

**DANCING IN BORROWED SHOES:  
A HISTORY OF BALLROOM DANCING IN SOUTH  
AFRICA  
(1600s-1940s)**

by

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**“Social dancing reflects the Spirit of the Age  
more faithfully than any other Art”.\***

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\* Lancer, “In the dancing world: Official results of the examinations”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/05/1935, p. 8.



## CONTENT

List of Abbreviations .....	iii
Acknowledgement .....	v
Summary .....	vi

### Chapter 1

<b>Opening the floor: an overview of literature on ballroom dancing</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Literature overview.....	6
1.3 Methodology and research.....	24

### Chapter 2

<b>First steps: international ballroom dancing</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1 Dancing to the seventeenth century .....	33
2.2 From the “contredanse” to the “cake wake” .....	37
2.3 Distinctively ballroom: waltz, tango, foxtrot and quick-stepping .....	46

### Chapter 3

<b>Belonging and not belonging in the ballroom:South Africa to 1926</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1 Regal steps for locals: 1652 to 1830.....	55
3.2 For the love of precious minerals and dance .....	63
3.3 Governor-generals set the pace: 1902-1926 .....	68
3.4 “Belonging” and “not belonging” .....	74

### Chapter 4

<b>Ballroom passions: dancing panache in 1920 and 1930</b>	<b>79</b>
4.1 Royal support: dancing governor-generals and princes.....	79
4.2 Taking the floor: Dancing necessities.....	86
4.3 Music, media and motion pictures .....	94



## **Chapter 5**

### **Perfecting the steps: competitive ballroom dancing 103**

5.1	Passionate Competitors.....	103
5.2	Examining the step.....	110
5.3	Almost British.....	119
5.4	Missing the beat .....	125

## **Chapter 6**

### **Dancing in the shadows 132**

6.1	Shadow dancing to a different tune?.....	132
6.2	Competing on the edge .....	146
6.3	Dancing around objection.....	149

## **Chapter 7**

### **Epilogue: Dancing in black and white shoes 159**

### **Sources 168**

8.1	Archival sources.....	168
8.2	Government publications .....	172
8.3	Newspapers.....	172
8.4	Journals .....	182
8.5	Periodicals.....	183
8.6	Literature.....	185
8.7	Theses .....	190
8.8	Electronic information .....	191
8.9	Personal information.....	192
8.10	Miscellaneous .....	192

Declaration.....	193
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## List of Abbreviations

ADA – Amateurs Dancers Association

ANC – African National Congress

AOF – Ancient Order of Fox Trotters

BAO – Bantoe-administrasie en Ontwikkeling (Native Administration and Development)

BMSC – Bantu Men’s Social Centre

CADA – Cape Amateur Dance Association

CBM – Contrary Body Movement

CBMP – Contrary Body Movement positions

DACST – Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

FEDANSA – Federation of Dance Sport South Africa

GG – Governor General records

GNLB – Government Native Labour Bureau

ICU – Industrial and Commercial workers Union

ISCOR – (South African) Iron and Steel Corporation

ISTD – Imperial Society of Teachers Dancing

KAB – Kaapse Argiefbewaarplek (Cape Town Archive Deposit)

KJB – Kommissarisse van Johannesburg (Commissioners Johannesburg)

LD – Law Department Transvaal

NADA – Natal Amateur Dance Association

NATDA (SA) – National Association of Teachers of Dancing

NFA – National Film Archives

NG – Nederduits Gereformeerde

NP – National Party

SAB – Suid-Afrikaanse Argiefbewaarplek (Public Records of central government since 1910)

SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation

SADTA – South African Dance Teachers Association

SADSF – South African Dance Sport Federation

SANCAD – South African National Council for Amateur Dancers

SAP – South African Party



SASCOC – South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee

TAB – Transvaalse Argief Bewaarplek (Public records of the Transvaal Province)

TADA – Transvaal Amateur Dance Association

TPB – Direkteur van Plaaslike Bestuur (Director of Local Government)

TVO – Transvaal Volunteers

VOC – Vereenigde Oost-Indisch Compagnie

WLD – Registrar of the Supreme Court of South Africa Witwatersrand Local Division

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## **Summary**

This study deals with the history of ballroom dancing in South Africa. While reference will be made to the founding of ballroom in the early eighteenth century in South Africa, the study will mainly focus on the period between 1920 and 1940 in the Johannesburg, Pretoria region. The study will determine how and why ballroom dancing came to South Africa from abroad; how South Africans borrowed from the international dancing world; what they copied, what ideas they followed, how they chose to dance ballroom and how this affected South African society at large.

## **Keywords:**

Ballroom dancing; dance; inter-group relations; South African Dance Teachers Association (SADTA); Transvaal Non-European Ballroom Dancing Association; Federation of Dance Sport South Africa (FEDANSA); Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC); leisure; governor-generals; social clubs; music bands; dance fashion.



## Chapter 1

### Opening the floor: an overview of literature on ballroom dancing

#### 1.1 Introduction

Ballroom dancing appears as a Westernised and Euro-centric social activity. The music, technique and costumes either originated or were adapted to contemporary standards by European and American dancing bodies.<sup>1</sup> Prominent federations and figures in the ballroom dancing world are almost exclusively centred in Britain and Europe and most of the dancing necessities are from the West. Since Europeans first set foot on South African soil, South African society (including the freeburghers, blacks and oppressed slaves) imitated the ballroom dances of their colonial forefathers or “masters”.

Borrowing the dancing technique and ideas from the Europeans did not necessarily imply that the South Africans did not have dances of their own, or that they wanted to change the ballroom dances to something more familiar to them. On the contrary, “traditional” dances were continually used and altered for either cultural or religious practices as well as to reinforce social bonds; ballroom dancing on the other hand still remained dominated by Western influences. To dance these borrowed ballroom dance routines, South African society also needed to borrow the music, shoes, dresses and etiquette from the West because it was believed across the cultural spectrum, to “truly” dance ballroom they had to mirror the West. The socio-economic position of a specific community influenced both the amount and manner in which they were able to copy or borrow. Borrowing often also implied association with the borrower (the West) – and this meant England in particular – while during the early twentieth century there was also borrowing between different groups within South Africa.

The literature focusing on ballroom dancing in South Africa is very limited and thus this study will make a contribution to South African historiography by focusing on the place and importance of ballroom dancing in South Africa’s past. The study aims to bring about a historical portrait of dance which will contribute to a general

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<sup>1</sup> This includes societies like the “Ballroom Branch of Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing” that was founded in 1924 in England and standardized ballroom dances.

understanding and appreciation of the development and place of ballroom dancing in South Africa. It will thus enable people to value the dances not only for their physical and aesthetic appeal, but also for their social and cultural significance. This is more pertinent given the fact that the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) has declared “Celebrating our Dance, our Heritage” as the theme of Heritage Month 2008 and Heritage Day.<sup>2</sup> This study will cast more light on one of the more popular forms of dance, one which has received relatively little attention. The study will also show that even though ballroom dancing was borrowed from Western countries, it formed part of the social life of many South Africans while still retaining its distinctly European character.

The effect that ballroom dancing had on South African society will also be considered. Unlike the existing, mainly international, literature on ballroom dancing, this study does not intend to focus on general international trends and developments. Rather, it considers South African society through the perspective of ballroom dancing. It will thus address a fairly untraversed terrain in terms of South African history as well as existing literature on ballroom dancing, which is mainly written for dancers and dance teachers who want to improve their dancing technique. It will show that dancing is an integral part of a greater cross-section of South African society and thus of relevance to its history. This study will focus on ballroom dancing in the “rapidly changing urban...milieu” of, mainly, Johannesburg and Pretoria during the 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>3</sup> In focusing on a specific area and moment in time one does run the risk of generalising and neglecting the “complex mix of peoples and contexts” that forms part of South African history.<sup>4</sup> However, given the economic, social, cultural and political prominence and diversity of these chosen locations during the heyday of ballroom dancing, as well as the relative availability of source material on this topic, this study aims to begin to explore ballroom dancing in Johannesburg, particularly, as a relatively representative segment of South African society. This

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<sup>2</sup> South African Government information: Heritage Month, <<http://www.info.gov.za/events/2008/heritagemonth.htm>>, s.a. Accessed: 11/09/2008.

<sup>3</sup> Anonym, External examiner’s report: Dissertation: Alida Maria Green MHCS: Cultural history, University of Pretoria, 06/01/2009

<sup>4</sup> Anonym, External examiner’s report: Dissertation: Alida Maria Green MHCS: Cultural history, University of Pretoria, 06/01/2009

more general approach is made necessary in the light of the fact that virtually nothing has been written in South Africa on this topic.

This chapter includes an explanation of dancing terms and will present a brief literature overview where the general trends in the limited writings on dancing will be discussed. Current problems in writing dance history will be outlined and the structure of the remaining chapters will be set out.

Due to its cultural exclusiveness, dancing is a difficult term to define. Most dictionaries describe “dancing” or “dance” as to “move rhythmically to music alone or with a partner or set”<sup>5</sup> or as “to move the feet and body rhythmically in time to music”.<sup>6</sup> However, dancing means different things to different societies and is dependent on social surroundings and changes over time. For European descendants in South Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century, written invitations, formal dress and “proper behaviour” were essential parts of an official ball at the Castle or a wine estate.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, dancing for the San was a transcendental affair in the open veldt, characterized by individual movements (e.g. the ritual dance of the Shaman) rather than couple dances.<sup>8</sup> Dancing can thus be used to distinguish between different groups or nationalities of people and is used by communities to make various statements about their group identity.

The anthropologist, Keali’inohomoku, gives a more inclusive definition by describing dance as:

... a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving through space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and

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<sup>5</sup> J.B. Sykes (ed.), *The pocket Oxford dictionary*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition (London, Oxford, 1978), p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> P. Weber (ed.), *Collins paperback dictionary* (London, Collins, 1995), p. 195.

<sup>7</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope 1797-1802* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1924), pp. 20, 28-31.

<sup>8</sup> M. Hall, *The changing past: Farmers, kings and traders in southern Africa, 200-1860* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1987), p. 62; A. Krueger, The drama of hunting and healing: interpreting the rituals of the San, *South African Theatre Journal*, 17, 2003. pp. 66-67, 70-71, 73-76; L. Marshall, The medicine dance of the [slanted!] Kung bushmen, *Africa: Journal of International African Institute*, 39 (4), October 1969, pp. 346-381.

controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognised as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group.<sup>9</sup>

Ballet, folkdances, Hip Hop, tribal dances and ballroom dancing can thus all be defined as dancing because all involve a certain combination of rhythmic aesthetic movements within a predetermined space that involves a certain sector of the community. The music, style, preferences and location determines what type of dance will be performed.

The first use of the term “ballroom dancing” remains unclear. In his presentation at the “International Folk Music Council”, F. Hoerburger argues that ballroom dance started in the sixteenth century with the commercialization of music and prescribed form in dance.<sup>10</sup> Both English and musical dictionaries emphasise the social aspect of dance and ballroom dancing. The 2005 publication of *Collins dictionary* defines dancing as to “move the body rhythmically in time to music [to perform] series of steps and movements in time to music [at] social meetings arranged for dancing”.<sup>11</sup> *Rogert’s 21<sup>st</sup> century thesaurus* also emphasises the social aspect of dancing by describing dance as “moving feet and body to music e.g. boogie ... Charleston .... tango ... waltz” and “party[music] for moving to music e.g. ball...formal...social”.<sup>12</sup> In most English dictionaries, ballroom dancing is simply defined as “social dancing in couples to music in conventional rhythms such as the waltz”.<sup>13</sup> However, *The Grove musical dictionary* gives a more specific description of ballroom dancing by describing it as “a social gathering with the emphasis on dancing... a choreography of varying elaborateness invented by a professional dancing-master and performed either at a social gathering or on the stage...”.<sup>14</sup>

A more useful explanation is provided in the local *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa (SESA)*. Here ballroom dancing is described as “social dancing” and the “only form of art which undergoes radical and even sudden changes of fashion as

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<sup>9</sup> G. Jonas, *Dancing: The power of dance around the world* (London, BBC Books, 1992), p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> F. Hoerburger, “Dance and dance music of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and their relations to folk dance and folk music”, *Studia musicologica academie Scientiarum Hungarica*, 7, 1965, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> P. Weber (ed.), *Collins dictionary thesaurus express*, p. 156.

<sup>12</sup> B.A. Kipfer, *Rogert’s 21<sup>st</sup> century thesaurus* (New York, Dell publishing, 1999), p. 194.

<sup>13</sup> P. Weber (ed.), *Collins paperback dictionary*, p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Grove music, ‘Ballo’ <<http://www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articlea/music/0/01910.xml>> s.a. Accessed: 10/07/2005.

the years go by starting as a craze and spreading rapidly over the world”.<sup>15</sup> Although ballroom dancing is thus understood as a social activity, the word “ballroom” implies a formal event. Even today ballroom dances do not necessarily have to be performed in formal evening attire (like the costumes of the nineteenth century), but it does necessitate some form of formal training in structured steps and is danced at an organized event.

Ballroom dancing can generally be divided into two distinct fields depending on the style, specialisation and surrounding in which it is danced. As most dictionary definitions indicate, the first and most commonly practiced type of ballroom dancing is indeed “social dancing”. Social dances are danced to popular music, usually on a 2/4 or 4/4 beat at a social dance school, a social event or a restaurant. Because the floor space at these locations is usually very limited, dancing steps are more basic and partners dance in a loose hold.<sup>16</sup> Dancers also have greater freedom to invent their own steps out of necessity or creativity. Although dancing is the reason given for attending the event, the emphasis is more on other secondary social activities (e.g. socialising, talking, drinking and eating) than the dances themselves. Social dancing can thus be seen as an expression of sheer enjoyment or recreation.

The second and more specialised field of ballroom dancing is that of “competitive ballroom dancing”. Competitive ballroom dancing is generally performed on a larger floor space than the social dances. The competitive ballroom dancers receive more formal and specific training to enable them to compete. Dancing is thus the centre of the event and other social activities are tangential. While onlookers will tend to casually judge ballroom dancers at a social event more on what they wear and how they express themselves on a floor, competitive ballroom dancers are judged by experienced adjudicators based on the technical standard of the movements, the dancers musicality and aesthetic appeal.

There is a general tendency to refer to the waltz, foxtrot, quickstep, tango and Viennese waltz as “ballroom dances” and to the rumba, cha cha, jive, samba and

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<sup>15</sup> D. Dymond, “Dancing Ballroom”, in D. J. Potgieter (ed.), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* III (Cape Town, NASOU, 1971), p. 558.

<sup>16</sup> In a “loose hold” dancers will thus dance not as closely together as in the school figure dances.

“paso doble” (as well as the more socialized version of the dances like the mambo and the “meringue”) as “Latin-American dances”. However, in competitive ballroom dancing, ballroom is divided into two different groups of dances: the standard dances, consisting of the waltz, foxtrot, quickstep, tango and Viennese waltz; and the Latin-American dances, consisting of the rumba, cha cha, jive, samba and paso doble. For the purpose of this study the term “ballroom dance” will refer to the waltz, foxtrot, quickstep, tango and Viennese waltz, unless otherwise stated.

## 1.2 Literature overview

There is a large variety of material available on ballroom dancing. This includes books and articles as well as archival, audio-visual and oral sources. However, literary sources specifically giving an exposition of dance history are scarce. Most publications focusing on dancing either emphasise the technical aspects of dancing or discuss it as a mere social pastime. In the next few sections these general patterns in dance literature will be discussed.

General South African texts seldom refer to ballroom dancing and the word “ballroom dancing” hardly ever appears in the indexes. A few publications that appeared after 2000 do mention or give a short discussion on the influence of “dancing”, but these remain chequered and superficial.<sup>17</sup>

The South African histories that do refer to dancing, do so as a social activity of a certain group. For example, in his 1955 commentary on the early leisure activities of the Dutch settlers, the cultural historian Victor de Kock, briefly refers to the informal, but popular, nature of seventeenth century travellers’ dances at the Cape. He states that the “...Dutch sailors who came ashore visiting inns where they could pass away the time in merrymaking, and dancing their own boisterous measures...”.<sup>18</sup> Both A.F. Hattersley<sup>19</sup> and C.G. Botha<sup>20</sup> in their social histories published in the 1960s and

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<sup>17</sup> American historian, Jaques Barzun, for example, discusses how the waltz can be seen as the start of a more “sexually” aware age. See J. Barzun, *From dawn to decadence: 1500 to the present: 500 years of Western cultural life* (USA, Harper Collins publishers, 2001), p. 500.

<sup>18</sup> V. de Kock, *The fun they had! The pastimes of our forefathers* (Cape Town, Howard B. Timmins, 1955), p. 47.

<sup>19</sup> A.F. Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa* (Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1969), p. 17.

1970s respectively, emphasise dancing's popularity by describing its prevalence in the eighteenth century South African ballroom as adding to the "...colour of life"<sup>21</sup> and that "amongst the wealthy who had young folks in the house a dance was a regular pastime..."<sup>22</sup>

In the 1970s, in their seminal *Oxford history*, Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson mention how "the Bantu" danced and point to social activities (including dancing) separating the various races in South Africa.<sup>23</sup> A decade later, in his popular pictorial history of South Africa, journalist Peter Joyce discusses dancing mainly as a form of white recreation. In this work he makes mention of the first national ballroom dance competition held in 1928 and refers to heats that were danced throughout South Africa with the final taking place in Johannesburg.<sup>24</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s passing reference is also made to specific ballroom dances, like the tango and the waltz, in texts such as *Cape Town the making of a city*<sup>25</sup> and *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century chronicles of an era*.<sup>26</sup> A short, but annotated overview of ballroom (social) dancing appeared in the 1971 *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*. Dorothy Dymond, who was a life member of the "Imperial Society of Teachers of Ballroom Dancing" as well as an examiner of the "South African Association of Teachers of Dancing" in Cape Town, was the author of this contribution. She claims that "in South Africa, like overseas... festive occasions were seen as an opportunity for a social ball" where "musicians played the accompanying music".<sup>27</sup> She however presents an overview that is entirely white and colonial with only a single concluding sentence referring to "coloured" and "bantu" participation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> C.G. Botha, *Social life in the Cape Colony with social customs in South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century* (Cape Town, C. Struik, 1973), pp. 51, 85.

<sup>21</sup> A.F. Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> C.G. Botha, *Social life in the Cape Colony with social customs in South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 51, 85.

<sup>23</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford history of South Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1971), pp. 145, 162, 266.

<sup>24</sup> P. Joyce, *Reader's Digest: South Africa's Yesterdays* (Cape Town, Reader's Digest Association, 1981), pp. 102-103.

<sup>25</sup> N. Worden & E. van Heyningen & V. Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town the making of a city: An illustrated social history* (Cape Town, David Philip Publishers, 1998), pp. 139, 148-149.

<sup>26</sup> P. Joyce, *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century chronicles of an era* (Cape Town, Struik Publishers, 2000), pp. 31, 141, 176, 103.

<sup>27</sup> D. Dymond, "Dancing Ballroom", in D. J. Potgieter (ed.), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa III* p. 558.

<sup>28</sup> D. Dymond, "Dancing Ballroom", in D. J. Potgieter (ed.), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa III*, p. 558.



In his publication *Solank daar musiek is...Musiek en musiekmakers in Suid-Afrika* (As long as there's music... Music and music makers in South Africa) Jan Bouws, a musical scientist from the Netherlands, traces the development of music and musicians, especially songs and composers, in South Africa from the 1650s to the 1980s. Bouws emphasises the popularity of ballroom dancing describing for example, certain dances like the “minuet” and the waltz; the prominence of dance masters like Etienne Garoute; and the importance of dance for the early pioneers.<sup>29</sup> The lack of a detailed index, footnotes and source list however makes it difficult to follow up and find primary sources and information provided in the book. Another publication specifically aimed at the Afrikaans speaking sector of South Africa includes *Die etiek van dans* (The ethics of dance) which was written by J.H. van Wyk in the mid 1970s and forms part of a series of works published by the *Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys's Instituut vir Bevordering van Calvinisme* (Institute for the Enhancement of Calvinism).<sup>30</sup> Van Wyk considers the opinions of various prominent persons and institutions on dance including: church leaders like John Calvin; the Nerderduits Gereformeerde (NG) and Gereformeerde Churches; South African writers, like J.D. du Toit (Totius); and the Bible. Although Van Wyk explores both institutions that support and condemn dances, and urges church members to differentiate between different dances and the influence they have on society, he is highly critical of the “modern dance” trend. He regards folk dances as one of the few dances that can have a positive influence and warns readers *inter alia* against the dangers of social dancing when married as it causes promiscuity.<sup>31</sup> Although almost obsessed with the “dangers of dance”, van Wyk's study is one of the few that compares both the negative and positive influence of dance in the South African Protestant church environment. It is consequently useful as a point of reference for a study on the perceived “moral values” of ballroom dancing in South Africa.

In his work entitled *African women in towns: An aspect of Africa's social revolution*, Kenneth Little, professor of African Urban Studies at the University of Edinburgh,

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<sup>29</sup> J. Bouws, *Solank daar musiek is...Musiek en musiekmakers in Suid-Afrika (1652-1982)* (Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1982), pp. 46-47, 112-113.

<sup>30</sup> J.H. van Wyk, *Instituut vir die bevordering van Calvinisme Die etiek van dans* (Potchefstroom, I.B.C, studiestuk 97, November 1975).

<sup>31</sup> J.H. van Wyk, *Instituut vir die bevordering van Calvinisme Die etiek van dans*, pp. 8-9.



researchers the African urban women's experience of the townships on the African continent. Although very generalized, and with few examples taken from the South African context, Little's study does emphasise the important role that certain Western activities, like ballroom dancing, played in raising the perceived status of an individual.<sup>32</sup>

Only a limited number of sources touch on why ballroom was so easily accepted in a diversified South African society. An example of this is South African anthropologist D. Coplan's<sup>33</sup> *In township tonight! South Africa's black city music and theatre*. It is one of the few South African books that discusses ballroom dancing within South African society. Published in 1985, this book emphasises black popular culture and the influence that industrialisation and urbanisation had on the music, theatre and dance in the townships. Focusing mainly on the period from the nineteenth century up until the 1980s, *In Township tonight!* makes reference to ballroom dancing both as a professional white activity, as well as a preferred black and coloured practice.<sup>34</sup> Coplan has done extensive research on this era and his in-depth knowledge of popular black culture makes this book a worthy source of information on the development of dance in South African history.

Besides the above, there are a few articles that have been published in journals concerning the presence of dance (often in combination with music) in South Africa, as well as the biographical stories of South African dancers and their passion for ballroom. David Rycroft's<sup>35</sup> article on African music in Johannesburg and Peter Alegi's<sup>36</sup> work on sport and cultural performance are examples of the former.

As regards the latter biographical trend, leading South African ballroom dancers, Bill and Bobby Irvine, produced a book in 1970 which traces the story of their dancing careers. This husband-and-wife team were leading ballroom dancers and taught

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<sup>32</sup> K. Little, *African women in towns: an aspect of Africa's social revolution* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.1-5.

<sup>33</sup> David Coplan is an anthropologist at the University of the Witwatersrand. He has done extensive research on the music, theatre and dance history of especially black South Africans.

<sup>34</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>35</sup> D. Rycroft, "African music in Johannesburg: African and Non-African Features", *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 11, 1959, pp. 25-30

<sup>36</sup> P. Alegi, "Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performance, and social identity in South Africa, 1920s-1945", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2005, pp. 17-38.

ballroom in South Africa for a couple of decades. Bobby Irvine was born and grew up in South Africa, and in teaching ballroom they both visited dancing studios throughout South Africa. The book is a life history tracing the rise of the Irvines' dancing career mainly between the 1950s and 1960s. The book refers to the state of dancing in the world and more particularly in South Africa during these years. Irvine also describes and compares the state and standard of white and coloured dancing in South Africa. The Irvines' travels take the reader to Japan, America and other prominent European ballroom dancing competitions (e.g. Blackpool). Their writings reveal the difficulty of both surviving as a dancer and dancing as South Africans in the mid-twentieth century. Being a biography, the book mainly focuses on their personal dancing, their perspectives and their problems. Yet, in its very intimate and subjective nature lies the enormous cultural historical value of this text. Although the book is primarily autobiographical, it does provide some comment on the coloured dancers, whom they encountered in their dancing careers.<sup>37</sup>

There are a few academic studies that survey the presence of ballroom dancing in South African society. Matilda Burden's study entitled *Die herkoms en ontwikkeling van die Afrikaanse volksdans* (The origin and development of Afrikaans folk dances) explores the existence of social dancing in South Africa between 1652 and the 1940s. Her research is based on early travel journals and diaries and mainly Afrikaans magazines and newspapers as well as a number of Afrikaans-based questionnaires.<sup>38</sup> Another study by Ranke Hamona entitled, *The impact of ballroom dancing on the marriage relationship*, explores the psychological value that social dancing has on marriage in the twenty-first century.<sup>39</sup> Although both studies provide some insight into the social value of dancing in South Africa, the limited range of the authors' questionnaires/interviews and the small amount of primary archival documents used, limit the scope of these studies as they therefore fail to explore ballroom dancing outside of its leisure milieu.

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<sup>37</sup> B. Irvine, & B. Irvine, *The dancing years* (London, W.H. Allen, 1970).

<sup>38</sup> M. Burden, *Die herkoms en ontwikkeling van die Afrikaanse volksdans* (M.A.-verhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1985).

<sup>39</sup> R. Hamona, *The impact of ballroom dancing on the marriage relationship* (M.A. Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2006).

There are also other academic studies that include ballroom dancing within broader themes, for example, Ellen Hellmann's study entitled: *Rooiyard. A Sociological survey of an urban native slum yard* which was published in 1948 as part of the Rhodes-Livingstone paper series. In this study, which was based on her 1935 M.A. thesis at the University of the Witwatersrand, Hellmann recorded the everyday life and analysed the various problems that individuals experienced living in a slum yard during the early 1930s. Although ballroom dancing is only mentioned in passing, the detailed research done on especially the social struggles and economic capabilities of these urban citizens makes it a valuable resource in determining what kind of ballroom dance infrastructure was available to them.<sup>40</sup> C.M. de Villiers's two-volume study entitled *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging* (Leisure activities of the male adult Bantu in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging area) also gives a detailed analysis of the nature of leisure activities amongst the black community, following much the same analytical structure that Hellman did forty years earlier. Although it does not focus, like Burden's and Hamona's studies, exclusively on ballroom dancing in South Africa, the value of this study lies in the author's understanding of the area, the people and especially in the detailed recording and the extensive nature of the questionnaire data collection and comparative tables.<sup>41</sup>

In what historians describe as a "post-modern globalising world", it has become apparent that while studies tend to be more thematic, focusing on specific topics, there is also a tendency to focus more on previously "ignored histories" of the marginalized or suppressed groups.<sup>42</sup> It has been argued that there is a need to write the "new kinds of history making, the histories of families, of sport or music...".<sup>43</sup> Where South African revisionist history, for example, focused mainly on "resistance politics, racial

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<sup>40</sup> E. Hellmann, *Rooiyard. A sociological survey of an urban slum yard* (Northern Rhodesia, The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1948), pp. 37, 93, 94.

<sup>41</sup> C.M. de Villiers, *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging* (D.Phil- thesis, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1972).

<sup>42</sup> A. Blunt & G. Rose (eds.), *Writing women and space: colonial and postcolonial geographies* (New York, Guilford, 1994); H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people* (London, Hurst & Company, 2003); R. Morrell & L. Ouzgane (eds.), *African masculinities: men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); A. Mountain, *An unsung heritage* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 2004); P. Brock (ed.), *Indigenous peoples and religious change* (Leiden, Brill, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> M. Morris, *Every step of the way. The journey to freedom in South Africa* (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2004), p. 321.

consciousness and class formation” two or more decades ago, historians are now diversifying and “turning their attention to the history of sport... culture, education...”.<sup>44</sup> As noted by the leading cultural historian Peter Burke, “[d]ance history, once the province of specialists, is now taken seriously by cultural historians and discussed in relation to politics and society”.<sup>45</sup>

As is evident from the above, only a few general and subject specific books are available on ballroom dancing. Although some of the books present an overview account of the development of styles in ballroom dancing, the greater majority of these sources are “do-it yourself” handbooks, illustrating the basic social steps of the various dances. Some of these books were written by the “big names” in the dance field, such as the dancers Alex Moore<sup>46</sup> and Victor Silvester.<sup>47</sup>

In the next few pages a selection of some of the main secondary sources focusing on ballroom dancing will be briefly discussed. These books are indicative of the type of ballroom dancing literature which is currently available in South Africa. The books will be considered in terms of what they cover, how they reflect the times in which they were published and what aspects the various authors underplayed or neglected. This will reveal not only how literature on dancing has developed, but also what aspects still require attention.

One of the earliest known books on the subject is the book by L. F. Segadlo, *Course of instruction in dancing and aesthetic development of the body*, which was published around 1889.<sup>48</sup> Segadlo, a dance instructor, translated an article published by an unknown author in the *Vienna Universal Gazette*. This article emphasises the importance of dance both as a skilled exercise and as an art form. He draws examples from classical culture and stresses the values that turning and dancing has on,

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<sup>44</sup> G. Vahed, “Review: Vahed on Murray & Merrett, Caught behind: Race & Politics in Springbok Cricket”, <jmartens@ARTS.UWA.EDU.AU>, 21/05/2005, archive at H-SAAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU.

<sup>45</sup> P. Burke, *What is cultural history?*, p. 91.

<sup>46</sup> Alex Moore was the President of the “Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing” and an honorary president of the “International Council of Ballroom dancing”.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Silvester was the co-founder of the British “Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing”.

<sup>48</sup> L.F. Segadlo, *Course of instruction in dancing and aesthetic development of the body* (Newark, N.J., c1889).

especially, the city youth. The book also describes various dances like “lancers” and “quadrilles” that were danced at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The most important attribute of this book is the author’s passionate arguments to promote skilful dancers.

Another key text is J.S. Hopkins’s book, *The tango and other up-to-date dances: a practical guide to all the latest dances* published just before the start of the First World War.<sup>49</sup> This step-by-step instruction manual gives a detailed description of dances like the tango, “hesitation waltz”, “castle walk” and the variations of these dances. Like other dance instruction manuals, Hopkins discusses what he regards as the “correct steps” and emphasises his personal preferences and his favourite dances. The book provides valuable insights into popular dances of the period between the two World Wars.

Another book, similar to Hopkins’s work is Caroline Walker’s *The modern dances, how to dance them* which was published in 1914.<sup>50</sup> This dance instruction manual provides details on how to dance the tango, “castle walk”, “Boston”, “hesitation waltz” and various variations of these dances. Walker defends the “new modern dances” and advises her readers that “[i]f the poses shown in this book are carefully observed, and the instructions, both general and specific are followed, these dances will be performed in a manner which cannot possibly provoke unfavourable criticism”.<sup>51</sup> While Walker favours the “modern ballroom dances”, her book does provide valuable pointers for dancers and explains dance terms in an elementary way.

The exhibition ballroom dancing couple of the early 1900s, Mr and Mrs. Vernon Castles produced a book entitled *Modern Dancing*, also published in 1914. Like most of the instruction manuals, this book contains a brief history or general background of each of the dances (e.g. waltz and “one-step”) it discusses. The emphasis is however

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<sup>49</sup> J.S. Hopkins, *The tango and other up-to-date dances; a practical guide to all the latest dances, tango, one step, innovation, hesitation, etc; illustrated with photographs posed by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Joseph C. Smith ... and many other famous dancers* (Chicago, The Saalfield Publishing Co, c1914).

<sup>50</sup> C. Walker, *The modern dances, how to dance them, complete instructions for learning the tango, or one step, the Castle walk, the walking Boston, the hesitation waltz, the dream waltz, the Argentine tango*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago, Saul Brothers, 1914).

<sup>51</sup> C. Walker, *The modern dances, how to dance them*, p. 8.

on the introduction of the “new” dances to the beginner and therefore it focuses mainly on the timing and technique of each step. The book is written in a conversational manner and the authors give extensive thought both on how to dance a step and what they think of the name of a certain step. The book focuses on the most popular dances of its time by credited dancers and is therefore a valuable period piece.

*A study in modern dance positions* appeared around 1916.<sup>52</sup> The author, George Hepburn Wilson, a dance instructor, discusses the best and worst positions that dancers can dance in. It contains numerous photographs showing various positions in which dancers can hold each other, and provides a detailed discussion of the most basic positions in the ballroom dances, making it a useful general reference book.

The revised edition of Louise de Koven Bowen’s book *The public dance halls of Chicago* was published in 1917.<sup>53</sup> It is concerned with the conditions in dance halls in Chicago and emphasises the late hours, lack of infrastructure, “indecent dances”, inappropriate advertising, liquor, and misbehaviour of both men and women involved in this pastime. Bowen feels that dancing provides “innocent enjoyment”, but that other influences cause dancing to be “dangerous”.<sup>54</sup> She concludes by recommending laws to prohibit the selling of alcohol at the dance halls. Although Bowen’s book deals mainly with dancing in Chicago, the problems she discusses concerning public dancing are also echoed in South African dance history and thus serves as a useful comparative text.

Another book published just before the end of the First World War was Vivian Persis Dewey’s, *Tips to dancers, good manners for ballroom and dance hall*. This book is aimed at the “non-urban” man who sets foot on the dance floor for the first time. Dewey focuses mainly on the most elementary etiquette warning his readers, for example, that “the days of ‘dance bluffing’ [have] passed”.<sup>55</sup> The simple and clear

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<sup>52</sup> G.H. Wilson, *A study in modern dance positions* (New York, The Inner Circle, c1916).

<sup>53</sup> L. de Koven Bowen, *The public dance halls of Chicago* (Chicago, The Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, 1917).

<sup>54</sup> L. de Koven Bowen, *The public dance halls of Chicago*, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> V.P. Dewey, “*Tips to dancers,*” *good manners for ballroom and dance hall* (Wisconsin, Kenosha, c1918), pp. 15, 21.

explanations of manners on the dance floor in the early twentieth century make this book a valuable guide to explain dance practices that are long past.

C. Sachs's book, *World history of dance*, was translated into English by Bessie Schönberg and published in 1938.<sup>56</sup> This appears to be one of the first books to approach this subject on such a wide scale. In order to explain the world history of dance Sachs divided his book into two parts. The first explains general themes that can be found in various dances, including different basic movements (e.g. convulsive, circular, close dance); types of dances (e.g. initiation dances, wedding dances); forms and choreography (e.g. individual dances, choral dances, couple dances); and music. In part two, Sachs presents a chronological explanation of the most prominent dance movements over time. He starts with the typical dances that Stone Age peoples danced, followed by an overview of "oriental" dances. He specifically traces the history of dance in Europe dividing this history into time periods and focuses on the most prominent contemporary dances. This same structure was followed by W. Sorell fifty years later. Through Sachs's description of the "minnesinger period", couple and court dances, the "minuet" in the 1650s, the waltz in the 1750s and the tango period of the twentieth century, there is a clear indication of how ballroom dancing developed. In tracing the development of ballroom dancing from ancient times to the present he uses texts and manuscripts of the times. Although the illustrative plates are only at the back of the book, making it difficult to refer back to certain pictures, his thorough referencing system and brief summary of terms, makes it a superb reference book. Despite, or perhaps because of its age, this source will remain a prominent text.

Dance critic of the *New York Times*, J. Martin, published a book in 1946 entitled *The dance: the story of the dance told in pictures and text*. The book has at least one black-and-white picture on every page, making it visually stimulating. It is an easy-to-read publication, which is not burdened by an excess of technical terms that appears to be common in many books on dance. Martin gives a very brief summary of the development of dance. He divides the chapters both chronologically (discussing dance in "primitive" societies, the Middle Ages, Renaissance and twentieth century) and thematically (discussing dance as a spectacle, dance as a communal activity and dance

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<sup>56</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1938).



in the technological era). He presents dance as a “reaction” to society, and mainly focuses on folk dances, theatrical dances and ballet. Although only two pages are devoted to ballroom dancing as a separate entity (discussing “The cycle ballroom dancing”) he succeeds in clearly explaining the basic terms, like dancing and the influence of prominent dancers, such as Fred Astaire.<sup>57</sup>

A. Haskell’s book, *The wonderful world of dance*, was published in 1960 and is readily available in numerous university libraries in South Africa.<sup>58</sup> This colourful book with its numerous photographs, sketches and accessible language almost appears to be a children’s world history of dance, rather than a serious academic resource. However, Haskell addresses interesting questions such as the impact of dance on society; fashion and behaviour at a dance event; the social importance of dance; and media influence on dance, making it a stimulating source for a more mature audience.

One of the most important sources available on the sixteenth century dances, is T. Arbeau’s 1588 *Orchesography*. The author, Jehan Tabourot, was a French clerk, who used the pseudonym Thoinot Arbeau. At the age of 69 he wrote this memoir describing the dances of earlier years.<sup>59</sup> This book not only gives a first-hand account of the sixteenth century dances, but was translated and republished various times.<sup>60</sup> It is even accessible in South African university libraries. The 1969 Dover publication of *Orchesography* consists of a translation of the original French manuscript, sketches, diagrams, Arbeau’s dance notation, as well as a later section that was added by the 1966 English translators presenting the dance patterns in Labanotation.<sup>61</sup> The book consists of a dialogue between Jehan Tabourot (Thoinot Arbeau) and Capriol. Capriol asks Arbeau to teach him how to dance to make him more acceptable in social spheres. Arbeau gives him step-by-step instructions of the most popular dances (e.g. “branse”, “gavotte” and “galliard”) and their variations. Throughout the dialogue, Arbeau teaches Capriol dance etiquette and illustrates how these steps will be danced in time to the music. Many faults can be identified in the book. Firstly, the original

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<sup>57</sup> J. Martin, *The dance: the story of the dance told in pictures and text* (New York, Tudor Publishing Company, 1946).

<sup>58</sup> A. Haskell, *The wonderful world of dance* (New York, Garden City Books, 1960).

<sup>59</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography* (New York, Dover publications, 1967), pp. 5-7.

<sup>60</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>61</sup> Symbolic representation of movement developed by Rudolf Laban, a Hungarian dancer, in the 1920’s.



manuscript was a memoir, thus one immediately expects a degree of romanticisation. Also, as Julia Sutton, the editor of the Dover publication notes, Arbeau just gave the outline of many of the dances taking for granted that his foreign readers (or future twenty-first century readers) would know how to move their arms and heads.<sup>62</sup> However, the valuable contribution *Orchesography* makes far outweighs its drawbacks. The book is not only a first-hand account of sixteenth-century dancing, but Arbeau also explains where each dance comes from, what to wear and how to move, as well as what the dance comprises. Furthermore, he draws and explains the dance in relation to music and the social sphere, making it much more comprehensive than most dance instruction books that were published in the 1980s and 1990s.

*Modern ballroom dancing: history and practice* by Victor Silvester, was first published in 1974 and then republished in 1977. Silvester, one of the founding members of the “Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing” divides his instruction manual into two parts: first describing the history of dancing and then giving a detailed description of the basic Standard and Latin-American dance figures. Unlike Sach’s and Sorell’s dance histories, this book focuses solely on the history of ballroom dancing. However, Silvester’s lack of references to sources hampers the academic usability of this book and the value in an international sense is diminished by the fact that he (over)emphasises, to the point of exclusivity, the British role in ballroom dancing. However, his detailed description of the development of dancing, especially between the 1920s and the 1940s, makes it invaluable as a ballroom dance reference book.<sup>63</sup>

A.P. Royce’s book, published in America in 1976, *The anthropology of dance*, is another source easily available in South African university libraries.<sup>64</sup> At the time of publication, Anya Peterson Royce was an anthropology lecturer at Indiana University. In her acknowledgements she also mentions that she was trained as a dancer. The audience that was aimed at in writing this book was clearly academic. It mainly consists of text with a few photographs and sketches and a vaguely outlined table of contents, which makes it not very user-friendly. The author discusses theoretical terms

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<sup>62</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice* (London, Barrie and Jenkins, 1977).

<sup>64</sup> A.P. Royce, *The anthropology of dance* (Bloomington, Indiana University press, 1977).

and explains the general trends in pre-literate societies by looking at tribes in America and Africa. Royce is one of the few authors that gives a historiographical overview of the literature on dancing. According to Royce,<sup>65</sup> five approaches in twentieth century historiography of dance history can be clearly determined. These include: the evolutionary; the cultural trait; the personality and cultural configuration; the problem-oriented in complex and plural societies; and dance as a unique phenomenon. In broad terms, these approaches were the most popular anthropological ways to explain and evaluate dancing. For a study on the cultural significance of ballroom dancing, Royce's book provides valuable insights into the ways anthropological methodology can inform historical study. The book also contains a clear explanation of the symbols, methods and techniques of how anthropologists (and historians) studied and can study dance. However, Royce gives a great amount of attention to the value of certain recording techniques at the expense of furthering her discussion about the cultural-social significance of dancing within a particular historical setting.

Richard Lorber's doctoral dissertation entitled *Videodance* was accepted by the Teachers College of Columbia University in 1977.<sup>66</sup> In this work Lorber mainly analyses the significance of dance being recorded on a video tape and in his dissertation explores the medium of video, videodance pioneers and the presentation of dance on a television screen. Although Lorber's study appears relatively limited in its scope, he does draw attention to the important role that television played, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, in the recording and promotion of dance. It is consequently useful as a reference in studying the popularization of dance in the latter part of the twentieth century.

*The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie, was published in 1980.<sup>67</sup> This musical encyclopaedia, along with its electronic version,<sup>68</sup> provides both a detailed overview of the development of dance as well as a description of the history, figures and musical style of some of the social dances. This is one of the most comprehensive sources that is available on ballroom dancing, as it

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<sup>65</sup> A.P. Royce, *The anthropology of dance*, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> R. Lorber, *Videodance* (D. Phil. Thesis, Columbia University, 1977), pp. i-20.

<sup>67</sup> S. Sadie, *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* (London, Macmillan publishers, 1980).

<sup>68</sup> Grove music, 'Dance' < <http://www.grovemusic.com/innopac.up.ac.za/data/articlea/music/0/01910.xml>.> s.a. Accessed: 07/10/2005.

presents both the history of dancing and suggests other sources for further consultation. Although the encyclopaedic style makes it difficult to get a clear overview of how dances developed over time, it is useful as a source to collaborate views in other sources.

*Dance in its time* was first published in 1981 by Walter Sorell who wrote various other dance books including *The dance through the ages* and *The dancer's image: points and counterpoints*.<sup>69</sup> The 1981 publication includes a historical overview of dancing, along with a detailed bibliography, some photographs and illustrations. As mentioned above, following a format similar to Sach's, Sorell presents a detailed chronological history of dance in the Western world. He starts with "The long awakening", discussing the dances and mindset of the Classical and Middle Ages. This is followed by chapters on "From Mannerism to neo-Classicism" and "Changing Scenarios" in which he goes into great detail about the dances of the Renaissance, the start of ballet, the waltz, art criticism and theatre, as well as court dances and the influence that Louis XIV had on dance detailed chapters devoted specifically to ballet and dance criticism then follow. The art forms of the early twentieth century are explored in some detail, as well as the development of theatre dances and the influence of science in this field. Sorell ends his book with a chapter considering the topic: "On the cultural crisis of our time" and explains that people try to mirror the "more recent confusion" and "despair of the world wars" as well as the ever changing world in their art. He briefly discusses the need to write down dance movements and concludes by referring to the influence of the mass media on dance. Throughout the book reference is made to ballroom dancing in general, but also more specifically on the development of the waltz and Latin American dances. At times Sorell gets sidetracked and gives almost excessive attention to the mindset and other art forms of a specific period. The lack of footnotes or other more specific reference methods makes it difficult to trace his primary sources. However, Sorell is one of the few authors that presents a general dance history and makes useful references to other dancing literature.

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<sup>69</sup> W. Sorell, *Dance in its time* (New York, Anchor Press, 1981).

*Rhythmic gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di figaro and Don Giovanni*, written by W. Allanbrook, appeared in 1983.<sup>70</sup> Parts of the book appeared in musical journals and books like *Musical Quarterly* 47 (January 1981) and *History of Music* (1983). The book is also one that is readily available in South African university libraries and includes sections that are relevant to ballroom dancing. *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart* mainly follows Mozart's musical development in some of his compositions. The book consists of a historical overview of the influences on Mozart's life, explained through text and musical notation. The "Gestures of social dance" are considered by firstly looking at the "habits in the dance hall", and by quoting and referring to texts of the time.<sup>71</sup> Allanbrook then explains how the most popular dances, like the "minuet", were danced, how the rhythm is divided and how the dances influenced, and were used by Mozart in his compositions. The book is more specifically aimed at readers that are familiar with the different movements of Mozart's compositions. The clear divisions with subheadings, as well as the comprehensive and detailed footnotes, make this book an important reference book. Together with Sachs and Sorell's dance histories, it is a useful source for obtaining an understanding of the early European roots of ballroom dancing.

One of the most detailed and comprehensive "self-teaching" dance books is Alex Moore's *Ballroom dancing*.<sup>72</sup> First printed in 1986, and reprinted in ten editions, this readily available book explains not only the dances danced in international competitions, but also how these competitions worked. It presents a general introduction in which Moore explains the basics of dancing (e.g. rhythm, line of dance, hold, and leads) as well as a brief history of each ballroom dance (quickstep, waltz, foxtrot, tango and Viennese waltz). It includes a section on competitive dancing and another section on "novelty" dances. The dancing steps are mainly explained through diagrams and photographs, which would in fact make it difficult for a beginner to interpret. However, Moore is one of the few authors who succeed in combining the history of the dances with the practical steps, by explaining contemporary steps after having discussed the development of a particular dance. This

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<sup>70</sup> W. Allanbrook. *Rhythmic gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di figaro and Don Giovanni* (London, University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>71</sup> W. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, pp. 31-70; 334-335.

<sup>72</sup> A. Moore, *Ballroom dancing* (London, A & C Black, 1974). 9<sup>th</sup> ed.

makes the book very useful, not only for relevant information, but also as a methodological aid on how to present dance in a historical study.

The American author, Edward Thorpe's *Black dance* was first published in 1990.<sup>73</sup> It presents a detailed discussion of the development of African American dance in thirty-two chapters and is illustrated with numerous black and white photographs and sketches. *Black dance* traces the origin of African American dance back to the slaves who were brought from Africa to the New World to work on the plantations. It shows how different African dance traditions were brought into contact with one another as well as different European dance traditions, conventions and protocols. Thorpe discusses the influence that minstrels, jazz, and tap had on the dances of the world. He also focuses on the life and development of prominent black dancers like Josephine Baker, Joel Hall and Pearl Primus, as well as the place of black dancers in the world of ballet and theatre, which took many prominent African-American performers to Britain. Thorpe concludes by pointing to the racial, political and social problems that black dancers still encounter at the end of the twentieth century. Although the book contains a wealth of relevant material, little attention is given to the sources used. There is also too much emphasis on specific individuals at the expense of an understanding of broader dance trends. However, *Black dance* does provide valuable insights into studying the influence and adaptation of social dance in various traditions, by giving a detailed history of the development of dance of a minority and oppressed group in the United States.

The "Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing" first published the book *Teach yourself ballroom dancing* in 1977 and then it was subsequently revised by Peggy Spencer, examiner of "The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing", in 1992.<sup>74</sup> The book consists of text and a few sketches giving elementary step-by-step instructions for ballroom and Latin-American dances while advising the aspirant dancer on what to wear.<sup>75</sup> This is followed by a basic introduction on the direction of movement and how to hold a partner. The book divides the dances into three categories: ballroom

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<sup>73</sup> E. Thorpe, *Black dance* (New York, Overlook Press, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing* (London, Hodder Headline, 1992).

<sup>75</sup> The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 1.

dances (including the waltz, quickstep, tango, social foxtrot and quick waltz), Latin American dances (like the rumba and jive) and “rock’ n’ roll”. Each chapter starts by giving interesting, but general, historical facts about the dances, before the rhythmic style and moves are explained. *Teach yourself ballroom dancing* makes use of the international standard names for steps and movements (e.g. “corte”, “promenade”, “pivot”) familiarising the new dancer with ballroom dancing terms and is useful in as far as it serves as an example on how to present ballroom dancing in a written form.

Gerald Jonas’s book, *Dancing. The power of dance around the world*, was published in 1992 as an addition to an eight-part BBC series (*Dancing*) broadcast in 1993.<sup>76</sup> Colour, as well as black-and-white photographs, and a detailed bibliography complements the text. The book focuses on: dance as an emblem of cultural identity (focussing on society clashes); dance as an expression of religious worship (e.g. Nigeria and Europe); dance as an expression of social order and power (focusing on royal courts); dance as an expression of culture, dance as a classic art (e.g. ballet and kabuki); dance as a medium of cultural fusions; the reaction of the individual artist; and dance as an indicator of society.<sup>77</sup> Jonas dedicates a few pages to specific aspects of ballroom dancing including couple dancing and balls in the eighteenth century; nineteenth-century dance schools; the waltzing phenomenon and the development of ballroom etiquette.<sup>78</sup> Although Jonas claims to present a “global picture”, the book remains Euro-centric in focus and representation. The history he writes is often too generalized and he does not indicate his sources. Used alongside books by Sorell, Sachs and Martin, Jonas’s book does provide insights concerning the adaptation of social dancing in specific societies.

Julie Malnig obtained her Ph.D. in Performance Studies at New York University and published a book entitled *Dancing till dawn: A century of Exhibition Ballroom dance* in 1992. Although Malnig’s main concern is exhibition ballroom dances at the beginning of the twentieth century, she presents a superb cultural historical study of ballroom dancing between the World Wars. She starts by tracing the beginning of exhibition ballroom dances at the end of the nineteenth century and considers general

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<sup>76</sup> G. Jonas, *Dancing: The power of dance around the world* (London, BBC Books, 1992).

<sup>77</sup> G. Jonas, *Dancing The power of dance around the world*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>78</sup> G. Jonas, *Dancing The power of dance around the world*, pp. 122-127.

characteristics of ballroom dancing in the nineteenth century and how and why this differed from the twentieth century. She also considers the economic and social forces that led to the escalation of the exhibition dancing craze, as well as its sudden end in the 1940s. This is indeed a rigorous piece of dance historiography.<sup>79</sup>

Sally Banes's book *Writing dancing in the age of postmodernism*, appeared in 1994.<sup>80</sup> The book comprises of 41 of her articles that were published in magazines like *Soho Weekly News*, *Village Voice* and *Dance Magazine*. They present her views on theatre dancers and ballet, on dance criticism and the way these dances succeeded in fitting into the postmodern world. The initial form of the articles has been retained and thus as chapters they include excessive material and do not complement one another. However, Banes does emphasise the importance of recreational dance in society. She shows how dance reproduces, but more importantly, produces cultural practices by looking at *inter alia* how dance has influenced writing and fashion in the twentieth century. In this respect this book, which primarily focuses on dance theatre and not on ballroom dancing, does provide certain insights.<sup>81</sup>

P. Bottomer, the “World and European Supreme Tango Champion” and “World Cup winner”, published *Dance class* in 1998 and 2000.<sup>82</sup> His book is another “do-it-yourself” dance book with step-by-step instructions, rhythmic count and sketches. He divides his discussions into three categories: “Club Dances” (including dances like the salsa); “International Latin-American dances” (like the rumba, cha cha and jive); and “Internal Standard Partner Dances” (including the waltz, quickstep, tango, foxtrot and Viennese waltz). Each chapter begins with a brief overview on the origins and/or characteristics of the dance, followed by instructions on the basic and more advanced steps of the dance. The simple and easy to follow text make this book very user-friendly and a valuable reference book.

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<sup>79</sup> Julie. Malnig, <[http://www.greenwood.com/books/BookDetail.asp?dept\\_id=1&sku=MND/&imprintID=11](http://www.greenwood.com/books/BookDetail.asp?dept_id=1&sku=MND/&imprintID=11)>, s.a. Accessed: 10/10/2005; J. Malnig, *Dancing till dawn* (New York, Greenwood Press, 1992).

<sup>80</sup> S. Banes, *Writing dancing in the age of postmodernism* (London, Wesley University Press, 1994).

<sup>81</sup> S. Banes, *Writing dancing in the age of postmodernism*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>82</sup> BBC Blast: Paul Bottomer, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/dance/>> s.a. Accessed: 10/10/2005; P. Bottomer, *Dance class* (London, Southwater, 2000).



More recently a web-based article by Don Herbison-Evans, a *History of Modern Ballroom dancing*, appeared. It traces the development of the modern waltz, tango, Viennese waltz, slow foxtrot and quickstep. Herbison relies heavily on S. Sadie's *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and P.B. Norton's *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* to write this dance history. The article provides a concise overview of these dances and is useful as a general reference.<sup>83</sup>

Peter Borsay's 2006 publication entitled *A history of leisure* explores the importance that leisure activities played mainly in the lives of the British since the 1500s. Although the scope of this work only allows for brief referrals to the place of ballroom dancing, the prominence of the role that dancing played in the development of European society is evident and also provides valuable insights into how dancing fitted into the social lives of people.<sup>84</sup>

### 1.3 Methodology and research

In general, the style and focus of the literature focusing on dance has changed very little over the years. As is evident in the previous section, authors seem to favour either the dances of specific groups<sup>85</sup> or general trends in dances.<sup>86</sup> Because of its direct link with people's everyday lives, a history of dance can however never ignore the economic, political, cultural or social circumstances of the time. Consequently the relatively few dance histories that appeared were to a degree a reflection of the intellectual thought of the day.

It is apparent in many of the sources included in the previous section that writing dance history is not without problems. Apart from the usual difficulties in doing research (e.g. limitation of sources) the very essence of dance makes it nearly impossible to pinpoint specific changes in style and influence. According to Royce, researches have "neglected dance" because they felt that it was "not really essential to understand it" while other researchers found it difficult to obtain and analyse

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<sup>83</sup> D. Herbison-Evans, 'History of modern ballroom dancing' <<http://linus.socs.uts.edu.au/~don/pubs/modern.html>> s.a. Accessed: 06/04/2005.

<sup>84</sup> P. Borsay, *A history of leisure. The British experience since 1500* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2006).

<sup>85</sup> E. Thorpe, *Black dance*, pp. 60-66.

<sup>86</sup> A.P. Royce, *The anthropology of dance*, pp. 38-49; J. Martin, *The dance*, pp. 20-40; S. Baner, *Writing dancing in the age of postmodernism*, pp. 48-50.



information that was seldom stored.<sup>87</sup> Because people learn “rhythmic movement” by imitation and not by writing it down, the basic steps of a certain dance are seldom immediately recorded. Unlike musical notation, dances do not have a specific writing style or language that enables them to have written record of movement. Although systems, like the Labanotation, have been used to record movements, it requires time, training and effort to document each inclination in a dance. Usually only the strange or elaborate movements of a certain dance are photographed or described in detail, making it necessary for the historian to assume certain aspects when finding sources referring to dancing. Firstly, because not everything about dancing has been recorded there will always be a dimension that remains unknown. Secondly, the historian must bear in mind that apart from dance instruction manuals, descriptions about dancing in sources are more a kind of social commentary than knowledge of an expert in the field. Thirdly, the historian must assume that there will always be groups of people who support and people who reject a certain style or type of dance within a community. Descriptions of dancing amongst a group of people thus do not necessarily represent the feeling of all the people in a given area. There remain these “hidden voices” practising dance in their own space with their own characteristics. Lastly, it must also be remembered that dancing is easily influenced by other cultures and changes in economic and social situations. Therefore it can not be assumed that a dance from one decade will look exactly the same in the following decade. To truly understand the type of dances and influence dance had on a particular society it is consequently necessary to examine not only contemporary (mainly international) dance instructions manuals, but also newspapers, official records, administrative documents and popular literature simultaneously. Although these sources, as noted by Burke, do necessitate extreme caution and source criticism before they can be used,<sup>88</sup> it is only in the very personal nature and dance choices in these contemporary sources that the complexity of South African society can be understood.

The American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, described the method of studying cultural anthropology as a “thick description” where one symbolic incident or action

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<sup>87</sup> A.P. Royce, *The anthropology of dance*, p. 38.

<sup>88</sup> P. Burke, *What is cultural history?*, pp. 114-115.

can provide a “window to understanding a culture or community”.<sup>89</sup> According to Geertz, one must be familiar with the social and cultural practices or laws of a specific society to determine if an action is an “incident” or a “symbolic presentation” of the community. He argues that by simply describing a certain cultural practice one can begin to interpret the event and understand the community better. The description is thus used as an interpretation of a specific event. Ballroom dancing may seem very far removed from the “Balinese cockfight” of Geertz’s famous essay, but dancing can also be observed as a symbolic representation of a society.<sup>90</sup> It is believed by simply explaining how and why a social action took place one can better understand the functioning of a certain community. Consequently this study will explore the reasons why dance started, what it entailed, who it involved and how it was represented in order to reflect on the nature of the society at a certain time.

The research for this study entailed the use of secondary sources, such as books and articles, to obtain a theoretical foundation. However, more specifically South Africa-related information on dance was found in primary sources spread thinly across the holdings of the National Archives, the National Library, the National Film Archives, Cape Town Provincial Archives and other archival collections housed in both the UNISA and University of the Witwatersrand archives. Dance does obviously not exist as an identifiable section in any particular archives series, but information can be gleaned from sources ranging from the correspondence and minutes of officials, various organisations as well as public records and central government policies. These include, amongst others, the governor-general (GG) archival series, the Bantu Men Social Centre (BMSC) minutes, African National Congress (ANC) correspondence, and minutes of the Garment Workers Union.

Newspaper reports and magazine articles play a fundamental, if not indispensable, role in both recording and analysing contemporary social history. In this study the social commentary of the *Rand Daily Mail* and *The Bantu World* provided crucial

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<sup>89</sup> J.Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (London, Longman, 2002) pp. 284-285; S. Hammerstedt, ‘Anthropological theories: a guide prepared by students for students, Symbolic and interpretive anthropologies’ <<http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/symbolic.htm>>, s.a. Accessed: 11/10/2005; P. Burke, *What is cultural history?*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006), pp. 36-37.

<sup>90</sup> P. Burke, *What is cultural history?*, pp. 36-37; S. Hammerstedt, ‘Anthropological theories: a guide prepared by students for students, Symbolic and interpretive anthropologies’ <<http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/symbolic.htm>>, s.a. Accessed: 11/10/2005.

information regarding the place and state of ballroom dancing during its heyday that would otherwise have been lost. The *Rand Daily Mail* was based in Johannesburg and reported on political, social and economic events concerning South Africa from 1902 up until 1985 when it ceased to exist and was dependant on a largely English-speaking support base.<sup>91</sup> Much of the detail of the founding meeting of the South African Dance Teachers Association (SADTA) as well as the further development of competitive ballroom dancing in South Africa were recorded in a weekly column in the *Rand Daily Mail*. The authors of this “side-line” used pseudonyms– “Treble Viol” and “Lancer”– making it difficult to access the positions they held. They obviously had a keen interest in the role of ballroom in the local South African social scene writing very detailed first-hand accounts of South African ballroom. These are an indispensable and rare source of information in studying the development of this dance form. Reports regarding the activities of the South African dancing organisations are scarce and it was primarily the *Rand Daily Mail*’s weekly report entitled: “Dancing and the ballroom” (since 1927), and “In the dancing world” (since 1934), that commented on their various activities and achievements. The weekly features in the paper further included snippets of international renowned ballroom writers, like Katie Smith, Victory Silvester, Josephine Bradley and Wellesley Smith, “words of wisdom” and ‘Do’s and don’ts’ in the ballroom with pictures of the winners of ballroom dance competitions.<sup>92</sup>

The Johannesburg based *The Bantu World: South Africa’s only National Bantu Newspaper* included articles on dance from about 1932 onwards that were written by both black and white authors. This newspaper was founded by a liberal farmer, B.F.G. Paver, to provide a “platform for free comment...” with, initially, a large body of

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<sup>91</sup> R. Gibson, *Final deadline. The last days of the Rand Daily Mail* (South Africa, David Phillip Publishers, 2007); The Switzers’ detailed study on the black press reveals that the *Rand Daily Mail* did have a black support base and since 1965 even had a “black-supplement”. It is however difficult to determine how popular, if at all, the *Rand Daily Mail* was amongst the black community during the period concerned here, since the first detailed study *Market Research Africa* was only done in the 1960s. L. Switzer & D. Switzer, *The black press in South Africa and Lesotho: a descriptive bibliographic guide to African, Coloured and Indian newspapers, newsletters and magazines 1836-1976* (Boston, G.K. Hall & Co, 1979), pp. 20, 22, 127.

<sup>92</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom: ‘Sprightly Springboks’- ‘Trebla’- Dancing ‘do’s and don’ts’ by ‘Treble Viol’ ”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/05/1931, p. 7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/12/1930, p. 12; Anonym, “The correct dancing hold”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/02/1925, p. 10; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/04/1932, p. 14.

African shareholders. Appearing every fortnight, at 3d a copy, the newspaper prided itself in being “truly independent” printing in six languages (Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho, Sechuana, Afrikaans and English) and producing articles that were held to be “interesting and instructive to the Bantu people”.<sup>93</sup> After 1933 the newspaper was taken over by the Argus Printing and Publishing company, which was controlled by white shareholders.<sup>94</sup> Like the *Rand Daily Mail*, *The Bantu World* provided detailed comment on its readers’ social activities, giving a first-hand account on the popularity and nature of dancing.

The *South African Dancing Times* was first published in 1933, and although its publication was suspended between 1940 and 1945, most likely due to a lack of funds during the Second World War, it provided information on dancing up to the mid-1950s. Based in Johannesburg, the *South African Dancing Times* was more of a popular magazine lavishly illustrated with self-help articles and a range of advertisements. It is unfortunate that the difficulty in finding this magazine in local libraries, and the lack of a complete set made it problematic to use this rich resource to its full potential. It is interesting to note that the available copies of the magazine reveal a strikingly similar writing and report style to the *Rand Daily Mail*.

Other primary sources include travel documents and early colonial texts such as the journals and diaries of Jan van Riebeeck (1651-1662), Lady Anne Barnard (1793-1803) and W. Bird (1822), which reflect on the social activities of the early colonial times. Certain travel diaries and reminiscences of the early twentieth century also highlight the prominence of ballroom dancing within specific communities. In her travel diary, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929*, Margery Perham, for example, set out to record the state of the “native” in South Africa.<sup>95</sup> She visited various black and white communities and while she

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<sup>93</sup> Anonym, “The Bantu World”, *The Bantu World*, 08/04/1933, p. 8; Anonym, “The Bantu World”, *The Bantu World*, 07/05/1932, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> L. Switzer & D. Switzer, *The black press in South Africa and Lesotho: a descriptive bibliographic guide to African, Coloured and Indian newspapers, newsletters and magazines 1836-1976*, pp. 20, 22, 127; Anonym, “The Bantu World”, *The Bantu World*, 08/04/1933, p. 8; Anonym, “The Bantu World”, *The Bantu World*, 07/05/1932, p. 1; L. Switzer, “Bantu World and the origins of a captive African commercial press in South Africa”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14(3), April 1988, p. 352.

<sup>95</sup> M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929* (London, Faber and Faber, 1974).

condemns the racist manner in which the white South African government and public treat the blacks, she also presents insightful narratives on the leisure activities.

In his seminal publication, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand* American missionary R.E. Phillips describes how the black South Africans experienced life on the Witwatersrand. Phillips was sent to South Africa in 1918 to assist with the development of a social programme for the American Board Mission in South Africa. He was actively involved in various white and black clubs and formed part of a number of commissions of inquiry that investigated *inter alia* the “liquor problem” in South Africa and supervised the use of motion pictures for black South Africans.<sup>96</sup> Phillips used his own experiences, oral records as well as newspapers and reports to record how blacks adapted to the urban area. This study consequently offers a unique view of the popularity of black ballroom because of Phillip’s extensive use of 1910s to 1930s contemporary sources and his own involvement in the social life of blacks in Johannesburg. Mia Brandel-Syrier’s study entitled: *Reeftown elite: a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef* was published in 1971.<sup>97</sup> Brandel-Syrier followed and recorded the everyday life experiences of sixty black males from “elite” families in a township on the Witwatersrand during the 1960s. The first-hand accounts, detailed analysis and direct quotations from people living in the township provide an insightful account of social and economic survival on the Reef. Although *Reeftown elite* focuses mainly on the 1960s and thus falls beyond the scope of this thesis, the reminiscences of the Reeftown elite and their own comparison between dancing in the 1960s and ballroom in the “old days” provided a useful glimpse into the prevalence of ballroom outside of the white ballrooms.<sup>98</sup>

Other primary sources include specific articles in journals and newspapers like the *Vocator*<sup>99</sup> of the Transvaal University College (1914), the *Daily Graphic* (1920), *The*

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<sup>96</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand* (South Africa, The Lovedale Press, 1970), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>97</sup> M. Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown elite a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).

<sup>98</sup> M. Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown elite: a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef*, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> Anonym, “Dancing partners I have suffered under”, *Vocator*, 1928, opposite p. 8.

*South African Musical Times* (1930) and *Outspan* (1930). Articles in *The Times*<sup>100</sup> have also been used mainly as a source of comparison between dancing in Britain and dancing in South Africa. Although these are mostly social commentary, they do provide some relevant information about the state of the dances.<sup>101</sup> Popular magazines, regional papers and newsletters published random articles on ballroom dancing mainly portraying it as a “fun pastime” in South Africa. These include articles in *Drum*,<sup>102</sup> and in *South African Philatelist*.<sup>103</sup> Regular advertisements of dance competitions also appeared in newspapers like the *Pretoria News*.

It is interesting to note that during certain periods many adults did not want it to be known that they were taking dance lessons, and this secrecy resulted in numerous ballroom dance teachers not getting the recognition and support that was due to them. This might explain the rather limited amount of contemporary sources that refer to ballroom dancing.<sup>104</sup> The problem in writing dance history lies not only with the lack of contemporary evidence, but even more so with the dance critics, current dancers and dance historians themselves. While the larger majority of dance reporters comment on the lack of evidence and detailed information, they are equally critical of one another’s work. See for example Selma Cohen’s review of Sorell’s *Dance in its time* which comments rather scathingly that he should have tried harder to present a more scientific study, listing the names of books and areas that he should have consulted.<sup>105</sup>

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. After the introduction and literature survey presented in this opening chapter, a chapter entitled “First steps: international ballroom dancing” focuses on the origins of ballroom dancing and its predecessors in the Western world. Between the early seventeenth and twentieth century, all the ballroom dances that were danced in South Africa were borrowed from European dance masters or foreigners visiting the country. To understand the type of dances, the

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<sup>100</sup> The times digital archives 1785-1985, <[http://0-www.gale.com.innopac.up.ac.za/onefile/onefile\\_x.htm](http://0-www.gale.com.innopac.up.ac.za/onefile/onefile_x.htm)>, s.a. Accessed: 06/09/2005.

<sup>101</sup> P. Joyce, *South Africa’s Yesterdays*, p. 103.

<sup>102</sup> K. Ngwenya. “Queen of the ballroom”, *Drum*, 23 August 2001, pp. 86-87.

<sup>103</sup> A. van der Walt, “The beauty of movement”, *South African Philatelist*, 79(4), August 2003, pp. 116-117.

<sup>104</sup> Anonym, “Fashions for the Royal visit: Dance time”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1925, p. 13.

<sup>105</sup> S.J. Cohen, “Dance in its time”, *Dance Research Journal*, 15(2), (Spring, 1983), pp. 38-39.



costumes that were worn and the etiquette on the dance floors, the chapter will briefly explore dances in European countries.

Chapter 3, “Belonging and not belonging in the ballroom: South African to 1926”, presents an overview of the early history of ballroom dancing in South Africa. It considers who was involved in ballroom dancing and why they wanted to dance. Attention is also given to those that did ballroom dancing, even though they did not have access to the formal dance floor for reasons related to the law, race, class or technique. It focuses on the various factors that made these foreign dances such a popular local activity, for the descendants of people from Britain, as well as for Afrikaner, blacks and coloureds.

The popularisation of ballroom dancing in some of South Africa’s urban centres is the focus of Chapter 4, “Ballroom passions: dancing panache in 1920 and 1930”. Special attention is given to the social influence of the governor-generals during the period before the Second World War, and how the role of this British figurehead in South Africa, helped to firmly establish ballroom dancing in this country.

The fifth chapter entitled, “Perfecting the steps: competitive ballroom dancing” considers the impact that the creation of formal dancing organisations had on South African ballroom dancing. It outlines how both international dancing organisations and local dancing bodies, like the prominent “South African Dance Teachers Association” (SADTA), forced ballroom dancing into a competitive phase, that thereby transformed ballroom dancing from a mere social pastime to a highly competitive sporting activity.

The penultimate chapter, “Dancing in the shadows”, reflects on the nature of ballroom dancing in black communities in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area during the period 1930 to 1940. This chapter not only details some of the difficulties these “side-lined” communities had in dancing, but also focuses on the popularity and nature of the so-called “rainbow balls”.

The Epilogue, “Dancing in black and white shoes”, follows on historically speaking from chapter 6 and reflects on how the changes in South Africa and the rest of the

world coincided with changes in South African ballroom dancing. It briefly comments on the practice of ballroom dancing after the Second World War up until the 1990s in order to provide a more complete picture of the state of ballroom dancing given the lack of attention in academic research in South Africa. Thus this chapter falls outside the periodisation of the study but reflects on the unprecedented upsurge in interest in ballroom dancing across a wider spectrum of society. It also reflects on the marked influences of race, gender and class struggles within the social realm which are apparent in the periods focus on the dissertation. This final section will thus reflect on the pervasive legacy of cultural and political segregation in South Africa, and how the changing social order was mirrored in the realm of South African ballroom dancing.



## Chapter 2

### First steps: international ballroom dancing

Ballroom dancing has developed for over eight centuries, borrowing and leaving its mark on all the continents of the world. Bearing in mind the limitations of available secondary sources mentioned in Chapter 1, a brief history will be given of the genesis and development of ballroom dancing in Europe. This will serve as a background to determine how much the international world offered and what South Africans borrowed. It will also reflect on dance as a mirror of society.

#### 2.1 Dancing to the seventeenth century

Recordings have been made of people dancing since the Stone Age through to the Classical period. Rock paintings in southern Africa, as well as France and eastern Spain bear testimony to this,<sup>1</sup> as do the pictorial portrayals found in the ancient tombs of Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Dance in the classical period is described in detail in the accounts written by the likes of Homer, Plutarch and Lucien, while proof that people danced in the Middle Ages is evident in travellers' accounts as well as the church's prohibitions that condemned dancing.<sup>3</sup>

During the late eleventh century we see a definite distinction being made between popular and social dances. Jugglers or acrobatic performers entertained guests at courts, while the elite danced "chain dances".<sup>4</sup> Sculptures and paintings of the time provide detailed accounts of these dances. As in the previous century, scandalous affairs, like women dancing nude, were also recorded.<sup>5</sup> The twelfth century was marked, at least on the cultural side, by the phenomenon of chivalry and courtly love. During this century singing and performing noblemen, including troubadours and minstrels, travelled to and from courts to entertain. They wrote love songs and dances

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<sup>1</sup> L. Marshall, "The medicine dance of the [slanted!] Kung bushmen", *Africa: Journal of International African Institute*, 39 (4), October 1969, pp. 346-381; C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 207-210.

<sup>2</sup> R. Schulz & M. Seidel (eds.), *Egypt: The world of the pharaohs* (Germany, Koneman, 1998), p. 456.

<sup>3</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 245-261; M. Little, "Recent research in European dance 1400-1800", *Early music*, 14(1), February, 1986, pp. 4-6.

<sup>4</sup> "Chain dances" were characterized by holding hands while skipping and leaping in a circle while singing.

<sup>5</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 261- 266.

about their experiences and spread these where they went.<sup>6</sup> According to Sorell, dance was so naturally written into these works that it can be concluded that formal or structured dance was part of everyday early Renaissance life.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century, the economic structure of European society changed, influencing the cultural and social mindset of the day. Gradually the power and influence of the church diminished and with the extension of more established cities, culture began to secularize. Music thus also became more secular and love songs, instead of Church chants, became the more popular choice of the day. During the Renaissance it is apparent that dancing also fulfilled other purposes. For a society in which the greater majority was illiterate, similes played an important role in conveying the steps, gestures, turns and bows of a dancing couple and these became the metaphors illustrating romantic love.<sup>8</sup>

However, before the fifteenth century there appears to be no sequence of prescribed steps for dancing. The basic dances were a circular choral dance, which varied from region to region, mixed with a variety of miming gestures, leaping and jumping.<sup>9</sup> It is believed that the first dance that can be classified as “ballroom” – because of its popular nature and execution – was introduced in the fourteenth century and eventually became popular in the Burgundy Court in the fifteenth century.<sup>10</sup> This “bassedanse” was performed during courtly functions and consisted of only five steps that were danced by couples in large groups.<sup>11</sup> According to the “American Ballroom Association[‘s]” translation of the 1490 guide entitled: *Les Basses danses de Marguerite d’Autriche* the “bassedanse” consisted of:

... single steps and double steps (noted *ss* and *d*)--these were walking steps that progressed forward or backward. The single step consisted of a step and weight change; the double was composed of three steps. Each step was

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<sup>6</sup> W. Sorell, *Dancing in it’s time*, pp. 26–31; F. Hoerburger, “Dance and dance music of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and their relations to folk dance and folk music”, *Studia musicologica academine Scientiarum Hungarica* 7, 1965, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> W. Sorell, *Dancing in it’s time*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>8</sup> A poem, *Roman de la Rose*, written by Geoffrey Chaucer in 1370 describing the courtly love between a young man and women and how they danced out of love and pleasure cited in W. Sorell, *Dancing in it’s time*, pp. 31-36.

<sup>9</sup> W. Sorell, *Dancing in it’s time*, pp. 26-31 and C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 207-266; F. Hoerburger, “Dance and dance music of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and their relations to folk dance and folk music”, *Studia musicologica academine Scientiarum Hungarica* 7, 1965, pp. 79-80.

<sup>10</sup> Grove music online, ‘Dance’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/yiwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>11</sup> S. Sadie, *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* II, p. 257.

punctuated by a slight rising and lowering of the body. The *branle* (notated *b*) was a sideways step performed with a slight swaying motion. The *reprise* or *démarche* (notated *z*, or *s* in other sources), was a backward step; and *révérence* (notated *R*) was the formal bow or curtsy. No floor patterns were provided in this manuscript, but the *bassedanse* was usually danced with one couple standing behind another, partners holding inside hands.<sup>12</sup>

The “bassedanse” both complimented and supported the fashion of the day as the simple and small steps allowed the ladies with their long trains and men with their long pointed shoes to move relatively easily through the choreography.<sup>13</sup> The “bassedanse” remained popular until the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

According to dance instruction manuals that appeared more frequently from the fifteenth century onwards,<sup>15</sup> the popular dances of the sixteenth century consisted of a series of walking steps, sliding and springing, as well as jumping and hopping in the choreography.<sup>16</sup> The restrictive lacing and corsets around the upper body and ruffs around the neck allowed dancers little movement and dances were consequently more focused on footwork.<sup>17</sup> The “American Ballroom Association” divides the types of dances in this period into two categories differentiating between the simple social dances (e.g. the “branle” and “pavan”) that were danced in a group, and the more intricate dances (e.g. “galliard”) that were usually danced by two to eight dancers and required extensive training.<sup>18</sup> While the “branle’s” and “pavan’s” were danced in circles, columns or lines, the “galliard” and other dances were danced to be viewed from the side, front or top of the dance floor. According to T. Arbeau in

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<sup>12</sup> Dance instruction manuals: About the collection, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>13</sup> The long pointed shoes were also known as “poulaines”.

<sup>14</sup> Dance instruction manuals: About the collection, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006; Grove music online, ‘Dance’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/viwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>15</sup> F. Hoerburger, “Dance and dance music of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and their relations to folk dance and folk music”, *St. Musicologica*, 7, 1965, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> The predominant manual of this era was T. Arbeau’s *Orchesography* other manuals of this time however includes Robert Copland 1521 manual on “bassedanse” cited in C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 298-320. The Italian dance instructions manuals *Il ballarino* (1581), *Nobiltà de dame* (1600), and *Nuvone inventioni di balli* (1604) is some of the limited resources that are available online via Dance instruction manuals: About the collection, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>17</sup> About the collection, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>18</sup> Dance instruction manuals: About the collection, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006; T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 128-175.

*Orchesography* the “branse” was danced as a round dance or with people holding hands following a leader.<sup>19</sup> It basically consisted of stepping sideways in time to the music, but had many variations including the “pinagay”, “cassandra”, “maltese” and the “official branse”. Arbeau differentiates between three types of “branse’s”: the double and single “branse” (for the elderly),<sup>20</sup> the gay “branse” (for married couples),<sup>21</sup> and the Burgundy “branse” (for young people).<sup>22</sup> The “pavan” was danced by stepping forward and back while facing your partner and was regarded as a stately dance appropriate for weddings and royalty.<sup>23</sup> The “galliard” consisted of five steps, kicks and jumps and was danced to triple meter while skilful dancers included more variations to the dance like replacing the basic steps with kicks.<sup>24</sup> The most basic “galliard”, however, started with the feet turned out and was followed by four steps, and a series of jump steps while crossing the leg behind and in front of one another. Other dances of this century included the “lavolta”, a turning dance consisting of  $\frac{3}{4}$  turns while springing on the first step and the gentlemen lifting their partners into the air, as well as the “alman”, a turning dance with springing steps along with pauses in between where conversation took place between partners.<sup>25</sup>

The changes that were taking place on a cultural and social level in the middle of the seventeenth century had a profound effect on the social dances of the time. There was a renewed interest in the meticulous science of mathematics and study of nature.<sup>26</sup> This era saw a steady rise in the upper and lower middle class that created a demand for social prestige. During the seventeenth century ballet also became a prominent dance form. Developed primarily in France under the patronage of Louis XIV,

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<sup>19</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 128-175; P. Walls, “Common 16<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms: some further notes”, *Early music*, 2 (3), 1974, p. 165.

<sup>20</sup> The “double and single branse” was danced by giving single or double steps to the left and right side.

<sup>21</sup> The “gay branse” was danced by moving only to the left and jumping on the last beat of the music.

<sup>22</sup> The “burgandy branse” consisted of a series of sideway jumps accompanied by hand and facial gestures. Other variations also included the “gavotte” that was usually danced after the “branses” but to faster music.

<sup>23</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, p. 57; P. Walls, “Common 16<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms: some further notes”, *Early music*, 2 (3), 1974, p. 164. As the century progressed various the “pavan” was danced alongside the “galliard”.

<sup>24</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp.119-127; P. Walls, “Common 16<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms: some further notes”, *Early music*, 2 (3), 1974, p. 165; According to F. Hoerburger, “Dance and dance music of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and their relations to folk dance and folk music”, *Studia musicologica academie Scientiarum Hungarica* 7, 1965, p. 80. The “galliard” was a favourite amongst the high dances of the sixteenth century that developed into the “...shocking V[v]olta danced even by the Queen of England”.

<sup>25</sup> T. Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp.119-127; P. Walls, “Common 16<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms: some further notes”, *Early music*, 2 (3), 1974, p. 165.

<sup>26</sup> W. Sorell, *Dance in its time*, p. 110.

academies were created that laid the foundation for the basic steps in ballet. Reflecting the societal interest in science, these steps meticulously assigned the position of the head, torso, arms and legs at the beginning and end of each movement.<sup>27</sup> This regulation of the dance form not only raised the quality of dancing and made it more uniform, but it also created a definite distinction between the amateur social dancers and trained performance dancers. The social dances followed suit. Prescribed steps that were to be danced in the ballrooms were taught to the upper and middle classes.<sup>28</sup> The most popular dances were the “branle”, “courante” and “gavotte”, while a ball usually concluded with a “minuet”.<sup>29</sup> The hop and leap movements that were so popular in the previous century almost completely disappeared. Feet were never supposed to be more than a foot apart and steps became smaller.<sup>30</sup> Rules of etiquette were firmly installed stating when dancing was allowed, who may dance first, how many people are allowed on the floor, how they must act and look while they dance. This prescribed behaviour intensified towards the end of the century.<sup>31</sup> During this period couples were physically moving closer together and after the 1650’s close or embrace-like holds formed the fundamental principle of each dance.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.2 From the “contredanse” to the “cake wake”

The end of the seventeenth century saw an increasing interest in the English country group dances known as the “anglaise”, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the “contredanse”. These dances were danced in columns or lines with partners facing one another and forming various patterns (like a square eight) on the floor.<sup>33</sup>

Borrowing from the ballet tradition, the baroque dances at the beginning of the eighteenth century were characterized by precisely controlled arm, feet and posture movements and were specifically choreographed to be viewed from the top of a ballroom. The most popular dances of this era were the “sarabande”, “courante”,

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<sup>27</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 392-394; W. Sorell, *Dance in its time*, p. 97.

<sup>28</sup> W. Sorell, *Dance in its time*, p. 109; C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 395-396.

<sup>29</sup> The “courante” became popular ballroom dance around the 1620s in France. See for example: W. Hilton, “A dance for kings: The 17<sup>th</sup>-century French *Courante*, its character, step-patterns, metric and proportional foundations”, *Early music* 5(2), April 1977, p. 162.

<sup>30</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 396-397.

<sup>31</sup> W. Sorell, *Dance in its time*, p. 109; C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 395-396.

<sup>32</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 351.

<sup>33</sup> Western Social dance: Transition From Renaissance Dance to Baroque Dance  
<<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a., Accessed: 10/05/2006.

“minuet” and “contredanse”. The “sarabande” was a slow dance, danced with raised arms accompanied by the guitar or castanets in triple meter, characterized by an accent on the second beat.<sup>34</sup> It was “... a favourite ballroom duet and was also often danced as a choreographed theatrical *entrée*”.<sup>35</sup> Believed to be Louis XIV’s of France’s favourite dance, the “courante” were danced in 3/2 time and basically consisted of rise and bending steps with accompanying arm movements.<sup>36</sup> Although some mention of this dance appeared in sixteenth century texts, it appears to have reached its height in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century two diverse styles of “courante” were visible in Italy and France. The Italian “corrente” was a lively courtship dance characterized by hop-step movements in a zigzag pattern. In contrast, the French “courante” was danced much slower moving forwards and backwards with bends, rises and slides.<sup>38</sup> Although, the French “courante” was still danced up until the eighteenth century, by 1660 it was gradually being replaced by the most popular of the Baroque dances, the “minuet”.<sup>39</sup>

Although its origins are unclear, the “minuet” is believed to be an adaptation of a French folk dance that was introduced to the French court in the 1660s.<sup>40</sup> The “minuet” was distinguished by its exact choreography and small steps and used, to “...display one’s good breeding to the full [with its] precise footwork and patterns, its regal bows, its taking and leaving of hats, gloves, fan and train”.<sup>41</sup> Usually performed by one couple at a time, the “minuet” started and ended with a series of bows acknowledging both the hosts of the evening and each other.<sup>42</sup> The “American Ballroom Association” describes the “minuet” as a dance that has:

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<sup>34</sup> P. Ranum, “Audible rhetoric and mute rhetoric in the 17<sup>th</sup> century French sarabande”, *Early music*, 14(1), pp. 22-23.

<sup>35</sup> Western Social Dance: Baroque Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a., Accessed: 10/05/2006; S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians XVI*, 1980, p. 489.

<sup>36</sup> W. Hilton, “A dance for kings: The 17<sup>th</sup> century French *Courante*: Its character, step-patterns, metric and proportional foundations”, *Early music*, 5(2), April 1977, pp. 161-162, 167; P. Walls, “Common 16<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms: some further notes”, *Early music*, 2 (3), 1974, p. 165.

<sup>37</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians IV*, 1980, p. 877.

<sup>38</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians IV*, 1980, pp. 875-877.

<sup>39</sup> W. Hilton, “A dance for kings: The 17<sup>th</sup> century French *Courante*: Its character, step-patterns, metric and proportional foundations”, *Early music*, 5(2), April 1977, pp. 161-162.

<sup>40</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 396-397; S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians XII*, 1980, p. 353.

<sup>41</sup> R. Astier, “Francos Marcel and the art of teaching in the eighteenth century”, *The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 2 (2), Summer, 1984, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians XII*, 1980, p. 353.



...an introduction and four figures: the S<sup>43</sup> or Z figure, which was repeated as often as the gentleman desired; the giving of right hands; the giving of left hands; the giving of both hands.<sup>44</sup>

Each “minuet” step requires two measures of 3/4-time music.<sup>45</sup> The steps performed in the S or Z pattern basically consisted of groups of four small steps that included “plie’s” (bending the knees) leaps onto the foot, rise and straightening the knees as well as stepping on the ball of the foot.<sup>46</sup>

The eighteenth century saw the growing popularity of the “minuet” and “contredanse” that was considerably easier to dance than the previous century’s “branle” with its detailed choreographed steps.<sup>47</sup> The popular eighteenth century “contredanse”, the French variation of an English country dance, was already introduced and adapted to the French court in the 1680s by dancing the traditional English line dance in a square formation.<sup>48</sup> However, the “contredanse” reached its height of popularity in the mid-eighteenth century and remained popular until the early nineteenth century by which time the “minuet” was only performed as a ceremonial dance.<sup>49</sup> Additional figures were introduced into the “contredanse” that formed the foundation of the early nineteenth century dances. This included, for example, the “contredanse allemande”, which was introduced by Marie Antoinette in 1774 to the French court and consisted of partners turning while changing hand positions.<sup>50</sup> Another example, the “cotillion” or “under-petticoat” dance, derived its name from a favourite French song to which it was originally danced in the seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> The “cotillion” was very popular

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<sup>43</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* XII, 1980, pp. 353-354, the S-pattern was used on the floor before the 1700s symbolizing Louis XIV, the Sun King.

<sup>44</sup> Western Social Dance: Baroque Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a., Accessed: 10/05/2006.

<sup>45</sup> Western Social Dance: Baroque Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>, s.a., Accessed: 10/05/2006.

<sup>46</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* XII, 1980, p. 354.

<sup>47</sup> W.J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic gesture in Mozart. Le nozze di figaro & Don Giovanni* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 31-33.

<sup>48</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* IV, 1980, p. 705; C. J. Sharp, “English Folk dance: The Country dance”, *The Musical Times*, 01/11/1915, p. 659.

<sup>49</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* IV, 1980, p. 704. According to C. J. Sharp, “English Folk dance: The Country dance”, *The Musical Times*, 01/11/1915, p. 660 the “contredanse” formed the foundation of the nineteenth century “quadrille”.

<sup>50</sup> Western Social Dance: Nineteenth Century Social Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>; s.a. Accessed: 10/05/2006. C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 421.

<sup>51</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* IV, 1980, pp. 828-829; C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 421-422. Translated this French tune reads “My dear when I dance does my petticoat show?”.

at eighteenth and nineteenth century weddings and balls and was essentially danced by couples facing one another in a square formation dancing to a waltz tune. According to Sachs, the three favourite figures in the “cotillion” were danced by all the dancers moving clockwise or anti-clockwise in a circle, then “... all the dancers join hands, the ladies turn to the left, the gentlemen to the right, and all wind through the circle in this direction until the original couple come together again...” and in the third figure the “...turning star of some or all of the participants, who all join hands and dance...around this central point in one direction”.<sup>52</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, however, most of the figures of the “cotillion” were incorporated in the “quadrille” and the “cotillion” “...which often closed a ball, became more a novelty item, in which the steps were determined by a leading couple and followed by the others”.<sup>53</sup>

In the early nineteenth century ballroom dancing was still dominated by group dances, with the “quadrille” being the most popular. The “quadrille” developed from the eighteenth century “contredanse” and was usually performed in a square formation.<sup>54</sup> It was danced by two, four or six couples and consisted of various figures or sets usually known by their French names, “le pantalon”, “le’ete”, “le poule”.<sup>55</sup> The first set of the “quadrille” consisted of four figures that were each made up out of six to eight sets. Basically this “quadrille”, as well as other variations like the “lancers”,<sup>56</sup> was characterized by men and women dancing facing each other, taking hands turning and changing partners. Before taking a new partner, dancers bow to their partner or waited for a few bars.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 422.

<sup>53</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* IV, 1980, p. 828.

<sup>54</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* XV, 1980, p. 489. Although the name “quadrille” is most likely from Italian or Spanish origin, referring to a small company or group, C. Sharp, “English folk dance: The Country dance”, *The Musical Times*, 01/11/1915, p. 659 traces the origins of the “quadrille” to an English folk dance, the “square-eight”, that was adopted by the French and renamed the “quadrille”.

<sup>55</sup> K. Preston, “Popular music in the ‘gilded age’: Musicians’ gigs in late nineteenth-century Washington DC”, *Popular Music*, 4, 1984, p. 35; Western Social Dance: Nineteenth Century Social Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>; s.a. Accessed: 10/05/2006.

<sup>56</sup> Although the “lancers” were most probably danced along with the Quadrille in 1815, the “lancer” only became popular around 1850 and retained its popularity until the beginning of the twentieth century in England

<sup>57</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England* (London, Jenkins, 1960), pp. 70, 91-94, 134-143.



A nineteenth century ball was a highly organized and popular, social event. The best documented ones were “lavish affairs given by the upper class, held in either the drawing rooms of private homes, at clubs or in what were known as [a]ssembly rooms, facilities that contained a ballroom, perhaps a billiard room, tea room and various lounges”.<sup>58</sup> From the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century dance programmes were also an important part of official and private balls, and were used to “book” a dance partner for each dance. The programme was usually made out of hard paper or cardboard and small enough so that it could either fit into a pocket or handbag. The front of the programme had the details and monogram of the hosts or club that organized the ball. On the other side, or inside of the programme was the sequence in which the dances were to be danced. Sometimes the pieces of music that would accompany the dances were also listed next to the name of the dance. Opposite the list of dances was a blank space in which dancers wrote down the names of their dance partners for each dance. Depending on the hosts, the programmes also had a little pencil attached.<sup>59</sup>

Contemporary dance instruction manuals revealed a definite procedure in the handling of these programmes, a procedure that was extremely gendered. Each dancer would receive a dance programme at the door,<sup>60</sup> in the cloakroom or while dancing the grand march. Dancers were advised to “make out the programme all at once and as early in the evening as possible...” and “...since the man has charge of filling the programmes; he should consider the preferences of his lady: and secure for her the partners she would most enjoy”.<sup>61</sup> To complete the programme the man writes his name next to the dances in the desired lady’s programme and her name next to the dances in his programme. The practice both on and off the dance floor in the nineteenth century made the dance programme a vital part in ensuring a successful ball. In contrast with current times, etiquette did not require that each male escort dance with his partner. On the contrary, partners were customarily changed after each

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<sup>58</sup> J. Malnig, *Dancing till dawn: A century of exhibition ballroom dance*, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> See for example dance programmes found in the National Archives TAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: Dance programme 03/05/1923 and TAB, Pretoria: GG 2343, 2/24: Grand Annual Caledonian Ball Dance Programme, 15/06/1938.

<sup>60</sup> V. Dewey, “*Tips to dancers*,” *good manners for ballroom and dance hall*, (Wisconsin, Kenosha, c1918), p. 15; This sequence of dances was usually decided in advance by the hostess and listed on dancing cards given to all the guest. J. Malnig, *Dancing till dawn: A century of exhibition ballroom dance*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>61</sup> V. Dewey, “*Tips to dancers*,” *good manners for ballroom and dance hall*, p. 15.

dance to meet as many people as possible. The group nature of the dances also allowed for frequent changes of partners both at the start and during each dance.<sup>62</sup>

From 1812 onwards more individualistic style dances, as opposed to group dances, became prominent and a dance programme consisted of a variety of dances. These dance forms were characterized especially by dances that were danced around the room while turning, the most popular being the waltz and “polka”.<sup>63</sup> With its gliding and turning motion in a close couple embrace to triple time, the waltz became the most popular dance in the nineteenth century ballroom. Manuals were printed and ballrooms built to facilitate the sudden increased demand for waltzing.<sup>64</sup> The origin of this popular dance is however contested. While some authors argue that the waltz can be traced to the sixteenth century “volta”, it is more likely that it was one of several terms used to describe eighteenth century couple dances in triple time from South Germany,<sup>65</sup> which were generally known as “Deutsche” dances.<sup>66</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, these German dances were becoming as popular as the “contredanse”.<sup>67</sup> Waltz-like figures were also incorporated into dances like the “contredanse” and “cotillion” before it was accepted as an individual dance that was danced with “intertwining” arm movements in the early nineteenth century European ballroom.<sup>68</sup> The waltz swept through Europe during the late eighteenth century and its popularity was recorded in detail in travel writings of the time.<sup>69</sup>

Sources generally agree however, that the immediate ancestor of the contemporary waltz was made popular in the early nineteenth century in England and Vienna. It was not until the first few decades of the nineteenth century that it was danced with a close embrace.<sup>70</sup> The introduction of the waltz in the ballroom had a profound effect on the development of ballroom dancing. The waltz was, in sharp contrast with the typical dances of the previous century that reflected a cordial, restrained relationship between

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<sup>62</sup> Dances during the nineteenth century include the “quadrille”, “mazurka”, “minuet” and “gavotte” that required a group of dancers to move in unison on the floor forming patterns.

<sup>63</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>64</sup> This includes for example the “Sperl” (1807) and “Apollo” (1808) in Vienna.

<sup>65</sup> These include dances like the “landler” from Austria as well as other dances like the “spinner” and “schleifer” also from the German regions.

<sup>66</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians XX*, 1980, pp. 200-201.

<sup>67</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians XX*, 1980, pp. 200-201.

<sup>68</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 63.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 432.

<sup>70</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 23.

the sexes, regarded as shockingly “indecent”, “immoral” and “scandalous”.<sup>71</sup> The whole manner of dancing was different from the dances of the previous century that were still popular at balls where dance had a more structured choreography and partners did not constantly embrace one another. Over time, the waltz prescribed that the man grasp the lady who was facing him around the waist and rotate with her around the floor in this embraced position.<sup>72</sup> The female partner either held the fold of her dress or placed it gently on her partner’s shoulder, still aware of remaining a foot apart as etiquette required.<sup>73</sup> In the waltz, the position of the feet shifted from toes that were turned outwards in a ballet-like position in the square dances, to toes that were turned inwards to a more walk-like position, thus creating a simpler swinging dance.<sup>74</sup> It appears as if there was, unlike the “minuet”, no definite prescribed steps and a variety of waltz-variations came to the fore. In general however “...waltzing couples turned clockwise while travelling counter clockwise around the room...”.<sup>75</sup> Along with the close embrace this constant spinning caused feelings of elation and raised great concern especially amongst mothers and societal leaders. The acceptance of the waltz was of course also fuelled by the popularity of Johan Strauss’s compositions.<sup>76</sup>

Although the waltz was danced throughout the nineteenth century, various other dances periodically equalled it in popularity. In the early 1840s, for example, the “polka” craze hit London.<sup>77</sup> Most probably originating in Eastern and Central Europe, the dance was adapted by dance teachers in France in the early nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup> The “polka” was a working class reaction against the precise choreographed dances of the eighteenth century. It was “...seen as an affirmation of the human spirit, a rebellion

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<sup>71</sup> J. Barzun, *From dawn to decadence: 500 years of Western cultural life 1500 to present* (London, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p. 500.

<sup>72</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 23; Also engraving of the early waltz in Thomas Wilson, *A description of the correct method of waltzing*, 1816. in S. Sadie (ed.), *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians XX*, 1980, p. 201.

<sup>73</sup> J. Malign, *Dancing till dawn: A century of exhibition ballroom dance*, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 23.

<sup>75</sup> *Code of Terpsichore* in Western Social Dance: Nineteenth Century Social Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>; s.a. Accessed: 10/05/2006.

<sup>76</sup> Western Social Dance: Nineteenth Century Social Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>; s.a. Accessed: 10/05/2006.

<sup>77</sup> L. Smigel, “Minds mad for dancing: Polkomania on the London stage”, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 30 (3), Winter 1996, pp. 197-207.

<sup>78</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, pp. 81-83; C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, pp. 434-436.

against constraint, the excitement of the forbidden, sensual and exotic...”.<sup>79</sup> There was apparently a general feeling of sympathy towards the Polish and Czechs who were under foreign rule and that this explains the popularity of Polish national songs and dance.<sup>80</sup> The “polka” was danced in 2/4 time, with a strong accent on the second beat, in a circle motion counter clockwise around the room like the waltz. It started off by springing onto a foot, stepping forward (or backward for the lady) crossing the foot in front of one another while turning and ending the figure by stepping forward.<sup>81</sup> Due to the high speed at which the “polka” was danced, the school figure step was however simplified and in reality the “polka” simply consisted of a step, bringing the feet together (close), step and a hop. The “tea dances” (or “Thé Dansant”) were first organized to facilitate the dancing of the “polka”.<sup>82</sup>

In the middle of the nineteenth century it became common for the balls to be opened with a “polonaise”<sup>83</sup> or grand march that were characterized by people walking or dancing behind one another weaving through the ballroom.<sup>84</sup> The waltz and “polka” became standard items on a dance programme and were alternated with dances like the “mazurka”,<sup>85</sup> “cotillion”,<sup>86</sup> “lancers” and Scottish reels.<sup>87</sup> The evening was usually ended with a ceremonial “minuet” and or “quadrille”.<sup>88</sup> By the 1880s, however, the “minuet” and “quadrille” were almost completely phased out in the

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<sup>79</sup> A.H. Gunkel, “The polka alternative: Polka as counter hegemonic ethnic practice”, *Popular Music and Society*, 27(4), 2004. p. 409.

<sup>80</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 80.

<sup>81</sup> M. Coulon, *The ballroom polka, polka cotillon, and valse a deux Temps*, 1844. Cited in P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 132.

<sup>82</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, pp. 80, 132.

<sup>83</sup> The “polonaise” formed part of ceremonies, like weddings, and was basically danced by couples forming a chain, the man taking the lady’s left hand and leading her around the room while slightly bending their knees at every third beat of the music. After walking around the room the men and ladies walk in opposite directions but follow each other with their eyes. When they rejoin they repeat the first set of the “polonaise”. H.E. Kennedy, “Polish peasant, courtship and wedding customs and folk-song”, *Folklore*, 36 (1), 31/03/1925, pp. 48-68; P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>84</sup> Western Social Dance: Nineteenth Century Social Dance, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diabout.html>>; s.a. Accessed: 10/05/2006.

<sup>85</sup> The “mazurka”, a Polish folk dance was, like the waltz, danced in triple time, but with a strong accent on the second beat. P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 96 and A. Swartz, “The polish folk mazurka”, *Studia...*, 1(4), 1975, pp. 249-255.

<sup>86</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 100.

<sup>87</sup> J. Malmig, *Dancing till dawn: A century of exhibition ballroom dance*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>88</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, pp. 9-10.

leading European dance halls.<sup>89</sup> The “mazurka”, “cotillion”, “scottisch” and “polonaise” further became party dance games where presents were exchanged and dance styles mixed for the general amusements of guests.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the growing popularity of ballroom dances, until at least the middle of the nineteenth century, balls remained exclusive in nature and were dictated by social rules.<sup>91</sup> Balls came to be a mirror image of society reflecting who had a prominent position in society, while the preferred dance style often reflected which nation was the most powerful.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, syncopated rhythm became integral to the ballroom. The “shifting of each beat in a measured pattern...”<sup>92</sup> of this musical innovation had an extensive influence on ballroom dancing as it introduced supplementary pauses and beats into the dance music which allowed for extra hops, jumps and dips in the choreography. This “off-beat” or “in-between beat” was a defining feature of the American originated “Ragtime” that flourished between the late 1890s until the end of the First World War. The syncopated rhythm was incorporated into the existing dance steps and re-choreographed, creating new dances like the “Boston”, “two-step”, “Washington post” and “cake walk”.<sup>93</sup>

According to Alan Dodsworth, a noted nineteenth-century English-born dancing master,<sup>94</sup> the “Boston” naturally developed from man’s growing desire to hop while

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<sup>89</sup> M. R. Marrus, “Modernization and dancing in rural France: From la Bourree to le Fox-Trot”, *Dance Research Journal*, 8(2), Spring–Summer, 1976, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, pp. 9-10; M. R. Marrus, “Modernization and dancing in rural France: From la Bourree to le Fox-Trot”, *Dance Research Journal*, 8(2) Spring–Summer, 1976, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> In his *The royal ball-room guide and etiquette of the drawingroom, containing the newest and most elegant dances and a short history of dancing*, Rudolph Radestock p.15 clearly states that “Etiquette is so closely allied to dancing, that to know one and not the other seems almost impossible...”.

<sup>92</sup> Grove music online, ‘Syncopation’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/viwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>93</sup> Grove music online, ‘Ragtime’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>94</sup> Allen Dodsworth was born in Sheffield in 1817 but moved to New York in the late 1820s. The Dodsworth family were accomplished musicians. Dodsworth became increasingly involved in the dancing world and his dance centre became the place where all the latest dances were taught. See for example: Grove music online, ‘Dodsworth’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

dancing.<sup>95</sup> The “Boston” was basically danced to slow waltz music, but unlike the waltz the “Boston” was danced with dipping (achieved by stepping with one foot and bending the opposite knee) and rising (achieved by lifting the heel of the foot) movements. At the height of its popularity, the “Boston” was danced with the man standing behind the lady and placing his hands on her hips.<sup>96</sup> Along with the “Boston”, the “Washington post” became another popular ballroom dance of American origin at the end of the nineteenth century. The “Washington post” was a “two-step” – “...not much more than a double-quick march, with a skip in each step, done as rapidly as a couple could go forward, backward, and turn...” – that was danced to John Phillip Sousa’s popular “The Washington Post” march.<sup>97</sup>

The “cake walk” was another American-inspired popular dance.<sup>98</sup> The “cake walk” traces its origins to the American slave performances in the 1880s. It is believed that the “cake walk” was initially a war dance, which was copied by American slaves from the Seminole Indians and performed as the “chalk-line walk” to their white owners. It became so popular amongst black Americans that various competitions were held during the late 1800s where the winner of the most erect and artistic dance style won a decorated cake.<sup>99</sup> At the end of the 1890s the “cake walk” was also danced to a syncopated beat.<sup>100</sup>

### **2.3 Distinctively ballroom: waltz, tango, foxtrot and quick-stepping**

The ever-changing nature of dancing makes it nearly impossible to determine a specific date when and place where a certain dance was created. However, certain periods can be determined when a dance style broke away from the accepted dance form and a new style was created, using for example some characteristics from the old style with a new rhythm. It seems as if every “new” creation followed the same path as the previous one – dances were first rejected in the society ballroom and danced by

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<sup>95</sup> A. Dodworth, *Assistant for A. Dodworth's pupils* (New-York, Nesbitt & Co., Printers, 1873), p. 35.

<sup>96</sup> A. Dodworth, *Assistant for A. Dodworth's pupils*, p. 36.

<sup>97</sup> P. J. S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 122.

<sup>98</sup> W. Terry, *The dance in America*, p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> J. Fields, “Cake walk”: reply, [h-net@msu.edu](mailto:h-net@msu.edu), 16/03/1998; V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, p.29; claims that the “cake walk” can trace its origin to South Africa. Unfortunately Silvester gives no references or reasons for his claim and to date no other sources could be found that supports this statement.

<sup>100</sup> Grove music online, ‘Ragtime’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.



the lower classes before they were adapted and became popular at all levels. The standard ballroom dances that are danced in competitions today (waltz, foxtrot, tango, quick step and Viennese waltz) were adapted and developed in the first half of the twentieth century. Although each dance came to have a distinctive style, these dances were essentially all a reaction against the “conservative” nineteenth century dances and reflected the rapid social changes that were taking place at this time. As mentioned, the introduction of ragtime music at the end of the nineteenth century marked a radical change in the eighteenth and nineteenth century idea of ballroom dancing and this was particularly reflected in the choreography. However, as will be discussed later, the dances of the nineteenth century remained popular in the colonies for a substantial amount of time, as was the case in South Africa. One thus tends to find a mixture of the “old” dances, danced alongside the “new” trends. By the 1930s, the modern day tango, waltz, Viennese waltz, foxtrot and quick-step were, except for a few stylistic changes, accepted and danced in the international ballroom. Like the nineteenth century “polka” and eighteenth century “minuet”, most ballroom dances of the early twentieth century each had a phase where it was extremely popular to dance them: the tango craze hit Europe in 1910; the foxtrot in 1914; and the “charleston” in the 1920s.<sup>101</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, the ragtime dances that started in the 1890s, were fashionable in especially America and Britain. They were “...essentially fast two-steps or one-steps performed to syncopated rhythms”<sup>102</sup> that were danced to live bands at the various “dances” and public ballrooms.<sup>103</sup> There seems to be very little distinction made between the “one-step” and “two-step” in both the early and late 1900s sources. While some 1910 sources<sup>104</sup> prefer to focus just on one of the dances, other<sup>105</sup> sources “ignore” one of the steps or just simply group the two dances together.<sup>106</sup> The clearest distinction between these dances seems to be that, while both

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<sup>101</sup> M. Schild, *Social dance* (Dubuque, W.M.C. Brown Publishers, 1985), pp. 3-4.

<sup>102</sup> J. Malnig, *Dancing till dawn: A century of exhibition ballroom dance*, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> M. Hustwitt, “‘Caught in a whirlpool of aching sound’: the production of dance music in the 1920s”, *Popular Music*, 3, 1983, pp. 7-8.

<sup>104</sup> V. & I. Castle, *Modern dancing with many illustrations from photographs and moving pictures of the newest dances for which the authors posed*, p. 43.

<sup>105</sup> Grove music online, ‘Dances’, [<sup>106</sup> V. & I. Castle, \*Modern dancing with many illustrations from photographs and moving pictures of the newest dances for which the authors posed\*, p. 43.](http://0- <www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?> , s.a. Accessed: 2006-08-18.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

the “one-step” and “two-step” were danced to 4/4 time in an embraced hold, the “one-step” consisted of one simple walking step per beat, while the “two-step” consisted of two steps per beat. The “two-step” was further danced to syncopated and livelier music and included various hops, skips and arm movements.<sup>107</sup>

The tango became a popular ballroom dance in the British and American ballroom in 1910. The appearance of the tango in the ballroom caused a “frenzy” in society.<sup>108</sup> Like the syncopated rag dances of the 1880s, the tango had an off-beat rhythm, but within it was a hidden passion that lured people of all classes onto the floor. The tango was most probably first danced by the horsemen of the Pampas Plato on the east coast of Argentina, although some sources link the dance to the Flamenco dance of Spain<sup>109</sup> or even an African slave dance called the “tangano”.<sup>110</sup> It was however the French that adapted and re-choreographed the dance to become the ballroom tango.<sup>111</sup> The sensational dance soon spread to England where it became popular at “[t]ango Teas” between 1910 and 1915. During this time the tango, with its distinctive staccato rhythm, was danced much slower than today and steps were rough, sharp and compact without the flowing lines that became characteristic of the contemporary tango.<sup>112</sup>

From 1912 to 1914 the various “one- and two-step” dances were being replaced by the foxtrot.<sup>113</sup> Although some sources claim that the foxtrot was inspired by the walk of the fox,<sup>114</sup> its sudden popularity is attributed to Harry Fox’s dancing on the stage.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, the foxtrot became the favourite dance amongst men in First

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<sup>107</sup> V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*. p. 29; D. Herbison-Evans. History of modern ballroom dancing. <<http://linus.socs.uts.edu.au/~don/pubs/modern.html>>, s.a. Accessed: 06/04/2005.

<sup>108</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 446.

<sup>109</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 69; A. van der Walt, “The beauty of movement”, *The South African Philatelist*, 79(4), p. 117.

<sup>110</sup> P. Bottomer, *Dance Class*, p. 10, however states that the tango was born in Buenos Aires and that although the word could be from Africa, meaning “special place”, the dance is not from Africa. Also see: Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 69; A. van der Walt, “The beauty of movement”, *The South African Philatelist*, 79(4), p. 117.

<sup>111</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 102.

<sup>112</sup> Grove music online, ‘Dances’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?>>, s.a. Accessed: 2006-08-18; V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*. pp. 25, 37-39; P. Bottomer, *Dance Class*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>113</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 445; Victor Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*. pp. 31-33; M. Schild, *Social dance*, p. 19.

<sup>114</sup> D. Herbison-Evans. History of modern ballroom dancing. <<http://linus.socs.uts.edu.au/~don/pubs/modern.html>>, s.a. Accessed: 06/04/2005.

<sup>115</sup> M. Schild, *Social dance*, p. 19.



World War training camps as it was danced to upbeat music and easier to learn than the waltz or tango.<sup>116</sup> Danced to a slower piece of music than the “one-step”, the foxtrot was and is especially renowned for its gliding and swinging movements. Between 1914 and 1920 there were no definite prescribed figures and dancers interpreted the music at their own free will. This early foxtrot basically consisted of a slow walk and a quick run in time to music<sup>117</sup> and was a “combination of movements—walking, running, gliding and two-stepping—and not a distinct set of movements”.<sup>118</sup> After the First World War the foxtrot retained its popularity in both Europe and America. By 1920 it was either danced as a slow foxtrot or a quick foxtrot (renamed the quickstep), depending on the pace of the music.<sup>119</sup>

Although the early twentieth-century waltz was still danced to a 1-2-3-beat, hops, glides and pauses were introduced to fit both with the growing individualistic mindset and new syncopated ragtime music of the 1910s and 1920s. This resulted in many variations in the standard waltz figure including amongst others, the “Boston” and “hesitation waltz”.<sup>120</sup> In the 1920s, attempts were made by the teaching profession to find a uniform basic step for the waltz. It was finally agreed “... that the feet should close on the third beat of a bar whether forward, forward, close, or forward, side close...”.<sup>121</sup> Although the dance had many variations, the waltz continued to be popular among dancers and evolved into the two accepted forms, the modern, diagonal or slow waltz and the Viennese, or quick waltz.<sup>122</sup>

The 1920s were a watershed for ballroom dancing. Not only did ragtime music influence dances as described in the waltz and the foxtrot, but it also increased the

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<sup>116</sup> V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*. pp. 31-33.

<sup>117</sup> S. Sadie, *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* VI, p. 738; V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*. pp. 31-32.

<sup>118</sup> A. McMahon Cree, *Handbook of ball-room dancing with an introduction by George Grossmith illustrated with diagrams*, p. 49.

<sup>119</sup> S. Sadie, *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* VI, p. 738; V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>120</sup> J.S. Hopkins, *The tango and other up-to-date dances; a practical guide to all the latest dances, tango, one step, innovation, hesitation, etc.* (Chicago, The Saalfield Publishing Co., c1914). pp. 91-99; V. & I. Castle, *Modern dancing with many illustrations from photographs and moving pictures of the newest dances for which the authors posed*, pp. 71-79; C. Walker, *The modern dances, how to dance them, complete instructions for learning the tango, or one step, the Castle walk, the walking Boston, the hesitation waltz, the dream waltz, the Argentine tango* (Chicago, Saul Brothers, 1914). pp. 41-59.

<sup>121</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 24.

<sup>122</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 23.

demand for syncopated rhythm couple dances over all sections of society. Gradually the formal exclusive upper middle-class dance features like the “dansants”, and dance programmes, were replaced by regular, mostly weekly, public dance events in public dance halls or in hotels.<sup>123</sup> Between 1920 and 1923 various dance conferences were held in Britain under the auspices of leading dance teachers and dancers like Richardson and Sylvester, in an attempt to standardize the various ballroom dances.<sup>124</sup> In 1924 the British based “Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing” was formed that standardized basic steps for the waltz, foxtrot, “one-step” and tango. This authority became, along with ballroom dance competitions, a fundamental part of dancing.<sup>125</sup> This formalisation of the ballroom dances was a welcome change for dancers as the fast changing trends in the music made it difficult to determine what was acceptable to dance.<sup>126</sup> Ballrooms, like “Blackpool” in Britain,<sup>127</sup> and the “Savoy” in America,<sup>128</sup> were opened to accommodate the increased demand for dancing, and soon became arenas where dancers could show off their talents and choreography. The introduction of the radio, motion pictures and mass printing on a commercial scale in the 1920s made dance music and dance information accessible as well as creating a more uniform popular culture.<sup>129</sup> Dance music was, for example, broadcast live on air during specific times of the day in London and was consequently heard more often, thereby further promoting its popularity.<sup>130</sup>

The 1920s again saw the introduction of African-American inspired dances like the “charleston”, “black bottom” and “lindy” that were based on the “one-step” and foxtrot of the previous decade, but made popular by the lively and more “upbeat”

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<sup>123</sup> Anonym, “Forthcoming dances”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 28.

<sup>124</sup> M. Hustwitt, ‘Caught in a whirlpool of aching sound’: the production of dance music in the 1920s, *Popular Music*, 3, 1983, p. 13.

<sup>125</sup> V. Sylvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, pp. 31-32; Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. vii-viii. The “Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing” was founded in 1904.

<sup>126</sup> M. Hustwitt, ‘Caught in a whirlpool of aching sound’: the production of dance music in the 1920s, *Popular Music*, 3, 1983, pp. 13-14.

<sup>127</sup> The history of the Blackpool dance festival, <<http://www.blackpooldancefestival.com/history.htm>> Accessed: 17/06/05.

<sup>128</sup> G. Jones, *Dancing: the power of dance around the world*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>129</sup> H. Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, venue, media and tradition”, *American Music*, 15(2), Summer, 1997, p. 184; W. Terry, *The dance in America* (New York, Harper & Row, 1956), p. 211.

<sup>130</sup> See for example the broadcasts times published in *The Times*, 20 October 1925, p. 19.

music that was transmitted on radio and in stage performances.<sup>131</sup> Like the foxtrot, the “charleston” was danced to a 4/4 beat with partners facing one another, however a stronger accent was placed on syncopation creating an off-beat dance. It was danced by stretching and flexing the knees, while twisting the feet in-and out and swinging the arms.<sup>132</sup> In 1925 the tango was revived, but the “charleston” became so popular in Britain, that special balls were arranged to accommodate this fast-pace dance, forcing some venues to use the slogan “P.C.Q” —Please Charleston Quietly— to maintain “order”.<sup>133</sup> The “charleston” was soon replaced by the “black bottom” in about 1926, a dance first popular amongst blacks in Nashville, Tennessee in around 1919. Like the “charleston”, the “black bottom” was first refined and made popular in theatrical performances before it was danced in the ballroom.<sup>134</sup> It was dance to a syncopated two-step beat and was described in a popular 1920s song as to:

...Hop down front and then you doodle (slide) back, mooch to your left and then mooch to the right, hands on your hips and do the mess around, break a leg (hobble) until you’re near the ground, now that’s the old Black bottom dance.<sup>135</sup>

The “lindy” was first danced in the Savoy ballroom and was a product of a mixture of European and African-American dancers that flocked to the ballroom after its construction in 1926.<sup>136</sup> Like the “charleston” and “black bottom”, the “lindy” was a lively “two-step” dance, but consisted of even more body movements. The “lindy hop” uses the “whole body far more than the conventional steps of the foxtrot and one step...It added the movements of the hips, thighs, buttocks...even the head and neck participate in the movement, making one thing of those ‘barbaric’ dances...for the dance is frenetic and voluptuous”.<sup>137</sup> While the foxtrot and “charleston” were danced with two movements per beat, the “lindy” was danced with four movements per beat

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<sup>131</sup> C. Sachs, *World history of dance*, p. 445; H. Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, venue, media and tradition”, *American Music*, 15(2), Summer 1997, p. 184.

<sup>132</sup> Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, *Teach yourself ballroom dancing*, p. 50. Also see for example the African influence on the “charleston” as reflected in W.L. Speight, “Notes on South African native music”, *The Musical Quarterly* 20(3), July 1934, pp. 348-349.

<sup>133</sup> V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>134</sup> E. Thorpe, *Black dance*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>135</sup> 1919 lyrics by Perry Bradford cited in E. Thorpe, *Black dance*, p. 66.

<sup>136</sup> H. Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, venue, media and tradition”, *American Music*, 15(2), Summer 1997, p. 184. George “Shorty” Snowden, a regular dancer at the Savoy claimed that he was the inventor of the “lindy”.

<sup>137</sup> G. Seldes, “Shake your feet”, *New Republic*, 4, November 1925, pp. 283-284 cited in H. Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, venue, media and tradition”, *American Music*, 15(2), Summer 1997, p. 186.

and started off with two steps, but also included a section where couples broke away from one another and invented their own steps.<sup>138</sup> By the 1930s, however, the waltz, foxtrot, tango and quickstep (a fast foxtrot combined with the syncopated rhythm, runs, kicks and hops of the “charleston”, “black bottom” and “lindy”) were accepted and regarded as the standard ballroom dances.<sup>139</sup>

At the end of the 1930s and 1940s it was the turn of the Latin-American dances to dominate the ballroom dancing scene. Dances from this era include the “samba”, “jitterbug” and “boogie-woogie” which allowed dancers to dance without being in a close embrace. Ballroom dancing, however, remained a popular pastime and various national competitions, like the “British National Championships” at Blackpool, were held in 1930.<sup>140</sup> The consequences of the new individualistic and competitive nature of the modern ballroom dances is evident, for example, in the changes that took place in what was regarded as the proper etiquette during a ball. During the first half of the twentieth century dancing programmes were still being used.<sup>141</sup> By the 1940s, however, judging by the lack of evidence or mention of dance programmes in manuals, the use of dance programmes at “balls” appears to have been phased out. This can be attributed to both the changing nature of the dances themselves as well as the social climate. The growing popularity of close contact couple dances as opposed to the group dances gradually made the use of dancing programmes less and less important. As dance is essentially a performance, it became easier to interpret the music and dance with somebody who you were familiar with, than to put on a show with a stranger. Dances were also getting less formal. The growing number of people at these dances also made filling out cards impractical and it became far more practical to just ask a lady to dance than book her in advance.<sup>142</sup>

In the period that falls beyond the scope of this thesis the dance trends and crazes continued to change unabated as social influences impacted on the cultural dimension of society. The 1950s saw the introduction of the Latin American rumba and mambo

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<sup>138</sup> H. Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, venue, media and tradition”, *American Music*, 15(2), Summer 1997, p. 187; E. Thorpe, *Black dance*, pp. 65-66; G. Jones, *Dancing: The power of dance around the world*, p. 179.

<sup>139</sup> V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, p. 46.

<sup>140</sup> V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, p. 47.

<sup>141</sup> V. Dewey, “*Tips to dancers*,” *good manners for ballroom and dance hall*, p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> V. Dewey, “*Tips to dancers*,” *good manners for ballroom and dance hall*, pp. 16-19.

as well as the beginning of “rock ‘n roll”. This was followed in the 1960s with the “twist”, which allowed dancers to dance without partners, with energized movements and music.<sup>143</sup> While 1970 was the punk era, the 1980s and 1990s were characterized by “hip-hop”, “break dancing”, “rave” and the “salsa”.<sup>144</sup>

Thus, the nature of dance underwent distinct stages of development over the past six centuries. In doing so, as Sachs and others have indicated, dance clearly reflected the changes that were taking place and was thus in a sense a reflection of the society in which they were performed.

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<sup>143</sup> Grove music online, ‘Dance’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006; V. Silvester, *Modern ballroom dancing: History and practice*, pp. 46-49; P. Borsay, *A history of leisure. The British experience since 1500*, p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> Grove music online, ‘Dance’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za/data/articles/music/22825.xml?>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

## Chapter 3

### **Belonging and not belonging in the ballroom: South Africa to 1926**

Although dancing has formed an integral part of South African social life for centuries, the “exclusivity” surrounding ballroom dancing, and its Eurocentricism made it appear as if it did not belong in a developing colonial destination at the bottom end of “darkest” Africa. However, the beginning of the twentieth century which marked the start of much of modern ballroom and Latin-American dances in Europe, was when these dances were transferred to South Africa. European social dances were introduced to colonial South African society by settlers and travellers from as early as the end of the seventeenth century. The European “minuets” and “quadrilles” that were danced in the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) castle, homesteads and on the outskirts of town, laid the foundation for the adoption of the more formalized ballroom dances in South Africa. By the late nineteenth century ballroom dancing was a central part of middle-class social life and the growth of an organized social scene enabled the newly borrowed international dances to be accepted on an even wider scale than the waltz of a century before. The early twentieth century was indeed the heyday of ballroom, and judging by the advertisements for balls, building of clubs and the supply of dance necessities, more people than ever before were dancing ballroom.

This chapter will discuss the genesis of ballroom dancing in South Africa, as well as its popularisation at different social levels. A brief overview of the state of ballroom in colonial South Africa will be given in order to determine who was already familiar with ballroom at the turn of the twentieth century. It will also consider the situation in South Africa during the 1900s and 1920s to establish how the South African economic, political and cultural scene impacted on the dancing of the early twentieth century. This chapter will conclude by describing the popularity of ballroom dancing focusing on its foremost campaigners - the colonial governor-generals.

### 3.1 Regal steps for locals: 1652 to 1830

When Jan van Riebeeck left Amsterdam in December 1651 for South Africa the “branse”, “courante”, “gavotte” and “minuet” prevailed in the European dance halls.<sup>1</sup> It is problematic to determine how many of these popular dances van Riebeeck or other VOC officials could dance, but taking his social status as an agent of the VOC, he and his wife Maria must have been, at the very least, familiar with the “minuet” and “courante”, the required court dances of that time. Van Riebeeck and his initial company members probably did not dance the formal court social dances any how, simply because the circumstances did not make this viable. His company was mostly comprised of males that were recruited to build a half way house and not to colonize and settle the country side.<sup>2</sup> The two hundred odd servants of the VOC were for example, described as “...common soldiers and sailors from men, often the destitute, of all nationalities...” and some of them held occupations like “...tailors, others fishermen, sawyers, millers and bakers...”, worlds apart from the elite aristocrats of the exquisite European ballrooms.<sup>3</sup>

Although van Riebeeck observed the indigenous dances of the San,<sup>4</sup> it is most unlikely that he invited the “bosjesman” to social functions, let alone balls, largely due to the huge cultural differences and class divisions between these two peoples.<sup>5</sup> On one occasion H.W.J. Piccard claimed that van Riebeeck danced towards the “Hottentotte” to greet them in a friendly nonoffensive manner.<sup>6</sup> Four months later he was treated to the music and dancing of the Namaquas. Van Riebeeck regarded the invitation as a confirmation of the friendship that was formed between the Europeans and the indigenous people and participated in this “foreign” activity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the seventeenth century dances see Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 21; T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (reds.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika in woord en beeld*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>3</sup> A.F Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa* (Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1969), pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> D.B. Bosman, *Dagregister gehouden by den oppercoopman Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck*, Deel 1 1651-1655 (Kaapstad, A.A. Balkema, 1952), p. 272; H.B. Thom (ed.), *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck I, 1651-1655* (Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1952), p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> H.W.J. Picard, *Masters of the castle* (Cape Town, C. Struik, 1972), pp. 29, 33.

<sup>6</sup> H.W.J. Picard, *Masters of the castle* pp. 29, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Picard’s reference to these events in the van Riebeeck journals do not appear on the correlating date in the 1952 publication of his journals.



However, the building of a ballroom was definitely not a priority as the early shelters were simple temporary tents and huts built in an “unfamiliar” and “unfriendly” environment.<sup>8</sup> Even when it became a fashionable necessity in later centuries to have balls “under the stars” in South Africa, due to the lack of dance halls, the intricate small steps of the “minuet” and “courante” made dancing without a ballroom floor difficult.<sup>9</sup> So-called “unceremonious social dances” did however take place. On 22 December 1654 van Riebeeck for example, mentions that with the arrival of an English ship the officers were invited to dinner and entertainment and left the coast “... al dansende, springende ende rollende...” (dancing, jumping and rolling).<sup>10</sup> In his commentary on the early leisure activities of South Africa, cultural historian Victor de Kock also mentions the informal but popular nature of seventeenth century traveller’s dances in the Cape. He states that the “...Dutch sailors who came ashore visiting inns where they could pass away the time in merrymaking, and dancing their own boisterous measures...”.<sup>11</sup> These dances were obviously all of an informal nature, if not merely a result of an over-indulgence in alcohol.

Prior to the introduction of formal ballroom dancing in the colonial period, southern Africa had a rich heritage of various indigenous or traditional group dances. These dances included for example the rain dances of the San and the belief system dances of the Khoikhoi that had a specific symbolism and super natural meaning.<sup>12</sup> Writing in the 1930s, Percival R. Kirby, a music Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, notes that because of the difference in musical scale, rhythm and tone, the San, Khoikhoi and blacks “struggle to imitate” the beat of the ballroom music

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<sup>8</sup> T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (reds.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Africa in woord en beeld*, pp. 61-62. Also see van Riebeeck’s own accounts during the early days in H.B. Thom (ed.), *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck I, 1651-1655*, pp. 19-43.

<sup>9</sup> C. Jeppe, *The kaleidoscopic Transvaal. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Cape Town, J.C. Juta and Co.,1906), p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> D.B. Bosman, *Daghregister gehouden by den oppercoopman Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck*, Deel 1 1651-1655, p. 272; H.B. Thom (ed.), *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck I, 1651-1655*, p. 278.

<sup>11</sup> V. de Kock, *The fun they had! The pastimes of our forefathers* (Cape Town, Howard B. Timmins, 1955), p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> W.L. Speight, “Notes on South African native music”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 20(3), July 1934, pp. 344-348 commenting on the musical talents of the San and Khoikhoi.



and were therefore unable to dance the European ballroom dances properly.<sup>13</sup> As more Europeans came to settle permanently on the southern tip of the continent, social activities, including dancing followed. During the terms of office of Simon van der Stel (1679-1699) and Rijk Tulbach (1751-1771) with the increase in size of the foreign population, the establishment of the VOC castle and expansions of the colony into the interior, there was also an increasing need for leisure activities, like balls and evening parties, amongst the colonists.<sup>14</sup> In his 1969 study of social life in the early Cape, A.F. Hattersley found that the dances of the Europeans in “Little Amsterdam: Cape Town, 1652-1795” were not that “elegant” an affair. Dances in the taverns however, at least “...added (to) the colour of life by permitting music and dancing” and while “townsfolk devoted their leisure hours to such quiet recreation... women were devoted to music and dancing”.<sup>15</sup>

The prominence of social dancing becomes more evident in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Cape Town society probably due to the larger and more established colonial settlement, and in the latter period, the occupation of the British. Travel journals<sup>16</sup> and diaries<sup>17</sup> comment extensively on every day life in South Africa, making it possible to not only determine when and how much people danced but also

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<sup>13</sup> R.P. Kirby, “Saint Cecilia goes South”, *Proceedings of the Musical Association (1937-1938)*, pp. 35-38. Also see R. Kirby Percival, “The reed-flute ensembles of South Africa: a study in South African native music”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 63 (Jul-Dec 1933), p. 313. Although William Burchell is also a bit sceptical about the “civil” nature of the indigenous dances, he is far less critical about the San and Khoikhoi. In his *Travels in the interior of Southern Africa* (Cape Town, C. Struik, 1967) pp. 499-500, W. J. Burchell gives a description of a “Hottentot” playing a fiddle and dancing that amused and amazed his company on their way to the Zwarteberg. In volume 2 of *Travels in the interior of Southern Africa* (London, Longman, 1824), pp. 64-65 Burchell also describes the unique nature of the San dances.

<sup>14</sup> G. Ross, *The African Court Calendar for 1807. Under the sanction of government* (Cape Town, Government Printing Office, 1807) in which the environmental, infrastructure and population growth is described; V. de Kock, *The fun they had!* and Anonym, *South Africa's heritage. How our forefathers lived, worked and played. From Van Riebeeck to XIXth century times. Part three: their customs, amusements and sport* (Cape Town, Caltex publication, 1962) in which the leisure activities of the early Cape are described; H.W.J. Picard, *Masters of the castle*, pp. 88, 97. where he describes Van der Stel's role in entertaining local and foreign guests.

<sup>15</sup> A.F. Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> R. Semple, *Walks and sketches at the Cape of Good Hope. A journey from Cape Town to Blettenberg's [sic.] Bay* (London, C & R. Baldwin, 1803); William, J. Burchell, *Travels in the interior of Southern Africa*; W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822* (Cape Town, C. Struik, 1966), facsimile reprint as well as J.L.M. Franken, *Duminy-Dagboeke, Duminy diaries* (Kaaopstad, Die Van Riebeeck-vereniging, 1938).

<sup>17</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, *The letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas from the Cape and elsewhere, 1793-1803. Together with her journal of a tour into the interior and certain other letters* (Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1973); D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope 1797-1802* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924).

what people danced and what they associated with the dancing.<sup>18</sup> Although ballroom dancing did at least form some part of the late seventeenth century European social life in Cape Town, D. Fairbridge notes in her introduction to Lady Anne Barnard's journal that it was only in the early 1780's that social dancing truly began in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> Fairbridge traces the beginning of social dancing to the arrival of French troops (The Regiments of Waldner, Luxembourg and Pondichery) in the Cape in 1781. These troops were brought in to help the Dutch protect the Cape against a possible attack by England. Their military skill was never needed, but the "French sabreurs" apparently instilled in the "serious Dutch ladies....a passion for dancing".<sup>20</sup> The regiments were believed to have been a definite "stimulus" for ballroom dancing, so much so that Cape Town was dubbed as "Little Paris" and it was reported that one ball after another were offered in honour of the French protectors.<sup>21</sup>

Judging by the continuous mention of balls in the journals of both Lady Anne Barnard<sup>22</sup> and W. Bird,<sup>23</sup> by the beginning of the 1800s social dances had become a habitual pastime for both the European and slave descendants living in and around Cape Town. According to Fairbridge and the contemporary travel writer R. Semple, except for dancing, eighteenth century burgher life allowed very little time for "diversions" or "amusements".<sup>24</sup> Bird also confirms that "dancing is the favourite amusement of the Cape ladies" adding rather condescendingly "for all prefer to do that in which they most excel".<sup>25</sup> Commenting on social life in the eighteenth century C.G. Botha concluded that "amongst the wealthy who had young folks in the house a dance was a regular pastime..." and that "...where farms were within easy distance of

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<sup>18</sup> A. Gordon-Brown's introduction to William, J. Burchell, *Travels in the interior of Southern Africa*, p. 7. commenting on the indispensable contribution that travelers' made to the understanding of South Africa's history.

<sup>19</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, pp. 19-20. Also see Anonym, *South Africa's heritage. How our forefathers lived, worked and played. From Van Riebeeck to XIXth century times. Part three: their customs, amusements and sport*, p. 14; H.W.J. Picard, *Masters of the castle*, p. 175.

<sup>22</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, *The letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas*, pp. 43, 73-74, 213, 216; D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, pp. 60, 84, 146, 151-152, 155, 162.

<sup>23</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, pp. 164-166.

<sup>24</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, pp. 31, 60, 84, 146, 151-152, 155, 162; R. Semple, *Walks and sketches at the Cape of Good Hope A journey from Cape Town to Blettenberg's [sic.] Bay*, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, p. 165

each other dancing was one of the few social amusements...”.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Semple comments on the regularity of these balls in burgers houses stating that ballroom dances are “...daily performed by the white inhabitants...”.<sup>27</sup> M. Le Valliant, an eighteenth century French traveller to the Cape, also observed the splendour and frequency of balls. He states that “...upon my arrival, the governor used to give a public ball every month, and the principal people of the town followed his example”.<sup>28</sup> Lady Anne Barnard comments on the regularity and accommodation of dance, while organising yet another ball in Government House during July 1797 that, “I shall not be stinted for *room*; as I have a Holl [*sic.*] of 60 feet, a drawing room of 40, a dancing room of 20...”.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast, in Duminy’s diary that contains a detailed description of everyday life deeper in the interior, she only mentions dance parties occasionally and indicates that inhabitants preferred playing cards and cooking as forms of light relief, rather than dancing.<sup>30</sup> Although it appears as if ballroom was not as popular a pastime further inland, special events, like New Year celebrations, marriages and in the slave community, the birth of a child, were all apparently celebrated with good food, wine and dancing.<sup>31</sup>

Ballroom dancing was thus an integral dimension of this early settler society, albeit that participation varied in terms of social status and geographic location. The distance between Cape Town and Europe also inevitably resulted in South African society being quite a few months “behind” in terms of dance fashion and style. Although Bird does not expect the Cape ladies to be able to “keep pace with the exquisite movements of the elegance of a court” he does comment that “the ladies of the colony, whether English or Cape-Dutch, appear to be little, if at all, inferior in

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<sup>26</sup> C.G. Botha, *Social life in the Cape Colony with social customs in South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century* (Cape Town, C. Struik, 1973), pp. 51, 85.

<sup>27</sup> R. Semple, *Walks and sketches at the Cape of Good Hope, A journey from Cape Town to Blettenberg’s [sic.] Bay*, p. 31; V. de Kock, *The fun they had! The pastimes of our forefathers*, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> M. Le Valliant, *Travels into the interior parts of Africa by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85 I* (s.a; Robinson, 1790), p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, *The letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas*, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> J.L.M. Franken, *Duminy-Dagboeke* (Kaapstad, Die van Riebeeck-vereniging, 1938), pp. 5-30.

<sup>31</sup> V. de Kock, *The fun they had! The pastimes of our forefathers*, pp. 29-31, 53; C.G. Botha, *Social life in the Cape Colony with social customs in South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 86, 98. Also see H.W.J. Picard, *Masters of the castle*, p. 146.

grace and activity to the usual standards of London dancing”.<sup>32</sup> In her travel memoirs, Emily Brittle however, questions the “grace” of the Cape Townian dancers. In a satirical poem she describes the dancing gentleman as “stamping their feet like a stray of dray horses...” and the “minuets” of the “vrouws” “...like a bear at a fair...”.<sup>33</sup> Although Le Valliant was impressed to find that the Cape women “... dress with as much attention to the minutiae of elegance as the ladies in France...” like Brittle, he also questions their social upbringing stating that “...they have neither their [the French ladies] manners and education...”.<sup>34</sup> Whether or not the early Cape dances were on par with those of Europe, balls and dance parties were indeed regular events that were increasingly held in the VOC castle, Cape taverns, burgher’s houses and in the slave quarters.

The popular dances of Europe which were danced in Cape Town included the waltz , “minuet”, “quadrille” and “contredanse”.<sup>35</sup> Hattersley believes these dances were introduced to South Africa through English passengers on board ships bound for India.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Duminy<sup>37</sup> emphasises the popularity of dances, like the waltz and “lancer”, while Hattersley<sup>38</sup> highlights “an epidemic of quadrille fever” in early eighteenth century South Africa. Short periods in South African history however, saw certain dances being more fashionable than others. In 1811 Burchell, for example, describes how the governor of the Cape gave a dinner party and ball for 200 guests in honour of the Queen’s birthday in Government House. He describes the ballroom as crowded and the

...ladies, who were for the greater part Dutch, were dressed neatly, and to great advantage; and both they and the gentlemen appeared to have adopted the fashions and manners of English society. Country-dances afforded the chief amusement; neither waltzes nor quadrilles being at that time generally in vogue. After supper, the dancing was

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<sup>32</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, p. 165.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in V. de Kock, *The fun they had! The pastimes of our forefathers*, p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> M. Le Valliant, *Travels into the interior parts of Africa by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85 I*, p. 31

<sup>35</sup> C.G. Botha, *Social life in the Cape Colony with social customs in South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 51; J. Bouws, *Solank daar musiek is...Musiek en musiekmakers in Suid-Afrika (1652-1982)* (Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1982), pp. 46-47, illustrations between pp. 26-27. Also see Chapter 2 for more information on the history of these dances in Europe.

<sup>36</sup> A.F. Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> J.L.M. Franken, *Duminy-Dagboeke* (Kaapstad, Die van Riebeeck-vereniging, 1938), pp. 5-30.

<sup>38</sup> A.F. Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 154.

renewed with spirit, and continued until a late hour, the party being apparently much gratified.<sup>39</sup>

Dancing became increasingly popular not only for its entertainment value but also because it was, to a certain degree, an opportunity where groups with different political sentiments (like the Dutch and English) could meet on “neutral” ground. It was, according to Fairbridge, the “quadrilles” and “mazurkas” that helped ease the political and social tension and “jagged edges of sentiment” between the English commanding officer, his personnel and the Dutch settlers.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, Bird notes that “company, dancing and the theatre, are to the taste of all; but the habits of the Dutch and English are not as yet sufficiently amalgamated to allow them to associate and mix with individuals of common stock”. Bird does mention however, that the balls created at the very least a place where issues could be discussed in “English style” between the governor, the English and the Dutch.<sup>41</sup>

The slaves in the Cape community played an important part in sustaining these ballroom dances amongst the Europeans. The white settlers found that because of their musical ability the slaves were ideally suited to provide the music for the balls.<sup>42</sup> The slaves however did not only provide the music but, in South Africa, the “mazurka”, “polka”, waltz and “cotillion” developed a new dimension when the slaves, working class whites, free blacks, Mozambiquers, Madagascans and descendants of indigenous people took up the dances as part of their “underclass subculture”.<sup>43</sup> Nineteenth century travel journalists give far more attention to these “rainbow balls”, describing them in greater detail than the exclusive government balls. Semple for example states that:

It is in these dances that the slaves show themselves off to best advantage. The women display much taste and even elegance in their dress, nor are their dances wild, irregular or unaccompanied with proper music. They are faithful imitators of what they see daily performed among the white inhabitants, and display an easiness of motion, and a

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<sup>39</sup> W.J. Burchell, *Travels in the interior of Southern Africa*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, p. 164.

<sup>42</sup> C.G. Botha, *Social life in the Cape Colony with social customs in South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 51; V. de Kock, *The fun they had! The pastimes of our forefathers*, p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> V. Layne, “Square roots at the Cape”, *Rootz Africa*, 5(4), November 2003, p. 18.

justness of ear which never fail to surprise and please an European unapprised of this circumstances.<sup>44</sup>

Bird describes the “High life below Stairs” and the “denominated rainbow balls” as follows:

The ladies imitate the manner, conversation, and dancing of their mistresses, and nearly equal them in dress: and when the dance is over, it is not necessary to follow the parties into retirement. Besides these rainbow dances there are others in which the negroes are engaged; and although a few of these dances take place every night, yet the grand display is in the outskirts of town to which the black population rush on a Sunday...<sup>45</sup>

These dances were distinctly different to the high society balls: dress, because of a lack of funds and time, was less fancy; the underclass danced on a Sunday afternoon (one of the few times that they did not have to work) while the upper class danced on Saturdays or weekdays, Sundays being reserved for God and family; the underclass danced in more public spaces (bars, the beach) while the upper class society danced in more private spaces (homes, club halls). In essence though, these events were the same: the festivities were organized around the dancing; both groups were accompanied by live music; and both groups danced “quadrilles”, “polkas” and waltzes.<sup>46</sup>

The influence that the dances had on the morals of Cape Town society was however prominently questioned by seventeenth, eighteenth and twentieth century authors alike. Lady Anne Barnard for example hints that the Dutch ladies had alternative motives in attending these balls stating that they “...love dancing or *flirting* [*sic.*] still more...”.<sup>47</sup> While Bird comments that one cannot pretend that the “rainbow balls” of the slaves “...add to the morals of the town...” adding that still “...the ball is conducted with due decorum...”.<sup>48</sup> Twentieth century writing found, perhaps too

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<sup>44</sup> R. Semple, *Walks and sketches at the Cape of Good Hope; A journey from Cape Town to Blettenberg's [sic.] Bay*, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>46</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, *The letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas*, p. 43; W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>47</sup> Barnard's letter to Dundas in A.M. Lewin Robinson, *The letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas*, p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, p. 166.



hastily, that “...prostitution and dancing went hand in hand”<sup>49</sup> and that the “...borderline between healthy amusement and mere frivolity was a matter of some concern...”.<sup>50</sup> Yet, regardless of the reservations, ballroom dancing persisted through the centuries across class, race and cultural barriers.

### 3.2 For the love of precious minerals and dance

Between 1830 and 1870 there appears to be a significant lull in the writing and reporting on South African dance. This however, did not mean that people stopped dancing or that balls were less popular than previous centuries. On the contrary, in Europe, this period saw the growing popularity of the waltz, “polka”, “mazurka”, “cotillion”, “minuet” and the “quadrille”.<sup>51</sup> Rather, travel journals, a major source of information on the every day events of pre-twentieth century South Africa, appeared to become a less common occurrence in South Africa’s literary record. Ballroom dancing formed part of everyday events, and writers seem to either mention it in passing or ignore it all together. Prominent historian, Nigel Worden, highlights the “inadequacy” of early twentieth century history writing with regards to social history stating that:

Afrikaner nationalist writers tended to laud the achievements of the trekkers and their descendents, while English-speaking historians placed emphasis on the role of the British government and settlers. As in Europe, many histories written in the early twentieth century emphasized political events and the ‘making of a nation state’.<sup>52</sup>

Consequently, it is difficult to determine the degree and nature of ballroom dancing during this time from secondary sources alone while the primary record is also equally scant.<sup>53</sup>

Artefacts of dance activity, like invitation cards and dancing programmes of the late nineteenth century, testify to the fact that ballroom dances continued to be a popular

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<sup>49</sup> N. Worden, E. van Heyningen, V. Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town the making of a city: an illustrated social history* (Cape Town, David Philip publishers, 1998), p. 195.

<sup>50</sup> A.F Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 155.

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>52</sup> N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 1; G. Vahed, “Review: Vahed on Murray & Merrett, Caught behind: Race & Politics in Springbok Cricket”, <jmartens@ARTS.UWA.EDU.AU>, 21/05/2005, archive at H-SAAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU.

pastime as the colony expanded and became established in the interior.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, memoirs referring to the 1870s and 1890s reveal that ballroom was not only danced by the upper middle classes like the Heys family of Pretoria, but these borrowed dances also formed part of the social life of people of lesser affluent society.<sup>55</sup> Bouws comments, for example, on the popularity of group dances like the “quadrille” next to couple dances, like the waltz and “polka”, during the Great Trek.<sup>56</sup> Charl Jeppe further describes, in his early twentieth century memoirs of the Transvaal, how the

... young people had a gay time indeed, by a bucksail spread over ground cleared from grass provided each evening a good floor to the beautiful and magnificently ventilated hall, domed by the blue sky and lit by the stars, while the notes of a fiddle or concertina was as much appreciated as the strains of the Blue Hungarian band in a London ball-room.<sup>57</sup>

In her 1902 diary Hildagonda Duckitt also records how the people “... who live in the country are generally very fond of dancing, for the mere exercise, I fancy”.<sup>58</sup> Like Jeppe, she describes how simple it was to create a makeshift ballroom and “... how quickly the dinner table was wheeled out of the large folding door, and the whole party would be merrily waltzing round or we would have sixteen sets of lancers...”.<sup>59</sup> Hattersley further mentions the “...Governor’s Ball on the Queen’s birthday [which] marked the height of winter festivities...” in the nineteenth century Natal and how the “...polka and the barn dance were still in fashion...”.<sup>60</sup>

Gradually ballroom dancing also became part of the leisure activities of white, black and coloured miners in the booming mining towns like Kimberley and Johannesburg, as they began to harbour more women and various secondary industries, like shops

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<sup>54</sup> B. Theron, “George Jesse Heys (1852-1939) in Pretoria”, *Historia*, 50(2), November 2005, pp. 119-148.

<sup>55</sup> C. Jeppe, *The kaleidoscopic Transvaal. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Cape Town, J.C. Juta and Co., 1906), p. 89; B. Theron, “George Jesse Heys (1852-1939) in Pretoria”, *Historia*, 50(2), November 2005, pp. 119-148.

<sup>56</sup> J. Bouws, *Solank daar musiek is...Musiek en musiekmakers in Suid-Afrika (1652-1982)*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>57</sup> Carl Jeppe, *The kaleidoscopic Transvaal*, p. 89.

<sup>58</sup> H.J. Duckitt, *Hilda’s diary of a Cape housekeeper, being a chronicle of daily events and monthly work in a Cape household, with numerous cooking recipes, and notes on gardening, poultry keeping, etc* (London, Chapman and Hall, 1902), pp. 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> H.J. Duckitt, *Hilda’s diary of a Cape Housekeeper*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>60</sup> A. F. Hattersley (ed.), *Later annals of Natal* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), pp. 253-254.



and clubs.<sup>61</sup> According to Louis Cohen's reminiscences, fancy dress balls in the city of gold, Johannesburg, were "... *the [sic.] things* - when they did take place..." and the Rand balls "pleased the ladies and delighted mankind, from the slopes of Witwatersrand to the plains of the Whitechapel".<sup>62</sup> Sam Sly's *African Journal*, for example, mentions the popularity of the "polka", "lancers", "gallopade", waltz and "quadrille" during the middle of the nineteenth century in South Africa.<sup>63</sup> It was according to Hattersley "...only in the last decade of the nineteenth century that dancing [entered] upon a dull period, with little to relieve the monotony of the valse...".<sup>64</sup> Although Hattersley implicates here the "valse" (the French translation for waltz), it is most likely that the South African ballroom dancers danced the "valse à deux temps" along with the waltz and not instead of it. The "valse à deux temps" was only popular for a brief period and was danced to livelier music. Instead of three steps per bar the "valse à deux temps" consisted of a "...sideways sliding movement...which occupied the first two beats of a bar followed by a gliding turn on the last beat".<sup>65</sup>

In 1888 Beatrice William, a Johannesburg miner's daughter recalls "...what fun it was meeting fresh partners at every dance and ball – handsome faces, new steps, men from all over the world...".<sup>66</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century Rose Blennerhassett, a British nurse on her way to Mashonaland, Rhodesia, describes how in the mining suburb of "Dornfontein" there were "...hotels, clubs, public ballrooms, and concert rooms...". In South Africa, as in Britain, charity balls became popular ballroom dancing events.<sup>67</sup> Blennerhasset ascribes the success of one of the nursing homes charity balls to the fact that the:

...Johannesburgher is passionately fond of dancing, so the penniless condition of our Home was naturally considered a good

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<sup>61</sup> L. Cohen, *Reminiscences of Kimberley* (London, Benette & Co, 1911), p. 202.

<sup>62</sup> L. Cohen, *Reminiscences of Johannesburg and London* (Facsimile reproductions of the 1924 edition with new Forward and Illustrations, Johannesburg, Africana Book Society, 1976), pp. 168-169.

<sup>63</sup> Sam Sly's *African Journal*, 25 July 1844 cited in A.F Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 154; Anonym, *South Africa's heritage, How our forefathers lived, worked and played. From van Riebeeck to XIXth century times, Part three: their customs, amusements and sport*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>64</sup> A. F. Hattersley (ed.), *Later annals of Natal* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), p. 254.

<sup>65</sup> A. Lamb: Valse à deux temps, Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>. Accessed: 04/04/2007; See Chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> W. Botha & L. Husemeyer, *The city that leapt to life: A 1986 diary celebrating Johannesburg's flamboyant origins 100 years ago* (Johannesburg, Perskor, 1985), p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> P. Borsay, *A history of leisure. The British experience since 1500* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 4.

excuse for getting up a charity ball. Over three hundred people went, and a special request was made that the nurses should be represented. Several of them therefore attended...A Church of England clergyman played the fiddle in the orchestra. He was attired in the usual swallow-tail; and wore tight black knee breeches, silk stockings, shoes and buckles...<sup>68</sup>

Ballroom dancing was not only popular among the foreign visitors and settlers in the mining towns. Because of the fluid social boundaries and cosmopolitan nature of society in the mining compounds, it became an event where class boundaries seemingly disappeared. Blennerhassett describes how “B[b]armaids and shop girls skipped about at the balls. Why not? The wives of the ‘upper ten’ had many of them been barmaids and shop girls not so very long ago. Besides... a lucky find might make any miner a rich man in the twinkling of an eye”.<sup>69</sup> In his reminiscence Cohen emphasises the variety of classes as well as races that danced together. He describes the dancing scenes as sometimes “violent” where different races danced in “... a building which was used as a dancing saloon, and thither would hasten every night a multitude of chocolate belles accompanied by their beaux...”.<sup>70</sup> He adds that “... as the coloured ‘pussons’ [*sic.*] were always in the majority, the white people who were inclined to try their luck among the dark skinned beauties had to do so with some caution, as their strong smelling cavaliers were exceedingly jealous and saucy”.<sup>71</sup> Given the more fluid social environment, “dancing” was also to be associated with “improper” behaviour. Particularly in the mining towns, dancing quickly became associated, as Cohen suggests in his 1911 recollection, with liquor, violence and the disobeying of social rules.<sup>72</sup> Blennerhassett also refers to the nurse’s charity balls being “...eccentric, to say the least. Nearly all the men, who were of course in a large majority, were very tipsy by ten o’clock. Revolving couples cannonaded each other, tumbled down, and could not get up again”.<sup>73</sup>

This perception and the popularity of dance escalated to such an extent that by the end of the nineteenth century the ZAR government found it necessary to pass a bill to

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<sup>68</sup> R. Blennerhassett & L. Sleeman, *Adventures in Mashonaland* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1969), pp. 8-9.

<sup>69</sup> W. Botha & L. Husemeyer, *The city that leapt to life*, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> L. Cohen, *Reminiscences of Kimberley*, pp. 202, 203.

<sup>71</sup> L. Cohen, *Reminiscences of Kimberley*, pp. 202, 203.

<sup>72</sup> L. Cohen, *Reminiscences of Kimberley*, p. 202.

<sup>73</sup> R. Blennerhassett & Sleeman, Lucy, *Adventures in Mashonaland*, p. 9.

prevent people from dancing on a Sunday instead of going to church. According to Act number 28 of 1896 it was illegal for a manager, leaser or owner of a public place to allow public dances on a Sunday and it was punishable with one month in jail or a fifty pound fine.<sup>74</sup> Moreover if, “naturelle” (natives) had “bier-en danspartijen” (beer and dance parties) on a Sunday they could be arrested and jailed for six months or fined a hundred pounds.<sup>75</sup> Negative reaction about dancing and efforts to create or adapt laws to regulate it did not only feature in South Africa. In 1917 the *Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago* published a report about “The public dance halls of Chicago”. This organisation investigated the halls and found that the majority of these dances turned into “violence and vice”. According to the contemporary author L. de Koven Bowen, dances went on until very late in the evenings in small unsanitary locations with little ventilation and were accompanied by “heavy drinking, lascivious dances, gambling, violence and immoral gestures”. Bowen found, as did certain of the South African authorities, that the only solution for these problems was extreme legislation which made it “illegal” to sell liquor at dances and provided for officials that had to investigate the events.<sup>76</sup> In Britain, Sunday adherence laws were also enforced and while, in some instances, the playing of football and other sports were overlooked, if public dances were held on a Sunday the magistrate and his police “...broke in to the assembly, dispersed the merry-makers, spilled the whisky, danced on the fiddle, and carried off to the nearest blockhole, or guard room, the owner of the house”.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> According to Act No. 28 of 1896 part 7, quoted in J.A. Schagen van Leeuwen, *De locale wetten en volksraadsbesluiten der Zuid-Afr. Republiek, benevens de proclamaties van ZHEd. Den Staatspresident en de belangrijke Gouvernements-Kennisgevingen gedurende het jaar 1896*, (Pretoria, Staatsdrukkerij van de Z.A. Republiek, 1897), p. 274. “De eigenaar, huurder of bestuurder van een publieke biljardkamer of andere publieke plaats van ontspanning, die toestaat of toelaat dat aldaar op Zondag het een of ander spel wordt gespeeld, of dat aldaar openbare vermakelijkheden worden gehouden zoals schouwburg-voorstellingen, café-chantants, publieke danspartijen, concerten, behalve voor gewijde muziek, harddraverijen, worden gestraft met gevangenisstraf van ten hoogste één of geldboete van ten hoogstevijftig pond sterling, bij wanbetaling te vervangen door gevangenisstraf een maand niet te bovengende”.

<sup>75</sup> According to Act 28 No. of 1896 part 8, quoted from J.A. Schagen van Leeuwen, *De locale wetten en volksraadsbesluiten der Zuid-Afr. Republiek*, pp. 274-275. “Alle Landrosten, Vrederechters, Veldcornetten, Assistant-Veldcornetten en Politie-beambten hebben het recht om personen uiteent te drijven, op Zondag op een openbare of open plaats verzameld, om er te spelen of te dobbelen...alsmede in gevealen van bier- en danspartijen van naturellen, en om in beslag te nemen, te vernietigen, of op andere wijze te beschikken over de werktuigen, instrumenten of dieren daarbij gebruikt...kunnen worden gearresteerd en worden gestraft met gevangenisstraf van ten hoogste zes maanden of met eene geldboete van ten hoogste honderd pond sterling, bij wanbetaling te vervangen door gevangenisstraf zes maanden niet te bovengende.”

<sup>76</sup> L. de Koven Bowen, *The public dance halls of Chicago*, pp. 3-9.

<sup>77</sup> A.O. Maolfabhail, “Hurling an old game in a new world”, cited in P. Borsay, *A history of leisure*, p.68.

From the late nineteenth century onwards South African authorities also increasingly began to fear what effects a combination of dancing and drinking could have on society at large. Therefore dancing schools or owners of public places were required to get prior approval about the operating times and selling of liquor before opening their doors to the public. In 1901, for example, there is evidence of both the police and the military general having approved the selling of liquor at a dance held at the Masonic Hall in Johannesburg.<sup>78</sup> Another application in 1901 by a certain Alfred Harris, a fireman in the Imperial Military Railways, was not so favourably received. He wanted to present dancing classes from 06:00 to 09:30 at a house in Pretoria for about thirty couples. Even though this dancing venue would be “fitted with electric light, (and) also a cloak room for ladies and one for gentlemen” the military governor turned his request down.<sup>79</sup>

Ballroom or social dances thus formed an occasional part of the social life of South Africa from the late seventeenth century up until the nineteenth century. It was however centralized within the European, and more privileged or musically orientated groups of people. It was only later with the further development and expansion of the cosmopolitan mining towns and, as will be discussed in the next section, the new jazz dances, that ballroom dancing found favour amongst a broader spectrum of South African society.

### **3.3 Governor-generals set the pace: 1902-1926**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, rapid global changes altered both the manner and style of dancing. Industrialisation, urbanisation and the First World War (1914-1919) created a large middle class that had both disposable income and leisure time.<sup>80</sup> The political, economic and social changes also influenced the availability of commodities that made ballroom dancing a viable, special, social event.<sup>81</sup> These

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<sup>78</sup> TAB, Pretoria: MGP 124, 12968/01: Louis Wertheim-Mayor MP Therson, 01/10/1901; TAB, Pretoria: MGP 124, 12968/01: Act Con. of Police- L. Wertheim, 24/09/1901.

<sup>79</sup> TAB, Pretoria: MGP 10251, A/01, pp. 104-105: Alfred Harris-Sir Maxwell Major General Military Governor Pretoria, 11/08/1901; TAB, Pretoria: MGP 10251, A/01, p. 108: Lieut. Sec. To the Mil. Gov.-Alfred Harris, 24/09/1901.

<sup>80</sup> P. Joyce, *The making of a nation*, (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2007), pp. 52-59; J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge: Johannesburg retrospect* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1975), pp. 97-98.

<sup>81</sup> See Chapter 4.

changes also served to spread the mainly European and American new style of dances throughout the world. Influenced by the syncopated rhythm of ragtime music, the modern waltz (“Boston”), “one-step”, foxtrot and tango (along with their various variations) became the dominant ballroom dances of the early twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> Even though early twentieth century South Africa lacked the European infrastructure, the economic development, industrialisation and a fast growing middle class increasingly made ballroom dancing a popular leisure choice. In general South African histories, much emphasis is placed on this political and economic development in the country between 1900 and the 1920s.<sup>83</sup> The beginning of this era saw the loss of independence for the Boer states after the South-African war (1899 - 1902) and establishment of British control over the entire country. Although the creation of the Union in 1910 was generally welcomed (especially in Afrikaner circles) as a way to strengthen the country economically,<sup>84</sup> it did not result in economic, social or even political unity.

On the political front the predominantly Afrikaner South African Party (SAP) faced resistance from the establishment of the opposition political party, the National Party (NP). Although the First World War demanded economic and industrial development it also fueled general unrest and protest movements (e.g. 1914 Rebellion, creation of the Industrial and Commercial workers Union (ICU) and the 1922 Strike or Rand Revolt). The 1920s saw the creation of the Pact government, the ignoring of black demands regarding housing and political representation, the acceptance of Afrikaans next to English as the official language, as well as the creation of sizeable secondary industries (e.g. ISCOR). Although the latter development strengthened South Africa's

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<sup>82</sup> For more information on the earlier dances see chapter 2; Anonym, “Dancing partners I have suffered under”, *Vocator*, 1928, opposite p. 8.

<sup>83</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, pp. 84-113; T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (reds.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*. Johannesburg, 1991; O.J.O. Ferreira, P.G. Nel & J.C. Pretorius, “Kultuurgeskiedenis as wetenskap”, *Handhaaf* 19(2), November 1981; L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa* (New Haven, 1995); N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid*, pp. 37-57.

<sup>84</sup> South Africa's economy was centred on mining. Statistics reveal that gold dominated the scale with other minerals taking second place, while the agricultural sector, that were suppose to support these industries, hardly featured. Thus, the importation of goods played a major role in South Africa's economy. Ironically, this trend supported the nature of ballroom dancing as most of the clothes, equipment and even music were imported rather than made in South Africa. This laid the groundwork for what was to come in the dancing world.

economy, it also increased the social division within the society due to burgeoning segregationist laws.<sup>85</sup>

Because of the continued connection and reliance on Britain from the first and the second British occupations of the Cape (1795-1803, 1806-), South Africa was particularly receptive to ballroom dancing in the early twentieth century. The British victory after the South African war placed a “foreigner” as figurehead on state level, through assigning a governor-general to the country. This ushered in an era, particularly during the early twentieth century, in which the British influence was even more apparent. According to the new post-war dispensation, the British governor-generals acted as official British representatives, as well as symbolic heads of state.<sup>86</sup> Sources are relatively vague about the actual power that they had over decision-making in South Africa and it appears as if the governor-general had a choice as to how much they wanted to be involved in politics. Appointed by the King in Britain on the advice of the British prime minister, (and after 1926 on the advice of the Royal commission) the Dominion Government and colonial secretary<sup>87</sup> were legally required to execute certain administrative duties including the appointment of ministers, choosing members of the Executive council and recommending taxing bills.<sup>88</sup> From 1910 up until 1926 (Balfour declaration), the appointed British Representative was both the high commissioner<sup>89</sup> and governor-general of South Africa.<sup>90</sup> Throughout their term of office in South Africa, the governor-generals had a very active social role and it is in this role that most South Africans began to associate the governor-generals. Tommy Boydell, a Labour politician, for example remarked that: “To the man in the street...I think he is regarded as the King’s figurehead, whose main job is to dress up in a frock coat, top hat and spats, and give dinners and garden

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<sup>85</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, pp. 84-113; T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (reds.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*; O.J.O. Ferreira, P.G. Nel & J.C. Pretorius, “Kultuurgeskiedenis as wetenskap”, *Handhaaf* 19(2), November 1981; L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*; N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa*, pp. 42-58.

<sup>86</sup> J. Lambert, “The Earl of Athlone and South Africanism: A united South African nation and not merely a South Africa peopled by Afrianders and English”: the Earl of Athlone and the attempt to forge a Dominion South Africanism in the 1920s”, *Kleio* 34, 2002. pp. 128-130.

<sup>87</sup> Personal interview: J. Lambert, UNISA, Pretoria, 20/04/2006.

<sup>88</sup> Under the South African Act and Colonial legislative in the *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1910 and 1911* (Pretoria, Government Printing and Stationery Office, 1911). pp. 102-110.

<sup>89</sup> The British High Commissioner was responsible to ensure British governmental rule and administration in Southern Africa

<sup>90</sup> Personal interview: J. Lambert, UNISA, Pretoria, 20/04/2006.



parties at which everybody invited has the opportunity of shaking his hand and saying, ‘How do you do’...’.<sup>91</sup> In reality, however, governor-generals had little actual power, and it appears as if their social influence far outweighed their political relevance.<sup>92</sup>

The prominent social position and royal inclination or image of the governor-generals and their wives played a considerable role in reinforcing ballroom dances in South Africa. The governor-generals were at the top of society’s social ladder and their attendance at functions validated social activities (e.g. clubs, garden parties and other leisure activities associated with the British middle class). These functions, along with the new style of ballroom dances, would otherwise not have been that easily accepted in either the “conservative” Afrikaner or “tribal” black culture. In a sense, the governor-general’s association with the ballroom component of much of this social scene, made it more prominent and desirable within society at large. As in Europe, for both Afrikaner of European descent and blacks influenced by European colonist, the pre-twentieth century style ballroom dancing was familiar. The “new” waltz (“Boston”), “one-step”, foxtrot and tango were however radically different from the “minuets” and “quadrilles” of the previous centuries. Not only was this new style of dancing danced to livelier music, it also required much closer contact and faster movements between partners. It can consequently be argued that without the inadvertent support of the new styles of dancing by the governor-generals, these dances might never have had the wide appeal they did gain in South Africa.

From the very outset of the early twentieth century, the social importance of ballroom dancing is evident. Although it was generally regarded more as an adult leisure activity, it became increasingly more fashionable to educate children in ballroom dancing. This reveals how integral it was becoming in South African society as a social necessity. As was the custom in Britain, teachers were appointed<sup>93</sup> and festivals<sup>94</sup> arranged to promote ballroom dancing amongst children. The military also

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted in J. Lambert, “The Earl of Athlone and South Africanism...”, *Kleio*, 34, p. 129.

<sup>92</sup> Personal interview: J. Lambert, UNISA, Pretoria, 20 April 2006.

<sup>93</sup> TAB, Pretoria: Government (Gov) 46, GEN 690/03: H.Bertram Cox-The Crown agents for the colonies, 24/06/1903.

<sup>94</sup> *Public Records of central government since 1910 Suid Afrikaanse Argief Bewaarplek* (SAB), Pretoria: Governor-General (GG) 2351, 6/171: G.W. Klerck-Miss F. Moorcroft Lamb, 19/04/1938.



stressed the social importance that ballroom dances had both for their members and the public in general. When referring, for example, to a 1911 ball of the Transvaal Volunteer Corps, it was stated that it was:

most desirable that it should be held, as it was a social function in which considerable interest was taken by the public and should be of considerable benefit to the officers of the force being as one of the very few opportunities accorded to officers of all Corps to meet socially.<sup>95</sup>

It was however under governor-generals like Herbert John Gladstone (1914-1920),<sup>96</sup> Prince Arthur of Connaught (1920-1923),<sup>97</sup> and the Earl of Athlone (1924-1930),<sup>98</sup> that ballroom dancing became an increasingly familiar pastime. It appears that the white middle class regarded ballroom dancing as an acceptable and respectable social activity which had connotations of royal behaviour. The governor-generals were a living example of what this respectability entailed. A letter from the governmental secretary in Maseru concerning governor-general Gladstone's visit to the city, for example, indicates that the Europeans in the country would like to meet governor-general Gladstone and his wife at a social function like a garden party.<sup>99</sup> A study of the social calendar of governor-general Connaught and his wife further reveals that governor-generals had both access to the infrastructure to host and attend various dance parties throughout a year.<sup>100</sup>

During this time a distinction was made between a garden party and ball, both of which were popular social dance functions. Balls and garden parties were generally organized for a Saturday (less often on Mondays or Fridays). Although private Sunday dances did take place, they were frowned upon, as Sundays were upheld as a

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<sup>95</sup> TAB, Pretoria: TVO. 18, 563: Minutes of a meeting held in the officers club on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1911 in connection with the Transvaal volunteers officers Ball, 18/03/1911.

<sup>96</sup> Gladstone was the first governor-general in South Africa. See for example Anonym, *Our first half-century 1910-1960, Golden Jubilee of the Union of South Africa* (Johannesburg, De Gama Publications, 1960), p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Governor-general Connaught was the grandson of Queen Victoria and was subsequently well aversed in social etiquette. Anonym, *Our first half-century 1910-1960, Golden Jubilee of the Union of South Africa*, p. 12.

<sup>98</sup> Governor-general Athlone was the brother of Queen Mary.

<sup>99</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 1412 45/13: Government secretary's office, Maseru-Garraway, 15/04/1911.

<sup>100</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2351, 6/183: G.W. Klerck-The town clerk Durban, 27/05/1940 for a Monday; TAB, Pretoria: Law Department (LD) 1575, AG 614/08: *Jewish Club Concert: A splendid success*, February 1908.

day of the Sabbath.<sup>101</sup> While a garden party was usually organized in the afternoon from around 2 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., balls were reserved for the late evenings, commonly starting at about 8 p.m. and going on until the early morning.<sup>102</sup>

A typical example of a garden party was organized by Connaught on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1921.<sup>103</sup> As was the case with most other garden parties organized by the governor-generals, it was a lavish, formal, affair. The party was held at Government House in Pretoria and local firms were hired to provide the necessary requirements. This included T.W Beckett who supplied the cutlery<sup>104</sup> and “Clark & Adlers orchestras” that provided the music.<sup>105</sup> “Clark & Adlers orchestras” were instructed that: “...there must be no question of people playing the piano with their feet, or putting on false beards, or shouting, blowing whistles...” and that “...no unauthorized notice of this Ball finds its way into the Press...”.<sup>106</sup> Arrangements were further made with the South African Railways to schedule special trains that would pick up the guests. The Government Printer was in charge of creating the 600 menus, as well as the dance programmes with a pencil attached on a white silk string.<sup>107</sup> According to the dance programme of the day the waltz; foxtrot; “one-step” would be danced.<sup>108</sup> Invitations were also sent out to the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Sunday Times* press.<sup>109</sup> The detail that was required to arrange these balls was impressive. One could not simply decide to have a dance, these balls required a substantial amount of money, adequate space and a lot of pre-planning – all elements that were readily available to the office of the governor-general.

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<sup>101</sup> According to Act 28 of 1896 part 8, public dances on a Sunday were illegal. For a more detailed discussion on the reasons and applications of this law see section above. See for example an article that appeared in a popular Afrikaans magazine that warns against the moral dangers that dancing had for the church in P.J. Pienaar, “Dans, gemengde baaiery, kaart-speel en wyn-drink”, *Die Huisgenoot*, April 1920, p. 378.

<sup>102</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: Col. Theo T. Truter-Captain Annesley, 25/09/1923; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/2: C. Annesley-A. Cameron & Co, 08/03/1922.

<sup>103</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: T.C. Gurney- Sirs, 05/10/1921.

<sup>104</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: T.W. Beckett- Col. Gurney, 09/11/1921.

<sup>105</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: Col. Gurney-Clark & Adeler’s Orchestras, 05/10/1921.

<sup>106</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG. 2251, 11/3: Col. Gurney-Clark & Adeler’s Orchestras, 05/10/1921 and SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: Gurney-Clark & Adeler, 07/11/1921.

<sup>107</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG. 2251, 11/3: Col. Gurney- The Government Printer, 08/11/1921.

<sup>108</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG. 2251, 11/3: Dance programme 03/05/1921. A special request was made by the governor-general’s wife that no Lancers were to be played. See for example SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: Gurney-Clark & Adeler, 07/11/1921.

<sup>109</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: *Sunday Times* Syndicate limited-Colonel Gurney, 09/11/1921.

### 3.4 “Belonging” and “not belonging”

The question however remains as to how many people in South Africa could actually dance ballroom and who “belonged” on the dance floor. The majority of the records found concerning ballroom dancing in the early twentieth century emphasise the strong European (“white”) presence at the dances in South Africa and the importance that status played in organising and attending these balls. As Robert Ross has pointed out “You are what you have”<sup>110</sup> and no where was this more visible than on the dance floor. “Belonging” at a ball or garden party inevitably meant dressing and acting the part. In his memoirs of early twentieth century Johannesburg, John Wentzel gives an expose of the extravagant costumes that the ladies wore to dance at the Johannesburg Country Club and the trials and tribulations of fitting into a dress.<sup>111</sup> A popular Afrikaans magazine also gives hints on attending a dance and advises readers to wear “no 4711 *Eau de Cologne*,” but also warns that dancing can both harm and reinforce moral values.<sup>112</sup> The latter sentiment is reiterated in a booklet for children, *Eerste Afrikaanse printe boeki vir soet kinders* (The First Afrikaanse picture book for well behaved children) by C.P. Hoogenhout which warns children that dancing is a waste of time, dangerous for your health and creates evil because “... dames wat kasta te vyn is om jongetjies an hulle hand te laat neem, laat sig ordentlik betas as hulle op die baan is...” (women who act as if they are too decent to hold hands with young men allow men to touch them all over when they are dancing).<sup>113</sup> In an article entitled *Dans, gemengde baaier, kaart-speel en wyn-drink* (Dancing, mixed bathing, card playing and wine drinking), P.J. Pienaar further warns Afrikaans readers against the moral dangers that dancing can have on the church, describing dancing as “verfoeilik” (destestable) and “verpetsende” (noxious) and contributing to the “onsedelikeid onder ons volk” (promiscuity of our nation).<sup>114</sup> Interestingly enough this echoes the commentary of Bird of the eighteenth century Cape regarding the “morals” reflected

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<sup>110</sup> R. Ross, *Belonging and belongings: on the material superstructure of identity*, Historical Association of South Africa Conference abstract, June 2006.

<sup>111</sup> J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge: Johannesburg retrospect* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1975), pp. 95-96.

<sup>112</sup> Hermanus, “As mama in die danssaal is”, *Die Huisgenoot*, Januarie 1922, pp. 378-388; 4711 *Eau de Cologne*, “Die laaste opskik”, *Die Huisgenoot*, November 1923, p. 23; Anonym, “The church and dancing”, *South African Dancing Times*, 6(10), May 1938, p. 10.

<sup>113</sup> Jan wat versies maak, *Eerste Afrikaanse printe boeki vir soet kinders*, cited in P. Minnaar, “n Baanbrekerboekie”, *Yearbook of the Africana Society of Pretoria*, 1989, pp. 54, 56.

<sup>114</sup> P.J. Pienaar, “Dans, gemengde baaier, kaart-speel en wyn-drink”, *Die Huisgenoot*, April 1920, p. 378; Anonym, “The church and dancing”, *South African Dancing Times*, 6(10), May 1938, p. 5.

in dance.<sup>115</sup> It was however not only certain elements among the Afrikaans speaking community that condemned ballroom dancing as a sin. The Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) rejected a proposal to allow occasional dancing in its building in Johannesburg. Dancing was not acceptable religious behaviour and by dancing in their building they would be forced to eliminate the "Christian" from their name.<sup>116</sup> The view, especially in some of the Afrikaner Churches, that dancing was morally dangerous appears to have persisted. In 1975 a certain J.H. van Wyk, by quoting text from the Bible, warns married couples that nearly seventy-five percent of all divorces start on the dance floor. He further states that:

Talle moderne danse, gepaardgaande met begeleidende sake soos obskure musiek, deurskynende rokke en oorvloedige drank, het vir talle getroude pare 'n afgrond van onpeilbare ellende geword (various modern dances along with accompanied issues like obscure music, see through dresses and abundant alcohol, has become a cliff of immeasurable anguish for married couples).<sup>117</sup>

On the other hand, the social prestige that was associated with ballroom dancing was reflected in the *Rand Daily Mail*. Its popularity is evident in the various advertisements inviting the public to attend dance events for an admission fee.<sup>118</sup> This daily newspaper also gives detailed descriptions of the extravagant outfits and range of people attending the various balls and garden parties that were hosted by the governor-generals, mayors and various clubs during the 1920s.<sup>119</sup> An example of one of these events was a garden party on 10 January 1921 held in Arcadia, Parktown, Johannesburg.<sup>120</sup> Despite a sudden downpour, the party was a great success and the *Rand Daily Mail* describes the 800 "honoured guests" as dressed in clothes that were "exceptionally smart". According to the *Rand Daily Mail* "Lady Dalrymple came in an elegant toilette of gold charmeuse allied with black charmeuse, with craped skirt, the corsage having loose panel back, edged black silk fringe, and her black lace hat was trimmed osprey fronds".<sup>121</sup> The attire of numerous other guests including Lady

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<sup>115</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, p. 166.

<sup>116</sup> Anonym, "Dances not a Christian pastime", *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/06/1925, p. 6.

<sup>117</sup> J.H. van Wyk, *Instituut vir die bevordering van Calvinisme Die etiek van dans*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>118</sup> See for example advertisements inviting the public Anonym, "Dancing, Main street Rink To-night, 8 to 11:30 admission 2/-, in *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/01/1921, p. 6; and Anonym, "Victorian League Ball, tonight, town hall, 9 p.m..." in *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/01/1921, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> See for example the *Rand Daily Mail* appearing in the 1920.

<sup>120</sup> Anonym, "Garden Party, brilliant scene at Arcadia, smart toilette in spite of rain", *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/01/1921, s.a.

<sup>121</sup> Anonym, "Garden Party, brilliant scene at Arcadia, smart toilette in spite of rain", *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/01/1921, s.a.

Carl Meyer, Mrs Raleigh and Mrs Gordon are also described in detail.<sup>122</sup> Failure to live up to the dress code and required style of the balls was met with social dismay and criticism. The Commanding Officer of the Transvaal Cycle and Motor Corps<sup>123</sup> was for example, ordered to reprimand a certain Lieutenant Douglas because he attended a private dance in mess dress.<sup>124</sup> In a letter to the members of the “Johannesburg Country Club”, that listed the date of functions and rules of the club, members and their guests were “earnestly requested to wear either light boots or shoes when attending dances at the Club”.<sup>125</sup> Advertisements, like those for “Blimans”, that advertised “exceptional bargains in fashionable dancing frock” also regularly appeared in the paper.<sup>126</sup> Although the *Rand Daily Mail* supported the “new jazz dances” in its detailed coverage explaining for example what the syncopated rhythm dancers are and where they could be danced,<sup>127</sup> it also carried warnings against “shed[ding] all notions of common decency and throw[ing] off the hampering restraints of maidenly reserve”.<sup>128</sup>

“Belonging” of course did not only entail wearing fashionable clothes, but also required enough social status to fit in.<sup>129</sup> Throughout the early twentieth century the name and social status of influential guests, like mayors and governor-generals, featured prominently on invitation cards.<sup>130</sup> Usually attendance at especially the more lavish balls and garden parties was by invitation only. A personal invitation from the

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<sup>122</sup> Anonym, “Garden Party, brilliant scene at Arcadia, smart toilette in spite of rain”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/01/ 1921, s.a.

<sup>123</sup> TAB, Pretoria: TVO 18, 570: Lieutenant-Colonel Staff Officer Transvaal Volunteers-Officer Commanding Transvaal Cycle & Motor Corps, 16/02/1911.

<sup>124</sup> Formal evening uniform for military occasions.

<sup>125</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2337, 1/27: R.B. Store-s.a., 27/03/1941.

<sup>126</sup> Blinman’s, “Dance frocks at Blinman’s sale”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/02/1925, p. 6.

<sup>127</sup> E. Rowan, “With the dancers”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/01/1921, p. 3. as well as advertisements inviting Anonym, “Union Club members to a Jazz dance evening at the Club: To Correspondence”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/01/1921, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> W. Harris, “Jazz Dances: New pastime of the long evenings”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/01/1921, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> For further (international) examples of the importance of etiquette and fashion see V. & I., Castle, *Modern dancing with many illustrations from photographs and moving pictures of the newest dances for which the authors posed*, pp. 431-37, 134-177 and A. McMahon Cree, *Handbook of ball-room dancing with an introduction by George Grossmith illustrated with diagrams*. pp. 21-23. Also see the various advertisements of local tailors and dressmakers Anonym, “Kotze, Die Afrikaanse Kleremaker”, *Die Huisgenoot*, September 1923, n.a; Anonym, “4711 Eau de Cologne, Die laaste opskik”, *Die Huisgenoot*, November 1923, p. 23 and C.F. Skinner, “The very best dancing shoes”, *Pleasure*, May 1938, p. 47; Anonym, “Skinner’s dancing shoes”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(3), October 1936, p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: Invitation card stating that the “Their Royal Highness Prince and Princess to invite-----to a garden party at the Government House Pretoria on Wednesday, 17 October, 3.30 pm to 5.30.p.m.

governor-general or mayor, or “belonging” to a club which ensured an invitation card symbolized recognition of a particular standing in society. In general, clubs were created for leisurely escape from the world and tended to draw people with a common social standing or political inclination and interests together.<sup>131</sup> Although clubs therefore reinforced social divisions in society, clubs also popularized, otherwise expensive, leisure activities as they had money, space or means to facilitate public amusements. Both high society and the lower classes borrowed from the English club tradition in London and created social clubs where they could spend their leisure time.<sup>132</sup> Life in the clubs, especially in the upper classes like the “Rand Club” and the “Auckland Park Country Club” in Johannesburg was lavish. Members could sleep over, enjoy billiards or cards in the game rooms, read from the library, or enjoy a cigarette or cigar alongside other members with more or less the same interests.<sup>133</sup>

In order to become a member of any one of these clubs, certain prerequisites had to be met. “Rand Club” members were mostly affluent males with a, perhaps, incidental dislike for the ZAR government.<sup>134</sup> Members of the “Country Club” in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, either owned or could afford property in the surrounding area.<sup>135</sup> Members of the “Pretoria Club” and “Voorslag” were professional, respectable Afrikaners,<sup>136</sup> while members of the Johannesburg’s “Afrikaner”<sup>137</sup> and “Union” clubs were ardent supporters of Afrikaans or English cultural life. Importantly for the dancing world, these clubs either had halls where ballroom dancing could be practiced or the means to hire a ballroom for special occasions.

Like the white clubs, black social clubs also began to feature strongly in the urban culture of the early twentieth century and it was especially in these clubs that ballroom dancing became a popular activity. Although soccer far outweighed the

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<sup>131</sup> J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge*, p. 90 stating: “An Englishman’s house is his castle but he’s always at home in his club”.

<sup>132</sup> P. Borsay, *A history of leisure*, p. 225.

<sup>133</sup> J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge*, pp. 90-92, 94-96.

<sup>134</sup> J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge*, pp. 90-92, 94-96.

<sup>135</sup> J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge*, pp. 94-96

<sup>136</sup> E.L.P. Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad II 1924-1961*, p. 171; B.M. Theron, *A social history of Pretoria during the first phase of the Anglo-Boer war: October 1899-June 1900* (D.Phil., thesis, University of South Africa, 1984), pp. 144-145, 154, 157.

<sup>137</sup> B. Arnold, *Lost Johannesburg* (Johannesburg, Macmillan South Africa, 1979), p. 74.



popularity of any other leisure activity,<sup>138</sup> marabi, concerts, alcohol, music and dancing became a customary part of life-after-work in the rapidly growing urban environment.<sup>139</sup> It was especially the African elite that favoured ballroom dancing and used it as a means to identify with whites or Westerners.<sup>140</sup>

Up until the early 1920s the political, economic and social situation thus served to facilitate ballroom dancing in South Africa. Although ballroom dancing was mainly practiced by the white middle class, its social importance made it appealing to other cultures. Fuelled by the support of the governor-generals, ballroom dancing became a sought-after social activity between 1910 and the 1920s. By 1926 however, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the position of the governor-general changed and thus the need for weekly balls, garden parties and social events. Supported by whites, and inconspicuously by blacks, ballroom dancing became increasingly more competitive in nature. The years leading up to the 1920s however laid the foundation for the acceptance of ballroom dancing in a country seemingly endlessly far removed from the London ballrooms. And, while “belonging” on a European ballroom dance floor first and foremost meant dressing and acting the part of a successful, respectable white middle class citizen, “belonging” for black South Africans meant being able to dance.

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<sup>138</sup> P.C. Alegi, Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performances, and social identity in South Africa, 1920s-1945, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2002, pp. 17-38.

<sup>139</sup> P.C. Alegi, Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performances, and social identity in South Africa, 1920s-1945, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2002, pp. 25, 29; D.B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 121, 129.

<sup>140</sup> P.J.S. Richardson, *The social dances of the nineteenth century in England*, p. 120. For a more detailed discussion of the urban Blacks involvement with ballroom dancing see Chapter 6.



## Chapter 4

### Ballroom passions: dancing panache in 1920 and 1930

What is dancing?... People who dance for the sake of their health call it ‘exercise’, those who dance for their figures talk about ‘losing weight’, doctors advise dancing to quicken the circulation, and mammas with marriageable daughters encourage it from another point of view. The question of what it really is seems to remain open, yet the advisability, the propriety, the poise, of every new dance is discussed as though it were an affair of national importance.<sup>1</sup>

During the second half of the 1920s ballroom dancing became increasingly popular and, as the above contemporary report in the societal pages of the *Rand Daily Mail* indicates, a matter of great relevance in society at large. While the governor-generals continued to play an important role in the promotion of these “borrowed” leisure activities, it was the incorporation of “new” technologies into everyday life, as well as urbanisation that made ballroom dancing not only a social necessity, but also a chosen popular cultural activity. This chapter will focus on the socialisation of ballroom dancing in South Africa from the second half of the 1920s through to the 1930s. After a brief discussion of the governor-general’s support of ballroom after the Balfour declaration (1926), and the impact this had on ballroom in South Africa, the role that media, radio, and motion pictures played in the popularisation and accessibility of ballroom dancing will be considered.

#### 4.1 Royal support: dancing governor-generals and princes

After the Balfour declaration was accepted in 1926, it theoretically placed South Africa (as well as the other dominions) on equal status with the United Kingdom. The position of high commissioner was abandoned and the governor-general became no more than the King’s representative in the country.<sup>2</sup> Despite their diminished legal authority and status the governor-generals, especially the British-appointed earls of

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<sup>1</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/06/1927, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1910 and 1911* (Pretoria, Government Printing and Stationery Office: 1911), pp. 102-110; J. Lambert, “Captain Henry Birch-Reynardson, Official secretary to the Governor-General of South Africa, 1927-1933: A British official in an ‘Independent’ Dominion”, *South African Historical Journal*, 46, May 2002, p. 87.

Athlone (1924-1930) and Clarendon (1931-1937),<sup>3</sup> continued to feature at social gatherings. Yet, though the role of the governor-general became increasingly more ceremonial in nature during and after the Second World War, the position of governor-general remained intact until 1961 with the establishment of the Republic of South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

The prominent social role that both the governor-generals and ballroom dancing had in South Africa is evident in the growing number of dance invitations that the governor-generals received as the years progressed.<sup>5</sup> Ballroom dancing became an extremely popular way to raise money because of its social appeal. Organisations and clubs used balls to raise money for what they viewed to be a worthy cause, but also because it was, at least for the middle class, the customary “social event of the year”. This could explain why clubs, like those for rugby, that one would presume would steer clear of ballroom dancing, used balls to establish themselves as socially acceptable clubs.<sup>6</sup> Dance events were used to raise money for War victims,<sup>7</sup> hospitals,<sup>8</sup> children’s homes, the blind and disabled, as well as other charities supporting a particular group in society.<sup>9</sup> The governor-generals of South Africa received various invitations both to attend these dance parties, but also to be the

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<sup>3</sup> Clarendon was the last British appointed governor-general. Anonym, *Our first half-century 1910-1960, Golden Jubilee of the Union of South Africa* (Johannesburg, De Gama Publications, 1960), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> E. Kahn, “Governor-General”, in D. J. Potgieter (ed.), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa V* (Cape Town: NASOU, 1971), pp. 289-290; C.F.J. Muller, (ed.), *Five Hundred years a history of South Africa* (Pretoria, Academia, 1977), pp. 403-404.

<sup>5</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2343, 2/9, 2: W. Smillie-The secretary of His Excellency the Governor General, 07/04/1937.

<sup>6</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2352, 6/195: G.W. Klerck-The mayor of Boksburg, 13/06/1938.

<sup>7</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2343, 2/9, 2: W. Smillie-The secretary of His Excellency the Governor General, 07/04/1937; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2343, 2/9, 2: P. Margetts – H.E. the Governor General of South Africa, 23/02/1938. where the West Rand Memorial Order of Tin Hats commit themselves to use the proceeds of the military ball for their Cottesloe house fund to build homes for “old and disabled ex-service men and their wives”.

<sup>8</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339, 1/59: M.L. Foster-Mr. Klerck, 13/03/1939 where the Mayor’s wife states that the proceeds of the Ball will “provide extra necessities and comforts throughout the Peninsula hospitals...”; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/03/1931, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2255, 1/92: Letters asking for support from various Jewish charities, 02/05/1925 to 28/04/1930 as well as TAB, Pretoria: TPB 2329, TA 122/5734: Johannesburg municipality grants in aid, 1940-1941 where the Johannesburg municipality granted £30 to the Chinese community ball in aid of the Liberty Cavalcade and £28 to the *Owners’ and Trainers Association’s* Christmas Race ball in aid of war funds. Other organizations also included *The Officers’ and Coloured ex-Service men’s Association* that held their annual ball in the Johannesburg City-Hall. SAB, Pretoria: GG 2306, 1/396: Chas. N. Hoy-Private secretary to his Excellency the Governor-General, 14/03/1936 where the association states that the funds will be used to help the Cape-Coloured community on the Rand.

patron of a certain event and thus validate its social importance.<sup>10</sup> Lending patronage to a certain event was of extreme importance for people that wanted to make their event a noteworthy experience and was closely linked with the social position of the governor-general in South Africa.

While the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s initially saw a period of economic crisis in South Africa and hence had an inhibiting impact on leisure activities, it was the introduction of the syncopated ragtime dances, like the new foxtrot, “charleston” and “Boston”, from America, that made ballroom dancing become increasingly more popular.<sup>11</sup> Contemporary newspapers, like the *Rand Daily Mail*, advertised weekly social evenings for the general (white) public,<sup>12</sup> as well as grand balls<sup>13</sup> for the more wealthy guests that integrated the new dance crazes alongside the “classical” ballroom dances like the waltz. Although governor-generals like Clarendon and his successor Sir Patrick Duncan (1937-1943),<sup>14</sup> did not always “...see their way clear...”<sup>15</sup> to accept the various dance invitations “...owing to the large number of requests ...”,<sup>16</sup> it did not deter people from organizing or inviting the governor-generals, to yet another ball. In declining invitations to the “Navy League Ball” and “Royal Natal Yacht Club”, Duncan explained that he had received so many invitations to these dances that he was unable to attend all the functions.<sup>17</sup> The engagements not only included charity balls as mentioned above, but also various social dance functions of prestigious clubs like the “Country Club” and “Rand Club” in Johannesburg.<sup>18</sup> Crowds were drawn to the various hotels and clubs to participate in the “Diner dansant” and gala dances

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<sup>10</sup> Personal interview: Prof. J. Lambert, UNISA, Pretoria, 20/04/2006.

<sup>11</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 106. Also see Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/01/1921, p. 3 inviting members of the Unionist Party Club to a Jazz dance evening.

<sup>13</sup> *Rand Daily*, 07/01/1921, p.4 report of the “Brilliant function in Johannesburg”.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Duncan became the first South African born governor-general. Anonym, *Our first half-century 1910-1960*, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2337, 1/31: H.C. Juta- the Organiser-Secretary of Habonim [*sic.*], 10/04/1937.

<sup>16</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2306, 1/360: Hyde-Mrs. P. Cranswick, 21/12/1934.

<sup>17</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2343, 2/20: G.W. Klerck-K.L. Buzzard, 03/06/1939.

<sup>18</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2303, 1/237: Basil A. Reen-E.H. Davidson, 23/05/1932. Also see the invitation to “dinner and dance” evenings at Auckland Park, Johannesburg Country Club SAB, Pretoria: GG 2337, 1/27: R.B. Store - The Private Secretary to the Hon. Sir Patrick Duncan, 11/03/1937 as well as dance invitation to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary dance of the Rand Club on 29 October 1937, SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339 1/51: G.W. de Klerck-The secretary, Rand Club, 07/10/1937.

arranged in celebrating festivities like Christmas and New Year.<sup>19</sup> On their part, the governor-generals also organized various dance events to satisfy a public need and reinforce their prominent social position within society. This included for example, the “Government House Dance” held in December 1934 which was especially arranged for “young people”.<sup>20</sup> Guests at this dance included members of the defence force, as well as prominent couples and dancers from Pretoria and Johannesburg. The media described it as a “delightful dance” on the “beautifully illuminated grounds” in Pretoria, again indicating the open-air nature of the event.<sup>21</sup>

The visit of His Royal Highness Prince George in 1934 however stands out on the local social calendar.<sup>22</sup> Pretoria alone for example, budgeted £5000 to entertain the Prince of which at least £750 was allocated for the civic reception.<sup>23</sup> The dancing events in honour of the Prince in Johannesburg included a civic garden party during the late afternoon of his first day in Johannesburg, a civic ball in the City Hall on the second day of his visit, as well as a military ball during his last evening in Johannesburg.<sup>24</sup> Protocol, like the governor-general “taking precedence” over the Prince, made it inappropriate for Clarendon and Prince George to attend the same functions, and consequently “...the Claredons are not going much with him [His Royal Highness] in order that he should always be the guest of honour”.<sup>25</sup> Throughout 1934 newspapers reported that various civic balls, garden parties and dancing events were organized to introduce the public to His Royal Highness. The *Rand Daily Mail* commented in detail on the logistics of the events, the dress of the dancers and lauded the successes.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Anonym, “Carlton hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/12/1934, p. 14; Anonym, “Stephanie”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/12/1934, p.14; Anonym, “Johannesburg during the festive season”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/12/1934, p.17.

<sup>20</sup> Anonym, “Government house dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/12/1934, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Anonym, “Government house dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/12/1934, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Anonym, “Royal welcome for royal visitor: Cape Town stops work to greet Prince this morning, gaily decorated shipping”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/02/1934, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Anonym, “The Prince’s Visit: What Pretoria is to spend”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/01/1934, p.10

<sup>24</sup> Anonym, “City and the Prince: The complete programme, some further alterations, traffic problem”, *Rand Daily Mail* 06/02/1934, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Lieut: R.N- The Private secretary to the administrator, 19/01/1934; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: N.A.- Sir Abe, 13/01/1934.

<sup>26</sup> Anonym, “City and the Prince: The complete programme, some further alterations, the traffic problem”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/02/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “Royal visit begins a week from to-day”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 13; Anonym, “What will you wear at the Garden Party for the Prince?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/02/1934, p. 7. advising readers to wear “...something soft and feminine...” as well as Anonym, “The Royal visit: For correct dress shop at McCullagh & Bothwell’s”, *Rand Daily*

One of the first major social- and dance- events of the year was the state ball in honour of Prince George given by governor-general Clarendon in Cape Town. Two bands played in the ballrooms of Government House and the Prince was said to have danced with some of the distinguished guests that attended the ball.<sup>27</sup> The public were also invited to buy tickets for the civic garden party at the Zoological Gardens on the Rand which was anticipated to be “one of the popular functions which H.R.H Prince George [would] attend...” and although only adults were allowed, it was expected that twenty thousand people would be present at this function.<sup>28</sup> Other dance events organized specially for Prince George included a civic reception and dance on 7 February 1934;<sup>29</sup> a “Grand Caledonian Ball” on 8 February 1934 at the Queens Hotel, Sea Point;<sup>30</sup> a garden party at the Cape Town Government House on 9 February 1934;<sup>31</sup> a dinner and dance on 12 February 1934 at Muizenberg<sup>32</sup> and a military ball at the Johannesburg City hall on 13 March 1934.<sup>33</sup> Less formal dance evenings, like the special “Diner Dansant” at the Carlton Hotel on Saturday 10 March, were also arranged in honour of the visit by Prince George.<sup>34</sup> Whether the Prince actually enjoyed this strenuous social programme is questionable as in replying to an invitation from a farmer to “...give up all these civic reception and things and come springbok shooting on a farm...” the Prince was quoted saying “... I only wish I could...”<sup>35</sup>

The old fashioned dances (e.g. the “polka”, “lancers”, “valenta”, “barn dances”) never completely disappeared from the ballroom and were still danced especially at British and commemorative events both in South Africa and Britain.<sup>36</sup> Prince George

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*Mail*, 27/02/1934, p. 11, recommending men to wear a dress suit, plain linen shirt, waist coat bowtie, white art silk scarf, and a white silk handkerchief. Also see Anonym, “Fashions for the Prince’s visit”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/01/1934, p. 7, advising women on the “...important matter of clothes for the balls and reception...” on Prince George’s visit and recommending that they wear evening gowns that are “closely moulded [*sic.*] to the figure” and cloaks in “gracious velvet”.

<sup>27</sup> Anonym, “State ball for Prince George”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/02/1934, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Anonym, “Civic garden party tickets for citizens”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/02/1934, p.10; Anonym, “Royal visit begins a week from to-day”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 13; Anonym, “Garden party is not for children”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/03/1934, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Event Inventory.

<sup>30</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Invitation card for the *Grand Caledonian ball*.

<sup>31</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: P.P. Cay’s Photo service-Comptroller Government House Cape Town, 30/01/1934.

<sup>32</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Tyrwhitt-Sir Abe Bailey (telegram), 12/01/1934.

<sup>33</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Invitation card from The Officers of the Active Citizen Force (Transvaal Command), no 501.

<sup>34</sup> Anonym, “Carlton hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/03/1934, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Anonym, “Farmer’s invitation to Prince”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Anonym, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/03/1931, p. 14.

reintroduced some of the nineteenth century dances in the South African ballroom during his visit. This was apparent in Ladysmith in March 1934 where he danced the “lancers” with the mayoress at the Caledonian Ball and also requested that the “polka” be played.<sup>37</sup> It was however not only the old fashioned dances or traditional ballroom dances that experienced brief periods of extreme popularity because of the royal visitors interests in it. During the earlier visit to Johannesburg in January 1932 by Prince of Wales, he unexpectedly showed up at the Saxony Hotel. Although the tango was, for reasons that will be discussed later on in this chapter, not very popular amongst the South African dancers, the whole dance programme had to be rearranged to ensure that “every other number became a Tango” since it was his favourite dance.<sup>38</sup>

Like Prince Georges’s visit, the Prince of Wales’s brief tour of South Africa in 1925 caused a stir in white social circles. Balls, like the “Roodepoort Ball”, municipal and civic balls and the “Union Party Club Flannel” and “Cabaret” dances (in appropriate dancing attire) were planned in detail to ensure extravagant events that drew hundreds of dancers.<sup>39</sup> The dancing community’s appreciation of the Prince of Wales grew when at the Eaton Hall in Johannesburg he apparently continued to perfectly dance and finish the foxtrot even when the lights went out in the middle of the dance.<sup>40</sup> Underlining his popularity and the manner in which he set the tone, the *Rand Daily Mail*, with the sponsorship of “Columbia Records”, printed a list of records to ensure that the public danced to the “dance hits favoured by the Prince of Wales”.<sup>41</sup> These “dance hits” mainly included a selection of waltzes and foxtrots performed by American bands.<sup>42</sup> As was the case with the visit of Prince George, the media devoted pages to advising women on how they should dress and behave at the various royal balls. Reflecting on the impact of the royal visits, the *Rand Daily Mail* observed that:

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<sup>37</sup> Anonym, “Prince dances the Lancers”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/03/1934, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/01/1932, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Anonym, “Ball at Roodepoort”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/06/1925, p. 11; Anonym, “Union Party Club: Visit of Prince of Wales to Johannesburg”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/06/1925, p. 8; Anonym, “Municipal Council of Johannesburg. In honour of H.R.H the Prince of Wales. Ball in town hall”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/06/1925, p. 6; Anonym, “Cuts cake at the civic ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/06/1925, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Anonym, “Dance by glimmer of a candle”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/06/1925, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> H. Polliack & Co, “The only records without scratch Columbia Records”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1925, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> H. Polliack & Co, “The only records without scratch Columbia Records”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1925, p. 7.



“Never before in Johannesburg has there been such a rush for dance gowns and gowns fit for banquet or command performances as there is to-day”.<sup>43</sup>

The royal visits did indeed create an astounding interest in ballroom dance. The *Rand Daily Mail* for example reported that the “effects of the forthcoming visit of Prince George is being felt in the principal dancing studios”.<sup>44</sup> And that “...many well-known people, both in Johannesburg and Pretoria, are brushing up their dancing steps in order that they may enjoy themselves the more on the occasions of the Royal functions”.<sup>45</sup> Even the different dancing styles and preferences of the royal visitors were carefully noted and then publicly discussed in the media:

The Duke of York is a very methodical dancer, who carefully studies the floor before beginning to dance. The Prince of Wales is a much more vigorous dancer, who adds original steps of his own to the grace of his brothers. He ‘lets himself go’ and anyone can see that he enjoys it.<sup>46</sup>

After almost every royal visit there appears to be a brief upsurge of awareness where the public and especially the media took a keen interest in the personal life of the royal family. Significant social events, like birthdays and marriages, happening in the royal family’s lives were used as an excuse to host yet another ball. This can be seen, for example, in the hosting of a “Carnival Ball” by the Greek community to celebrate the marriage of Princess Marina of Greece to the Duke of Kent.<sup>47</sup> Ballroom dancing continued to form part of royal visits to South Africa during this period as can be seen in the various ballroom dancing events held during 1947.<sup>48</sup> This upsurge in interest before, during and after a royal tour of the Union definitely served to further advance the popularity of ballroom.

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<sup>43</sup> Anonym, “Fashion for the Royal visit: For the woman that dances”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1925, p.13.

<sup>44</sup> Anonym, “Royal visit causes a rush to the studios”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Anonym, “Royal visit causes a rush to the studios”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/07/1930, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Anonym, “Carnival ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/11/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “In the dancing world”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/11/1934, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Anonym, *Cape Times: Souvenir of the Royal tour*, 1947, pp. 15, 19, 37, 53; D. Morrah, *The Royal Family in Africa* (London, Hutchinson & Co, 1947), p. 63.



## 4.2 Taking the floor: Dancing necessities

The *Rand Daily Mail* asked its readers in 1931 if Johannesburg was a “city of dancers?”<sup>49</sup> Judging from the regular dance-related advertisements in the paper, as well as advertisements in the *Pretoria News*, it appears as a rhetorical question rather than a debatable statement. Also the media claimed that there was, “no kind of joy of movement that is not taught and known in Johannesburg”.<sup>50</sup> Johannesburg, and Pretoria, did not only have (as will be discussed later on in this chapter) a variety of dance bands, dance teachers and dance halls to choose from, but also a large range of ballroom dancing activities to meet different social needs. For those that were, for example, unable to attend one of the royal dance parties during the Prince’s visit, the customary charity balls;<sup>51</sup> dancing evenings;<sup>52</sup> club functions;<sup>53</sup> office dance functions;<sup>54</sup> fund raising events;<sup>55</sup> special celebrations<sup>56</sup> and sport club dances<sup>57</sup> continued to be popular choices of entertainment.

<sup>49</sup> Lancer, “Is Johannesburg a city of dancers?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Lancer, “Is Johannesburg a city of dancers?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Anonym, “Second annual cabaret ball...”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 8 advertising the “Second annual Cabaret ball in aid of the civilian blind to be held at the city hall, Friday 2 March under the distinguished patronage of their Excellencies the governor-general and Lady Clarendon, the mayor and mayoress of Johannesburg. Jazz Maniacs’ personal band.” Also see Anonym, “Jewish orphanage annual dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/03/1924, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Anonym, “Positively keeping open...”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 8 advertising the “Positively keeping open Loveday Palais de danse 73, Loveday Street. To-day 3.30-8. admission, 1/6, including light refreshments. To-night, 8-12. Admission 2/6. Come and dance to the New Loveday palais band Leader: Fred Allen.” Also see Anonym, “Carlton Hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/02/1934, advertising “Carlton Hotel every Friday cabaret dansant in the Chez Vous, from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. special supper 10/6 per Couvert.”; Anonym, “Carlton Hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 8. advertising “Diner dansant in the Chez Vous from 7 p.m. to midnight 12/6 per Couvert”.

<sup>53</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 8. advertising “Under the distinguished patronage of H.E. the Governor-General. Wednesday, Mar. 7 All roads will lead to the Grand Purim ball of the Nordau Club at the Wanderers Hall”; Anonym, “To-night the grand Purim ball at the Wanderers’ hall”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/03/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “Caledonian Society dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1934, p. 5; Anonym, “Master Builder’s dance at the Wanderers”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/05/1931, p. 7; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbc136: Garment Workers Union: Transvaal Union: General Correspondence Dance: E.S. Sachs- Comrades of the Garments Workers Union, proposed meeting of the Dance Committee on 3 July 1933.

<sup>54</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/02/1934, p. 11 where the Labour Party dance at Edenvale is described as a “very successful dance” which about fifty couples attended. The “Malvern Dance Band supplied a first-class programme, and dancing was kept up till past 12 midnight”; Anonym, “Pleasant dance at Wanderers: S.A. general electric staff”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 13. Three hundred dancers attended this function. Anonym, “Cobryn staff dance at Langham Hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/02/1934, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Anonym, “University carnival dance. Year ends with gay function.”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/11/1927, p. 5. discussing the yearend function of the Witwatersrand University Students for which the proceeds went to the University Development fund.

<sup>56</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/02/1934, p. 12 listing some of the people that was presented at the St. Valentine’s dance in the “beautifully decorated” Hotel Alexander, Germiston. Also see *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/02/1934, p. 9 describing a dance at Berea Hall, Pretoria where the Currie Cup swimming tournament medals were celebrated by 250 dancing couples that consisted for “the most part of the

As indicated in Chapter 1 these ballroom dancing events were reported on with much detail in the social columns of *Rand Daily Mail*, and as one of the very few social commentaries appearing during the 1920s and 1930s that published articles on dancing, much of the information on ballroom events are gleaned from its columns. Dances organized as fund raising events still received, as in the 1920s, detailed media coverage. This can be seen for example, in the report of a dance organized by the doctors of Johannesburg and their wives in aid of the “District Nursing Association” and the “Seaside Fund” in February 1934. The dance held at the “Langham Hotel” in Church Street, Johannesburg, promised to be a “delightful” event and attracted four hundred dancers that wore a variety of gowns with decorations ranging from “floral taffeta” to “white cock feather trimmings”.<sup>58</sup> Other fund raising events also included the “Cabaret Ball” in aid of the civilian blind that was held under the patronage of governor-general and lady Clarendon and the mayor and mayoress of Johannesburg. The ball was held at the Johannesburg City Hall on Friday 2 March and dancers were accompanied by the “Jazz Maniacs’ Personal band”.<sup>59</sup> While a record number of five hundred dancers attended the “Purim Ball”, which was held in aid of the “Pretoria Jewish Women’s Benevolent Association” at the Jewish Memorial Hall in Pretoria on 28 February 1934,<sup>60</sup> more than six hundred dancers danced and played bridge in aid of the civilian blind in the Johannesburg City hall on 2 March 1934.<sup>61</sup> Ballroom dancing was not only used to raise money for the less privileged, but professional ballroom dancers occasionally presented ballroom dance classes for the disabled to bring “movement and pleasure” to them.<sup>62</sup>

The dance emphasis during the 1920s and 1930s visibly fell on the waltz and the only obstacle towards it being danced was whether or not it would be appropriate to waltz

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competitors and officials from the various provincial centers who had taken part in the tournament and their bright rosettes and blazers provided a colourful background for the evening’s festivities. As well as Anonym, “British Empire exhibition ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/01/1924, p. 6

<sup>57</sup> Anonym, “Benoni Callies Association football club”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/02/1934, p. 9 announcing that the “...club’s annual dance will be held in the Hebrew hall on Saturday February 10, 1934”.

<sup>58</sup> Anonym, “Woman’s Dairy: A doctors’ dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 7; Anonym, “Doctors’ dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/02/1934, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Anonym, “Second Annual Cabaret Ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “Second Annual Cabaret Ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Anonym, “Grand Purim ball in Pretoria”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> Anonym, “600 dancers at city hall”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/03/1932, p. 3.

in the new fashionable relatively short skirts.<sup>63</sup> It is only on a dance programme, in a very detailed media report on an event, in a film, or on a competition entry form, that one finds out what ballroom dancing meant to the people of a specific period. Judging from the dance programmes of the time, the quickstep began to feature prominently only at the end of the 1920s, while dances like the “one step”, “polka” and “lancers” were gradually being phased out during this time.<sup>64</sup> These dances were mainly danced on special request, like the specially arranged “Mixed old-fashioned and modern dance evening” at the “Loveday Palais de danse”, or on commemorative occasions like the “Old Edwardian dance” or the “Caledonian Society Reception” where dancers danced *inter alia* the “military two-step” and the “valeta”.<sup>65</sup> Although for brief periods the old square dances had flashes of popularity, this did not endure.<sup>66</sup> Comments in the *Rand Daily Mail* declared that: “Johannesburg is not keen on reverting to old styles and there is no sure sign that England wants to do so either” again emphasizing the influence and cognisance of developments from abroad.<sup>67</sup>

As ballroom dancing became a more popular and lucrative pastime attracting both the general public and, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, competitive dancers, it became essential that ballroom venues offered not only a nice venue but more specifically good quality dancing floors because:

A ballroom offers plenty of scope for marvels of lighting and decoration, but the floor is all important. Summer-time dancing depends on the floor and the ventilation more than in any season of the year.<sup>68</sup>

Restaurants and clubs tried a variety of techniques to draw dancers to their floors. This included regular advertising, introducing dance bands, creating space for competitive dancers to practice and perform, and even putting in new floors, to create more motion and movement on the floor. By the end of the 1920’s it was reputed that:

At hotels and restaurants plenty of opportunities for dancing are being offered. Cabarets, diner dansants, souper [*sic.*] dansants

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<sup>63</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/07/1927, p. 7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/07/1927, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/11/1928, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Anonym, “Old Edwardians dance: Crowded hall at the Wanderes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p.5; Anonym, “Old dances popular”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/11/1934, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/12/1927, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/12/1927.

<sup>68</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/11/1930, p. 12.

abound from tonight till after the New Year. We are even to have community dancing in the streets on Christmas Eve.<sup>69</sup>

The “Lounge Tea Room” in Pritchard Street, Johannesburg, for example, promised daily dancing for both social and competitive couples on a “beautiful dance floor” and assured the provision of “delightful music”.<sup>70</sup> Although only a few dancers made use of the opportunity to dance in the afternoon it “attracted a crowd of dancers at night”.<sup>71</sup> Like the “Lounge”, the “Luthje’s Langham Hotel” in Church Street, Johannesburg, dancers were drawn to its ballrooms because it promised Canadian maple dancing floors that were comparable with those in London, while catering for both the refreshments and music for social couples as well as space that competitive couples required.<sup>72</sup> The “Carlton Hotel” also drew ballroom dancers to their Friday evening dances by creating a “...beautifully decorated and illuminated new dance hall...[and a] new floor...on springs...”.<sup>73</sup> By 1925 the “Carlton Hotel” established itself not only as a social dance venue, but also as a competition venue.<sup>74</sup> For dancers that preferred a venue out of the ordinary, Johannesburg also offered dancing under the stars in Mayfair.<sup>75</sup> By the late 1920s restaurant and dinner venues, or “Supper dance” galleries and clubs as they were occasionally referred to, were being out-danced by ballroom dance halls.<sup>76</sup>

Following the craze in Britain, various “Palais de danse” were opened in Johannesburg that enabled serious social or competitive dancers to dance on a decent floor at a fraction of the price.<sup>77</sup> The “Loveday Palais’ de danse” in Loveday Street promised to be “cool in the warm weather, with the open-air balcony” with dances

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<sup>69</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/12/1928, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Anonym, “Dancing in Johannesburg”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/02/1925, p. 10; Anonym, “Dancing daily at the lounge”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1925, p. 9; Anonym, “SADTA Championship: Ballroom dancing coming contests”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/02/1925, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Anonym, “Dancing daily at the lounge”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1925, p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Preparing for the carnival season”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “Luthje’s Langham Hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 10; Anonym, “The Williams Hun dance: Colourful scene at the Langham hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/05/1931, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Plans for the Operatic Festival”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/02/1935, p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> Anonym, “S.A.D.T.A ballroom championships semi-finals and finals ball at the Carlton hotel”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/02/1925, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Anonym, “Open air dancing: First floor opens to-night”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/12/1930, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> Anonym, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/11/1931, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/01/1932, p. 8; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/01/1931, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/05/1931, p. 7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 3.

being held in the late afternoon with light refreshments.<sup>78</sup> “Loveday Palais de danse” also invited the public to “...come and dance to the new “Loveday Palais” band under Fred Allen”.<sup>79</sup> Located in Noord Street, Johannesburg, the “Astoria Palais” became one of the prominent dancing venues in the city. It advertised at least once a week in the *Rand Daily Mail*<sup>80</sup> and the variety of bands and music that entertained guests ranged from “Harry Gers’ New Astorians” to Frank Daly’s “Savoy Astorians”.<sup>81</sup> The “Astoria Palais” further offered a maple wood floor and dancing in the late afternoon or evening until midnight and, like the others, frequently changed its decorations.<sup>82</sup> Other industries also made use of the lucrative ballroom dancing world to expand and promote their businesses. “Elektrolux”, which sold “scientifically designed floor polisher[s]”, for example, had “Treble polishers for dance floors” that promised to create a “perfect floor” that would “sav[e]...labour”.<sup>83</sup>

Various clubs and people in their private capacity also used town or city halls for their balls. This included, for example, the “Rugby Jubilee Celebration” of 24 June 1925 held in Cape Town City Hall;<sup>84</sup> the “Women’s Club” ball in the “Berea Hall”, Pretoria during 1934;<sup>85</sup> and the fourth annual ball of the “Officers’ and Coloured Ex-service Men’s Association” in the Johannesburg City Hall.<sup>86</sup> The 1931 ball of the “Caledonian Society of Johannesburg” was also held in the City Hall where the evening promised “non-stop” dance accompanied by the “Caledonian Pipe band”.<sup>87</sup> The various city halls did not only accommodate more people and allow for the wider – white – public to attend the balls, but as these balls were more often than not fundraising events the municipalities usually offered some kind of discount on the hiring price, it became a less expensive venue to hire.

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<sup>78</sup> Anonym, “Loveday palais de danse”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “Loveday palais de danse”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Anonym, “Loveday palais de danse”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> “Astoria Palais de danse”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> Anonym, “Astoria Palais”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “In the dancing world: Full month of dances for charity”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Anonym, “Astoria Palais”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “In the dancing world: Preparing for the carnival season”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>83</sup> Elektrolux, “A perfect floor”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2351, 1/69: R.C. Hargreaves-Winifred Stephan, 22/05/1925.

<sup>85</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2305, 1/340: M. Plunkett-Governor-General, 21/06/1934.

<sup>86</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2306, 1/396: Chas N Hoy-Admiral Halifax, 20/07/1937.

<sup>87</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/05/1931, p. 8.

There was of course, as mentioned earlier, some public opinion that associated these dancing venues with the degeneration of moral values.<sup>88</sup> Yet, despite the occasional social objections against it, these clubs and dancing halls were extremely popular venues where dancers “...meet so many times a week, and in spite of heat or cold, dancing goes on till a late hour”.<sup>89</sup>

In the 1930s it was held that the “form of social dancing is always controlled by two things, costume and environment, and it reflects the Spirit of the Age more faithfully than any other Art”.<sup>90</sup> These sophisticated dancing dresses and accessories of the 1930s were advertised in newspapers and magazines and promised to “improve” or “flatter” the potential dancers and make them more popular on the dancing floor.<sup>91</sup> For example, the necessity of fans at dances was described as follows:

...one goes to few dances now without seeing fans of every sort waving and fluttering in fair hands, or just lying idle - a delicious splash of colour or fantastic decoration against a wonderful frock. But – and this is the important point which every young woman should note fans are not exclusively a ballroom fashion these days. Dance fans are, or should be very special fans, rare and large, that make a purring swish as they move languidly through the warm and scented air.... At dance teas and ordinary teas, committee meetings, boudoir talks and concerts, and even outdoor events like polo and cricket and racing fans are in evidence...Some of the rare fans one sees in the ballroom just now are gems....<sup>92</sup>

While another article advised women to wear long flowing gowns with lace and drapes in pink and black for “...dancing and dining [to] be graceful this year”.<sup>93</sup> It further stated that a “Lilac pink georgette [will make a] lovely formal ball-gown” and also necessitates, as noted by the *South African Dancing Times*, more “striking make-

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<sup>88</sup> J. H. van Wyk, *Instituut vir die bevordering van Calvinisme: Die etiek van dans*, p. 7.

<sup>89</sup> Lancer, “Is Johannesburg a city of dancers? Real zest for ballroom and stage activities”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>90</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Official results of the examinations”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/05/1935, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Anonym, “Dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/02/1934, p. 7; Anonym, “Don’t lose your looks while you dance”, *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Anonym, “Fan Fancies”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Anonym, “For dancing and dining be graceful this year”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/03/1934, p. 7.



up” to give a lady “comfortable assurance” in the “bright lights of the ballroom”.<sup>94</sup> Some newspapers warned against spending too much money on clothes and shoes and none on dance lessons. They advised readers that it is much wiser to set aside money for ballroom dancing classes as the dances would then be much “nicer”. They also advised that pupils must first learn the “basic principles” of dancing before they even attempt the new dance crazes.<sup>95</sup>

According to the *Rand Daily Mail*, the 1920s saw the reinstatement of the “chaperone” in the South African ballroom. Forming part of an at least two century old tradition in Britain<sup>96</sup> they were to ensure respectability and keep an eye on the young people. “Chaperones” were abandoned during the First World War because European society felt that since their future was uncertain chaperones were an unnecessary formality. “They and champagne...” noted *The Rand Daily Mail*, “... were absent from the scene”.<sup>97</sup> By the early 1920s, there was however again a need to reinstate the chaperone. The ideal chaperone would, unlike the previous century where she would just “sit and knit”, now be the “dancing chaperone”.<sup>98</sup> Interestingly the media however warns chaperones that they must always remember that they are the “chaperone first and the good dancer second”, and not take away all the attention from the debutante.<sup>99</sup>

When evaluating ballroom dancing in Johannesburg during 1925 the *Rand Daily Mail* found that it was “almost a part of daily routine” and that especially during the evenings the dance floors in South Africa were packed to full capacity, an intensity that was comparable with the London ballrooms.<sup>100</sup> There was a very momentarily decline in ballroom dancing in 1927 as the flu and pneumonia<sup>101</sup> epidemics swept through South Africa paralysing especially the bigger cities where the centres of

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<sup>94</sup> Anonym, “Bows for the ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/04/1931, p. 5; G. Weiss, “Preparation for the dance”, *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/06/1930, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> A. de Courcy, 1939. *The Last season* (London, Phoenix, 2003), pp. 114-115.

<sup>97</sup> Anonym, “Dancing Chaperones”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/06/1925, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> Anonym, “Dancing Chaperones”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/06/1925, p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Anonym, “Dancing Chaperones”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/06/1925, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Anonym, “Fashions for the Royal visit: Dance time”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1925, p. 13.

<sup>101</sup> R. M. Packard, “The Invention of the 'Tropical Worker': Medical Research and the Quest for Central African Labor on the South African Gold Mines, 1903-36”, *The Journal of African History*, 34 (2), 1993, pp. 272, 287.



dancing were located.<sup>102</sup> Dance teachers had to temporarily close schools and ballroom dancing events were limited in comparison with events early in the year.<sup>103</sup> The epidemic had a lasting influence on the South African ballroom dancing as dancers “missed out” on the “black bottom” craze and consequently struggled even further to associate with American-influenced ballroom dances that reached South Africa at the end of the 1920s.<sup>104</sup> For the most part these periods were brief and despite its initial setback, a much milder variation of the “black bottom”, the “Yale”, did find some favour as an exhibition dance at local social evenings.<sup>105</sup> By 1935 the newspaper stated that ballroom dancing was so popular that “...the only quiet time in the dancing world in Johannesburg is in January, following the reaction of staff and charity dances which take place for the three months preceding New Year celebrations”.<sup>106</sup>

Music and especially the ability to produce music that was suitable for the ballroom was vital for the development and sustainability of ballroom dancing. Without sound, dancing became just movement without grace or emotion and without the correct beats it was impossible to accurately interpret the music as danced in the international ballroom. As the *Rand Daily Mail* points out “...a true lover of dancing does not stop to think of the temperature, the chief considerations are a good partner, a good band and a good floor”.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, until the late 1920s dance bands remained an integral part of ballroom dances. Some of the most popular dance bands in the Pretoria and Johannesburg area included the “Clark and Adellers Orchestra” who mostly played at governor-general balls and during ballroom competitions;<sup>108</sup> the “Jazz Maniacs’ Orchestra”;<sup>109</sup> as well as African swing bands like the “Merry Blackbirds” and the “Darktown Strutters” whose main audiences lived in the

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<sup>102</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/07/1927, p. 7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/09/1927, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/07/1927, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/07/1927, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/09/1927, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/11/1927, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/11/1927, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/12/1927, p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Plans for the Operatic festival”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/02/1935, p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/12/1928, p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: J.C Clark- T. Gurney, 03/11/1921, where Clark, the violinist for the company, discuss the musical items for a Garden Party; Anonym, “Red Cross ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/04/1924, p. 6; Anonym, “SADTA ballroom Championships semi-finals and finals ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1925, p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> Anonym, “The Croxley staff dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/11/1934, p. 10.

townships.<sup>110</sup> Unable to dance without music, club owners, governor-general secretaries and organisers of dance parties relied on dance bands to provide and decide what type of music, and thus which dances, would be danced. The type of dances that were danced was consequently dictated, not only by the preferences of the organisers of the functions,<sup>111</sup> but also by what was popular amongst the dancing bands.<sup>112</sup> From the 1920s the ability of bands to live up to the expected standards of the public caused much debate in dancing circles. While local dance bands were desired at social functions, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, competitive dancers generally found these bands to be inadequate.<sup>113</sup>

The dancing community also welcomed any English band that was willing to come to South Africa and accompany dancers in the ballrooms. The temporary “importation” of dance bands, like the “Bert Ralton’s Havana Band” and “Debroy Somers Band”, from England become important not only to dance to the latest tunes that were heard on the gramophone, but also to keep up ties with England.<sup>114</sup> Reviews on the latest and best dance records became an important guideline for consumers to decide what they wanted to buy. Some of the choices in 1931 included “Geraldo’s Gancho Tango Orchestra” playing “Don Fabricio” featuring “real tango rhythm” and Jack Payne and his “B.B.C. Dance Orchestra” records featuring tango’s, foxtrots, “one-steps” and waltzes.<sup>115</sup> In later years the *South African Dancing Times* also printed a list detailing the “recommended records for [the] month” that assisted dancers with the increasing variety of records that became available.<sup>116</sup>

### 4.3 Music, media and motion pictures

The capacity-packed South African dance halls and growth in popularity of ballroom was also fuelled by recorded sound and images from the international bands and dancers. From the eighteenth century onwards, various efforts had been made in the

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<sup>110</sup> D. Coplan, “African Musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African Studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 150.

<sup>111</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2251, 11/3: T.C. Gurney- Messr Clark & Adeler, 07/11/1921 where “Her Royal Highness... desires to have the programme [*sic.*] mark ‘no 1’ in red ink... there are to be no [l]ancers”.

<sup>112</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/02/1932, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom by ‘Treble Violl’ ”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> Anonym, “Famous band for Union: Debroy Somers Organisation”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p.14.

<sup>115</sup> Anonym, “Heard on the gramophone”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>116</sup> Anonym, “Recommended records for this month”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(3), October 1936, p. 27.

Western world to invent musical recording devices. At the end of the nineteenth century, Thomas Edison and Emile Berliner consecutively developed the graphophone<sup>117</sup> and gramophone<sup>118</sup> that were commercialized in the United States by 1902. Until the middle of the 1920s sound recordings were being made by musicians collecting sound vibrations through a horn and engraving it on a medium. In the middle of the 1920s technology was sufficiently developed to amplify sound through a microphone and replay the recorded disk on either an electric or acoustic player.<sup>119</sup> From the early 1900s these phonographs,<sup>120</sup> grafonolas<sup>121</sup> and gramophones were steadily being introduced into South Africa.<sup>122</sup> The international drives to distribute these products were, as some records indicate, financially beneficial and a way to control the African mind whereby travellers to the continent could "...describe the phonograph as a new and improved portable god, and call upon the native kings to obey it...".<sup>123</sup>

However, like in the USA, the South African consumer found that these portable music boxes not only brought them closer to the international musical industry, but also gave them freedom in choosing and deciding when and on what beat to dance to.<sup>124</sup> Advertisements ensured South African consumers that they would be able to

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<sup>117</sup> Instrument that played music that was stored on cylinders. Grove music online, 'Recorded sound', <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/viwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>118</sup> Instrument that played music that was stored on flat discs and derived from a Greek word for sound writing. Grove music online, 'Recorded sound', <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/viwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.; D. Laing, "A Voice without a Face: Popular Music and the Phonograph in the 1890s", *Popular Music*, 10(1), January 1991, pp. 4-5.

<sup>119</sup> Grove music online, 'Recorded sound', <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/viwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>120</sup> 'Phonograph' is or was the preferred etymologically correct word for gramophone used in the USA. M. Katz, "Making America more musical through the Phonograph, 1900-1930", *American Music*, 16(4), Winter 1998, pp. 448-476.

<sup>121</sup> A 'grafonola' can be described as a gramophone where the whole instrument, including the sound horn, is "enclosed in a cabinet". T.H. Macdonald, "Support and sound duct for sound boxes. Application filed May 14, 1910. Patented Apr 30, 1912" (United States Patent Office, serial number 561 312).

<sup>122</sup> See for example advertisements concerning the buying and selling of gramophones and phonographs: Anonym, "Portable", *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/08/1925, p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> D. Laing, "A Voice without a Face: Popular Music and the Phonograph in the 1890s", *Popular Music*, 10 (1), January 1991, p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> M. Katz, "Making America more musical through the Phonograph, 1900-1930", *American Music*, 16(4), Winter 1998, pp. 448-476; D. Laing, "A Voice without a Face: Popular Music and the Phonograph in the 1890s", *Popular Music*, 10(1), January 1991, pp. 1-9.

“dance in your own home to the rhythm of the world’s most famous jazz bands”.<sup>125</sup> As they did during occasions like the royal visits from the middle of the 1920s onwards, record houses frequently listed the most fashionable dance music. This made the selection of “suitable” dance music easier. During 1925, for example, a list of popular foxtrot records included hits like: “Charlie my boy” and “Doodles-Doo-Doo”, in the media.<sup>126</sup> While a 1927 report further informed readers that “Hallelujah” from “Hit the deck” was the foxtrot tune for the season.<sup>127</sup>

Articles about popular dance bands and their records also featured in the newspaper. This includes a *Rand Daily Mail* article reporting on a famous Russian composer, that composed a tune for the renowned “Jack Hylton dance band”.<sup>128</sup> However, the technologies required for playing the music were not only expensive, with the Thomas Edison Phonograph that promised, for example to give dancers “immediate access to the world’s greatest music” amounting to £32, the price of 768 loaves of bread.<sup>129</sup> In addition, the sound and quality of musical discs was poor and consequently recorded music did not gain immediate public appeal.<sup>130</sup> These records were further only able to play for a short time, in most cases less than five minutes. Only in the late 1940s were long playing records developed that could play for slightly longer than thirty minutes.<sup>131</sup> These record playing devices were initially bought more for their elitist value, rather than for the ability to produce clear and readily available pieces of music literally at the touch of a button. Even after the Second World War, live bands were favoured at clubs and dance evenings, although gramophones and musical centres at lower income shebeens and dancing clubs were being used to limit running costs.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Chenik & Barnett, “On with the dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/12/1934, p.8.

<sup>126</sup> Anonym, “Columbia Records”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 18/06/1925, p. 8.

<sup>127</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/12/1927, p. 7.

<sup>128</sup> Musicus, “Heard on the gramophone: Stravinsky to write for famous dance band”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/03/1931, p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> The price of bread ranged from 6d. per loaf to 3d. for stale bread in the 1930s. E. Hellmann, *Rooiyard. A sociological survey of an urban slum yard*, (Northern Rhodesia, The Rhodes-Livingston Institute, 1948), pp. 30-31.

<sup>130</sup> P. Joyce, *Reader’s Digest South Africa’s yesterdays*, (Cape Town, Reader’s Digest Association South Africa, 1981), pp. 126-127; H. Polliack & Co. “The New Edison”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1925, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Grove music online, ‘Recorded sound’, <<http://0-www.grovemusic.com.innopac.up.ac.za:80/shared/viwes/article.html?section=music.27263>>, s.a. Accessed: 18/08/2006.

<sup>132</sup> See chapter 6.

Radio also played a crucial role in both popularizing and introducing the “Jazz dances” among both white and black South Africans. Although the lack of signal amplifiers and rudimentary radios limited the quality and area of broadcasts, radios were rapidly becoming a fundamental part of a large percentage of households. Dance music and dance bands were heard more frequently on the radio which, on the one hand stimulated the popularity of dance music, but on the other led to criticism regarding the quality of local bands and the selection of music played. Broadcast schedules were printed in newspapers and it was especially the “Jazz dance” feature that led to fervent debates in the media about the nature and suitability of dance music in society. A Johannesburg citizen complained, for example, about what he regarded as the “amateurish manner” of the dance bands that were being heard over the radio and requested the A.B.C (African Broadcasting Company) to replace the dance bands with dance records.<sup>133</sup> The ABC broadcasting choices of Saturday evening’s dance band was further condemned by a reader stating that “we pay the heaviest license fees in the world, and it is time some of the money was spent in giving us something worth listening to”.<sup>134</sup> Another anonymous reader also criticized the “highbrow” music and requested less of symphony orchestras and more variety from overseas, implying the need for dance type music, but at the same time underlining the need to borrow.<sup>135</sup>

While some readers condemned the Jazz dance music, others felt that dance bands did not play quality music and demanded that records should replace the dance bands that played over the radio because then at least the music would be played by “decent” orchestras.<sup>136</sup> Other members of the public however defended the local dance bands and stated that while local bands usually consisted only of six or seven members, the international recorded bands consisted of at least fourteen players which naturally increased the sound of the music.<sup>137</sup> Dancers and dance band members further passionately supported the playing of dance music over the air. Frank Daly, the conductor for the “Astoria orchestra”, one of the bands that played at regional and national dance championships, was concerned about the “... criticism levelled at jazz

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<sup>133</sup> Anonym, “Records instead of dance bands”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1934, p. 12.

<sup>134</sup> Anonym, “Saturday night “crooners””, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1934, p. 12.

<sup>135</sup> Anonym, ““Highbrow’ music in moderation”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1934, p. 12.

<sup>136</sup> Anonym, “Young listeners’ taste: more light music is wanted”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 12.

<sup>137</sup> Anonym, “The dance bands defended”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1934, p. 10.

bands by wireless enthusiasts”.<sup>138</sup> It was felt that “radio bridges distance...” and thus made London and Johannesburg “neighbouring towns”. Also, the citizens of the colonies were “anxious” to hear commentaries and news on English events.<sup>139</sup> Other letters were written to the A.B.C requesting “...more good dance records”.<sup>140</sup> On occasion, dance music was transmitted from the various ballroom dancing venues and played over the radio.<sup>141</sup> During 1928, dancers also had the opportunity to dance to the sound of live New York bands that transmitted over the radio in the early hours of the morning. There were even discussions to form a “New York Dance Club” in South Africa.<sup>142</sup> Special musical programmes like the “Dance Club” aired on the English radio service was furthermore devoted to play “popular old time ballroom dances” and music from internationally acclaimed swing musicians.<sup>143</sup>

In this period shows and productions on stage that incorporated ballroom dancing drew audiences to the South African theatre. For example, the “Empire theatre” showcased Freddie Fox and Anita Lowe exhibiting the tango as well as other dances.<sup>144</sup> Other international dance productions which were eagerly awaited included Russian productions like “Chauve Souris” and “Musical Snuff box” where “old-world dances” like the “minuet” were performed.<sup>145</sup>

The motion picture or cinema also had an impact on the popularity of ballroom. The 1930s were described as a “cinema-crazed” decade. Bioscope and “flickering” pictures had already begun to feature in South Africa at the end of the 1890s and by the turn of the twentieth century film houses, with their motion pictures, were a part of the rapidly expanding city social life. Films were so popular that an investigative board was created to “screen” the films before they were shown to the public. The introduction of the Entertainment Censorship Bill in 1931 which enforced censorship

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<sup>138</sup> Anonym, “Russian ballet season for Johannesburg”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/04/1934, p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> Anonym, “How radio bridges distances”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/03/1934, p. 9.

<sup>140</sup> Anonym, “Young listeners’ taste: more light music is wanted”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 12.

<sup>141</sup> Anonym, “Today: Diary of events: broadcasting”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 10. where the dance music of the day would be at “...9 dance programme by Palmer Barrett band, relayed from the form the German Club; Ambassador band, relayed from the S.A.P. Club; Palais orchestra, relayed from the Astoria Palais de Danse.”

<sup>142</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/10/1928, p. 7.

<sup>143</sup> C. Hamm, “The constant companion of Man: Separate development Radio Bantu and Music”, *Popular Music*, 10(2), May 1991, p. 156.

<sup>144</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/01/1932, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/03/1932, p. 3



on both public and private films<sup>146</sup> testifies to this increase in the popularity of films. Dancing films also got scrutinized. In 1917 the film “The Charleston no 2” was reviewed by the publishing board and certain parts of the film, like “kissing” and “dancing in tights”, were not allowed to be screened.<sup>147</sup>

It was the introduction of sound to film in the 1930s that made the cinema more popular than ever before and also led to the inclusion of more realistic ballroom dancing scenes. Lavish buildings, like the Capitol in Pretoria, were erected to create an atmospheric cinematic experience with its elaborately decorated interior, carpets and arm chairs. Films featuring ballroom dancing appeared regularly alongside the popular comedies,<sup>148</sup> cartoons<sup>149</sup> and adventure<sup>150</sup> films. In the early 1930s the *Rand Daily Mail* stated that “scarcely any picture is now without dancing and it is to look well [*sic.*] in the ballroom scenes that film stars are now taking pains to keep slim”.<sup>151</sup> Film critics further stated that the “addition of sound has caused a great improvement” to the “art of making ballroom dancing tell a film story” because it allowed the music and dance steps to compliment one another.<sup>152</sup> The additional use of mobile cameras allowed camera film teams to follow the dancers around the room.<sup>153</sup> Films featuring particular dances in them had an almost immediate effect on the social dancing scene and drew the public to the theatres. The showing of dance on film also reminded couples of the “old time” dances and led to reflection on how dance had changed and improved.<sup>154</sup>

In 1931 the film “The shadow between” was shown in South Africa featuring a number of dancers dancing the mid-nineteenth century “lancer”. Dance commentators predicted that there would be an “outburst of Lancers in the [South African]

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<sup>146</sup> *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1931*, Act No. 28 of 1931: Entertainment Censorship Bill, (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1931), pp. 132-140.

<sup>147</sup> Anonym, “Film censorship”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/02/1934, p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> Anonym, “Orpheum and Plaza theatre”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/02/1934, p. 6 advertising the “Blarney Stone” and “Mad Genius”.

<sup>149</sup> Anonym, “Orpheum and Colosseum theatres”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/03/1934, p. 8 advertising the “King’s vacation” and “King Neptune”.

<sup>150</sup> See for example advertisement in Anonym, “Plaza theatre”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/03/1934, p. 10, advertising “King Kong”.

<sup>151</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/08/1930, p. 12.

<sup>152</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/01/1931, p. 12.

<sup>153</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/01/1931, p. 12.

<sup>154</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/08/1930, p. 12.



ballroom” like there was in London during this time.<sup>155</sup> Although the “lancers” was danced on occasion it did not gain the popularity that the media predicted it would. Dance critics further found that when it was danced “no one had the haziest notion of the figures, the chief idea being to spin your partner as much as possible”.<sup>156</sup> In February 1934 the film “Dancing Lady” was shown in the Metro theatre, Johannesburg. The film tells the story of a hard core musical director (Clark Gable) and a chorus girl’s (Joan Crawford) determination to become famous.<sup>157</sup> The film received rave reviews and newspapers of the time had pictures of women and men dancing in gowns with frills and tail suits, imitating the movie.<sup>158</sup> During November 1934 another film “The Gay Divorce” was also shown in Johannesburg. This film featuring, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, caused great excitement in the dancing fraternity as it showcased the latest dance from the international ballroom, the “continental”.<sup>159</sup> The movie “Atlantic” (the predecessor of the 1997 hit “Titanic”) featured a “beautiful ballroom scene” with couples dancing while the ship was sinking.<sup>160</sup> Despite the interest these films conjured up in the media and amongst society at large there were those that were less well received. The criticism, such as that of the film “The Calendar”, where the ballroom dancing was regarded as “not always of the highest standard”, was indicative of the higher standards that the social ballroom was starting to acquire.<sup>161</sup>

Another media source which also contributed to the popularization of ballroom dancing was the “African Mirror”. This was a news reel that used to appear a few minutes before a feature film was shown in cinema and reported on the general social and political life of mostly white South Africa.<sup>162</sup> The “African Mirror” screened garden parties such as gatherings in Cape Town and Pretoria where guests of the

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<sup>155</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/08/1931, p. 13.

<sup>156</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/09/1927, p. 5.

<sup>157</sup> Anonym, “‘Dancing Lady’ at the Metro”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/02/1934, p. 7. as well as Anonym, “Metro”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 8 advertising the “...ultimate in musical entertainment DANCING LADY [sic.] with Joan Crawford an Clark Gable...”. Anonym, “Music and dancing: brilliant show at the Metro”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 14

<sup>158</sup> Anonym, “Joan Crawford comes back to her natural sphere in ‘The Dancing Lady’, which is to be shown at the Metro”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>159</sup> Anonym, “In the dancing world: Hellenic royal wedding dance”, *Rand daily Mail*, 24/11/1934, p. 6.

<sup>160</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/07/1930, p. 2.

<sup>161</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/11/1931, p. 14.

<sup>162</sup> National Film Archives (NFA), Pretoria: African Mirror no 962, 07/10/1931.

governor-general danced during the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>163</sup> The popularity of the dances like the “lancers”, “one-step” and “polka” was still very visible in 1936, where during the commemoration of Graaff-Reinet 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the “African Mirror” recorded its inhabitants dancing a variety of old fashioned dances.<sup>164</sup> It is however the few silent video clips featuring championship couples at dance demonstrations, as well as regional and national ballroom dancing competitions, that emphasise more than any written record, how popular ballroom dancing was.<sup>165</sup> Like the film industry, the “African Mirror” occasionally featured video clips where dancers, both professional and amateurs, performed novelty scenes like the “charleston” and “jitterbug”.<sup>166</sup> Although the motion pictures did assist in making dancing more popular, 1930s comment in the *Rand Daily Mail* insisted that the flood of “new dances” that were introduced to the public by the movie screen, did not manage to overthrow the popularity of the standard ballroom dances including the waltz, tango, foxtrot and quickstep.<sup>167</sup>

Writers commented on the “frivolity” of everyday life in the 1920s and 1930s describing dancing in London where they “...kicked our heels up to the Charleston, all but swooned at the tango and charged about in the one-steps...”<sup>168</sup> and how often “...the carpet would be rolled back in the drawing-room for dancing to the gramophone...”<sup>169</sup> As records in the South African National Archives and reports in the *Rand Daily Mail* indicate, this was also a time in South Africa where nights and weekends were, at least in urban areas, filled with ballroom dancing. This dancing panache resonated with the passion of London’s social life and was indeed enhanced by the influences emanating from there - royalty, music, media and motion pictures.

However, while South African ballroom dancing experienced a definite high in these two decades, this inevitably led to the emergence of a low. This came in the form of the founding of the South African Dance Teachers Association (SADTA) during the

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<sup>163</sup> NFA, Pretoria: African Mirror no 964, 1931; NFA: African Mirror no 772, 1928.

<sup>164</sup> NFA, Pretoria: African Mirror no 1213, 03/08/1936.

<sup>165</sup> NFA, Pretoria: African Mirror no 962, 07/10/1931.

<sup>166</sup> NFA, Pretoria: African Mirror no 1362, 12/06/1939.

<sup>167</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: two famous dancers”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/12/1934, p. 6.

<sup>168</sup> E. Mannin, *Young in the Twenties* cited in G. Mitchell, *Living through history. The roaring twenties: Britain in the 1920s* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1986), p. 60.

<sup>169</sup> A. de Courcy, 1939. *The last season*, pp. 137-138.

latter half of 1920 – a reflection of the heights ballroom dancing had achieved – but at the same time plummeted it into the competitive realms which changed both the manner and dancers that participated in it for decades to come. This development forms the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Perfecting the steps: competitive ballroom dancing

In the midst of dancing having become extremely popular in the West within the first decades of the twentieth century and with couples striving to perfect the steps, various dancing organisations were formed that unavoidably forced ballroom dancing into a competitive phase.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the Imperial Society of Teachers Dancing (ISTD) in London during the 1920s had a profound effect on ballroom dancing. The society had the best teachers, dancing venues, bands and prestigious competitions in the Western world and its influence stretched far beyond the London ballrooms. It consequently also changed dancing in South Africa. This chapter will focus on how the founding of the ISTD influenced the creation of the South African Dance Teachers Association (SADTA) and how both the British and South African organizations changed ballroom dancing in South Africa. It will discuss the founding of the various official ballroom dancing bodies in South Africa during the 1920s and 1930s and the subsequent development of competitive ballroom dancing. It will also consider the shortcomings of these official organizations, the infrastructure it needed in order to function, as well as the determining role that it had on South Africa's ballroom dance history.

#### 5.1 Passionate Competitors

Up until the mid 1920s ballroom dancing was mainly a leisure activity primarily in urban South Africa.<sup>2</sup> Not unlike Britain, the increased popularity of ballroom, as discussed in the previous chapter, led to a need to standardize the various dancing steps. A major factor in the history of ballroom dancing was the establishment of the Ballroom Branch of the ISTD in Britain during 1924. As discussed in Chapter 2, this society created uniform rules for ballroom dances, making it easier to compare, teach and judge the standard of the dances and consequently turned social dancing into a competitive activity. The South African counterpart of this organisation, the SADTA, was formed in the early

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<sup>1</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Why not a National Board of Control?", *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/03/1935, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Anonym, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 3.

1920s under the guidance of a South African dance teacher, Madge Mans.<sup>3</sup> This organisation at first focused on operatic dancing and ballet as competitive art forms. However, from the outset it was clearly evident both in the popularity of social dancing and in the increased interest in ballroom competitions that South Africa had the potential to form a reputable ballroom dance organisation.<sup>4</sup> The founding date of the SADTA is unclear. Dymond in *SESA* states that that first “Dance Teachers’ Association” was established in Cape Town in 1926 and that this body later “united with similar bodies in other centres to become the South African Dance Teacher’s Association”.<sup>5</sup> However, the SADTA already features in the *Rand Daily Mail* from 1924.<sup>6</sup> All the early records of the SADTA are apparently “lost” and no other primary document could be found that details the founding of the Association.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is known that the first national ballroom competition was held in 1928 and it is most probable that the ballroom branch of the SADTA was formed during this year (Dymond “surmised” that it was formed in “about 1930”) with branches in Johannesburg and Cape Town.<sup>8</sup>

The activities of the SADTA’s ballroom branch already started to feature prominently in the media from October/November 1927. During this time the most prominent South African ballroom dancing teachers came together to discuss the necessity of a ballroom dancing branch, the institutionalisation of a dancing syllabus and the “refinement” of

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<sup>3</sup> A. Grant-Smith “Dancing notes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/02/1924, p. 9; Anonym, “Controlling dancing affairs: S.A. Dancing Teachers’ Association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1932, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Anonym, “Members of the South African Dancing Teachers’ Association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1925, p. 13; A. Smith, “Dancing notes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/02/1924, p. 9; Anonym: Advertisement, “SADTA Ballroom Championships. Semi-Finals and Finals Ball”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/02/1925, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 30/07/1932, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> D. Dymond, “Dancing Ballroom”, in D. J. Potgieter (ed.), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* III, p. 558.

<sup>6</sup> A. Grant-Smith “Dancing notes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/02/1924, p. 9; Anonym, “Controlling dancing affairs: S.A. Dancing Teachers’ Association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1932, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> D. Dymond, “Dancing Ballroom”, in D. J. Potgieter (ed.), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* III, p. 558.

<sup>8</sup> P. Joyce, *Reader’s Digest: South Africa’s Yesterdays*, pp. 102-103; Anonym: Advertisement “SADTA Championship”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/02/1925, p. 6; A. Grant-Smith, “Dancing notes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/02/1924, p. 9; Anonym, “Controlling dancing affairs: S.A. Dancing Teachers’ Association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1932, p. 3.

ballroom dances.<sup>9</sup> Aiming to promote the association and increase the quality of dancing and better manage the administration of the association, especially in the northern parts of South Africa, various accomplished dancers were appointed at top management level. These included amongst others: the Pretoria based South African Championship Standard couple, Mr and Mrs Jack Calder; dancing teachers like Miss Poppy Frames; as well as influential and knowledgeable dancers like Madame R. Ravodna and Miss Ella Scott.<sup>10</sup>

After less than a decade the changes in the wider dancing fraternity became even more apparent with the establishment of an additional ballroom dancing organisation, the Amateurs Dancers Association (ADA). The ADA was founded in South Africa in 1933 mainly to promote a high standard of dancing amongst amateur social dancers.<sup>11</sup> This organisation became a place where more serious social dancers could display their skills and was further regarded as a stepping stone for future professional dancers to test the competitive dancing field while fine tuning their dancing technique.<sup>12</sup> At first the ADA was run as a separate organisation, but because of the increased desire for competitive dances, plans were made in the middle of the 1930s to incorporate the ADA into the SADTA. The subsequent incorporation of the ADA increased the amateur association's status by enabling it to be part of the national dancing body.<sup>13</sup> Both the SADTA and ADA held regular meetings to elect officials and advise organisers of the respective associations on how to operate and get the best out of their dancers.<sup>14</sup> Concerns, new

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<sup>9</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/10/1927, p. 5; Anonym, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 3; "T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom: notes and comments by 'Treble Violl'", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/05/1930, p. 5; T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/06/1931, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's annual election of officials", *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> According to the SADTA an amateur dancer was: "...one who has never been employed as a dancer, a teacher of dancing or assistant to a teacher of dancing for money or other reimbursement. Also one who has not been employed as a dancer, teacher or assistant without payment since November 1, 1933"; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Record entries for the Easter festival", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's first elementary ballroom test", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Encouragement for Rand dancers", 08/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's first elementary ballroom test", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/01/1932, p. 5; Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's first elementary ballroom test", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Royal visit causes a rush to studios", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing

decisions and complaints regarding the rules and conduct of competitions were also discussed at general meetings and were open to the public to attend.<sup>15</sup> Like the SADTA, the ADA further committed itself to financially assist a South African couple to dance in the world championship.<sup>16</sup> Newspaper articles indicate that ADA functions were as popular as those of the SADTA, both with large attendance.<sup>17</sup>

Within less than a year of being formed, the ADA was, along with the SADTA, beginning to "...assume national importance in the dancing world..."<sup>18</sup> and by 1934 competition events were overtaking social dancing functions in popularity and number.<sup>19</sup> This division between the social and competitive dancing realm regarding its importance is apparent in the list of honoured guests that actually attended these events. While governor-generals received numerous invitations to go to the dance events,<sup>20</sup> festivals,<sup>21</sup> eisteddfods and balls<sup>22</sup> of the national and provincial bodies of dance, the social dance evenings were hardly ever attended by high ranking officials.<sup>23</sup> Although their reasons

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world: SADTA's annual election of officials", *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing world: success of the Amateur Dancers' Association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Anonym, "SADTA: Special general meeting to discuss questions re dual partnership in championship last night", *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/02/1925, p. 6; Anonym, "SADTA extra preliminary dance", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1925, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Preparing for the carnival season", *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's first elementary ballroom test", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Lancer, "Amateur dancers association: crowded ballroom at the Criterion", *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/03/1934, p. 14; Lancer, "In the dancing world: success of the Amateur Dancers' Association", *Rand Daily Mail* 03/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: success of the Amateur Dancers' Association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Before 1925 dancing related articles in the *Rand Daily Mail*, as indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, focused on advertising dance venues and social events that included dancing and published in between everyday news or in social columns. From 1927 to the mid-1930s weekly detailed reports appeared in this paper on the state of competitive dancing and general advertisements indicated which venues were allocated for competitive practice sessions.

<sup>20</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221: L. Smith-The secretary for their Excellencies Lord & Lady Clarendon, 13/03/1933 regarding the dance recital at the "Majesty's Theatre" in Johannesburg.

<sup>21</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221: Florence Moorcroft Lamb-The Excellency the Earl of Clarendon, 24/02/1937.

<sup>22</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221, Jean Botha-The secretary to his Excellency the Governor-General, 03/08/1936 regarding the inaugural ball of the National Association of Teachers of Dancing of South Africa; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221: J. Calder-The Major Lewis, 03/09/1936 regarding the "Calders' Academy of Ballroom Dancing's" annual championship ball.

<sup>23</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221: H. Birch Reynardson- L. Smith, 03/04/1933; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221: J.C. W. Lewis-J. Calder, 05/09/1936; SAB: GG 2318 2/221, n.a.: G.W. Hallifax-F. Moorcroft Lamb, 05/03/1937.



were related to the time and place of the events, it is interesting to note that members of local government, including the mayors, supported the ballroom competitions and were a visible presence at most of these events.<sup>24</sup>

During February 1934 ballroom examinations and grades were first introduced by the SADTA.<sup>25</sup> Dancers older than 16 were allowed to dance the examination and were graded by SADTA examiners.<sup>26</sup> This not only increased the standard of dancing, but also forced dancers to dance a nationally accepted syllabus which consequently raised the level of competitions.<sup>27</sup> The SADTA as the most prominent ballroom dancing organisation, was not the only society that aimed at developing and supporting South African dancers. Musical festivals, dance competitions and dancing shows of the 1920s and 1930s all reveal the importance and variety of dances that were danced in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> Like the SADTA's dancing events, these dances were also competitive rather than social in nature, but the programmes of the day seem to more closely mirror the dances that were danced at the social functions in the 1930s. Just like the SADTA, these other events also drew a large number of the general public.<sup>29</sup> Local dancing and music organizations continued to encourage and prepare potential ballroom dancing couples for the competitive scene. During the fifteenth "Pretoria Musical festival" held in the Pretoria City hall in October 1939, ballroom dancing appeared as a separate section in the programme. This event was supported by the "South African Society of Music Teachers" (Pretoria branch) and also included various children's musical performances; operatic

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<sup>24</sup> Lacquer, "Round the East London studios", *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 20; T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/07/1925, p. 5; T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/12/1930, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's first elementary ballroom test", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6; Anonym, "Ballroom Examinations in South Africa", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's first elementary ballroom test", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Royal visit causes a rush to studios", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 6; Anonym, "Imperial Society Examinations. Visit of Mr. Henry Jacques", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, pp. 14, 16.

<sup>28</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/04/1932, p. 3. where the different dancers and dances are listed that were danced at the "S.A. Dance Festival Matinee" as well as the South American dancing show; Anonym, "Pretoria Notes", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339, 1/52, programme of the "Fifteenth Pretoria Musical festival", pp. 1, 66.

dancing; classical acrobatic tap; ballet; Scottish and mime dancing.<sup>30</sup> In the ballroom dancing section novice, junior as well as amateur couples danced the slow foxtrot, waltz, quickstep and tango, competing for cups and medals.<sup>31</sup> The ballroom dancing section also included an “all-Ladies (open) Waltz” division and an “All men’s Quickstep”.<sup>32</sup> The musical festival concluded with a masked ball at the City Hall.<sup>33</sup> Although it did not focus exclusively on ballroom dancing, the eisteddfods and local ballroom clubs also incorporated ballroom dancing competitions into their programmes.<sup>34</sup>

The growing importance that competitive ballroom dancing had within the community was evident in the industries that directly benefited from it. Competitive ballroom dancing became so popular amongst young and old in the Transvaal that various venues and organisations opened their doors to ballroom couples, both to practice their routines and to compete against one another. As indicated in the previous chapter, hotels, restaurants and entrepreneurs profited from this lucrative market by offering opportunities and venues to dance. This included *inter alia* weekday lunch hour dancing; eating at a variety of restaurants and bioscope cafes to dance for a minimal charge of 2s;<sup>35</sup> a dance and dance lesson at a “moderate price” in a hall on Thursday evenings.<sup>36</sup> During the late 1920s and early 1930s Johannesburg was in particular regarded as “South Africa’s premier dancing centre”.<sup>37</sup> The “Astoria Palais de danse” in Noord Street, Johannesburg, was not only one of the popular social dance venues, but in 1934 also became a venue where competition heats were danced every month.<sup>38</sup> The competitions

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<sup>30</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339, 1/52, programme of the “Fifteenth Pretoria Musical festival”, pp. 58 - 65.

<sup>31</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339, 1/52, programme of the “Fifteenth Pretoria Musical festival”, pp. 1, 66-68.

<sup>32</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339, 1/52, programme of the “Fifteenth Pretoria Musical festival”, p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2339, 1/53, Madge Robertson-The secretary to his Excellency Sir Patrick Duncan, 28/09/1939.

<sup>34</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/02/1932, p. 12; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318 2/221, J. Calder-The Major Lewis, 03/09/1936 regarding the “Calders’ Academy of Ballroom Dancing[‘s]” annual championship ball.

<sup>35</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/03/1931, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/02/1931, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom: How they dance on the continent-A film of Madame Pavlova-The rhythm step.”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/12/1927, p. 7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/05/1930, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Record entries for the Easter festival”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/03/1934, p. 6; Anonym, “General interest: The new Astoria Palais de Danse”, 3(1), August 1935, p. 10.

were usually held on week nights.<sup>39</sup> Holidays further appeared to be an exceptionally popular time to conduct ballroom competitions. During the 1936 Easter vacations, for example, the national eisteddfod, SADTA and “Astoria Palais de danse” organized competitions that lasted several days and attracted the “best that the country had to offer”.<sup>40</sup>

In Pretoria there were a number of popular venues such as, the Berea Hall for championship competitions, as well as the Technical College which had a “good floor”.<sup>41</sup> After various complaints were made that dancing in just one venue did not allow all dancers a fair chance to compete, it was decided that competitions would be held in different venues ranging from city and municipal halls, to restaurants and clubs to dancing schools.<sup>42</sup> Final and national competitions usually took place at prominent venues like city halls and were accompanied by live bands.<sup>43</sup> Smaller regional competitions were often held at private studios or restaurants. Entrance fees to the latter competitions ranged from 2s to 5s per couple depending on the venue and the provincial or national status of the competition.<sup>44</sup> Although cities like Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town were by far the centre of the South African dancing world, on a much smaller scale, rural areas also catered for ballroom competitions. After establishing herself in Louis Trichardt, Madge Mann, founding member of the SADTA, organized various dancing classes and competitions in the area. According to reports, these dances were so popular that some students travelled more than thirty miles to attend.<sup>45</sup> As the

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<sup>39</sup> Lancer, “Astoria Palais de danse”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/02/1934, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> E.M.B, “In the dance world: Success of the Pretoria festival”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/04/1936, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/08/1931, p. 3; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/05/1931, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/04/1930, p. 12; Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s annual election of officials”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 6 discussing the Transvaal Amateur Dancing Championships that was organized by the Calder Academy of Dancing and danced at the “Embassy Hall” in Pretoria.

<sup>43</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/03/1932, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/03/1931, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/03/1931, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/06/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/12/1930, p. 12.

popularity of ballroom dance competitions grew more studios, like Miss Valerie Smith's studio in Roodepoort, were opened on the outskirts of towns.<sup>46</sup>

Other industries also benefited, although perhaps not as directly as the above mentioned dancing venues, from the popularity of ballroom dancing. Numerous advertisements published in the *South African Dancing Times* promoted their products as crucial if dancers wanted to be successful in their competitive careers. These even included, amongst others, a bread that would "keep dancers fit".<sup>47</sup>

## 5.2 Examining the step

By the end of the 1920s the SADTA was credited with creating a successful "South African Ballroom Championship".<sup>48</sup> It had raised the dancing standard so that it was almost comparable with that of the British ballrooms and firmly established ballroom dancing in the big cities (Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban) in South Africa.<sup>49</sup> The significance of this was that ballroom dancing thus now took on a different dimension. With competition came various constraints which ultimately had ramifications in all areas relating to the ballroom. During this time ballroom dancing changed from a mere recreational event to a competitive sport with a set of predetermined rules dictating the nature, style and growth of ballroom dancing. This was especially evident in the passionate precision that was used to implement competition rules regarding dress and performing ability. The next few years would be spent trying to create the best dancers at any cost and making every effort to strengthen its allegiance with the British ballroom.<sup>50</sup>

The general public were continually urged to participate, at least on some scale, in the SADTA's events. The "simplicity" that the organisation vowed to establish in ballroom

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<sup>46</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/03/1931, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Anonym, "Dancers are kept Fit [*sic.*] by eating-Connolly's Branolin Bread. Delivery everywhere", *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/05/1931, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/05/1931, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> L. Smith, an SADTA official clearly stated during the 1930 that the SADTA "...intends building ballroom dance championships in the near future". T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom by "Treble Violl", *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/03/1930, p. 5.

dancing promised to be an “educational” and “artistic spectacle” that would help the “physical development” and health of dancers as well as assist with overcoming an “inferiority complex”.<sup>51</sup> Some national ballroom dancing championships were even broadcast live over the radio.<sup>52</sup> The public appeal for support and the promised “benefits” no doubt drew dancers to become members of the SADTA.<sup>53</sup> This increased public awareness of the SADTA’s ballroom dancing competitions was evident when the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that 300 members of the public attended and voted for the best dancing couple during a competition held in Johannesburg City Hall. However, the prime concern of competitive ballroom dancing during the 1920s and 1930s was more on the creation of technically perfect dancers, than the general well being or promotion of mere social dancing in society. Competitive couples were required to dance the foxtrot, quickstep and waltz in various heats or sections.<sup>54</sup> Judging by advertisements in some of the popular dancing venues, unlike competitions in the twenty-first century where all five ballroom dances are danced per heat, dancers competed in one dance against one another per heat or section.<sup>55</sup> The tango particularly became a highly competitive dance during the first half of the 1930s and was included in the regional competition line up in 1932 in the Transvaal.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom by ‘Treble Violl’”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p. 12; Anonym, “Dancing as aid to health advocated by many doctors”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 3; A. Murray, “Dancing for that inferiority complex”, *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Anonym, “South African ballroom championships”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(3), October 1936, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom notes and comments by ‘Treble Violl’”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/11/1930, p. 12. *The South African Dancing Times* further recorded a “record” audience number during the SADTA Ballroom dance festival in May 1938 and a “crowd of over 800 people” at the ballroom competition held in Johannesburg during 1945. Anonym, “SADTA ballroom festival”, *The South African Dancing Times*, 6(10), May 1938, p. 6; Anonym, “Official results SADTA festivals”, *The South African Dancing Times*, 10(3), September 1945, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/01/1932, p. 6; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/08/1930, p. 12; Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Anonym, “Northcliff Amateur Dancing Championship”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 13; Lancer, “Astoria Palais de danse”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/02/1934, p. 8; Anonym, “SADTA ballroom festival”, *South African Dancing Times*, 6(10), May 1938, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/01/1932, p. 6; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/08/1930, p. 12; Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

The regional and national dancing heats were judged by renowned and experienced local and international dancers on an internationally approved dancing syllabus.<sup>57</sup> Local adjudicators were handpicked and trained by international experts and although they were allowed a certain amount of artistic freedom in the placing of dancers at competitions, their decisions were closely monitored by the ballroom dancing community.<sup>58</sup> While the Jazz influence of the 1920s produced “pretty waltz tunes” that provided variety on the dance floor and made the waltz more fashionable during both social and competition dances, it was the quickstep that was generally regarded as the most popular dance on the competition floor in the 1930s most probably because of its upbeat music and fast pace.<sup>59</sup> However, since the foxtrot was generally regarded as the “basis of every intending teacher of ballroom dancing”, it became crucial to do extremely well in the dance in order to perform in international ballrooms. To improve the standard and popularity of dances, special dance competitions, like the foxtrot competition held on the Witwatersrand in August 1930, were organized.<sup>60</sup>

In its dance column, the *Rand Daily Mail* placed particular emphasis on the “merriment” and “carnival” like atmosphere at competitions.<sup>61</sup> Despite this, the highly competitive nature and strict implementation of rules that were orchestrated by the SADTA, as well as the increasing rift between social and competitive dancing, was progressively more evident from the 1930s onwards. “Average” couples were harshly criticized and penalised for not knowing the “basic steps”, “step[ping] out to the music”, and being an “inconvenience” on the competition floor.<sup>62</sup> Teachers who were members of the SADTA

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<sup>57</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s annual election of officials”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 6; Anonym, “Johannesburg studio notes”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(3), October 1936, p. 18. T.

Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 18/06/1927, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/04/1932, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 18/06/1927, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1928, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/08/1930, p. 12.

<sup>61</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Winners of last night’s championship”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/10/1934, p. 6; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Dancing extremes in Transvaal ballrooms”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/10/1934, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Winners of last night’s championship”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/10/1934,



were also advised to concentrate on the “refinement of ballroom dances” and attended demonstration sessions that lasted for hours to reacquaint themselves several times with the basic steps required of the competition dances.<sup>63</sup>

Detailed explanations of steps also became an integral part of the *Rand Daily Mail*’s weekly commentary on the ballroom dancing world. Articles, like those printed during March 1924 which portrayed the “correct” ballroom dance hold, often included photographs of champion dancers or renowned teachers performing the steps.<sup>64</sup> These instructional articles were also a standard feature of the *South African Dancing Times* and a single issue would often include at least two detailed articles, written by international experts, on a single step or movement as well as several photographs portraying the regional champions.<sup>65</sup> Often more attention was given to condemning, what the 1930s competitive ballroom dancing officials regarded as “errors” made by dancers, than promoting the dance competitions themselves.<sup>66</sup> Especially after the SADTA had firmly established itself as the main organising body behind ballroom dancing competitions, newspaper articles tended to rather give step-by-step instructions of new figures and variations that were required at dance competitions.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, judging by the media’s criticism of the ballroom dance competitors’ rhythm, more emphasis was placed on counting beats and dancing in time to the music

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p. 6; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Dancing extremes in Transvaal ballrooms”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/10/1934, p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Anonym, “Ballroom dancing”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/05/1924, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> B. Williams, “Odds and ends”, *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, p.6; A. Moore, “C.B.M. or C.B.M.R[C.B.M.P]?”, *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, p.8; V. Silvester, “Hints for competitors”, *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, p. 13; B. Leiholt, “Mr Ernest Gordon with his pupils, whose successes at the Transvaal Ballroom Championships, were outstanding”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/06/1930, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> This included, amongst others, the “feather-step” and “reverse wave” in the foxtrot, the “diagonal change” and “natural turn” in the waltz and the “walk” and “chasse” in the quickstep. T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/05/1930, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/06/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/07/1930, p. 2, A. Moore, “Some important additions described by Alex Moore”, *South African Dancing Times*, October 1936, 5(3), October 1936, pp. 3, 4.



than actually enjoying the music.<sup>68</sup> Dancers were advised to constantly better themselves by adhering to the guidance given by the SADTA, practicing more and studying other art forms, like music, to improve their understanding of rhythm and movement.<sup>69</sup> Ladies especially were instructed not to “move about like a sack of potatoes”<sup>70</sup> in the man’s arms, but to have the “ambition to follow her partner”<sup>71</sup> effortlessly. In this regard specialist information relating to ballroom dancing became an important part of the dancers training as it informed dancers on developments in the competitive field.

Apart from the regular features in the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *South African Dancing Times*, other specialist ballroom dance information was also published in the *Vale*, a “bright little paper on dancing”.<sup>72</sup> Contemporary magazines also occasionally reported on the state of ballroom dancing in South Africa and the achievements of competitive dancers. *Pleasure* magazine, for example, placed an article featuring the brilliant dance talent at an SADTA competition in Johannesburg during 1938.<sup>73</sup> The number of dance teachers listed for the Johannesburg and Pretoria area in the article alone bears testimony to the growing need for interpretation of and formal training in competitive ballroom dancing.<sup>74</sup> Criticism against the publication and media attention that the SADTA received regarding ballroom dancing was however widespread. Some competitors complained that this was at the expense of announcements regarding the date and time of South African dancing championships which were not clearly advertised and thus excluded potential dancers while favouring established competitors.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/05/1930, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> E.M.B., “In the dance world: Dancing in Greece”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1936, p. 5; E.M.B., “In the dance world: Ballroom Festival dates”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/02/1936, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16.

<sup>71</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/06/1930, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/07/1930, p. 5. The *Vale* is however not listed in libraries or archives and no copies could be traced.

<sup>73</sup> Anonym, “‘Quickstep’, The Dancing World: Beginner’s Chance”, *Pleasure*, May 1938, pp. 46-47.

<sup>74</sup> Anonym, “‘Quickstep’, The Dancing World: Beginner’s Chance”, *Pleasure*, May 1938, pp. 46-47; According to this article noteworthy dancers in South Africa during that time were the 1937-1938 South African and Transvaal Professional Champions Mr & Mrs. Jack Calder, as well as dance teachers Pat Tufnell, Barbara Reeves, Elwyn Williams, Signor Canale, Molly Hayward (Afrikaans speaking), Tommy Williams and Marjorie Fowles; Anonym, “Johannesburg Studio Chatter”, *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, p. 20.

<sup>75</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/04/1930, p. 12.

While the so-called average competitors were severely reprimanded, winners of ballroom competitions received trophies, were featured in the press and the careers of potential South African ballroom stars were closely followed.<sup>76</sup> Often regional champions received financial support from the SADTA's relevant branches to compete in international and regional competitions.<sup>77</sup>

The increasing emphasis that was placed on creating the "perfect" "highbrow" ballroom dancer was evident in a number of articles that advised dancers how to dress, take up hold, stand, move, listen to music and where and how to practice. These competitive dancers were, and are still, judged not only on their technical skill, but also on how visually pleasing their interpretation of a dance was. Therefore the appropriate clothes worn at competitions were, as was the case at social dance functions, an important matter for discussion during meetings and events. However, unlike the social dance "dress code" where dances had the freedom to decide what they wanted to wear, competitive dancers were forced to adhere to "appropriate" dancing costumes enforced by an SADTA official's fashion sense, leaving limited scope for artistic freedom.<sup>78</sup> Council members debated at a number of meetings about the competitive dress code.<sup>79</sup> Special feature articles consequently listed precisely, down to the colour of the cufflinks and make of the shoes, what the men should wear during these competitions.<sup>80</sup> Female dancers, on the other hand, apparently had more sovereignty in choosing the colour and style of their dress. However, although they could find inspirations in the various contemporary

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<sup>76</sup> Anonym, "South African and Provincial Amateur Ballroom Championships Heat Winners", *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, p. 26; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Success of Amateur Dancers Association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6; Anonym, "Johannesburg studio notes", *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 14; Anonym, "Transvaal ballroom championships", *South African Dancing Times*, 5(3), October 1936, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Success of Amateur Dancers Association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>78</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/11/1927, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> This included the 1927 debate concerning male dancers wearing white gloves at competitions. Spurred by Cape Town's *Ancient Order of Fox-Trotters* (AOF) it was eventually decided to allow but not enforce gloves at competitions. T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, "Dancing and the ball room [*sic.*]: Happenings at home and abroad", *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1927, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/07/1930, p. 5.

sketches published in the media, photos of competitive female dancers in costume appear strikingly alike.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the restrictions placed on dancers by the official bodies, structures and rules did serve to raise the level of ballroom dancing in South Africa and introduce a high standard of ballroom to younger members of society.<sup>82</sup> By the beginning of 1930 it was clear that as the years progressed the SADTA's largest support base would come from children between 5 and 17 years of age. A substantial amount of time was therefore put into organising children's balls and appointing judges for the events that ran more or less simultaneously with the provincial adult dancing heats.<sup>83</sup> These children and youth ballroom dancing sections at the SADTA's competitions were, according to newspaper reports, extremely popular drawing "exceptionally talented" dancers from the "...very tiny tot... to the well-set-up little lady...".<sup>84</sup> The children's ballroom dance competition required them to dance the "polka", waltz and quickstep and required, as in the case of the adult competitions, very specialized training.<sup>85</sup> During the introduction of these children's dances, a lot of emphasis was placed on the dresses that were worn and "special prizes" were awarded to the "most original" dress.<sup>86</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* remarks that "... the talent shown by the children, from tiny tots of five to growing boys and girls of seventeen, must have been a revelation to many of the hundreds of parents and friends present...".<sup>87</sup> Public requests were even made that the "Children's Fancy dress

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<sup>81</sup> Anonym, "The Transvaal ballroom championships", *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/02/1925, p. 10; T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/06/1929, p. 12. T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/04/1929, p. 12; T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/04/1930, p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Terpsichore, "The road to success", *South African Dancing Times*, 5(3), October 1936, p. 14.

<sup>83</sup> T. Violl, "Dancing and the ballroom", *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/04/1932, p. 3; Lancer, "In the dancing world: SADTA's annual election of officials", *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Brilliant success of the children's night", *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Royal visit causes a rush to studios", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Success of Amateur Dancers Association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6; L. Kehl, "The dancing master's corner", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Royal visit causes a rush to studios", *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, "In the dancing world: Success of Amateur Dancers Association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Lancer, "In the dancing world: Brilliant success of the children's night", *Rand Daily Mail*, 24/02/1934, p. 6.

competition” should be an annual ballroom dance event.<sup>88</sup> Christmas holiday seasons saw various functions and shows where children performed “...it is pre-eminently”, noted the *Rand Daily Mail*, “their dancing time”.<sup>89</sup>

Media reports declared ballroom dancing to be beneficial to the physical development of young girls as it taught them poise, grace and elegance.<sup>90</sup> While competitive ballroom dancing was clearly supported by a large number of mothers with children, the highly competitive nature of the children ballroom competitions stood in direct contrast to the “pleasable” social evenings of fund-raising dance events. Furthermore, white upper middle-class families that were able to afford the best dance teachers and clothes, obviously drew more attention to themselves often making children dance competitions more to show-off status than developing dancing talent. Although the *Rand Daily Mail* praised the well organized functions and talent during various children competitions and Eisteddfods, complaints from mothers overwhelmed the newspaper after each competition.<sup>91</sup> “Interested mother[s]” questioned *inter alia* the capability of the judges, comments made during the competitions, artistic nature of other competitors and the clothes worn at these functions.<sup>92</sup> This tended to detract from the pleasure of the activities and underline the new direction ballroom dancing had taken.

The mid 1930s saw an intensification of the importance of ballroom competitions with an increase in newspaper reports commenting in detail on the pose and dances of competitors. There was also more intense speculation and debate concerning the possible winners of the National championships.<sup>93</sup> Plans were made to incorporate smaller individual ballroom branches, like the “South African Members of the Imperial Society” into the SADTA, to ensure that these dancers had the support of the largest dancing

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<sup>88</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Success of Amateur Dancers Association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/03/1934, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> A. Grant-Smith, “Dancing notes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 18/03/1924, p. 9; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/12/1928, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom: The ‘pets’ come to life-Children dancing-‘Puss in boots’- The ‘Come as somebody’ dance by Treble Violl”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/12/1927, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/05/1931, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/05/1931, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> E.M.B., “In the dance world: Operatic championships”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/05/1936, p. 5; E.M.B., “In the dance world: Ballroom Festival dates”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/02/1936, p. 6.

organisation when competing internationally. The incorporation of the various smaller dancing societies consequently gave the SADTA almost all of the power in choosing national representation at international ballroom events.<sup>94</sup> During March 1936 a new dance association was officially registered under the Company's Act.<sup>95</sup> The "National Association of Teachers of Dancing NATDA (SA)" a company based in Pretoria which consisted of four dancing subdivisions including an "...Operatic Section, General Section, Greek Section and Ballroom Section...".<sup>96</sup> The main aim of this association, formed by the council of the SADTA, was to "gain government recognition for the art of dancing" which, it was hoped, would recognize dancing as a subject in the school curriculum.<sup>97</sup> It thus planned to "...promote and foster the Art of Dancing ...",<sup>98</sup> as well as standardize dancing in all branches and associations of dancing across South Africa.<sup>99</sup> The NATDA (SA) recognized the efforts made by other associations since 1924 to "raise the standard of teaching in South Africa" and to "protect the public from bad tuition".<sup>100</sup> This new association requested that all the various dance societies in South Africa support the national dancing body. The NATDA (SA) proposed to educate dancers and teachers by facilitating dance examinations, providing training and funds, as well as creating a library that was devoted to dancing with its headquarters at the "South African Academy of Dancing", with studios, a hall and stage, in Pretoria.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> E.M.B., "In the dance world: Folk dance festival", *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/02/1936, p. 18.

<sup>95</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Activities of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Activities of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 1; Anonym, "National Association of Teachers of Dancing (S.A.)", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> H. Nöckler, "Ballroom dancing in schools?", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 4; KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 1.

<sup>99</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 1; E.M.B., "In the dance world: National dance association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/04/1936, p. 5.

<sup>100</sup> E.M.B., "In the dance world: National dance association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/04/1936, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 1; E.M.B., "In the dance world: National dance association", *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/04/1936, p. 5; Anonym, "Johannesburg Studio Notes", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(1), August 1937, p. 18; Anonym, "News of the month", *South African Dancing Times*, 6(10), May 1938, p. 3.

### 5.3 Almost British

Although it was felt that “...rules and regulations are necessary concerning competitors in the various dance festivals” some dance critics also began to indicate that a “..broader outlook is required if dancing is to be further popularised both as a profession and a recreation”.<sup>102</sup> From the 1930s onwards the SADTA focussed on expanding its position (or focussing on this “broader outlook”) both in South Africa and the rest of the world by enlarging its support base and increasing its contact with ballroom dancers in other countries. Discussing the popularity of ballroom in the East in comparison with dancing in South Africa, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported in 1935 that:

...dancing is tremendously popular in Dairen [located in southern Manchuria]. All classes and all ages indulge in it; and apart from being regarded as a joyous form of amusement it is looked upon as an excellent means of promoting physical well-being. The Chinese element in Dairen still maintains a rigidly conservative attitude towards the adoption of foreign forms of entertainment; but it is held that under the steady pressure of Japanese influence the Chinese are slowly becoming more and more ‘ballroom-minded’.<sup>103</sup>

Various publications emphasised the important role that international dancers, from the East, but especially those from the West, had on South African ballroom.<sup>104</sup> Articles on biography, training, achievements, deaths and locations of prominent international ballroom dancers also appeared regularly in the media.<sup>105</sup> As proposed in some of the first meetings held during the 1920s<sup>106</sup> and the official registration document of 1936, the national ballroom dancing body did not only publish information regarding the

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<sup>102</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Why not a National Board of Control?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/03/1935, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Official programme of the operatic festival”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/04/1935, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1928, p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/09/1932, p. 6. The *Rand Daily Mail* commented extensively on the death of prominent British dancer Wellesley Smith in October 1931 and found it to be a “great tragedy” both for the international dancing world and South Africa T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>106</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s annual election of officials”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 6.



international development of ballroom dancing.<sup>107</sup> The SADTA also “...engage[d] visiting professionals from overseas or elsewhere to demonstrate new developments in dancing”.<sup>108</sup> Already in 1927 it was decided that in order to “... bring out the proficiency of its members...” the best coaching talent in London should be brought to South Africa.<sup>109</sup> Although there was initially a considerable amount of doubt if the “heavy expenses” to sponsor overseas experts was worthwhile, a published report by the *Rand Daily Mail* stated that the international experts that were brought to South Africa greatly benefited the South African ballroom dancing scene.<sup>110</sup> Since London was generally regarded as the “centre of the [dancing] world”<sup>111</sup> and because South Africa already had such close ties with Britain, dancing organisations regularly invited mostly British ballroom dance competitors and teachers.<sup>112</sup> Accomplished international dancers like Leslie Murray and Barbara Miles<sup>113</sup> not only judged South African ballroom competitions, but also danced at numerous functions and did dance exhibitions that drew large numbers of spectators.<sup>114</sup> British teachers and prominent dancers like Josephine Bradley, (the vice president for the London branch of the Imperial Society of Dance) continued to tour through South Africa throughout the second half of the 1930s to demonstrate ballroom dances and styles from England and, like Murray and Miles, judge competitions.<sup>115</sup> These foreign ballroom dancers brought enthusiasm to the local dance floors as well as a high standard of dancing to the Union.

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<sup>107</sup> Anonym, “General interest: British Ballroom Champions”, 3(1), August 1935, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Anonym, “General interest: British Ballroom Champions”, 3(1), August 1935, p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/05/1931, p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Why not a National Board of Control?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/03/1935, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/08/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 30/07/1927, p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Barbara Miles along with her partner Maxwell Stewart won the second world ballroom dance championship in 1924 and also won the world championship in 1925. For more information on Miles see T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 07/11/1931, p. 16.

<sup>114</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/09/1931, p. 6; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16. T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/09/1931, p. 6; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> E.M.B., “In the dance world: Dancers teach the army how to march”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/05/1936, p. 5; E.M.B., “In the dance world: South African Operatic championships”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/05/1936, p. 5; Anonym, “In the dance world: S.A. ballroom championships at Exhibition”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/05/1936, p. 5; E.M.B., “In the dance world: Ballroom festival dates”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/02/1936,



To further increase the standard of dancing in South Africa, programmes were created where South African and British teachers exchanged places in their relevant British or South African studios to teach and study for a few months.<sup>116</sup> The international visits subsequently made the incorporation of new steps easier and more uniform as the standardisation of the technique enabled ballroom dance teachers to prepare dancers from a recognized syllabus for a local or international competition floor.<sup>117</sup> The introduction of English dance masters further spurred interest in British ballroom competitions and the media now and again published competition programmes of British championships.<sup>118</sup>

Therefore by the mid 1930s South African dancers, and organisational bodies in general, were increasingly relying on Britain for guidance and inspiration relating to the South African ballroom. In 1934 the SADTA claimed that the quality of South African dancing had almost reached that of Britain and that “we are fast approaching the times when South Africa will send its own amateur couples oversea [*sic.*] to compete in the world’s championships”.<sup>119</sup> By 1936 the *South African Dancing Times* proudly stated that the “best” South African ballroom dancers were on a “par” with the “average overseas competition couple”.<sup>120</sup> During the 1930s the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that both ballroom students and teachers are in “direct contact” with British teachers, are “thoroughly up-to-date”, and that members of the association “constantly” visited London.<sup>121</sup> It further stated that demonstrations of new dances were “always” given,

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p. 6; Anonym, “Itinerary of Mr. John Herbert and Miss Ella Spowart”, *South African Dancing Times*, 3(1), August 1935, p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/12/1931, p. 13; “Dancing”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/11/1934, p. 2; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Encouragement for Rand dancers”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s annual election of officials”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup> E.M.B., “In the dance world: Origin of the Rumba”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/02/1936, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>120</sup> M. Pilz, “Impressions of English ballroom dancing”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 8.

<sup>121</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

thereby preventing South African dancers from being “handicapped”.<sup>122</sup> Ironically, despite the efforts made by dance enthusiasts to create “European like” dance venues, a national dance syllabus accepted by Britain and teachers of high standard, it still was not Europe. Media reports romanticised and nostalgically yearned for the “numerous” dance venues with special features like dance floors that can be raised, lightening effects with “mounted mirrors” and “revolving spheres” where ballroom dancing continued “throughout” the day.<sup>123</sup>

This unremitting focus on Britain did however manage to establish an organized and highly competitive ballroom dancing community in South Africa. For a few years at least it also made competitive ballroom dancing completely reliant on British approval. Consequently, instead of South African ballroom dancing being developed and adapted to South African circumstances, South Africa ballroom dancing technique and rules were based on the British system and were executed as in Britain. By 1931 Johannesburg was as close to British ballrooms as dancers could be, considering the distance. It was said that the city closely “...follows the fashion in England” regarding ballroom dancing where the “...waltz, foxtrot and quick step reign supreme, with occasional branchings [*sic.*] off into some new dance which offers the temptation of novelty”.<sup>124</sup>

Although most of the serious Transvaal competitors were, thanks to frequent publicity in the 1930s, well aware of the most fashionable international dance crazes, few of these “spasmodic bursts” of new dances managed to find their way into the formal, white, South African ballroom.<sup>125</sup> There was a “general apathy” from the dancing officials to embrace new dances in the South African ballroom mainly because they were regarded as too complex for the “average dancer”.<sup>126</sup> The SADTA's initial aim was to implement a

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<sup>122</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/06/1930, p. 12.

<sup>124</sup> Anonym, “Controlling dancing affairs: S.A. Dancing Teachers’ Association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Two famous dancers”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/12/1934, p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6; Lancer, “In the dancing world: A great revival of interest in ballet”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/12/1934, p. 5.

status quo for each dancing tempo as well as its variations. The standardisation of tempos remained at the centre of its objectives. Consequently any new dances or variations of the standard dances were critically assessed, and regularly discredited, before being incorporated in to the syllabus.<sup>127</sup>

Even after a prominent dancer brought a new dance to South Africa, the *Rand Daily Mail* was quick to disregard it, unless the dance was preformed by some credited teacher or championship couple from South Africa. Commenting for example on the Blues dancing phenomenon that swept through America and Europe in the 1920s, the *Rand Daily Mail* stated that even though “dancing papers in England devote pages to the variations of the ‘Blues’ and are making a great effort to introduce it”, its success seems “unlikely”.<sup>128</sup>

During 1930 the “continental tango” was introduced to South Africa after it became extremely popular in the London and Parisian ballrooms. It was predicted that the “continental tango”, which was strikingly different from the other ballroom dances and a much simpler version of its 1920s predecessor, being danced with bent knees and with the ladies left arm hooked under the mans right elbow, would draw even more dancers to the ballroom.<sup>129</sup> Although the tango was the “dance of the London ballrooms” it was not instantly popular in South Africa.<sup>130</sup> The white, usually male-only dance bands,<sup>131</sup> were according to some dancers, not able or very keen, to play the tango as it was too slow. Some also felt that the tango was not a fitting dance for South African ballrooms. Even though the SADTA “endeavoured by every means in its power to popularise the Tango”, including for example, adding a special tango competition to the South African ballroom

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<sup>127</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 2; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/10/1927, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 5; A. Moore, “What does London dance?”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup> A. Grant-Smith, “Dancing notes”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/01/1924, p. 12.

<sup>129</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 26/04/1930, p. 12.

<sup>130</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16; Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>131</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/01/1932, p. 5.

championships in 1931, when bands played the tango at public dances still only a few couples attempted to dance it.<sup>132</sup>

Other popular London ballroom dances, like the “rumba” in 1931 as well as temporary dance crazes like the “lilt” and “seven step”, were also introduced to the South African dance floor by the British dancers.<sup>133</sup> Articles contemplating the introduction these and other fashion crazes like the “charleston”, “trebla”, and “moochi”<sup>134</sup> onto the competitive floor caused heated debate. While these vogue dances were practiced at dancing schools, teachers generally regarded them as “good fun” and popular enough to organize a ball devoted to, but not suitable for the competition floor.<sup>135</sup>

Despite dance authorities warnings against the “slavish following of the spectacular expert” which were according to them “not dances for the average dancer”, ballroom dancers could not simply ignore these new dances.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore in order for the SADTA’s members to be “ballroom dance champions” the organisation had to incorporate the “crazes” on the dancing floor to ensure South African dancers stayed competitive in the international dancing arena. The organisation attained this by continually controlling the level and manner in which the recurrent influx of different “craze dances” would be incorporated into the competition floor.<sup>137</sup> Elements of the Blues and Jazz dance craze that swept over metropolises like London, New York and

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<sup>132</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16; Lancer, “In the dancing world: SADTA’s first elementary ballroom test”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/02/1934, p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/09/1931, p. 6; Anonym, “The ‘Lilt’”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/10/1931, p. 14; E.M.B., “In the dance world: Origin of the Rumba”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/02/1936, p. 7.

<sup>134</sup> The “moochi”, believed to be based on a Zulu war dance, was danced to a lively two beat and consisted, like the “charleston”, of a series of steps based on the “foxtrot” with incorporated twist and sharp knee actions. This local deviation on the ballroom steps was however not incorporated into the formal ballroom and by the end of 1931 appears to have almost completely disappeared from the dancing scene.

T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/11/1930, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/11/1930, p. 12.

<sup>135</sup> Anonym, “‘Jazz with knobs on’ America’s new dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/09/1925, p. 6; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ball room [*sic.*]: Happenings at home and abroad”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1927, p. 5; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 08/11/1930, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/11/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 03/01/1931, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 21/02/1931, p. 12; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Full month of dances for charity”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 01/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>136</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: A great revival of interest in ballet”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/12/1934, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/03/1930, p. 5.

social Johannesburg in the late 1920s and 1930s were gradually incorporated in the South African competition floor.<sup>138</sup> In general, however, by mid 1930 it was believed that:

The waltz, quick-step, fox-trot, and tango have become the recognized basic dances of the ballroom. They are within the capabilities of the average dancer, who, after all, has a great say in the modern ballroom, and it seems that these dances will remain, as a permanent background whatever else may temporarily hold sway.<sup>139</sup>

The years leading up to the Second World War subsequently saw the strengthening of the SADTA along the lines of the British standard ballroom dance example, the widening of its local support bases, record numbers of entrances and public attendance at competitions.<sup>140</sup>

#### 5.4 Missing the beat

It was however the problems that the SADTA experienced amongst themselves administratively speaking, as well as in getting the most basic dancing amenities in order, that increasingly alienated ballroom dancing from the general public.<sup>141</sup> By the mid 1930s it was clear that South African ballroom dancing truly needed a “unified basis” from which the tempo, interpretation and standard of dances could be monitored and refined if competitive dancing was to maintain its interest within society.<sup>142</sup> During this time the South African competitive dancing organisations put much of their efforts into taking control of the basic dancing amenities and changing the local infrastructure to suit competitive ballroom. The strong emphasis that was placed on restructuring the South

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<sup>138</sup> The adjustment of the dances was evident in the adjustment of the foxtrot. Although sometimes toning it down slightly to make it more adaptable for the formal ballroom, the sliding beat of the 1920s foxtrot, counted as 1, 2-1, 2 was adjusted to a shorter step, counted as 1, 2 and 1, 2 in most of the international and South African ballrooms. This new “midway rhythm” had a substantial amount of support from Johannesburg dance teachers and any movement to ignore or down play it was met with protest. T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/09/1930, p. 12; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/09/1930, p. 5.

<sup>139</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: A great revival of interest in ballet”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/12/1934, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Why not a National Board of Control?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/03/1935, p.6; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Brilliant success of the dance festival”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/03/1935, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> Terpsichore, “Lack of support in the SADTA”, *South African Dancing Times*, 5(4), November 1936, pp. 6-9; J. Woolf, “Poor accommodation at SADTA festival”, *South African Dancing Times*, 10(3), September 1945, p. 1.

<sup>142</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 3; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/12/1927, p. 5.

African ballroom however important it was in sustaining an official dancing body, often divided these organisations from itself and its members.<sup>143</sup>

From the outset there was considerable rivalry, especially during the late 1920s and early 1930s, between the different provincial dancing talents and ballroom dancing branches in South Africa. As much time went into comparing the dancing standards of different branches, as in to promoting competitions and provincial championship couples. Dance critics noted in 1931 that the standard of the Transvaal couples were “excellent” and far ahead of Natal, where the dancing among the general public was “poor” and the interest in dancing “lukewarm”.<sup>144</sup> In order to sustain their honour, a special effort was made by the members of the Transvaal branch of the SADTA to raise funds for the Transvaal leading couple (Jack Strydom and Mildred McLaren) to dance at the South African championships in Cape Town and “wrest” the trophy from the previous winners’ hands.<sup>145</sup> This apparent lack of talent in the Natal and Cape Town branches could however have been attributed more to a lack of funds to sustain a high standard of ballroom dancing teachers, and perhaps not to a lack of talent or will power, as the Transvaal branch insinuated.<sup>146</sup>

During the 1930 “South African Amateur Ballroom Championships” it was clear to the dancers and adjudicators present, that, although “Johannesburg dance bands [and schools] are bigger and better than the Capetown [*sic.*] bands” the standard of dancing in Capetown [*sic.*] is the highest in South Africa”.<sup>147</sup> While another examiner stated that although the steps in the competitive ballroom dancing were “admirable”, Johannesburg’s dancers are far better concerning their style and finishing.<sup>148</sup> The Johannesburg male dancers were found to be especially good partners because they were “men who zig-zag,

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<sup>143</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* commented with disillusion on the general lack of “inspiration” and “skill” in 1936. E.M.B., “In the dance world: National dance association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/04/1936, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/09/1931, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 30/01/1932, p. 3; Lancer, “In the dancing world: Encouragement for Rand dancers”, 08/12/1934, p. 8.

<sup>145</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/09/1931, p. 14.

<sup>146</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 22/08/1931, p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/12/1930, p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1932, p. 3.

curve and slide, who do accomplished variations and fully sustain the honour of the ballroom”.<sup>149</sup> The passion that each ballroom branch in South Africa had for their dancers and ballroom dancing was admirable. Judging by the views held by international dancers on the quality of dancing in South Africa it appears as if, no section or region was significantly worse or better than any other, but that the best dancing schools, and consequently the best dancers, were located in the bigger metropolises.<sup>150</sup>

Soon after the founding of the various dancing organisations in South Africa tension also arose concerning the participation of a dancer in more than one organisation. The SADTA indicated very early on in its existence that it would not lend support to ballroom dancers who were not members of its organisation and forbade its members to participate in any competition that was not approved by the SADTA before hand. After the National Eisteddfod, for example, decided to include a ballroom dancing competition section in its December 1931 competition, and thereby ignored the SADTA’s concerns that it would clash with their “South African Amateur Ballroom Championship” event, the SADTA, along with most of the dancing teachers in Johannesburg and Cape Town, planned to boycott the Eisteddfod.<sup>151</sup> Despite this, the Eisteddfod organising committee continued with its ballroom dancing competition stating that “the committee feels confident that the art of ballroom dancing will be stimulated and improved to a great extent as has been done already in all forms of dancing by the Eisteddfod competitions”.<sup>152</sup> In 1932, mainly because of the wide support of ballroom dancers that the national dance organisation had managed to secure, the SADTA decided to assist with some of the organising needs for the Eisteddfod. The SADTA took over most of the expenses and arrangements regarding the securing of an international examiner to adjudicate dancers, thereby validating the Eisteddfod competition and catering for less experienced dancers who wanted to compete.<sup>153</sup> The SADTA however still arranged their own ballroom dancing competition running more or less simultaneously with the Eisteddfod festival and drew large numbers

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<sup>149</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/04/1932, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/12/1930, p. 6.

<sup>151</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/02/1932, p. 12.

<sup>152</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/12/1931, p. 14.

<sup>153</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/02/1932, p. 12.



of dancers and spectators to its dancing venues.<sup>154</sup> It subsequently drew dancers away from the Eisteddfod event and alienated some dancers from the competitive dancing world.

Dance teachers from different branches of the SADTA frequently went to the competitions of other dance regions to adjudicate as professional and “impartial” observers.<sup>155</sup> The adjudication of dancers was however another sensitive issue that sparked much debate in dancing circles. While the greater majority of competitive dancers in South Africa supported the idea of adjudicators, they could not agree on who the adjudicators should be and how they should judge the competitions. While some sectors decided by a public vote, where the public would indicate who the “best dancers” were and thus judged on the artistic or performance quality of the dancers, other sectors were adjudicated by dance teachers and consequently judged on the technical correctness of the dance.<sup>156</sup>

Tension between the Transvaal and Cape branches of the SADTA escalated in 1931 when the Cape Town branch increased the tempo of the waltz, foxtrot and decreased the tempo of the quickstep. This outraged the Transvaal authorities who claimed that they followed the rules set by London and that the change of tempo would not only disadvantage the Transvaal competitors when dancing in Cape Town, but also “lower the standard” of South African dancing as a whole. Competitions did not take place for a few weeks since neither party wanted to change its policy.<sup>157</sup> As a compromise, it was decided that each branch would make its own decision regarding the tempo of the music and competitors had to adjust to different tempos of music at the various branches. Despite these differences of opinion in the various ballroom branches of the SADTA, it was decided in

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<sup>154</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/02/1932, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/07/1930, p. 7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/08/1930, p. 12.

<sup>156</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/08/1931, p. 16; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 17/05/1931, p. 5.

<sup>157</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 18/07/1931, p. 5.

December 1930 to annually run a South African Amateur ballroom championship which continues up to the present day.<sup>158</sup>

Although a great concern for the professional dancers, it was nevertheless not the infighting between the ballroom branches, but also the problems in finding bands that would play up-to-date dance music, which caused the most distress among dancers. “At the present moment”, noted the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1935, “...the various professional associations dictate their own terms, the orchestras play to their own time, and the enthusiastic dancer pays but cannot call the tune!”<sup>159</sup> Since the new syncopated dances raised questions concerning what was “acceptable dancing” in the ballroom, it was important for the SADTA and other dancing organisations in South Africa to find ballroom dance bands that could play to their prescribed beat.<sup>160</sup> Yet, both local and international ballroom dance experts found that, although South Africa had excellent ballroom teachers that created students with an exceptional knowledge and technique of ballroom dancing, the few “Palais de Danse” and limited number of “first-class” bands restricted the potential development of dancing in South Africa.<sup>161</sup>

According to British experts, it was the “band that made the dancer” and thus it became essential that South African musicians adjusted their performances in order to make it more suitable for the ballroom.<sup>162</sup> However, South African ballroom dancers and bandsmen had, according to the *Rand Daily Mail*, a long established feud because the former claimed: “...the tunes were played too fast and melodies were crude”.<sup>163</sup> Despite suggestions throughout the 1920s and early 1930s that Johannesburg bands increase their

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<sup>158</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/12/1930, p. 6; For present day competitions see the official website of the Federation for Dancesport South Africa (FEDANSA) <<http://www.fedansa.org>>, s.a. Accessed: 27/08/2007.

<sup>159</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Why not a National Board of Control?”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 02/03/1935, p. 6.

<sup>160</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19/11/1927, p. 3; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/12/1927, p. 5.

<sup>161</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: Encouragement for Rand dancers”, 08/12/1934, p. 8; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 31/12/1927, p. 5.

<sup>162</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/10/1927, p. 6.

<sup>163</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom: notes and comments by ‘Treble Violl’ ”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p. 12.

repertoires and thus “greatly add to the enjoyment on these [competition] occasions” the dance bands were “endued with genius” and refuse to drastically adjust their music.<sup>164</sup> It was that there “...is certainly a constant desire for novelty in the ballroom, and frequent protests against the time adopted by dance orchestras”.<sup>165</sup>

Dance band competitions were proposed as the only way to establish a “marked improvement” in the dance music.<sup>166</sup> Such competitions were introduced in Cape Town whereby bands were judged on their ability and variety of dance music they were able to play. Plans to launch these dance band competitions in the Transvaal were only introduced in late 1932.<sup>167</sup> Informal dance band competitions were, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, already a regular event in the townships but it appears as if this never gained significant favour among white dance bands in the Transvaal. According to the South African dance public, dance bands and orchestras had no excuse for their poor performances and that they just had to listen to the “new dance records, which reflected very accurately what is going on” in the dancing world.<sup>168</sup> During 1927 South African dance bands had an opportunity to get their music recorded by Francis, Day and Hunter that “turns out a prolific amount of dance music every year”.<sup>169</sup> Complaints about the quality of dance bands however continued throughout the 1930s, and this along with the problems within the SADTA, caused the white South African ballroom dance standard to fall.<sup>170</sup>

The progress in and popularity of ballroom dancing during the 1920s and 1930s was, according to the media, due to the “courageous work” done by the SADTA.<sup>171</sup> However, although the national dance organisation committed itself to “...co-operate with dance bands, dance organisers and members of the dancing public in an effort to improve the

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<sup>164</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/06/1927, p.7; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom: notes and comments by ‘Treble Violl’ ”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/06/1930, p. 12.

<sup>165</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ball room [*sic.*]: Happenings at home and abroad”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 04/06/1927, p. 5.

<sup>166</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 11/06/1927, p. 7.

<sup>167</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/02/1932, p. 14.

<sup>168</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 09/07/1927, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/12/1927, p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> E.M.B., “In the dance world: National dance association”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 25/04/1936, p. 5.

<sup>171</sup> T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 16/05/1931, p. 7.

standard of dancing and increase its enjoyment...”, only a relatively small and exclusive portion of white society were allowed to dance the competitions and thereby benefited.<sup>172</sup> The need to structure the dancing arena along strict rules in the late 1920s enabled the SADTA and ADA to create national dancing bodies, introduce dance to children and organize competitions of a high standard. However, it also inevitably meant excluding those that did not have money for lessons to learn the “right” steps or buy acceptable clothes to look like a ballroom dancer or have access to public transport to attend competitions and practice sessions. Furthermore, despite its promise to regularly introduce professionals from the international dance floor to judge and teach local talent, by 1939 the competition dances still consisted of the waltz, quickstep, foxtrot and tango with little contemporary figures or variations. While the blacks in the townships were dancing dances like the “jitterbug” to international records, the white competitive dancers failed to hear or refused to incorporate the new dance beat into their routines.

By the end of the 1930s the rift between the social and the competitive dancing worlds had become almost unbridgeable. Social dancing became synonymous with an evening out at a club or civic ball dressed in fashionable finery and dancing to popular music. Competitive ballroom dancing, on the other hand, was focused on perfecting the steps of the internationally recognized ballroom dancing syllabus, hard hours of practice at any one of the various professional dancing schools and competing in ballroom gowns that were specifically designed to complement the various dances. Ballroom dancing was, after almost two decades since its inception in South Africa, standardized and accepted both as a social activity and a competitive art form in a large part of South African society. However, the years leading up to the Second World War saw a different approach to ballroom dancing appearing in South Africa. Ballroom dancing was not as it was in Britain, becoming more inclusive, but rather the increasing constraints of the local social laws rendered ballroom dancing an almost exclusive pastime.

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<sup>172</sup> KAB, Kaapstad: LC 1028: Memorandum of Association: National Association Teachers of Dancing (S.A.). p. 2.

## Chapter 6

### Dancing in the shadows

The period between the 1920s and 1940s – both in South Africa and in the rest of the Western world – saw an avid escalation in the popularity and participation in ballroom dancing. In South Africa it coincided with a period which was increasingly influenced by race, gender and class struggles. This chapter will examine the popularity and high standard of ballroom dancing amongst black dancers in South Africa in the decades leading up to and including the Second World War. It will discuss how ballroom dancing was perceived in the city, mainly in the greater Johannesburg region, as well as how it fitted into the lives of different sectors of society in an expanding urban economy. It will consequently look at the influence that legislation, the war economy and cultural differences had on ballroom dancers. It will furthermore discuss how a large part of South African society was forced to use “borrowed shoes” to be able to dance during this time. The chapter will conclude by considering how overcoming the obstacles of cultural and political segregation assisted in creating a vibrant ballroom dancing culture outside of the mainstream white ballroom. The above will be attempted within the frustrating constraints of limited source material pertaining to what can be regarded as a sub-altern group.

#### 6.1 Shadow dancing to a different tune?

Ballroom was not only danced by white middle class South Africans, but has a distinct yet separate history of black and coloured participation. The historical record reveals that black dancers “belonged”, if not by law, then by passion and technique, on the dance floor. The “rainbow balls”, mentioned in Chapter 3, that were danced on the “outskirts of town” while the white upper classes were having public and private balls, remained part of South Africa’s ballroom dance history throughout the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> These “non-white” balls were however danced in the shadows – ever present and an imitation of the white balls, but not always visible to the European eye. The limited number of travel

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<sup>1</sup> W. Bird, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822*, pp. 165-166.

journals that reported on the black social pastimes reflected the “astonishment” of writers at the high standard of ballroom dancing in black communities.<sup>2</sup> Reference to “non-European” ballroom dancing in early twentieth century documents appears to be more by accident or in passing. When mentioned in the white media, it was usually not discussed in as much detail in the early twentieth century as the European or “white” balls and dance functions. Far more attention was given to the so-called ethnic or “tribal dances” and various documents and media reports can be found describing or listing the place and time of mine and tribal dancing competitions.<sup>3</sup>

However, sources that do make mention of ballroom dancing in black and coloured communities emphasise the ability of the dancers to perfectly imitate steps of the white ballroom, as well as the prominent role that it played within their societies. As indicated in previous chapters, certain newspapers like *The Bantu World* and *Rand Daily Mail* were committed to commenting on the diversity of everyday lives of South Africans.<sup>4</sup>

Although *The Bantu World* did not have a weekly report on ballroom dancing in South Africa like the *Rand Daily Mail*, it did place regular articles discussing the popularity of ballroom amongst its readers. It gave advice on where and when the best dances would take place, what dancers should wear and to what music they will be or should be dancing. Comparing these newspaper reports revealed that black, white and coloured ballroom dancing events were, especially in the decade leading up to the Second World War and thereafter, strikingly similar. Ballroom dancing evenings or afternoons were characterized by live bands playing Western style music. Furthermore, dancing evenings across the board were marked by dancers performing standard ballroom dances, the “charleston” and other ragtime variations, while some dancers even found inspiration

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<sup>2</sup> M. Le Valliant, *Travels into the interior parts of Africa by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85 I* (s.a; Robinson, 1790), p. 31; B. Irvine, & B. Irvine, *The dancing years*, (W.H. Allen, London, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> SAB: BN 25/4/1928, Native sub commissioner Benoni-The Director of Native labour, 18 May 1928, where the mining commissioner of Benoni comments on the “tribal competition dances” and the weapons used during these dances. Mining houses promoted these competition dances amongst the black workers, as it was a cheap but effective leisure activity for the miners believing to prevent violent outbursts that could possibly occur because of boredom in the confined space; Anonym, “Ons fotografie wedstrijd: Basoetoeskoolmeidjies aan dans”, *Die Huisgenoot*, April 1920, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Anonym, “Weekend enjoyments divert many people throughout the city”, *The Bantu World*, 20/08/1932, p. 9; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 13/01/1934, p. 3.

from the newly imported Latin American dances (e.g. “samba”, “jitterbug” and “boogie woogie”). Moreover, the *Bantu World*, along with minutes of organisations such as certain trade unions and centres (like the Bantu Men’s Social Centre or BMSC ) reported that “dances, concerts and parties are the order of the day” in settlements in and around Johannesburg. These brief intermittent reports reflect on the growing interest in ballroom dancing during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the newspaper and societal minutes, archival sources also give glimpses of the demand for ballroom dancing in black urban communities. Like the white societies, the coloured and black communities invited and valued the patronage and presence of the governor-generals at their ballroom dancing events.<sup>6</sup> These invitations, some of which can be found in archival series such as the governor-general (GG) collection, emphasise the passion for ballroom but also, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the social value which was associated with ballroom dancing.

By the late 1920s it becomes apparent that the black ballroom infrastructure was expanding and turning into a lucrative business in townships and other black areas. Ballroom dancers were able to visit several clubs and dancing halls and call upon a variety of dance bands catering specifically for black ballroom couples, despite the various economic, legal and social constraints that existed. Phillips’s research on the nightlife of the black settlements highlights the prominence of dancing clubs near and in Johannesburg. He writes that:

Several dance clubs are known which organise regular dances and engage halls and orchestras...Outside the Location halls, of which there

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<sup>5</sup> Anonym, “Bantu have changed their social life as progress continues”, *The Bantu World*, 30/04/1932, p. 9; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1933 (G.M. Horne, 1934). pp. 13-14; WITS, Johannesburg: A 410, B 2.8.13, M Ballinger, Correspondence: individuals: E. Louw 1943-1960; Anonym, “Fine effort for medical aid for Russia”, *Guardian*, 04/03/1943, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2306, 1/396: Lt. Col. N. Hoy-Admiral Halifax, 20/02/1937. where the Lieutenant colonel of The Officers’ & Coloured Ex-service men’s Association invites Governor-General Clarendon to their association’s annual ball in the Johannesburg city hall; SAB, Pretoria: GG 2355, 6/316: J. Fataar-The Controller, 21/06/1939 where the coloured community of Durban invites Governor-General Duncan to a dance; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1929 (G.M. Horne, Johannesburg, 1930); WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1932 (Radford Adlington, Johannesburg, 1933).



are eight, the principal halls available for dancing parties are the Springbok Hall, Vrededorp, and the New Inchcape Palais de Dance, known also as the Ritz. Both of these are in Johannesburg. The Springbok Hall is operated by a prominent Indian property owner, who has a caretaker at the hall who exercises some supervision. The Ritz is under the capable management of Jack Phillips, a very efficient and popular Eur-African [*sic.*] who provides excellent supervision and direction for the functions at his Palais de Dance. The European type of dance is followed exclusively... The Springbok and Ritz are available every evening for Non-European engagement. Admission to an ordinary dance is five shillings per couple.<sup>7</sup>

The “Inchcape Hall” was apparently the most popular of the black ballroom venues as is evident in *The Bantu World* advising its readers to “book their tables” at least a month in advance.<sup>8</sup>

Special amenities laws like the Natives (Urban Areas) Act (Act number 21 of 1923) and the subsequent 1930 amendment to this act, (Act number 25 of 1930), that prohibited the movement of blacks, especially females in urban areas without special licenses, made gatherings expensive and risky.<sup>9</sup> This forced black ballroom dancers to adapt. The increasing popularity of dance was reflected in the founding of dance clubs or clubs that made dancing a feature and operated without approval, or funds, of the government organisations. Dances became so popular that a dancing club, the “ABC Club”, was founded in 1932 especially for those blacks living in and around Johannesburg. For 2/6 members could attend dance evenings on Thursdays at the “African Hall” and on Fridays at the “Diggers Hall”. Membership also included “free conveyance by Motor Car to and from the dances at both African Hall and Diggers Hall”,<sup>10</sup> as well as the organisation of “regular [dancing] evenings...”.<sup>11</sup> Other clubs or groups also promoted ballroom dancing

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<sup>7</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 293; also see “Popular jazz band fully enjoys their vacation in the Golden city”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Anonym, “The popular Inchcape palais de danse”, *The Bantu World*, 10/12/1932, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1930*, Act No. 21 of 1923: Natives (Urban Areas) Act (Government Printer, Cape Town, 1930), pp. 178-201; *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1930*, Act No. 25 of 1930: *Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923, Amended Act, 1930* (Government Printer, Cape Town, 1930), pp. 178-201.

<sup>10</sup> Anonym, “A.B.C. club and association”, *The Bantu World*, 02/07/1932, p. 9; “A.B.C. club and association”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Anonym, “A.B.C. club and association”, *The Bantu World*, 02/07/1932, p. 9; “A.B.C. club and association”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9.

within their ranks by organising occasional dancing events at their meetings and in their club halls. For example, the “Gamma Sigma Club”, which was founded in 1918 primarily as a discussion and debating group aiming to socially uplift its members, had nine clubs that were located all over the Rand. By the mid 1930s its membership had reached roughly five hundred. Ballroom dancing regularly formed part of the club’s activities and its dedication to provide “safe social activities in halls” served as a major draw card which facilitated ballroom dancing.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most prominent dancing venues in Pretoria was the recreational hall built for the Marabastad and Bantule locations in 1928 by the then Pretoria Town Council and the “Pretoria Native Welfare Association”. This hall was a popular meeting place and within five years “...hundreds of Concerts and Dances [had] taken place under its spacious lofty roof”.<sup>13</sup> The “Vereeniging non-European Entertainment Club” also occasionally held dance evenings for its members.<sup>14</sup> By 1930 municipal halls were being overcrowded by groups that had monthly functions including social nights where people danced, watched “bioscope pictures” or played games.<sup>15</sup> It was however the clubs that were located in the centre of Johannesburg that played the most prominent role in increasing the popularity of ballroom dancing amongst black society by organising regular ballroom evenings.<sup>16</sup> The “Bantu Sports Club” for example, hosted a “splendid dance” at its Sport Club pavilion in Johannesburg during May 1932. *The Bantu World* reported on the “graceful dancing” in “smart ballroom costumes of various shades and shapes and sober dignified suits of all colours...”.<sup>17</sup> Large gatherings of people were also noted “between eight and nine hundred dancers”, at some of the monthly Guest Nights.<sup>18</sup> These events

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<sup>12</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 301.

<sup>13</sup> Anonym, “Pretoria moves in the right way. A liberal spirit to the Bantu prevails at present”, *The Bantu World*, 18/06/1932, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Anonym, “Non-European form club at Vereeniging for social fuction [sic.]”, *The Bantu World*, 10/03/1934, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Anonym, “City Council provides recreational and social facilities for Africans: Social gatherings”, *The Bantu World*, 10/11/1934, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> M. Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown elite: a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> “Splendid dance takes place in the Bantu Sports Club pavilion”, *The Bantu World*, 28/05/1932, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1933 (G.M. Horne, 1934). pp. 13-14.

generally required some amount for entrance or a membership fee and were organized by members from the community.

According to an article in the *Bantu World*, as well as one that appeared later in *The New Nation*, clubs and centres like these provided entertainment and prevented members from “roaming the streets and getting into mischief” and form a “respectable... new culture...”.<sup>19</sup> It has been argued that the large scale forming of social meeting places was evidence of the “intercontinental links” and “flow of ideas” between white South Africa, “non-white” South Africa and the Western world, as dances in a social club became popular leisure choices for an increasing number of the working community.<sup>20</sup> Concerts and (ballroom) dancing were indeed, as pointed out by Coplan, the “...universal format of middle-class African entertainment between the world wars”.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, these dancing centres saw a marked rise in membership as segregationist laws were increasingly implemented and provided a platform for discussions about race, thereby foreshadowing the political nature that would form part of numerous ballroom dance events in the years to come.<sup>22</sup> In some instances, ballroom dancing functions took a definite political turn when the increasingly radical black political parties used the venues to protest against racism. Veit Erlmann, for example, reports on how the Industrial Commercial Workers Union (I.C.U) organized weekly ballroom dancing fundraising concerts in order to “strengthen the hegemony of union leaders”.<sup>23</sup> In her article on the history of the South African Communist Party (SACP), Dominique Fortescue, also reports on the use of regular ballroom dancing functions as an “excuse” to discuss political matters.<sup>24</sup> However, during this earlier period for black South Africans, like their

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<sup>19</sup> Anonym, “Bantu Sports Club requests Europeans to visit grounds”, *The Bantu World*, 26/08/1933, p. 15; Anonym, “Soccer and dance create new culture”, *The New Nation*, 3(46), 23/11/1988, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> J. Hyslop, *The notorious syndicalist J.T. Bain: A Scottish rebel in colonial South Africa*, (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2004), p. 9; A. De Courcy, *1939 The last season*. (London, Phoenix, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 128.

<sup>22</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1932 (Johannesburg, Radford Adlington, 1933); WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1948. p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> V. Erlmann, “‘Horses in the race course’: the domestication of ingoma dancing in South Africa, 1929-1939”, *Popular Music*, 8(3), African music, October 1989, p. 266.

<sup>24</sup> D. Fortescue, “The Communist party of South Africa and the African working class in the 1940s”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24(3), 1991, p. 511. Both Fortescue and Erlmann failed to see that these ballroom dances were a pastime amongst the black communities living in the urban areas.

European counterparts, these dancing locations were primarily popular socialising venues for people from different townships and continued to form part of township life throughout the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

The Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC) played a leading role in further popularising these historically white leisure activities.<sup>26</sup> The BMSC was founded and erected during 1924 in Eloff Street, Johannesburg through the sponsorship of white liberals and was “managed by Africans under the direction of an executive committee of both white and blacks”.<sup>27</sup> At the Centre “all classes of Africans” could participate in educational (e.g. reading), athletic (e.g. cricket) or leisure (e.g. dancing that was introduced in 1930) activities.<sup>28</sup> By the mid 1930s the centre was “...in great demand for concerts, dances, lectures and evening athletic games”.<sup>29</sup> During “Guest Nights” in the early 1930s the almost six hundred members, who paid ten shillings per year, could bring their families to the centre to attend “...programmes of music, games, addresses, cinema films, and dancing”.<sup>30</sup> From 1931 onwards the BMSC launched and organized the annual Eisteddfod to “preserve and develop Native music and to encourage the finer refinements of European music and provide liquor-free recreation for the urban African”.<sup>31</sup> Patrons at these festivals included “many distinguished politicians, business-men, educators,

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<sup>25</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men's Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1960, p. 4; C.M. de Villiers, *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging*, p. 332.

<sup>26</sup> Anonym, “Bantu Men's Social Centre”, *The Bantu World*, 06/08/1932, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929*, p. 141, D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 115, Anonym, “Bantu Men's Social Centre: Club for African men”, *The Bantu World*, 18/11/1933, p. 5; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men's Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1929 (Johannesburg, G.M. Horne, 1930).

<sup>28</sup> M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929*, p. 141, D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 115, Anonym, “Bantu Men's Social Centre: Club for African men”, *The Bantu World*, 25/11/1933, p. 15; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men's Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1929 (Johannesburg, G.M. Horne, 1930).

<sup>29</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 302; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men's Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1933 (Johannesburg, G.M. Horne, 1934), p. 14; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men's Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1940, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 303. Also see Anonym, “Guest night at BMSC”, *The Bantu World*, 12/11/1932, p. 9 where the paper invites the members of the club to bring their friends to the “Guest Night” on 18 November 1932.

<sup>31</sup> Anonym, “Africans hold musical festival at the B.M.S.C”, *The Bantu World*, 25/11/1933, p. 14; D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 116.

missionaries [and] artists...”.<sup>32</sup> Activities during the Eisteddfod ranged from musical performances by choirs and bands to dance events that included both “traditional dances” and “Westernised urbanites doing the waltz, foxtrot, and quickstep”.<sup>33</sup> Like the white musical festivals, the African Eisteddfod concluded with a “grand dance” where many of the performers and visitors celebrated the success of the event.<sup>34</sup> During 1934 the festival became a national event and was seen, at least by *The Bantu World*, as “one of the very few agencies that help[ed] to advertise African talent and achievement”.<sup>35</sup> The comment was that “there [was] no doubt that the path to the African Canaan of Liberty [lay] across the desert of concrete, genuine achievement”.<sup>36</sup>

While these clubs and centres provided a venue for social contact, they also provided a place for upcoming bands, radios and gramophones to play the tunes inspired by Western films and international records. Coplan traces the origin of black dance bands to coloured dance bands that came to Johannesburg in its founding years. But by the end of the 1920s, Johannesburg and its surrounding area’s band industry was dominated by black bands.<sup>37</sup> The progress made by black dance bands was reported on with great enthusiasm in *The Bantu World* because of the important role that music played in the everyday life of black South Africans and also at white ballroom dancing events.<sup>38</sup> These bands

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<sup>32</sup> Anonym, “Africans hold musical festival at the BMSC”, *The Bantu World*, 25/11/1933, p. 14, Anonym, “Transvaal African Eisteddfod coming: Fourth African musical festival takes place at BMSC”, *The Bantu World*, 13/10/1934, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> Anonym, “Africans hold musical festival at the BMSC”, *The Bantu World*, 25/11/1933, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> H.I.E. Dhlomo, “Great Bantu national Eisteddfod. Competitors come from all over South Africa. Symbol of courage and hope”, *The Bantu World*, 08/12/1934, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> H.I.E. Dhlomo, “Great Bantu national Eisteddfod. Competitors come from all over South Africa. Symbol of courage and hope”, *The Bantu World*, 08/12/1934, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> D. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 101, 130.

<sup>38</sup> Y. Daniel, “Dance in the African diaspora”, in M. Ember, C.R. Ember, I. Skoggard (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Diasporas* (UK, Springer, 2005), p. 347; E.N.N. Mautwana, “African musicians must be supported: Bantu schools and music some programmes do not represent noted Europeans & Bantu composers”, *The Bantu World*, 03/11/1934, p. 9; Anonym, “Study of European music helps Africans to understand their own”, *The Bantu World*, 22/12/1934, p. 9; Anonym, “The Bantu popular jazz band”, *The Bantu world*, 30/04/1932, p. 9. Also see an invitation card for a dance in the Selborne Hall, Johannesburg on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1928 presented under the auspices of the Witwatersrand Tailors’ Association where the Jazz Maniacs Orchestra was in attendance. Couples could dance from eight to twelve and a double ticket was priced at 2/6. WITS, Johannesburg: AH 1092, Aab 1.40: WTA Central administration- transactions: General correspondence and papers: Dance 1928 June- March 1945; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/03/1931, p. 12.

included the famous “Japanese Jazz band” which was “composed purely of Bantu artists”,<sup>39</sup> the “Empire Follies” which was founded in 1928 in Mafeking and was in demand “everywhere” at both black and white events.<sup>40</sup> Other ballroom dance bands that regularly played at social and competitive functions included the “BMSC Glee Singers”,<sup>41</sup> various Stockfel bands,<sup>42</sup> the “New Magnets Jazz Band”,<sup>43</sup> “Jazz Revellers Band”,<sup>44</sup> “Rayners Band”,<sup>45</sup> “Darktown Strutters”,<sup>46</sup> and the “Merry Blackbirds”.<sup>47</sup> These bands apparently made enough money from playing at balls and social events to make a “decent living”,<sup>48</sup> something that few of their fellow country men could say.

Dance bands served to be both stimulated and stimulate the dance crazes that swept through the white and black communities, as they could easily and frequently did adapt their musical repertoires to international musical crazes that were heard on the radio, musical records or in the film houses.<sup>49</sup> Singing and dance band competitions drew audiences, mainly young black couples, to halls to evaluate, listen to and support the Jazz

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<sup>39</sup> Anonym, “The Bantu popular jazz band”, *The Bantu world*, 30/04/1932, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> One of Them, “Mafeking plays no insignificant role in Bantu musical development”, *The Bantu World*, 21/05/1932, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Anonym, “Non-European community help to keep their hospital doors open”, *The Bantu World*, 31/12/1932, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Anonym, “Weekend enjoyments divert many people throughout the city”, *The Bantu World*, 20/08/1932, p. 9. These “Stockfell” or “Stockfel bands” were most likely community bands popular at Stockfel parties. Coplan explains that “Stokfel” refers to “credit rings in which each member contributes a set amount each week in anticipation of receiving the combined contributions of all the other members at regular intervals. Commonly, each member in her turn uses the lump sum she receives to finance a “Stockfel” party, at which other members and guests pay admission and buy food and liquor and even musical entertainment... On Sunday afternoons, stokfel members marched to the party in uniform... accompanying them would be an ensemble of from five to twelve players...” See D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>43</sup> Anonym, “Fancy dress tennis”, *The Bantu World*, 23/11/1933, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Anonym, “Tragedy of Nongquase[sic.]”, *The Bantu World*, 26/08/1933, p. 11; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 01/12/1934, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Anonym, “Crown mines notes”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> Anonym, “Non-European community help to keep their hospital doors open”, *The Bantu World*, 31/12/1932, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 05/01/1934, p. 15; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16; Anonym, “Miss Nettie Nkosi promotes dance and concert in communal hall”, *The Bantu World*, 20/10/1934, p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Anonym, “The Bantu popular jazz band”, *The Bantu world*, 30/04/1932, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> One of Them, “Mafeking plays no insignificant role in Bantu musical development”, *The Bantu World*, 21/05/1932, p. 9; R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 297; Anonym, “Popular jazz band fully enjoys their vacation in the Golden city”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9. The impact that the radio and film industry had on ballroom dancing is discussed in chapter 4.



and ragtime musicians that would play at their dances, thus ensuring that the bands produced music of a high standard.<sup>50</sup>

Gramophones were apparently widely used during the Great Depression and War years in homes but especially at dancing events. Phillips points out that “in hundreds of homes, the gramophone [had] become the source of much pleasure”.<sup>51</sup> They also appeared to be affordable and were widely marketed as is evident in advertisements like that of Deacon & Co stating that the “...largest portable gramophones of beautiful tonal qualities can now be purchased from us on exceptionally easy terms”.<sup>52</sup> In general, dancing bands, playing variations of local and international music heard on the gramophone, radio or film and incorporating it with their own styles, were preferred at ballroom dance functions.<sup>53</sup> However, the gramophone became a very powerful and accessible piece of equipment in sustaining the dances and introducing other international dance crazes to the local halls.<sup>54</sup> For people who were unable to afford the band fees that ranged from 5s 6d – an expensive item considering that as already mentioned, at that time a loaf of bread generally cost between 3d to 6d per loaf – the gramophone became a “makeshift band” that took up less space in the crowded shebeens and provisional dancing areas.<sup>55</sup> The *Bantu World* commented on the accessibility and use of the gramophone where during a private party in Doornfontein on a Sunday “couples swayed gracefully in one another’s [sic.] arms...” while “musical items were rendered by a very capable gramophone which went all out, bravely demonstrating the fact, that orchestras had no terrors for it”.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hills, “Tenacious Darkies win the Midnight Follies Harmony Kings’ trophy”, *The Bantu World*, 03/12/1932, p. 9; D. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 136; discussing how Caluza’s performance made ragtime music respectable.

<sup>51</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 299. D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 135.

<sup>52</sup> Anonym, “Gramophones”, *The Bantu World*, 07/01/1933, p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> Anonym, “New gramophone records ready: by Christmas they will be on sale everywhere”, *The Bantu World*, 24/09/1932, p. 9; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 05/01/1934, p. 15; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16; Anonym, “Miss Nettie Nkosi promotes dance and concert in communal hall”, *The Bantu World*, 20/10/1934, p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> E.J. Collins, “Jazz feedback to Africa”, *American Music*, 5(2), Summer 1987, p. 177; W.L. Speight, “Notes on South African Native music”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 20 (3), July 1934, pp. 348-349, 353.

<sup>55</sup> E. Hellmann, *Rooiyard. A sociological survey of an urban slum yard*, p. 37.

<sup>56</sup> Anonym, “Enjoyable part at Doornfontein: Popular couple invite friends to make merry”, *The Bantu World*, 05/11/1932, p. 9.



In contrast, the radio had far less direct influence on the development of ballroom dances in black locations. For all practical purposes it was generally the white man's device which at that time mainly deliberated on the "gloom" of war.<sup>57</sup> Also, though the radio was available to black communities, up until the 1930s it was only through a subscription fee in areas close to cities. These broadcasts were, according to C. Hamm, mainly aimed to "dispel disruptive rumours concerning the progress of World War II...".<sup>58</sup> Only after the Second World War were radio stations specifically for black communities implemented. Although these radio stations focused on the broadcasting of music that was already "familiar" to its listeners, the radio receivers as an item remained expensive and thus had a very limited audience.<sup>59</sup>

Like white dances, black ballroom dancing was generally held on week nights at certain halls like the "Inchcape" or clubs where dancing usually went on throughout the evening, usually ending at midnight.<sup>60</sup> By the middle of 1932, it becomes clear that Sunday afternoon dances were an increasingly popular leisure activity and ladies "...in ball room [*sic.*] dresses and gentlemen in similar attire, are usually to be seen hurrying to the several halls..." in Sophiatown.<sup>61</sup> Marabi dances, "rhythmically propulsive dance music" based on the "repetitive harmonic patterns... [that is]...typical of traditional African music", were associated with the slums and shebeens of the 1920s and 1930s Johannesburg and eschewed by "all respectable" people.<sup>62</sup> Ballroom dances were

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<sup>57</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 160; C. Hamm, "The constant companion of Man: Separate development Radio Bantu and Music", *Popular Music*, 10(2), May 1991, pp. 147-148.

<sup>58</sup> C. Hamm, "The constant companion of Man: Separate development Radio Bantu and Music", *Popular Music*, 10(2), May 1991, p. 148.

<sup>59</sup> C. Hamm, "The constant companion of Man: Separate development Radio Bantu and Music", *Popular Music*, 10(2), May 1991, pp. 148, 149.

<sup>60</sup> Anonym, "Splendid dance takes place in the Bantu Sports Club pavilion", *The Bantu World*, 28/05/1932, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> Lady Porcupine, "Charity dance held at Bloemfontein to help poor children", *The Bantu World*, 17/03/1934,

p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> C. Ballantine, *Marabi Nights: Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville* (Johannesburg, 1993). The social impact of Marabi dances will be discussed later on in this chapter.

however regarded as the more “refined dances” and also drew the black public to the Sunday dance venues where admission generally was 2s.<sup>63</sup>

According to articles in both black and white newspapers, ballroom dancing was used to celebrate special events, sport club achievements and commemorations. On Monday 1 August 1932, for example, a farewell dance was held for the visiting Natal soccer team in the BMSC *The Bantu World* reports that the “...gorgeously dressed ladies and gentlemen had no sooner heard the orchestra [“Singer Bantu Artist”], then unable to restrain their alacrity they started dancing”.<sup>64</sup> On the 1 September 1933 a “Grand dance” was given to celebrate the “Tragedy of Nonquase [*sic.*]” in the “Inchcape Hall”<sup>65</sup> and the so-called changing of the seasons was celebrated with ballroom dancing at the “Early Autumn Ball’ in the Percy Hall, City Deep during January 1934.<sup>66</sup> In December 1933 a “grand Fancy Dress ball” was held at the Bantu Sports Club for the tennis players of the club.<sup>67</sup> The achievements of another tennis club, the “Witwatersrand District African Lawn Tennis Association”, were also celebrated with a dance in the Rose Deep Hall.<sup>68</sup> Other ballroom dancing events referred to in the media included a ball held in the communal hall during March 1934 hosted by the “Eastern Native Township Ladies Civic Society” where more than a hundred people danced to the music of the “Merry Black Birds” on a Sunday.<sup>69</sup> Nearly three hundred people attended the celebration function in March 1934 given in honour of the football victory of the “Transvaal Jumpers in the Western Township Communal Hall”. *The Bantu World* reported on the allure of these functions and stated that during this particular dance event “...immediately after dinner the

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<sup>63</sup> Lady Porcupine, “Charity dance held at Bloemfontein to help poor children”, *The Bantu World*, 17/03/1934, p. 16; Anonym, “Bantu keenly enjoy modern life they develop social activities”, *The Bantu World*, 17/09/1932, p. 9; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 05/01/1934, p. 15; D. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 139; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 01/12/1934, p. 16; Anonym, “Crown mines notes”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Anonym, “All merrymakers enjoy themselves. Celebrated artists play before an eager audience”, *The Bantu World*, 06/08/1932, p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Anonym, “Tragedy of Nongquase[*sic.*]”, *The Bantu World*, 26/08/1933, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 05/01/1934, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Anonym, “Fancy dress tennis”, *The Bantu World*, 23/11/1933, p. 16.

<sup>68</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 06/01/1934, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 10/03/1934, p. 3.

Japanese Express Band struck up a merry tune, and soon the floor was full of dancers who slid [sic.] gracefully along, through the mighty crowd”.<sup>70</sup>

The 1934 royal tour also incorporated a number of visits by Prince George to “non-European” balls. This included for example a “Visit [to a] Non-European dance” in the Cape Town City Hall.<sup>71</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that nearly two thousand “coloured people, Malays, Indians and Natives” attended the “non-European” ball to see Prince George. After he “looked in at the dance for half an hour” he left to attend a private ball given by the High Commissioner and Lady Stanley.<sup>72</sup> The international interest in black and coloured ballroom transcended the years as can be seen when during a visit to South Africa in February 1947 the Royal family also attended a civic ball for Cape Town’s coloured citizens.<sup>73</sup> It is rather strange that no mention is made of these balls in *The Bantu World*’s coverage of the royal visit.<sup>74</sup>

Like the *Rand Daily Mail*, *The Bantu World* generally included snippets throughout the newspaper that reported on the successes of ballroom dance functions. Reporting on two functions held in the “Inchcape Hall” and “Bantu Sports Club” in 1932, *The Bantu World* pointed out that ballroom dancing had become the “best pastime” with the “Reef Bantu show[ing] a keen interest in this modern dance”.<sup>75</sup> Unlike the *Rand Daily Mail*, *The Bantu World* mentions the names of individual dancers, such as Dina Peter, Emily Ndebele, Joe Martin and F. Morawa because of the “enthusiastic” and “conspicuous” manner in which they danced, and not, as in the case of the former, because of their

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<sup>70</sup> Anonym, “Western Township social and sporting notes make news”, *The Bantu World*, 24/03/1934, p. 17.

<sup>71</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Event Inventory.

<sup>72</sup> Anonym, “A record hand-shake”, *Rand Daily Mail* 10/02/1934, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Anonym, *Cape Times: Souvenir of the Royal tour*, p. 20; D. Morrah, *The Royal Family in Africa* (London, Hutchinson & Co, 1947), p. 23.

<sup>74</sup> Anonym, “Bantu Reception Committee reports on money spent on Royal visit”, *The Bantu World*, 24/03/1934, p. 17; Lady Porcupine, “Bloemfontein people give Prince George a great welcome”, *The Bantu World*, 10/03/1934, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Anonym, “Dancing becomes the best pastime: Reef Bantu show a keen interest on this modern dance”, *The Bantu World*, 04/06/1932, p. 9.

extravagant clothing. It was reported that couples exhibited “faultless styles, [with] lively changes accompanying each tune, [which] rendered the dance extremely lovely”.<sup>76</sup>

By 1932 ballroom dancing was such an integral part of black urban society that it formed part of wedding receptions alongside various traditional customs.<sup>77</sup> *The Bantu World* reported on the wedding of a popular couple – J. Mavimbela and E.J. Kusse – held in 1932 at the BMSC. The function was attended by a “huge crowd” in “gay dresses” where almost all the guests started dancing after the couple opened the floor accompanied by popular music.<sup>78</sup> Another wedding reception in 1932 for a certain J. Nhlapo and Hlabangne was likewise filled with the music of popular jazz bands where couples danced foxtrots, waltzes and tangos throughout the evening.<sup>79</sup>

As in white society, ballroom dancing was also sometimes used to raise money for the lesser privileged. During September 1932 the “Highlanders Football Club” organized a charity dance at the “Inchcape Hall” for the “Bantu Relief Fund”.<sup>80</sup> The “...hall was brilliantly decorated and in rapid successions its colourful lights cast attractive shades among the dancers who were “immaculately attired”.<sup>81</sup> Other fundraising events held in 1932 included the dance and concert held for the “Princess Alice Nursing Home”, the “Bridgman Memorial Hospital” and the “non-European Hospital” at the BMSC hall.<sup>82</sup> Fundraising events at the “Inchcape Hall” also included the “Doornfontein Ladies Civic

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<sup>76</sup> Anonym, “Dancing becomes the best pastime: Reef Bantu show a keen interest on this modern dance”, *The Bantu World*, 04/06/1932, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> Z.K. Matthews, “The tribal spirit among educated South Africans”, *Man*, 35, February 1935, p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Anonym, “Splendid wedding of a popular couple attracts huge crowds”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Anonym, “Splendid East Rand wedding give [sic.] diversion and pleasure to many”, *The Bantu World*, 16/07/1932, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> “Bantu Relief Fund” was founded by prominent, black members of society under the leadership of a “Bantu Relief Committee”. This was a reaction against the Johannesburg Mayor’s fund that was mainly aimed at poor whites and intended to “light[ten] the many cases of misery... of starving workless Bantu”. Anonym, “The Highlanders football club sets a good example of charity”, *The Bantu World*, 27/08/1932, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Anonym, “Distinguished people patronised the dance of the Highlanders”, *The Bantu World*, 17/09/1932, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Anonym, “Non-European community help to keep their hospital doors open”, *The Bantu World*, 31/12/1932, p. 11.

Society” (1933),<sup>83</sup> the “Rand Bantu Women’s Benevolent Society” dance (1934)<sup>84</sup> and the “Ladies Civic Society”(1934) – the latter being in aid of the hospital in the Western Township.<sup>85</sup> Thus much of what was happening on the floor of the white South African ballroom was also being played out in ballroom among black South Africans – albeit in the shadows. The steps, dress, music and popularity of the dances were in fact not that different.

## 6.2 Competing on the edge

As the popularity of ballroom escalated among blacks, the commitment also transformed into the competitive realm. It is apparent that from at least the beginning of 1933 ballroom dance competitions for adults were advertised periodically, along with other social and Marabi dancing events. The dance competitions were mostly held at the “Inchcape Hall” and music was provided by well-established dance bands like the “Revellers” and the “Merry Blackbirds”.<sup>86</sup> Passionate ballroom dancers were usually members of dancing clubs that assisted with the financial and organisational aspects of the competitions. In 1933, *The Bantu World* reports that more than forty dancing clubs, including dance clubs like “Oxford Sailors”, “Land Labours”, “British Central”, “Rainbow”, “Parktown”, “Rhodesian Standard” and “East Africa”, from Johannesburg, Pretoria, Benoni and Germiston, attended a dancing event at the “Springbok Hall” in Johannesburg in November 1933. According to the article more than six hundred people danced that evening and prizes were given to the best dressed lady and gentleman.<sup>87</sup> “Everybody” was however, invited to attend the “...grand theatrical ball and competition dance” that was hosted by the “Mosetlha Home Preventers’ Dancing Club” at the

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<sup>83</sup> Anonym, “Ladies society does very well: Doornfontein women hold enjoyable social party”, *The Bantu World*, 11/03/1933, p. 11; Anonym, Anonym, “Western Township News”, *The Bantu World*, 03/03/1934, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> Anonym, “Western Township News”, *The Bantu World*, 03/03/1934, p. 3. Other charity events also included The Bantu Young Men’s Christian Association ( Y.M.C.A) charity dance in aid of the “non-European Child Welfare Society” for which the “...floor which was well smoothed, helped to make dance all the more pleasant”; Lady Porcupine, “Charity dance held at Bloemfontein to help poor children”, *The Bantu World*, 17/03/1934, p. 16.

<sup>86</sup> Manager, Springbok Hall, “Oxford Sailors hold successful dance and beauty competition”, *The Bantu World*, 25/11/1933, p. 15; Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 13/01/1934, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Anonym, “Oxford Sailors hold successful dance and beauty competition”, *The Bantu World*, 25/11/1933, p. 15.

Inchcape De luxe, in February 1934. Prizes at this competition included “silver cups and cash”.<sup>88</sup> According to reports on this event the hall was “crowded to capacity” with nearly five hundred dances and about fifty taxis parked outside.<sup>89</sup> Talented competitive dancers’ careers were closely followed by the press and *The Bantu World* regarded them as “dancing role models”.<sup>90</sup>

However, it was also evident that to present truly prestigious black ballroom dancing competitions did not only require illustrious black ballroom couples, but also dancing demonstrations by whites as well as white judges. The *Bantu World* commented on these “ambitious” group of Africans that formed a competitive ballroom dancing club and placed inimitable emphasis on ballroom dance competitions that featured white participation.<sup>91</sup> At the “Sport Club Pavilion” in 1932, Mr and Mrs P.J. Esterhuizen, who frequently danced demonstrations and judged black ballroom competitions, were described as having, “...exhibited an excellent waltz performance which absolutely thrilled and bewitched the onlookers so muchso [*sic.*] that an air of...silence pervaded the pavilion as with gaping jaws and glittering eyes the spectators beheld the splendid display...these European friends added zest to an already enticing night”.<sup>92</sup> At another ballroom competition hosted by the “Moseitha Home Preventers’ Dancing Club” in February 1934 Miss Doreen Fowles, “who was well-known among Europeans and Africans as a teacher of dancing”, gave an exhibition dance, and along with the Transvaal Ballroom Champion, W. Jenks, judged the competition. This ballroom dancing event was consequently reported to be the “mecca of dancing”.<sup>93</sup> At yet another dancing event in

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<sup>88</sup> Anonym, “Weekly diary”, *The Bantu World*, 03/02/1934, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Anonym, “Miss D. Fowles presents prizes; Competition dance held at the famous Inchcape hall”, *The Bantu World*, 24/02/1934, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 13/01/1934, p. 3; Anonym, “Crown mines notes”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16. *The Bantu World* reported on the dancing style, dress and location of a seemingly famous ballroom dancers in Johannesburg, D.W. Cikido and the “well-known” dancing lady, M. Williams, who hosted various dance evening at popular halls like the Inchcape and Western Native Township Communal hall.

<sup>91</sup> G. M. Pember, “Dancing club formed at Port Elizabeth by ambitious Africans”, *The Bantu World*, 18/11/1933, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> Anonym, “Splendid dance takes place in the Bantu Sports Club pavilion”, *The Bantu World*, 28/05/1932, p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> Anonym, “Miss D. Fowles presents prizes; Competition dance held at the famous Inchcape hall”, *The Bantu World*, 24/02/1934, p. 3.

June 1932 the Esterhuizen competitive couple were again received with similar favour at the “Bantu Sport Club” where *The Bantu World* reported on the very “useful lessons” that black dancers could learn from their “friends”.<sup>94</sup> White ballroom couple dance demonstrations remained a popular event at balls as can be seen during December 1934 where ballroom enthusiasts came together at the “Western Native Township” Communal Hall to dance and watch a demonstration by their so-called “European friends”.<sup>95</sup> White interest in black ballroom was further evident during 1936 when the SADTA sent the chairman of the organisation, Miss Ivy Conmee, to Rhodesia, to introduce dance examinations and develop them in the country.<sup>96</sup> White presence at dancing events was apparently perceived as giving an “air of respectability”, thereby not only quieting any moral alarms that might arise from the gathering but also validating its presence within the community.

Although no evidence could be found indicating that black children were dancing or being taught ballroom dances or participating in competitions as in the white communities during the 1930s, reports in *The Bantu World* clearly indicate that teenagers were encouraged to dance ballroom. At a dancing event held in the “Inchcape hall” in 1932 reference is made to both old and young couples that “...polish the floor of the Hall with the soles of their shoes to the utmost brilliancy”.<sup>97</sup> Halls and youth clubs were also created where ballroom dancing was specifically encouraged. The “Recreation and Social Department” of the Johannesburg municipality<sup>98</sup> developed “unemployment clubs” in halls where boys between the ages of sixteen and twenty could meet daily to participate

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<sup>94</sup> Anonym, “Dancing becomes the best pastime: Reef Bantu show a keen interest on this modern dance”, *The Bantu World*, 04/06/1932, p. 9.

<sup>95</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 01/12/1934, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> Anonym, “In the dance world: S.A. ballroom Championships at Exhibition”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 23/05/1936, p. 5; Anonym, “Rhodesian Association dance”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 15/12/1934, p. 14; T. Violl, “Dancing and the ballroom”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 06/08/1930, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Anonym, “Popular jazz band fully enjoys their vacation in the Golden city”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> Anonym, “City Council provides recreational and social facilities for Africans: Unemployed Clubs”, *The Bantu World*, 10/11/1934, p. 14.



in constructive leisure activities.<sup>99</sup> These included activities like boxing and craft making, and those clubs also regularly hosted social evenings which included dance.<sup>100</sup>

By the mid-1930s ballroom dancing was, although sometimes hidden from white communities and different in its initial appearance, well established amongst the black urban communities and gradually developing in to a highly competitive activity.<sup>101</sup>

### 6.3 Dancing around objection

Under the Entertainments (Censorship) Act, Act 28 of 1931, a dancing venue was classified as a “public entertainment” venue, and “members of the police” could thus patrol dance functions.<sup>102</sup> However, especially during the years before the Second World War, certain government members and some employers seemingly chose to rather use the popularity of ballroom dancing to promote the separate economic growth plan of the state. The opening of new locations were, for example, celebrated with dances, generally organized by the municipality itself. This included the opening of the “Egugwini location” near Johannesburg on 25 August 1934 where so many people attended the function that “dancers were pressed to their ribs” on the dance floor.<sup>103</sup> The opening of the “Prospect Location” during October 1934 was also celebrated with a concert and dance again to the beat of the “Merry Black Birds” for the residents of Crown Mines.<sup>104</sup> On occasion, company dances were organized for black workers. This included, for example, a picnic, dance and activity day hosted by the whites for the black employees of *The Star* during March 1936. This function even had a “...orchestra play during the afternoon while couples dance[d] on a tarpaulin, stretched on the ground for the purpose...”<sup>105</sup> From all accounts it appears that as long as these ballroom dancing events

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<sup>99</sup> Anonym, “City Council provides recreational and social facilities for Africans: Unemployed Clubs”, *The Bantu World*, 10/11/1934, p. 14.

<sup>100</sup> Anonym, “City Council provides recreational and social facilities for Africans: Unemployed Clubs”, *The Bantu World*, 10/11/1934, p. 14.

<sup>101</sup> Anonym, “A.B.C. club and association”, *The Bantu World*, 02/07/1932, p. 9; Anonym, “A.B.C. club and association”, *The Bantu World*, 09/07/1932, p. 9.

<sup>102</sup> *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1931*, Act number 28 of 1931: Entertainments (Censorship) Act (Government Printer, Cape Town, 1931), p. 140.

<sup>103</sup> Anonym, “Crown mines notes”, *The Bantu World*, 01/09/1934, p. 16.

<sup>104</sup> Anonym, “Who’s who in the news this week”, *The Bantu World*, 25/10/1934, p. 14.

<sup>105</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 305.

kept within the “perceived” boundaries of the law, the government did not actively try to prohibit or interfere with them.

At another level, despite the obvious popularity of ballroom dancing, there is evidence to indicate that a number of Africans, some governor-generals and sections within the South African government were reluctant to approve of clubs or give “permission” for blacks to dance within the city.<sup>106</sup> The records referred to above suggest that if black Johannesburg employees had the financial resources, they could choose between a variety of leisure activities. It was reputed in *The Bantu World* that “...some enjoy dances, others music and others still, [preferred] primitive war dances”.<sup>107</sup> However, in E. Hellman’s study on the 1930s urban slum yard<sup>108</sup> she found that dancing was “...definitely discredited as ‘bad’ and ‘no good’ by the conservatively respectable Natives of the yard”.<sup>109</sup>

The latter attitude was evident amongst a section of the educated African elite who, in some instances, questioned the value of ballroom dancing fearing that dancers only took the “frivolous aspects of European civilization” and spent all of their time, as noted by R.R.R. Dhlomo, “dancing themselves mad”.<sup>110</sup> Missionaries further affirmed this view when some claimed that ballroom dancing did “not belong” in black society because it was “too” European.<sup>111</sup> Like some of the white newspapers of the time, missionaries warned against the explicit nature and “moral dangers” of dancing. At first, they, like some African elite, were against ballroom dancing because it apparently took black society even further away from their so called “traditional” life style and led to

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<sup>106</sup> Luli Callinicos, *A people’s history of South Africa Volume 2 Working life 1886-Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 216; P. C. Alegi, “Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performance, and social identity in South Africa, 1920s-1945”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2002, p. 34.

<sup>107</sup> Anonym, “Bantu have changed their social life as progress continues”, *The Bantu World*, 30/04/1932, p. 9.

<sup>108</sup> An urban slumyard in the 1930s was a place in or in close proximity to a city characterized by informal housing, poverty and little or no infrastructure and usually associated with alcohol, abuse and violence. E. Hellman, “Native life in a Johannesburg slumyard”, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 8(1), January 1935, pp. 34-62. Also see Act number 24 of 1937, *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1937* (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1937), p. 134.

<sup>109</sup> E. Hellman, *Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban Native slum yard*, pp. 29-30; 93-94.

<sup>110</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 128.

<sup>111</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 76-79.

degeneration of moral values.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, as with so much other social history, black ballroom dances are often only referred to in the literature because they involved the “transgression” or “disobeying” of social rules.<sup>113</sup> The missionaries argued that attending a ball was “life threatening”. This is apparent in a *Bantu World* report which claimed that people are “slaughtered with knives” at dancing halls and even “members attending civil dances carry knives for defence”, describing dance halls as the “the haunts of the most vicious class”.<sup>114</sup>

Being a leisure activity, dancing became very much associated, with – both from within and outside black communities – the breaking of laws, late nights, explicit sexual activity<sup>115</sup> and the misuse of alcohol.<sup>116</sup> During her travels in southern Africa, Margery Perham commented on the parallel that some members of European society drew between alcohol abuse and ballroom dancing, and also the stereotypical perception of blacks and dancing. Perham noted a court hearing where a black man accused another of stealing 10s from him while being “at the house of a women”.<sup>117</sup> The accused stated that they had “...a little dancing and singing” after which he fell asleep. The judge accused the man of being drunk, and thus negligent, because “...you people don’t dance and sing unless you’re drunk..” and forthwith discharged the case.<sup>118</sup> Phillips, like Perham, further

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<sup>112</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 76-79, 128; D. Rycroft, “African music in Johannesburg: African and non-African features”, *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 11, 1959, p. 25 where Rycroft contemplates the role that traditional music, western influences and missionaries had on the music and dance styles of the black society in Johannesburg in the early twentieth century; Anonym, “Rev A Mtimkulu presides over a social gathering”, *The Bantu World*, 05/11/1932, p. 9; E. Hellman, *Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban Native slum yard*. p. 94.

<sup>113</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 76, comments on official concerns about the growing number of “brandy parties” and “immoral bight meetings” amongst blacks. Primary sources like SAB, Pretoria: Municipality Brakpan (MBP) 2/2/1192, 20/3/143: Town Clerk- Messrs. Gross and Gross, 06/11/1962 are later examples of a stern warning against the possible misuse of dance privileges granted to blacks.

<sup>114</sup> W.M.B. Nhlapo, “Are our dance halls becoming the haunts of the most vicious class?”, *The Bantu World*, 18/06/1932, p. 9.

<sup>115</sup> See for example the early twentieth century comment and picture of two apes dancing the tango in the *South African Musical Times* cited in Peter Joyce (ed.), *Reader’s Digest: South Africa’s Yesterdays*, p 103.

<sup>116</sup> P. C. Alegi, “Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performance, and social identity in South Africa”, 1920s-1945, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2002, p 25; D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 128. Primary sources concerning the prominent role that liquor played in ballroom dancing include: TAB, Pretoria: MGP 124, 12968/01, n.a., Louis Wertheim- Major Therson, 01/10/1901, requesting to sell liquor at a dance.

<sup>117</sup> M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929*, p. 154.

<sup>118</sup> M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929*, p. 154.

found that liquor negatively influenced the order at black dancing events in Johannesburg.<sup>119</sup>

Indeed, although social dances, especially Marabi dancing, served to reinforce dancing in the black settlements, it did raise tremendous concern among the African elite. Marabi was regarded, by many of the educated elite as a dance of the “lower classes” that had a negative impact on the youth and was associated with substance abuse.<sup>120</sup> *The Bantu World* stated that:

The effects of the ‘Marabi dances’ are very demoralizing to the Bantu youth who participate in them. They usually take place in Liquor dens. The environment coupled with the frenzied shouts and usual violence turn many parts of the Reef into a perfect pandemonium. This Marabi dance it [*sic.*] a great menace to the community. The sooner it comes to an end, the better, it will be for all concerned. The evils of this menace and disturbance are such that it will need the co-operation of all sections of the community to effectually eradicate it.<sup>121</sup>

As the century progressed however, it is ironic to note that the missionaries who had as already indicated deplored ballroom dancing, now tended to start promoting it as a counter to the more “traditional heathen dances”.<sup>122</sup> Ballroom dancing, along with variety concerts, was later viewed as contributing to the growth of community social life, and provided a specifically urban form of recreation which made a vital difference in the quality of life for many in the hard-pressed locations.<sup>123</sup> It is interesting that this missionary stance is also reflected in the comment of the *Bantu World*. Take for example an article entitled “Bantu have changed their social life as progress continues”.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> R.E. Phillips, *The Bantu in the city: a study of cultural adjustment on the Witwatersrand*, p. 293; M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa* 1929, p. 146.

<sup>120</sup> Scipio Africanus, “A new development of dance styles takes place among the Reef Bantu”, *The Bantu World*, 28/05/1932, p. 9.

<sup>121</sup> Scipio Africanus, “A new development of dance styles takes place among the Reef Bantu”, *The Bantu World*, 28/05/1932, p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 76-79, 128. Also see D. Rycroft, African music in Johannesburg: African and non-African features, *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 11, 1959, p. 25 where Rycroft contemplates on the role that traditional music, western influences and missionaries had on the music and dance styles of the black society in Johannesburg in the early twenty century.

<sup>123</sup> D. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, pp. 135-164.

<sup>124</sup> Anonym, “Bantu have changed their social life as progress continues”, *The Bantu World*, 30/04/1932, p. 9.

It was especially because of its “social value” that ballroom dancing became more acceptable, in spite of the moral concerns of some. In an increasingly marginalized society it became progressively more important to associate with the “right” people to survive socially and to be regarded as part of the respected African elite. In the context of black South Africa in the 1930s, this meant being “traditional”, being like an African-American or being like the British middle class who, amongst other things, formed clubs and danced ballroom.<sup>125</sup> Ballroom dancing was used, as noted by Coplan and others, to distinguish between social statuses within the townships.<sup>126</sup> Coplan makes a very important point when he differentiates between groups of black people based on their leisure choices: the mission educated African middle class “who worked in Johannesburg as clerks, teachers, preachers and tradesmen” and regarded themselves as “...an elite cultural vanguard of African society”, and the “...unskilled domestic, commercial, and industrial workers...with little regard for moral admonitions”.<sup>127</sup> While the latter group could spend whole weekends drinking and dancing in shebeens, the middle classes’ social functions consisted of “...a choir, a variety concert, or a western-style dance orchestra”.<sup>128</sup>

In his 1973 study of the role of urban African women, K. Little emphasises the perceived perception of respectability that a woman obtained when she was able to dance ballroom. He states that in Bamako, the capital of Mali:

...another socially useful skill is dancing, and among the circles into which an ambitious girl hopes to enter, the preferred style is often ‘ballroom’. In order, therefore, to keep up to date she belongs to clubs organized specifically for this purpose. These associations also teach

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<sup>125</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp 129-131.

<sup>126</sup> D. B. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 136; P. C. Alegi, “Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performance, and social identity in South Africa, 1920s-1945”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2002, pp. 17-38; E. Hellman, *Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban Native slum yard*, p. 94; C.M. de Villiers, *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging*, p. 337.

<sup>127</sup> D. B. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 136.

<sup>128</sup> D. B. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 137.

their members the latest version of jazz and jive, and there are expert male and female performers to demonstrate steps. The most select of these clubs is known as the ‘Casa Antica’ because the majority of its members are educated. For both the girls and young men the social advantage of membership is the opportunity afforded of keeping in the swim; and, above all, no effort is spared in the exact imitation of modern dances. Consequently, in accordance with the world to which both sexes aspire, women members are expected to be well dressed in the fashionable Western way in addition to being educated and good dancers. In fact, a new social feminine social type has been created by these clubs. She is the *ecoliere*, that is to say, a girl who dresses well, though provocatively, and is, for both older men of position and the younger men, a symbol of cultural achievement. She is desired both as a wife and as a mistress because she offers the double promise of modern social distinction and sexual licence...<sup>129</sup>

It was especially because of this “perceived” notion that dancing ballroom created an image of social respectability that it was advocated by some leaders within the black South African community.<sup>130</sup> By the turn of the 1920s Coplan argues that ballroom dancing was used especially at black clubs, like the BMSC, “ABC Club” and people visiting the “Inchcape Hall”, to make them “look and feel” more European and thus validate their existence.<sup>131</sup> In *An essay on the Economics of detribalization in Northern Rhodesia*, Godfrey Wilson concurred with this view when he describes how important he believes it was for the various African clubs of “Broken hill” to get “recognized and respected by Europeans as civilized men, not as decorative barbarians.”<sup>132</sup> According to Wilson “...almost every town ... has its African dance club...” and these clubs “...hold regular dances in European style...”<sup>133</sup> He goes on to show that there was “considerable rivalry between the dance clubs of different towns...” and makes the point that at the ballroom dance competitions “...European spectators are essential; their presence is the *cachet* of success and they alone can act as judges...”<sup>134</sup> “The adoption of European

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<sup>129</sup> K. Little, *African women in towns: an aspect of Africa’s social revolution*, p.143.

<sup>130</sup> Z. K. Matthews, “The tribal spirit among educated South Africans”, *Man*, 35 (1), February 1935, pp. 26-27.

<sup>131</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 129-131.

<sup>132</sup> G. Wilson, *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers, number 6 An essay on the economics of detribalization in Northern Rhodesia part 2* (Manchester, Institute for Social Research, University of Zambia, 1968). p. 19. My thanks to R. Ross for this reference.

<sup>133</sup> G. Wilson, *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>134</sup> G. Wilson, *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers*, pp. 18-19.



dress (and its display in dancing) goes together with the adoption of European manners...”.<sup>135</sup> He also indicates that in “...the rivalry of different dance clubs is manifest the effect that interracial relations have on the conventional relations of the Africans themselves.”<sup>136</sup>

While Wilson’s essay focuses primarily on racial attitudes and tribal identities in Rhodesia during the 1940s, the same struggle to overcome prejudices and the need for white approval at balls of the “outcast” societies he discusses are apparent in contemporary South African newspapers and travel reports.<sup>137</sup> Perham describes, for example, the mixture of costumes and “ardent” ballroom dancers during a function in a Johannesburg municipal hall and its similarity with white ballroom functions.<sup>138</sup>

However, despite the social value that was placed by some on the “new” ballroom dances and the interest from the white competitive ballroom dancing world towards black ballroom dancing events, there was increased resistance from some top institutions towards black participation. From the end of the 1920s there appears a sudden urge from the side of government to rather promote “traditional” tribal dances.<sup>139</sup> After a traditional war dance exhibition, for example, the Native Sub-commissioner of Benoni assessed the situation and indicated that the traditional dances amongst the black labourers make them “...amenable to law and order...” and the “playing of native pianos and other such amusements are encouraged amongst the Portuguese boys who do not understand such civilised recreation as Football etc...”.<sup>140</sup> Various war dances were also commonly performed to entertain foreign visitors such as His Royal Highness Prince George during his visit to Africa<sup>141</sup> so as to showcase the traditional cultures, but at the same time to

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<sup>135</sup> G. Wilson, *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>136</sup> G. Wilson, *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers*, p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Anonym, “All merrymakers enjoy themselves. Celebrated artists play before an eager audience”, *The Bantu World*, 06/08/1932, p. 9; Anonym, “Miss Nettie Nkosi promotes dance and concert in communal hall”, *The Bantu World*, 20/10/1934, p. 17; M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929*, p. 146.

<sup>138</sup> M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An autobiographical journey in Southern Africa 1929* (London, Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 146.

<sup>139</sup> Anonym, “Native war dance to-day”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 05/03/1934, p. 7.

<sup>140</sup> SAB, Pretoria: B.N. 25/4/1928, Native sub commissioner- The director of Native labour, 18/05/1928.

<sup>141</sup> See for example inventory of the Royal visit in SAB, Pretoria: GG 2318, 2/240: Event Inventory.



emphasise the difference between the various racial groups. Tourists (including acclaimed international ballroom individuals) reinforced the perceived perception of the “traditional African” by insisting on seeing “tribal war” dances. In April 1935 a English dance master, Felix Demery on visiting South Africa, was “... very anxious to see a native war dance...[since]...so much had been said about it in Britain...”.<sup>142</sup>

It is also apparent that the governor-generals and government officials were sometimes rather reluctant to give black communities permission to dance ballroom.<sup>143</sup> For example, in 1934 a certain R. Chake wrote to the governor-general asking permission to open “The African Social Centre or Club” for the “[c]ooks, waiters, messengers and clerks employed in the town of Pretoria” where members would dance.<sup>144</sup> In another instance, a certain Mackson Zigale applied to the government’s office in 1941 to use a Native bioscope hall, for which he paid a monthly rental of £12. 10., to “conduct a social club at which members of this club will be allowed dancing for 4 nights of the week”.<sup>145</sup> Both applications were refused with no explanation as to why these requests had been turned down. This response underlines the fact that government did not accept black people as anything other than “temporary workers” in urban areas who did not need permanent recreational facilities within the boundaries of “white” South Africa.

Although the white authorities did not specifically ban ballroom dancing, the various segregationist laws influenced the manner and style in which ballroom dancing was practiced among black society. The devastating effects that the depression, droughts and Land Acts of the late 1920s and 1930s had on the southern Africa countryside drew a continuous flow of workers, and potential dancers, to work in the mines, households and secondary industries such as the textile, and clothing industries of the big cities.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Lancer, “In the dancing world: success of the Easter dance events”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 20/04/1935, p. 6.

<sup>143</sup> *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 18/10/1916, cited in D. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 136.

<sup>144</sup> SAB, Pretoria: GG 1570, 50/1517, n.a.: R.I. Chake-Governor-General, 14/11/1934.

<sup>145</sup> TAB, Pretoria: KJB N9/10/3, n.a.: L.N. Rosencrown-Native Commissioner, 11/02/1941.

<sup>146</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, pp. 106-107.

Moreover, Acts like the 1930 Natives in (Urban Areas) Act,<sup>147</sup> and 1931 Regulation of Public Entertainment Act<sup>148</sup> made it illegal for the black dancers to freely visit dancing halls in their spare time, making it seemingly impossible for dancing to thrive under these restrictive conditions. Hellman noted for example that “...before the ban on organising parties, dances and concerts was enforced, a number of men and women found their entertainment in attending these functions on Saturday nights and Sundays”.<sup>149</sup> The cancelling of events and enforcing of restrictions often came suddenly and without an explanation.<sup>150</sup> This is evident in an announcement in *The Bantu World* where people of the Western Township were informed that they would not be allowed to use the local hall for dancing on a Sunday.<sup>151</sup>

The evolving race legislation, that was indeed becoming more restrictive in nature from the 1920s onwards, ironically also reinforced the presence of ballroom dances within the black community. As it was, for example, “illegal” for blacks to be outside during a certain time in the night (due to the various curfew laws), dance parties then became all night affairs creating ample time to practice and learn from one another within a confined space. Economic restraints and other everyday problems, like the lack of sufficient transport to and from late night dance competitions, also served to keep ballroom dancing within the confines of the areas in which black society were resident.<sup>152</sup>

Yet, in many instances, for a large percentage of the black population ballroom dancing was simply “too expensive” to participate in. In comparison with other leisure activities

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<sup>147</sup> *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1930*, Act No. 25 of 1930: Natives in (Urban Areas) Act (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1930), pp. 178-201.

<sup>148</sup> *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1931*, Act number 28 of 1931: Regulation of Public Entertainment Act (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1931), pp. 130-140.

<sup>149</sup> E. Hellman, *Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban Native slum yard*. p. 93.

<sup>150</sup> V. Erlmann, “‘Horses in the race course’: the domestication of ingoma dancing in South Africa, 1929-1939”, *Popular Music*, 8(3), African music, October 1989, p. 267.

<sup>151</sup> Anonym, “Western Township News: the Communal Hall”, *The Bantu World*, 26/05/1934, p. 23; SAB, Pretoria: BNS. 1/1/503, 16/8/85.: Provincial secretary – The secretary for the interior, 28/11/1940 where local residents of a Cape Town municipality requested that the Sunday observance law be specially amended to prohibit dancing on a Sunday because of the dangers of “undesirable developments”.

<sup>152</sup> D. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, p. 77. Also see Anonym, A better understanding of our culture, *Drum: Drum woman*, April 1989, pp. 84, 86. Where the South African dancer, Nomsa Manaka, explains how she overcame various problems in Soweto.

like football, ballroom dancing required extravagant clothes, dance bands, suitable space and expensive training.<sup>153</sup> Most of the profits made during ballroom dance club competitions were used to cover travelling expenses to the next ballroom competition, thus making it difficult to invest, like the white dancers did, in expensive dancing lessons.<sup>154</sup> The poor economic and social conditions of the majority of urban black society consequently made ballroom dancing a difficult or unviable leisure choice. Hellman also makes specific reference to the economic pressures of ballroom dancing stating that it is "...beyond the financial reach of many..." and "more respectable dances such as [what the] Inchcape Hall offers, concerts and sport matches are only for the prosperous".<sup>155</sup>

The very different social reality of the black and white communities is evident in the way that the two racial groups experienced the accessibility of ballroom dancing. Anthony Sampson mentions, for example, the diverse perceptions that white and black people had of the city and consequently suggests how their dance experiences would differ. He states that "...while the white man experienced Johannesburg as a "...city of cinemas, hotels, restaurants and night clubs. To the African, it is a city of shebeens...".<sup>156</sup> While European balls were very exclusive in their nature and emphasise the "white only" dimension, black South African balls were truly "rainbow balls". They generally consisted of coloured and black musicians playing European and American style Jazz music that was danced to by black men and women from a variety of language and cultural groups and judged by white adjudicators!<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> P. C. Alegi, "Playing to the gallery? Sport, cultural performance, and social identity in South Africa, 1920s-1945", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1), 2002, pp. 17-38; L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume 2 Working life 1886-Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), pp. 216-217.

<sup>154</sup> G. Wilson, *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers number six: An essay on the economics of detribalization in Northern Rhodesia part II* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1968), p. 19.

<sup>155</sup> E. Hellman, *Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban Native slum yard*. p.94.

<sup>156</sup> A. Sampson, *Drum. The making of a magazine* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005), p. 50. Also see Robert Ross, *A concise history of South Africa* (United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 97.

<sup>157</sup> C. Ballantine, "Music and emancipation: The social role of black Jazz and Vaudeville in South Africa between the 1920s and early 1940s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17(1), March 1991, p 7; David. B. Coplan, *In township tonight!*, pp. 128-131; TAB, Pretoria: KJB N9/10/3, n.a.: L.N. Rosencrown-Native Commissioner, 11/02/1941.

## Chapter 7

### **Epilogue: Dancing in black and white shoes**

The Second World War, along with the new political dispensation, completely changed the economic, social and political situation in South Africa. Both the consequences of the War and the reality of Apartheid intensified the racial division that existed within the ballroom dance fraternity. With separation being entrenched in the Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act, Separate Amenities Act, Immorality Act and a plethora of other racially based pieces of legislation in the 1950s, the social dance – and competitive dance floor – remained divided along black and white lines. However, half a century later the situation gradually changed and ballroom dancing ultimately reformed into a multiracial sport. This chapter will present a brief overview of this metamorphosis in South African ballroom dancing during the second half of the twentieth century.

After 1948 South African industries prospered and while its population continued to grow,<sup>888</sup> the “NP’s determination to maintain white domination” was at the centre of South Africa’s national policy.<sup>889</sup> The apartheid regime was “pragmatic” and focused on “separatist development” favoring the white section of society.<sup>890</sup> In reality government “regulated”, as noted in a parliamentary debate of the 1970s, “... where they [South Africans] should live, where they should work, their social life and their economic life”.<sup>891</sup>

While ballroom dancing continued to feature prominently in relatively affluent white society, dancing ballroom within the black community became, as was the case with so many other activities, synonymous with the struggle. Formal dance venues became an even bigger luxury than in previous decades and with the Apartheid government’s increased restrictions on the movement of people, ballroom dancing became a

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<sup>888</sup> F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940* (Cambridge, The Press syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2002),

pp. 58, 144; R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 144.

<sup>889</sup> H. Giliomee, “The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(2), June 2003, p. 390

<sup>890</sup> F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, pp. 10, 144.

<sup>891</sup> B. Streek, “When the dancing stops”, *Daily Dispatch*, 24/05/1979, p. 6.

localized activity.<sup>892</sup> Moreover, forced removals and township relocations often meant that communities lost their recreational and regular dancing venues. For example, with the forced removal of Sophiatown in 1956 to Soweto, there was almost no space available nor money allocated to provide for recreational facilities and halls.<sup>893</sup> Lack of basic infrastructures like sufficient transport and viable dancing halls, also made it a challenge if not an impossibility to dance ballroom.<sup>894</sup> Strict censorship exercised by the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) furthermore made the importation and promotion of dance music difficult and black urban communities consequently experienced a “sense of cultural isolation”.<sup>895</sup>

While it was, from a practical point of view, far easier for white dancers to participate and attend ballroom functions, there appears to have been an increase in moral resistance against it from certain churches and other organized groups in the latter half of the twentieth century than in the first half.<sup>896</sup> In a sense, the hardliner Afrikaner nationalists put a damper on ballroom dancing: it was briefly over shadowed in popularity by “Volkspeler” as part of the emerging “Voortrekkerkultuur” in the Afrikaner community and remained a part of some sections of society to the end of the twentieth century and beyond.<sup>897</sup> Although “Volkspeler” was, as indicated by M. Burden, derived from a combination of various ballroom dances, ballroom dancing was generally regarded as being “dangerous” in conservative communities.<sup>898</sup> Social

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<sup>892</sup> KAB: LDC 290: Arthur Murray School of dancing, 11/06/1965-27/02/1980; SAB: BAO 21/63, R144/11, Ondersekretaris sport en ontspanning, 25/10/1973; D. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5(2), April 1979, p. 160; Act No. 25 of 1945, *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1930* (Government Printer, Cape Town, 1945), pp. 109-207; Act No. 36 of 1957, *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1930* (Government Printer, Cape Town, 1957), p. 399.

<sup>893</sup> Robert, Ross. *A concise history of South Africa*, 1992. p. 119; D. Coplan, “The African Musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5 (2), April 1979, p. 160.

<sup>894</sup> Anonym, “A better understanding of our culture”, *Drum Woman*, issue 24, April 1989, p. 84.

<sup>895</sup> D. Coplan, “The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry, 1900-1960”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5(2), April 1979, pp. 146, 148.

<sup>896</sup> SAB: BNS. 1/1/503, 16/8/85: Provincial secretary – The secretary for the interior, 28/11/1940.

<sup>897</sup> A. Grundlingh, “Playing for power? Rugby, Afrikaner Nationalism, and masculinity in South Africa, c. 1900-70”, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 11(3), pp. 408-430; P. Joyce, *South Africa's Yesterdays*, (Reader's Digest Association South Africa, Cape Town, 1981), p. 102. J. Morgenrood, “Jonges draai nog tiekie en sing van blinkvosperd”, *Die Volksblad*, 04/07/1996, p. 3; P. Vosloo, “Shot in the arm for Volkspeler movement”, *Pretoria News*, 13/07/1989, p. 6; Anonym, “n Nuwe bundle vir Volkspeler”, *Die Transvaler*, 17/07/1989, p. 4.

<sup>898</sup> M. Burden, *Die herkoms en ontwikkeling van die Afrikaanse volksdans*; K. Mooney, “ ‘Ducktails, flick-knives and pugnacity’: Subcultural and hegemonic masculinities in South Africa, 1948-1960”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(4), December 1998, pp. 764, 767, 769.

dances became closely associated with “moral degeneration” and “substance abuse warnings” were raised against the “dangers of dancing”. Society was advised on how not to practice it. In the mid-seventies a certain J. H. van Wyk, speaking for the Calvinist Churches, differentiated between the accepted and treacherous way to practice this social activity, noting that:

Daar is ook ‘n verskil of daar in ‘n sitkamer en skoolsaal sober gedans word en wanneer daar in ‘n danssaal op die maat van opruimende musiek, met oormatige drank en in suggestiewe kleredrag gedans word. (There is also a difference between dancing soberly in a lounge and school hall and when dancing in a dancing hall to the beat of lively music with excessive alcohol and in suggestive clothing).<sup>899</sup>

The dawning of the “rock ‘n roll” era in the 1950s and “swing” in the 1960s further aggravated concerns. These popular social dance crazes<sup>900</sup> were condemned by the NGK (Dutch Reformed Church), as well as some newspapers.<sup>901</sup> On occasion a commentator in the English press for example described these rock ‘n roll dancers as “primitive...hordes of sloppy, aggressive, be-jeaned louts...”.<sup>902</sup> Despite this, ballroom dancing remained a popular leisure activity among urban residents.<sup>903</sup> Interviewees recall the popularity of ballroom dancing in communities in areas like Marabastad during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>904</sup>

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<sup>899</sup> J. H. van Wyk, *Instituut vir die bevordering van Calvinisme: Die etiek van dans*, p.7.

<sup>900</sup> In his studies de Villiers found that these “Jive” dance crazes was the most popular dance form during the 1960s and 1970s in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereniging areas. C.M. de Villiers, *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging*, p. 571.

<sup>901</sup> P. Joyce, *South Africa's Yesterdays*, p. 192; C. Hamm, “Rock n’ Roll in a very strange society”, *Popular music* 5, 1985, pp. 159-163.

<sup>902</sup> C. Hamm, “Rock n’ Roll in a very strange society”, *Popular music* 5, 1985, pp. 159-160.

<sup>903</sup> National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria: Marabastad exhibition, visited 1 August 2007; WITS, Johannesburg: A 410, B 2.8.13, M Ballinger, Correspondence: individuals: E. Louw 1943-1960; Anonym, “Fine effort for medical aid for Russia”, *Guardian*, 4 March 1943, p. 7.

<sup>904</sup> National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria: Marabastad exhibition, visited 1 August 2007. Also see A 410/ B 2.8.13, M Ballinger, Correspondence: individuals: E. Louw 1943-1960; Anonym, “Fine effort for medical aid for Russia”, *Guardian*, 4 March 1943, p. 7.



According to C. Hamm the black press was also far more tolerant towards the 1950s and 1960s music and dance crazes and, in some instances, even promoted them.<sup>905</sup>

This can for example be seen in an article published in *The New Nation* reporting on the African middle class that danced the “respectable” waltz, foxtrot and tango, to the “popular European strains” and how this, along with soccer, helped to form a “new culture of the city”.<sup>906</sup> The efforts that were made earlier in the century to promote ballroom dancing amongst the younger generations appeared to have been successful. While ballroom dancing was still regularly practiced by married educated black couples between the ages of twenty six to forty five, de Villiers’ studies found that it had a definite following amongst young adults between the ages of sixteen and twenty five.<sup>907</sup>

Furthermore, prominent dancing centres of the earlier century, like the BMSC, continued to present monthly social and ballroom dance evenings with local bands for its members.<sup>908</sup> In this elitist society “all modern jiving and twisting was abhorred” and only ballroom dancing was allowed.<sup>909</sup> In her study on the African elite, Brandel-Syrier also noted how they, like their Western counterparts, danced “unsmilingly, the tangoes, the fox-trots the quick Viennese waltzes and the slow English waltzes – those hardy perennials of the European dance floor...”.<sup>910</sup> She goes on to say how even with the unremitting objections against the “social detestable”<sup>911</sup> behaviour at dances, efforts, like renovating the dance floor and hiring dance areas out for a “nominal fee”,

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<sup>905</sup> C. Hamm, Rock n’ Roll in a very strange society”, *Popular music*, 5, pp. 164-168.

<sup>906</sup> Anonym, “Soccer and dance create new culture”, *The New Nation*, 3(46), 23/11/1988, p. 1

<sup>907</sup> C.M. de Villiers, *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging*, pp. 567, 569, 570, 571

<sup>908</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1940 p. 2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1947 p. 3; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1943 p.2; A1058, WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1958. p. 2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1957. p. 3; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1956. p. 2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1951. p. 2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1953. p. 2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1949. p. 3.

<sup>909</sup> M. Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown elite: a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>910</sup> M. Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown elite: a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>911</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1950, p.2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1945.



were made to draw the “entire non-European community” to the dance floor.<sup>912</sup> Internationally acclaimed ballroom dancers including, John Wells and Renee Sissons, continued to perform for dance enthusiasts.<sup>913</sup> In his research on leisure activities among adult black males in the Pretoria Witwatersrand Vereniging area, De Villiers also found ballroom dancing clubs, like the “Vereeniging Ballroom Dance Club”, the “Mamelodi Central Dancing Club” as well as the “Chiawelo Dance Club”. All of these were affiliated with the “Transvaal Non-European Ballroom Dancing Association”,<sup>914</sup> and each had between thirty six and fifty members in the early 1960s.<sup>915</sup>

As indicated in previous chapters, ballroom dancing became instrumental among organisations to draw members together as the years progressed. Both Fanon and Cabral, 1960s and 1970s African philosophers, called on African society to use dance as “committed art” alongside other sources to fight for freedom, and once they became independent, to use dancing to affirm their culture.<sup>916</sup> In South Africa, trade unions and political parties increasingly used ballroom dancing events to further their cause. This is apparent in ANC and Communist Party correspondence with Oliver Tambo:

We know that you will not be able to attend because Mr. Swart has banned you from attending any gathering with a common purpose- and our Dance will certainly have a common purpose, that of helping to keep South Africa’s only progressive party in the forefront of the struggle for freedom. As one of the many who have been victimized for their political beliefs and activities, you realize perhaps more keenly than others the role our paper plays in enabling the banned to break through the political sound barrier and thereby maintain invaluable contact with the people. We are sure that although you will not be present at the dance in person, you will certainly be there in spirit, and that you too would like to make the customary contribution to our funds. We ask you, therefore, to make a special donation for this particular occasion,

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<sup>912</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1943, p. 3; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1944, p. 6; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1946. p. 2.

<sup>913</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1948. p. 3.

<sup>914</sup> As in the case with the establishment of the SADTA, records of the founding of this Association could not be traced.

<sup>915</sup> C.M. de Villiers, *Die vryetydsbesteding van volwasse manlike Bantoe in die gebied Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging*, pp. 332-333.

<sup>916</sup> K. Welsh-Asante, “Philosophy and dance in Africa. The view of Cabral and Fanon”, *Journal of Black studies*, 21(2), December 1990, pp. 224-232.

accompanied by a short message of greetings to those who will be present...<sup>917</sup>

There was indeed an excessive control of individuals and the movement of people by government and an increased emphasis on the separate development of the “Bantu” during the second half of the twentieth century as the Apartheid government enforced its social engineering. This is further evident in, for example, an increased desire by the government to promote “typical Bantu tribal music” on radio seemingly alienating these sections of society from Western influence during the 1960s.<sup>918</sup> Furthermore, media reports as late as the 1970s, 1980s and even the 1990s present glimpses of how government forcefully tried to prevent ballroom dancers from different racial groups from dancing together. Newspaper articles in this regard containing phrases like “When the dancing stopped”,<sup>919</sup> “all-white dancing”,<sup>920</sup> “...geen gemengde dansery toegelaat nie [no mixed dancing allowed]”,<sup>921</sup> “Gekleurdes weggewys by dansery [coloureds showed away at dance]”<sup>922</sup> reflect on the deep division within ballroom dancing society.

However, the second half of the twentieth century in South Africa was not only marked by pro white Nationalist rule, but also revealed a time of “rapid economic growth”, especially in industries that were associated with ballroom dancing.<sup>923</sup> The influx of international records, tape recorders and better radios allowed for Western influenced style music and dances performed by black dance bands to be heard alongside the prescribed programmes.<sup>924</sup> Also, unions like the Garment Workers Union, for example, hosted regular ballroom dancing events and made use of a variety

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<sup>917</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: Ad2186, M7.5, Carmeson & B.P. Bunting- O Tambo, 14 December 1955. Also see WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbe 2.13: Garment Workers Union: Cape branches, East London Correspondence A-F: Secretary Garment Workers Union East London – General Secretary, 26/11/1954.

<sup>918</sup> C. Hamm, “The constant companion of Man: Separate development Radio Bantu and Music”, *Popular Music*, 10(2), May 1991, p. 161.

<sup>919</sup> B. Streek, “When the dancing stops”, *Daily Dispatch*, 24/05/1979, p. 6.

<sup>920</sup> Anonym, “Dance shock for black rep”, *Cape Herald*, 01/09/1979, p. 3.

<sup>921</sup> C. Bosman, “Dansvoerval onnodig, sê bestuurder”, *Die Transvaler*, 04/06/1980, p. 14.

<sup>922</sup> L. Laubscher, “Gekleurdes weggewys by dansery”, 07/09/1995, p. 11.

<sup>923</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth-century South Africa*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 163, 165, 175, 176.

<sup>924</sup> C. Hamm, “The constant companion of Man: Separate development Radio Bantu and Music”, *Popular Music*, 10(2), May 1991, pp. 163-161.

of modern advertising mediums, including bioscope screenings, posters and international dancers, to draw people to their events.<sup>925</sup>

The continued media interest in the international world ultimately created an obsession with all things British and American, especially in the ballroom dancing fraternity.<sup>926</sup> Films increasingly became an important medium through which international ballroom was broadcast and recorded. Dancing actors and actresses like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers of the 1930s; Gene Kelly of the 1940s and 1950s;<sup>927</sup> Al Pacino, Richard Gere and Jennifer Lopez in the late 1990s, became iconized for both their acting abilities and dancing talents. These films increased the popularity of the dance industry and drew more dancers to the ballroom.<sup>928</sup> Both social ballroom dancing and competitive dancing continued to feature in news and reports.<sup>929</sup> During the height of Apartheid, there were cases of experienced ballroom dance teachers offering free lessons in township for “devoted dancers” as part of “gemeenskapsdiens” (community service) and thus these lessons continued to form

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<sup>925</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: Ad2186, M7.5, Carmeson & B.P. Bunting- O Tambo, 14/12/1955; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbc 7.2.3: Garment Workers Union: Transvaal Union: Transvaal branches, Dance Committee 1942: Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dance committee meeting of the Fordsburg Branch of the Garment Workers’ Union held on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1942 at 6 p.m. at 42 Central roads, Fordsburg, Johannesburg; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbc 14.4.6: Garment Workers Union: Transvaal branches, Millinery Mens’ Hats, Millinery Branch, Special minutes: Minutes of a meeting of the Dance sub-committee of the executive committee of the millinery branch, Garment Workers’ Union, held at Avon house, President street, Johannesburg, on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1953 at 5 p.m; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbe 2.13: Garment Workers Union: Cape branches, East London Correspondence A-F: Secretary Garment Workers Union East London – General Secretary, 26/11/1954; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbe 2.13: Garment Workers Union: Cape branches, East London Correspondence A-F: Our Annual ball, 27/11/1954; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbe 2.13: Garment Workers Union: Cape branches, East London Correspondence A-F: Adjudicating in “Miss Garment Worker” Contest, Hester Cornelius-Dulcie Hartwell, 19/11/1954; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbe 2.13: Garment Workers Union: Cape branches, East London Correspondence A-F: The second meeting of the dance committee of the no. 1 branches of the Garment workers Union of S.A. held on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1955 at 4.15 p.m at Avon House, Johannesburg. pp. 1-3; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bbe 5.1.3.2. Garment Workers Union Port Elizabeth Branch- E.S. Sachs, 05/01/1950; WITS, Johannesburg: AH1092, Bcd 3, G.W.U. Cape branches, Port Elizabeth Correspondence (Special topics D-K).

<sup>926</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 175, 176.

<sup>927</sup> G. Eichbaum, “A tribute to Gene Kelly”, *Scenaria* 182, March, pp. 12-15. Gene Kelly’s dancing films included: *Anchors Aweigh* in 1945 and *Singin’ in the Rain* in 1952.

<sup>928</sup> A.D. Smith, “This is where the life is. Impressions of the new South Africa”, *American Theatre*, 12(5), May/June 1995, p. 2.

<sup>929</sup> WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report 1960, p.4; WITS, Johannesburg: A882, Bb2.2.4, Notes submitted by Miss Joane Pim, L.I.L.A. on routines quarterly visit of 16<sup>th</sup> February 1971 to Harmony Gold mining company limited, p. 2; WITS, Johannesburg: A 1058 Bantu Men’s Social Centre Records 1923-1975: Annual report, 1961, pp. 3-4; KAB: LDC 290: Arthur Murray School of dancing, 27/02/1980.

part of the life of some township children.<sup>930</sup> By the late 1990s ballroom dancing still was, according to a study published in *Newsweek*, the third most popular leisure activity in South Africa, after soccer and boxing.<sup>931</sup> As in the Apartheid years, ballroom dancing was seen as an escape from poverty where during a few hours of the week, ballroom dancers could dance like “kings and queens”.<sup>932</sup>

However, apart from its social appeal, it was both the long involvement that ballroom dancing had within South African society at large, as well as the practicing of ballroom dancing on a competitive level, that appears to have sustained its presence in South African communities up to the present day. The 1980s was a turning point in South Africa’s competitive ballroom dance history. During this time the South African Dance Sport Federation (SADSF) that consisted of the Transvaal Amateur Dance Association (TADA), the Cape Amateur Dance Association (CADA), and the Natal Amateur Dance Association (NADA) was formed to control “white” dancing competitive events.<sup>933</sup> The beginning of the 1990s further saw the creation of the South African National Council for Amateur Dancers (SANCAD), a national organization for black dancers. In 1994, in the post-Apartheid South Africa, the black and white dancing bodies finally amalgamated to form the Federation of Dance Sport South Africa (FEDANSA). Despite various disputes within the organization, the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) recognized FEDANSA in 2006 as the “sole representative for Dance Sport in South Africa”.<sup>934</sup> Although problems like infighting within the formal dancing bodies appear to have persisted, the twenty-first century ballroom dancing events encapsulate the

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<sup>930</sup> S. Dalton, “Ritmes, passies en swier”, *Insig*, Maart 2000, p. 36; K. Ngwena, “Queen of the ballroom: It was a historically white pursuit for most of her career, but that didn’t stop her becoming a champion”, *Drum*, 468, 23 August 2001, pp. 86-87; T. Beaver, “Spin on the floor is dream come true for township children”, *The Sunday Independent*, 24/09/1995, p. 4.

<sup>931</sup> Cited in S. Dalton, “Ritmes, passies en swier”, *Insig*, Maart 2000, p. 36. For earlier examples of the popularity of soccer and ballroom dancing see Anonym, “Soccer and dance create new culture”, *The new nation*, 3(46), 23/11/1988, p. 1.

<sup>932</sup> S. Dalton, “Ritmes, passies en swier”, *Insig*, Maart 2000, p. 36.

<sup>933</sup> For the constitution of these associations see: South African Amateur dance sport association (SAADA) Kwazulu-Natal provincial faculty, <<http://www.saadakzn.org/>>, 2006. Accessed: 17/12/2006; Federation of dance sport South Africa. <<http://www.fedansa.org/docs/general/FEDANSA%20NATIONAL%20CONSTITUTION>>, 2007, Accessed: 23/06/2008; F.E.D.A.N.S.A Federation of Dance Sport South Africa Rule book, 1998 (amended 2001), <[http://www.fedansa.org/docs/rules/RULE%20BOOK%20FEDANSA%2006%20\(2\).doc](http://www.fedansa.org/docs/rules/RULE%20BOOK%20FEDANSA%2006%20(2).doc)>, 2006. Accessed: 20 February 2006.

<sup>934</sup> FEDANSA.org, <<http://www.fedansa.org/history.php>>, 2006. Accessed: 25/02/2008.

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GG 2251, 11/3: Col. Gurney-Clark & Adeler's Orchestras, 05/10/1921.

GG 2251, 11/3: Col. Theo T. Truter-Captain Annesley, 25/09/1923.

GG 2251, 11/3: Dance programme 03/05/1921.

GG 2251, 11/3: Gurney-Clark & Adeler, 07/11/1921.

GG 2251, 11/3: Invitation card stating that the "Their Royal Highness Prince and Princess to invite-  
-----to a garden party at the Government House Pretoria on Wednesday, 17 October, 3.30 pm to  
5.30.p.m.

GG 2251, 11/3: Sunday Times Syndicate limited-Colonel Gurney, 09/11/1921.

GG 2251, 11/3: T.C. Gurney- Messr Clark & Adeler, 07/11/1921

GG 2251, 11/3: T.C. Gurney- Sirs, 05/10/1921.

GG 2251, 11/3: T.W. Beckette- Col. Gurney, 09/11/1921.

GG 2255, 1/92: Letters asking for support from various Jewish charities, 02/05/1925-28/04/1930.

GG 2303, 1/237: Basil A. Reen-E.H. Davidson, 23/05/1932

GG 2305, 1/340: M. Plunkett-Governor-General, 21/06/1934.

GG 2306, 1/360: Hyde-Mrs. P. Cranswick, 21/12/1934.

GG 2306, 1/396: Chas. N. Hoy-Private secretary to his Excellency the Governor-General,  
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GG 2306, 1/396: Lt. Col. N. Hoy-Admiral Halifax, 20/02/1937.

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GG 2318, 2/221: G.W. Halifax-F. Moorcroft Lamb, 05/03/1937.

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GG 2318, 2/221: J. Calder-The Major Lewis, 03/09/1936.

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GG 2318, 2/240: Event Inventory.  
GG 2318, 2/240: Invitation card for the *Grand Caledonian ball*.  
GG 2318, 2/240: Invitation card from The Officers of the Active citizen force (Transvaal Command), no 501.  
GG 2318, 2/240: Lieut R.N- The Private secretary to the administrator, 19/01/1934.  
GG 2318, 2/240: N.A.- Sir Abe, 13/01/1934.  
GG 2318, 2/240: P.P. Cay's Photo service-Comptroller Government house Cape Town, 30/01/1934.  
GG 2318, 2/240: Tyrwhitt-Sir Abe Bailey (telegram), 12/01/1934.  
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GG 2337, 1/31: H.C. Juta- the Organiser-Secretary of Habonim [*sic.*], 10/04/1937.  
GG 2339 1/51: G.W. de Klerck-The secretary, Rand Club, 07/10/1937.  
GG 2339, 1/52: Programme of the *Fifteenth Pretoria Musical festival*.  
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GG 2339, 1/59: M.L. Foster-Mr. Klerck, 13/03/1939.  
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GG 2343, 2/9, 2: P. Margetts – H.E. the Governor General of South Africa, 23/02/1938.  
GG 2343, 2/9, 2: W. Smillie-The secretary of His Excellency the Governor General, 07/04/1937.  
GG 2351, 1/69: R.C. Hargreaves-Winifred Stephan, 22/05/1925.  
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seventeenth and nineteenth century idea of “rainbow balls”.<sup>935</sup> At these FEDANSA competitions, dancers and spectators of different races become active, “...clapping, shouting, and rhythmically moving...” participants in the dancing scene.<sup>936</sup> With its close links with the International Dance Sport Federation (IDSF) and the World Dance and Dance Sport Council (WD&DSC), FEDANSA actively oversees, organizes and grades provincial and national competitions to identify the best amateur and professional ballroom dancers in South Africa.<sup>937</sup> The growth of ballroom dancing in South Africa is perhaps most evident in the renewed media coverage which these dancers have received in recent years due to their local involvement with the sport, as well as their international achievements.<sup>938</sup>

Throughout the years South African ballroom dancing has remained a borrowed activity. It was however its foreign allure and the sheer passion for dancing that sustained it in a divided society and that made it possible for dancers to continue to dance in these borrowed shoes. The history of how it started, what it entailed, and who it involved is indeed a “symbolic representation of society” which contributes to another understanding of the complexity of the South African past.

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<sup>935</sup> See Chapter 3; Federation of Dance Sport South Africa, <<http://www.fedansa.org/docs/general/FEDANSA%20NATIONAL%20CONSTITUTION>>, 2007, Accessed: 23/06/2008.

<sup>936</sup> Y. Daniel, “Dance in the African diaspora”, in M. Ember, C.R. Ember, I. Skoggard (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*, p. 354.

<sup>937</sup> F.E.D.A.N.S.A. Federation of Dance Sport South Africa Rule book, 1998 (amended 2001), <[http://www.fedansa.org/docs/rules/RULE%20BOOK%20FEDANSA%2006%20\(2\).doc](http://www.fedansa.org/docs/rules/RULE%20BOOK%20FEDANSA%2006%20(2).doc)>, 2006. Accessed: 20/02/2006.

<sup>938</sup> K. Ngwena, “Queen of the ballroom: It was a historically white pursuit for most of her career, but that didn’t stop her becoming a champion”, *Drum*, 468, 23 August 2001, pp. 86-87.