifice the ethno-racial specificity of tap dance in favor of representing a unified vision of America.

Notes:

[1] I viewed *And Still You Must Swing* on DVD in the archives at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. I saw *Shift* live in 2017, and I used an mp4 of the concert that the choreographer shared with me. Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Derick K. Grant, and Jason Samuels Smith, choreographers, *And Still You Must Swing*, DVD, presented by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Doris Duke Theatre, July 7, 2016, ID 5699, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival archives. Rebecca Hill, choreographer, *Shift: An original music and dance work inspired by Appalachia*, live concert, MP4 courtesy of choreographer, November 18-20, 2017, 4th Story Theater, Nashville, TN.
[2] Pamela Tatge in *And Still You Must Swing*, videographer Amber Schmiesing, ID 5699, Doris Duke Theatre, July 7, 2016, DVD.
[3] *Shift: An original music and dance work inspired by Appalachia*, concert program, 4th Story Theater: Nashville, TN. November 18-20, 2017.
[4] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).
[5] In a profile of Sumbry-Edwards, Grant, and Samuel Smith in the June 2018 issue of *Dance Magazine*, Samuels Smith is quoted as stating: "We've been here for 30 years, so if you consider experience a badge, then we are vets. We are elders" (29). See Brian Schaefer, "'Tap Deserves More': Derick K. Grant, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, and Jason Samuels Smith offer a frank assessment of the state of tap," *Dance Magazine* 92, no. 6 (June 2018): 26-29.
[6] Stephen E. Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, 2nd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2007), 34.
[7] John Hartigan, Jr., "Whiteness and Appalachian Studies: What's the Connection?," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 58-72, 65.
[8] Thank you to Alex Harlig for offering the insight that racialization is a systemic, aggregative process.
[9] Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 35.
[10] Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
[11] Ibid., 10.
[12] Ibid., 118.
[13] See also Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996); Thomas DeFrantz, ed. *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Anthea Kraut, *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) and Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright: Race, Gender, and Intellectual Property Rights in American Dance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[14] See for example Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Yutian

Wong, *Choreographing Asian America* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), Ramón Rivera-Servera, *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics* (Ann Arbor: Univeristy of Michigan Press, 2012); SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Cindy Garcia, *Salsa Crossings: Dancing Latinidad in Los Angeles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Thomas DeFrantz, ed., *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).

[15] Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris*, 56.

[16] Ibid., 56.

[17] Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris*, 56. Responses to the women's actual dancing further racialized and sexualized them, as reviewers were disappointed in what they read as "monotonous" movement that was not as erotic as expected and performed by dancers who did not show enough skin in accordance with audience expectations. See Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris*, 56-59.

[18] Mary K. Anglin, "Erasures of the Past: Culture, Power, and Heterogeneity in Appalachia," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, No. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 73-84; Hartigan, "Whiteness and Appalachian Studies"; and Barbara Ellen Smith, "De-Gradations of Whiteness: Appalachia and the Complexities of Race," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 38-57.

[19] John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 16.

[20] For Appalachian responses to popular mis-representations of the region see Billings et al., eds, *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1999).

[21] Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 34.

[22] Ronald Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); David E. Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[23] Gordon B. McKinney, "The Political Uses of Appalachian Identity After the Civil War" *Appalachian Journal* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 200-209, 200.

[24] William Phillibert, Clyde McCoy, and Harry Dillingham, eds, *Invisible Minority, Urban Appalachians* (Lexington, KY, University Press of Kentucky, 1981).

[25] Smith, "De-Gradations of Whiteness," 52. See also Anglin, "Erasures of the Past" and Hartigan, "Whiteness and Appalachian Studies."

[26] Steve Martinot, *The Machinery of Whiteness: Studies in the Structure of Racilaization* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010), 87.

[27] See chapter 3 of this dissertation for more on the correlation between whiteness and Americanness.

[28] Hartigan, "Whiteness and Appalachian Studies,"65.

[29] Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright*, 30.

[30] Emily Satterwhite, "Romancing Whiteness: Popular Appalachian Fiction and the Imperialist Imagination at the Turns of Two Centuries," in *At Home and Abroad: Historicizing Twentieth-Century Whiteness in Literature and Performance*, ed. Delois Jennings (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 94.

[31] For more on the proposal that square dance be the national folk dance of the United States, see Phil Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

[32] Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 34.

[33] Thomas DeFrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power," in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 66.

[34] Kraut, *Choreographing the Folk*, 56-57.

[35] Joy2Learn Foundation, "Gregory Hines | Why – The Creative Process: Improvography," youtube.com https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFvhwCjTuGk (accessed February 1, 2018).
[36] Constance Valis Hill, "Gregory Hines (1946-2003)," Dance Heritage Coalition, 2012.
[37] In an article about Hines in *Dance Spirit Magazine* tap dancer Anita Feldman stated that Hines "wasn't happy that tap dancers weren't always given credit for their work, especially if it was improvised." See "Unleash Your Inner Gregory Hines," *Dance Spirit Magazine* (May/June 2013), https://www.dancespirit.com/unleash-your-inner-gregory-hines-2326200418.html (accessed April 21, 2018).
[38] Susan Leigh Foster offers a rich genealogy of the shifting meanings and uses of the term choreography and the role of choreographers. She describes of the perception of the choreographer during the mid-20th century as "one who could synthesize the knowledge gained through the study of compositional craft with a unique, inspired vision" (2011, 52), which is also an apt characterization of the performers in *ASYMS* as improvographers. See Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).
[39] Kraut, *Choreographing the Folk*, 59.
[40] Ibid., 56.
[41] Ibid., 60. Dorrance Dance similarly engages improvography, but the program does not call that out. In conversation and pre- and post-show discussions Dorrance often states that anytime a dancer is dancing alone they are improvising. The program for *The Blues Project*, for example, includes "in collaboration with the dancers" under choreography, but though subtle, this is different.
[42] Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright*, 62.
[43] Kraut summarizing Saidiya V. Hartman in *Choreographing Copyright*, 62.
[44] Jenai Cutcher, dir, *Thinking on Their Feet: Women of the Tap Renaissance*, DVD (Columbus, OH: JamJam Productions, 2010).
[45] Hill, Rebecca, *Shift: An original music and dance work inspired by Appalachia*, choreographed by Rebecca Hill and collaborators, MP4, courtesy of choreographer, 2017.
[46] Ibid.
[47] SanSan Kwan, "What is Contemporary Dance?" *Dance Research Journal* 49, no. 3 (2017): 38-52, 43.
[48] Susan Manning, "Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric: A Response to Sally Banes' *Terpsichore in Sneakers*" *The Drama Review* 32, no. 4 (1988): 32-39, 35.
[49] For a brief survey of the vexed nature of defining categories of dance with such labels as modern, postmodern, and contemporary See Kwan, "What is Contemporary Dance?"
[50] Rebecca Hill, telephone conversation with the author, March 15, 2018.
[51] *Shift*, concert program.
[52] Hill's band, T-Mart Rounders, similarly identifies the goal of its "Progressive Percussive Old-Time" music as "respecting the tradition while pushing the boundaries of what old-time music is." Wheatland Music Organization, "T-Mart Rounders," Wheatlandmusic.org https://www.wheatlandmusic.org/milnes-chesser-and-hill/ (accessed April 4, 2018).
[53] *And Still You Must Swing*, concert program, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, July 6-10, 2016.
[54] Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 206-208.
[55] Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark*.
[56] Ibid., 209.
[57] Ibid., 216.
[58] DeFrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible," 66.
[59] In a review of Brown's choreography for the Broadway revival of *Cabin in the Sky*, dance scholar Joanna Dee Das suggests Brown stages the black dancing body as an archive that documents the collective creation of African American dance. Joanna Dee Das, "The Collective Memory of the Black

Dancing Body: The 2016 Revival of Cabin in the Sky," *TDR: The Drama Review* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 168-174.

[60] For example, in Brown's Black Girl Spectrum initiative, she uses movement and history "to instill and encourage a sense of pride and power within ourselves and our own communities…to build a world where Black girls and women can live as creative citizens." See Zita Allen, "Camille A. Brown: Exploring the Black Girl Spectrum," *The New York Amsterdam News* (July 14-July 20, 2016): 22, 24.

[61] To parse each of these social dances in Brown's performance, I rely on her video from the TED studio entitled "A Visual History of Social Dance in 25 Moves." As of June 2, 2018, the video has 1,138,458 views. See TED Studio, "A Visual History of Social Dance in 25 Moves," ted.com. https://www.ted.com/talks/camille_a_brown_a_visual_history_of_social_dance_in_25_moves/transcript#t-169839 (accessed June 2, 2018).

[62] DeFrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible."

[63] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 193.

[64] Ibid., 193.

[65] For more on bodily archives, see Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris* and André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (2010): 28-48.

[66] Anthea Kraut, "Between Primitivism and Diaspora: The Dance Performances of Josephine Baker, Zora Neale Hurston, and Katherine Dunham" *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 3 (2003): 433-450, 450.

[67] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*.

[68] Ibid., 15. Kariamu Welsh-Asante similarly states, "in the African aesthetic imitation is based on sensation, not materialism" (78). See Kariamu Welsh Asante, "Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation," in *Moving History / Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, eds Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 144-151.

[69] See Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005) and Z. S. Strother, "Invention and Reinvention in the Traditional Arts" *African Arts* 28, no. 2 (1995): 24.

[70] Kariamu Asante-Welsh, *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 79.

[71] Ibid., 80.

[72] Jacob's Pillow: PillowTV, "Post-Show Talk: And Still You Must Swing | Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival," youtube.com, published July 9, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrdZa-S3sXE&t=184s (accessed February 1, 2018).

[73] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 54.

[74] Ibid., 54.

[75] Jacob's Pillow: PillowTV, "Post-Show Talk".

[76] In her solo, Brown purposefully introduces images in short bits and flashes that refer to different moments or ideas or expressions particular to the African-American experience. This is itself a kind of representational, image-based, gestured genealogy that refers to laboring in Antebellum slavery, listening to music on headphones, and fanning one's self on a hot day, which might call to mind fanning in church or outside with friends after playing. Once Brown leaves her chair on the platform, the gestures expand to a genealogy of dances—*buzzard lope*, the *bop*, *charleston*, *juba*, the *twist*, and more. Throughout Brown's solo, she makes "the black beat visible," and I think it is the beat as translated through the body via visual and aural percussion that is the unifying force of this genealogy. See DeFrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible."

[77] In a spotlight video by the Anti-Defamation League, tap dancer Derick K. Grant cites his dance teachers and inspirations and then also lists musicians who inspire him, including Nina Simone. See

ADL-Anti-Defamation League, "Everyone has the ability to make a difference," facebook.com. https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10156080365384648&id=149220264647&_rdr (accessed March 30, 2018).
[78] See Katrina Dyonne Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014).
[79] Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark*, 207.
[80] DeFrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible," 66-67.
[81] This one-time experience of *ASYMS* was captured by the archivists at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival who were recording the concert, which is how I have been able to witness it.
[82] Jacob's Pillow: PillowTV, "Post-Show Talk."
[83] *And Still You Must Swing*, DVD.
[84] Siobhan Burke, "Review: Mourning in Tap Shoes at Jacob's Pillow," *New York Times* (8 Jul 2016).
[85] Jacob's Pillow: PillowTV, "Post-Show Talk."
[86] Rebecca Hill, telephone conversation with the author, March 15, 2018. Hill's dancestry expands beyond Footworks and Rhythm in Shoes, as she recalls learning clogging vocabulary such as the *Tennessee walking step* from Ira Bernstein and steps such as the *Earl* and the *alamo* from Rodney Sutton, Sharon Leahy, and Eileen Carson. Since 2011, Hill has been a member of Good Foot Dance Company, an ensemble that explores the American vernacular dance practices of Appalachian clogging, tap dance, and urban dance forms. See Matthew Olwell. "good foot dance company." mattolwell.wordpress.com. https://mattolwell.wordpress.com/good-foot/ (accessed April 15, 2018).
[87] Robert Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Jamison, *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics*; McKinney, "The Political Uses"; and Satterwhite, "Romancing Whiteness."
[88] Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine*, 56.
[89] Ibid., 97.
[90] Ananya Chatterjea, "On the Value of Mistranslations and Contaminations: The Category of 'Contemporary Choreography' in Asian Dance," *Dance Research Journal* 45, no. 1 (2013): 7-21, 11.
[91] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 118.
[92] From 2004 to 2005 Hill apprenticed with Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble, an organization directed by Eileen Carson Schatz. Carson Schatz considers herself to be a folklorist who stages cultural practices in concert dance contexts, and I suggest Hill diverges from such objective. For more on Carson Schatz and Footworks, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[93] Outside of dancing and composition, the piece also conveys the themes of light and dark through costuming, music, and song lyrics.
[94] An example of this push and pull between life's challenges and its joys comes from Eula Hall, an Appalachian woman. Hall's story is dark and painful to read, but it is also inspiring for her commitment to helping people in her community. In her chapter, "If There's One Thing You Can Tell Them, It's That You're Free," which was adapted from an oral presentation Hall gave at a "Women in Appalachia" conference in 1994, Hall depicts her difficult upbringing in poverty, the abusive marriage she endured for the sake of her children, and her unwavering commitment to helping people, especially women and children. Central to Hall's story is the Mud Creek health clinic she started in her community in 1973, which served hundreds of patients who could not access health care elsewhere. As of January 2018, at 90 years old, Hall continues to work at the clinic as a patient advocate, coordinating transportation to the clinic, running the neighboring food pantry, fund raising for the clinic, helping patients pay their co-pays sometimes from her own salary, and more. See Eula Hall, "If There's One Thing You Can Tell Them, It's That You're Free," in *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region*, Dwight Billings et al, eds (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999). See also "She 'fought like hell' to change health care in Appalachia. At 90, she's still fighting," *Lexington Herald Leader*,

January 3, 2018. http://www.kentucky.com/news/state/article192761569.html; Big Sandy Health Care, Inc. "Eula Hall Story," bshc.org. http://www.bshc.org/index.php?page=eula-hall-story (accessed May 1, 2018).
[95] Hill, *Shift* 2017.
[96] Critics of coal mining engage even stronger language to describe it, including identifying it as "rape." See Michael Shnayerson, "The Rape of Appalachia," vanityfair.com, https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2006/05/appalachia200605 (accessed May 2, 2018) and Emily Goodin, "Ashley Judd criticizes federal government for supporting mountaintop removal mining," thehill.com, http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/102273-ashley-judd-criticizes-epa-for-supporting-mountaintop-removal-mining (accessed May 2, 2018).
[97] Hill, *Shift* 2017.
[98] Chatterjea, "On the Value," 18.
[99] Ibid., 11.
[100] On mythic abstraction, see Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*.
[101] Hill, *Shift* 2017.
[102] Satterwhite, "Romancing Whiteness," 94.
[103] Rebecca Hill, in telephone conversation with the author, March 15, 2018.
[104] Ibid.
[105] For more on Silva, see Sandy Silva Percussive Dance, "Sandy Silva," sandysilvadance.com, http://www.sandysilvadance.com/about.html, (accessed April 10, 2018). For more on Peklari, see International Body Music Festival, "Yita Peklari | Athens, Greece," internationalbodymusicfestival.com, http://www.internationalbodymusicfestival.com/2013/art-yiotapeklari.shtml (accessed April 10, 2018).
[106] J.D. Vance's recent success with his memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (2016) is just such a text. Vance attempts to extrapolate his experience of Appalachia to that of all Appalachians. Plenty of Appalachians have written rebuttals to Vance's portrayal, including an essay in the *Boston Review* by Elizabeth Catte, an Appalachian author who also penned a short polemic in response to Vance's text titled *What You are Getting Wrong about Appalachia*. To read Catte's essay, see Elizabeth Catte, "The Mythical Whiteness of Trump Country," bostonreview.net. http://bostonreview.net/race-politics/elizabeth-catte-mythical-whiteness-trump-country (accessed April 17, 2018).
[107] *Shift*, concert program, 2017.
[108] Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine*, 97.
[109] Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 48.
[110] Ibid..
[111] Danielle Robinson, *Modern Moves: Dancing Race During the Ragtime and Jazz Eras* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
[112] Rebecca Hill, in telephone conversation with the author, March 15, 2018.
[113] Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine*, 97.
[114] Rebecca Hill, in telephone conversation with the author, March 15, 2018.
[115] Hill, *Shift*.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark*.

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