Introduction

In the spring of 1922, British dance teacher Alec Mackenzie embarked on a trip to Paris. Over the course of several evenings, he toured through many of the city's vibrant public ballrooms, where, to lively and carefree music, dancers performed energetic foxtrots, tangos and one-steps. Mackenzie occasionally joined in, but he also just observed: he was keen to see what was new in French dancing. It was common practice for dance professionals like Mackenzie to visit the Continent, especially when the British dancing season went on hiatus for the summer: they toured as exhibition dancers, participated in competitions and taught classes in places such as the French Riviera. Since the long-ago days when the waltz had been imported to Britain from Vienna, first scandalising but ultimately captivating Regency society, British dancers had also looked to Europe for inspiration and innovation – although by the time Mackenzie visited Paris, both Britain and the Continent had grown increasingly enthralled by the American music and dances of the Jazz Age. Indeed, in one Parisian ballroom, Mackenzie observed the impact that a crowd of American tourists had on the dancing, when they introduced a new variation of the foxtrot from their own country and it was eagerly taken up by their French hosts. Mackenzie later reflected on these events in the British dance profession's premier periodical, the *Dancing Times*: 'in London this could not have happened. Here the dancing is an absolutely national development, extremely characteristic of the national temperament, and very suited to it'. He went on to assert that whereas dancing in France was 'cosmopolitan' and reflected a 'melting-pot' of foreign styles, British dance was 'concrete' and resistant to outside influences.[1]

This moment on a dance floor in Paris, and one British teacher's reaction to what transpired, reveal a great deal about the national and international contexts within which British popular dance operated during the first half of

the twentieth century. Owing to expanding global networks of popular cultural exchange, representatives of Britain, France and the United States were all familiar with the same dance: the foxtrot. Where the dance had originated was also reflective of the growing influence of American culture abroad in this period, although it is significant that the foxtrot continued to be performed in different ways in discrete national settings. What had happened that night in Paris was in fact one example of how transatlantic cultural transmissions occurred, when visitors from America – whether they were performers, teachers or simply tourists – shared dance steps and figures, and helped to modify European dancing. While these exchanges occurred in the opposite direction as well, the flow of American cultural forms to Europe had grown disproportionately strong, a reality that was embraced by some and prompted concerns about Americanisation in others. These patterns were as real for Britain as they were for France, which is what makes Mackenzie's statement that his country was resistant to foreign influence so striking and incongruous. He was not alone in making these types of claims, however: though very few of the dances Britons enjoyed in this period were home-grown, the teachers and entrepreneurs who controlled commercial dancing regularly claimed that Britain had a style of dance that was all its own, and which was expressive of British national identity. This book is in large part about the origins and impacts of that conviction.

Popular dance in Britain fundamentally transformed in the early 1920s. The end of the First World War witnessed what contemporaries referred to as a dancing 'craze' or 'boom', as war-weary men and women of all classes took to the dance floor in an effort to celebrate their victory and forget their traumas. But importantly, *where* and *what* Britons danced was also changing. In 1919, the Hammersmith Palais de Danse opened in west London, inaugurating a new era in British leisure as many more purpose-built and affordable public dance halls began to crop up around the country. Within their often luxurious confines, patrons participated in a wide array of new dances. Building on dramatic changes to dancing styles that had commenced even before the war, the first years of the peace saw the social ascendency of the foxtrot, one-step and other so-called 'modern' ballroom dances. These dances and the public spaces where they were performed both provoked controversy. Modern dances were criticised for being overtly sexual in their movements, and those that were imported from the United States were subject to racist attacks and condemned as examples of American cultural encroachment. Public dance halls, or palais (from the French 'palais de danse'), also waged a continuing

battle for respectability, and in some quarters, dancing became synonymous with a controversial culture of excessive pleasure-seeking, particularly by young women.

Dancing in the English style takes this moment of transformation and disorder at the end of the First World War as its point of departure, and explores the development, experience and cultural representation of popular dance in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. The specific focus is on two distinct yet occasionally overlapping commercial producers – the dance profession and the dance hall industry – which both emerged in the 1920s to seize control of and restore order to the new dancing juggernaut. I argue that these producers, motivated by interests that were both artistic and financial, negotiated the creation of a national dancing style, and its many attendant cultural meanings, with the consumers who composed the 'dancing public'. In making the case for a 'national' dancing style, I am not suggesting that the steps or experience of British dancing were universal or monolithic. Rather, I am arguing that producers and consumers of dance each contributed – sometimes in collaboration, sometimes in conflict – to deliberations over what would be danced in Britain, how and where it would be danced, and what meanings the national style would create, circulate, and embody. In a period of intense social upheaval and warfare, gender, class, sexuality, and race all intersected and were contested through popular dance. In particular, the strong foreign – and increasingly American – influences on dancing directly connected this cultural form with questions about the autonomy and identity of the British nation. Consequently, as much as this book is a history of dancing and dance culture, it also uses dancing as a lens through which to better understand broader historical processes of popular cultural production and consumption, and national identity construction.

The first part of the book focuses on the efforts of dancing's producers to construct a standardised style and experience for British dancing, and the response to those efforts by consumers. These interactions determined which dances would find success in Britain, and how and where they would be performed. It was usually the dance profession and the dance hall industry that introduced new dances to Britain, and they were driven by sizeable financial interests: new dances boosted enrolments in dancing schools and kept people interested in an evening out at the palais. Yet the dancing public also strongly influenced the development of popular dance. They made choices determined by their age, sex, geographic region, personal preferences and, of course, degree of interest in dancing, which significantly individualised their own, and by

extension, the nation's collective experience and style. There were dances that the profession sought to promote, like the tango, which the public resisted, and others that the dancing public continued to perform – such as the Charleston or the jitterbug – regardless of professional ambivalence. In addition, despite the efforts of dance hall chains to construct a standardised experience throughout the British Isles, the ways that people used dancing spaces frequently defied industry intentions. Some patrons were keen amateur dancers, while others came to hear the music of the band, and still others were most interested in socialisation and romance. Through these interactions, the nation's dance culture was created, and revealed for its uniformity and its diversity.

Part two of the book demonstrates how these interactions between dancing's producers and consumers constructed, circulated, embodied – but also commodified – ideologies of gender, class, race and nation. The performance of modern ballroom dances and the goings-on within the plethora of new public dancing spaces fostered debates about sexual behaviour and respectability, and were central to contemporary deliberations over femininity and masculinity. At the same time, within the context of broader societal debates about the impacts of Americanisation, the dance profession and dance hall industry reacted to expanding foreign influence by attempting to 'Anglicise' the nation's popular dancing. The dance profession transformed the steps and figures of foreign dances like the foxtrot and tango into what became known as the 'English style' of ballroom dancing, while the dance hall industry launched a series of novelty dances that were celebrated for their British origins and character, and marketed the wartime dance floor as a site of patriotism and resistance. Through the effort to imbue or legitimate something 'British' in popular dance, this leisure form become an important means through which ideas about what it meant to be British were created, contested and embodied.

Historians of Britain have frequently pointed to the connections between popular culture and national identity construction.[2] Like film, music hall or football, dancing produced and circulated ideologies of nation. This book will show that at different moments popular dance evoked the reserve, refinement and discipline of the national character; nostalgically celebrated Britain's natural beauty and folk tradition; and championed democracy, courage under fire and national unity in wartime. However, I argue that within popular dance national identity also became something that could be sold. I define this phenomenon as *commercial nationalism*. Commercial nationalism was the cultural interaction through which the producers of dance created and marketed a national dancing style and culture, and the dancing public accepted, resisted or transformed

the visions of the nation articulated and physically embodied through dance to varying degrees.[3]

There were a variety of ways in which the dance profession and dance hall industry commodified national identity: paid dance instruction presented a correct British way to dance, certain dances were marketed for their explicit (although often manufactured) Britishness, and during the Second World War Britons were assured that they could do their 'bit' for the war effort and reinforce democracy through a visit to the local palais. Yet Britons were not simply passive recipients of the nationalist impulses promoted through commercial dance culture; they were savvy consumers, generally prioritising a dance's quality or entertainment value over its national origins. In addition, as the American influence on British culture grew as the nation entered the Second World War and re-built in its aftermath, many Britons chose to dance American imports in their original, un-Anglicised forms, expressing alternative national imaginaries. The national identity that was produced through popular dance was thus in a constant state of flux, negotiated and re-negotiated by the British people, often right on the dance floor with their dancing bodies.

The vision of the nation that was produced and circulated by popular dance also illuminates the contested underpinnings of British national identity in this period. First, with the appellation of the 'English style' of ballroom dance serving as the most flagrant example, popular dance often expressed a nationalism that was more English than it was British. Specific idioms of Englishness rather than Britishness were also invoked by dancing's commercial producers when creating the English style or marketing novelty dances. This can in part be explained by what Kenneth Lunn has called the 'series of assumptions about the natural right of England to speak for Britain', which existed long before and continued to be manifested long after the early twentieth century.[4] Peter Mandler has also observed that the England/Britain 'semantic confusion' was never greater than it was during the interwar years (the period upon which much of this book is focused) owing to imperial decline, Irish home rule debates and Celtic nationalism, and the inward turn represented by Little Englandism.[5]

Yet despite its clear reflection of these Anglo-centric tendencies, the popular dance culture produced by the dance profession and dance hall industry was unquestionably meant to be truly national in scope. The dances that comprised the English style were performed throughout the country, some professionals did in fact refer to a 'British style' and regularly called for the English style to be re-named, and dance hall chains extended into all regions. Particularly

Scottish professionals, entrepreneurs, and dancers found important ways to interact with and shape the nation's dancing. Therefore, throughout the book I employ the language of the sources, which generally means referring to the national style or describing certain idioms as 'English'. However, I am concerned with the experience and meanings constructed by popular dance throughout the whole of Britain, and use 'British' to describe the broader dance culture that was created in this period, especially pertaining to its operation in international contexts.

Second, British popular dance constructed national identity in relation to foreign others, including continental Europeans, Latin Americans and especially Americans. It is a central contention of this book that Britain's relationship with the United States and interaction with American cultural products were fundamental to the production and circulation of ideologies of nation in this period. While the importance of the Empire to constructing these idioms has been well established by historians, popular dance helps us to see that the impact of other international influences were also profound by the first half of the twentieth century. As Andrew Thompson has noted, 'the empire [was] not the only frame of reference for national imagining'.[6] At the same time, the 'local' is still a critical element in this study, and the different ways that popular dance was created and experienced not just nationally, but regionally, within the British Isles, clarify its complicated impact on the national culture. In a crucial historical period that witnessed the expansion of commercial leisure, a redefinition of gender roles and significant changes to the racial make-up of the nation – as well as two world wars, new challenges to British imperial hegemony, and the growing global dominance of the United States – an everyday practice like dancing provided a way for Britons to make sense of and to test the social boundaries of their world.

History, theory and 'popular' dance

Dancing was rivalled only by the cinema as the most widespread and favoured leisure activity in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century, and yet it has only recently begun to receive significant attention from historians. Previous scholars have examined dancing as part of broader historical studies about expanding leisure practices, or the class and youth cultures of the interwar years.[7] In this context, there has been especially important scholarship on dancing and women and gender, by historians such as Claire Langhamer, Judith Walkowitz, Melanie Tebbutt and Lucy Bland.[8] The importance of jazz

and its attendant dances to modernist literature has also received attention from literary critics such as Rishona Zimring and Genevieve Abravanel, and dance scholar Theresa Jill Buckland has provided a thorough analysis of British ballroom dancing in the years immediately preceding the period covered here.[9] The most extensive historical work on this topic has been that of James Nott, who in two books has explored dancing's expansion in tandem with the interwar popular music industry, as well as the development and social experience of the dance hall business.[10] This book builds upon and is indebted to all of this work.

However, my approach is distinguished from the existing scholarship on dancing in several key respects. First, I closely examine the origins and evolution, as well as the social and cultural impacts, of what was the nation's primary popular dance style in the first half of the twentieth century: modern ballroom dancing. Second, I emphasise the critical importance of not only the dance hall industry, but also the dance profession, to the commercial production and consumption of popular dance. Finally, I disentangle dancing from its customary associations with women and the young – showing that it shaped the lives and experiences of Britons of all ages and both sexes – and explore the manifold ways that popular dance operated within British society beyond the social practice of visiting the palais. Outside the walls of the public ballroom, thousands of dancing schools were in operation around the country, and dance culture was circulated through both the popular press and a voluminous dance-themed print culture, as well as via the burgeoning entertainment industries that surrounded music, radio, theatre and film. I argue that in all of these realms, dancing provided a vehicle through which Britons grappled with some of the most critical issues of the day, including the instability of gender relations, class tensions and respectability, race relations and the encroachment of foreign culture, international diplomacy and war, and their very self-understanding as Britons. In these ways, popular dance constructed cultural meanings and had social effects even for those people who never danced a day in their lives.

Crucially, while highlighting the complex mechanisms and impacts of the domestic cultural production of popular dance, this book also situates these processes within global networks of exchange. Prior to this period, Britain already had a long history of importing dances: both the waltz and the polka, introduced from the European continent, were among the most important ballroom dances of the Victorian period. By the early 1900s, the Continental influence on British dancing was still strong, though growing more complicated. Dances that were imported from Paris, notably the tango and the Boston, had

actually begun life in Argentina and the United States respectively. Direct cultural influence from the Americas was also on the rise. From the 1840s onward, with the first British tours of blackface minstrel troupes, which were soon followed by Wild West shows and Hollywood films, Britain was inundated with more and more performers and popular cultural forms from across the pond. As Victoria DeGrazia has shown, in the twentieth century, Britain and the rest of Europe were profoundly shaped not only by cultural imports, but by the broader production and consumption practices of America's 'market empire'.[11] In this context, there were already potent anxieties about Americanisation in Britain by the interwar period.

However, this book joins with historical scholarship that has complicated the picture of unrelenting and straightforward American cultural encroachment in the twentieth century.[12] Instead, I show that 'Americanisation' was a complex, messy and ongoing process of cultural appropriation, modification and resistance, which produced new cultural forms and multiple meanings. As Alec Mackenzie's experience on a Parisian dance floor exposed, American culture was not understood or experienced in identical ways in different national contexts. While the music and dances of the Jazz Age were a driving engine of Americanisation in this period, recent scholarship has shown that Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America did not simply receive and absorb these American cultural products. Rather, they were places where music and dances were created or reimagined, and then sent out into the world, even reciprocally influencing the culture of the United States.[13]As Robin D. G. Kelley has summed up this state of affairs, we can 'no longer speak so confidently about jazz as an *American* art form'.[14]

This book seeks to more firmly place Britain into this story of transnational cultural exchange during the Jazz Age.[15] The popular dances that achieved success in Britain during this period – everything from the foxtrot and the tango to the jitterbug – were hybrid, transatlantic creations that incorporated African, North and South American, and European cultural influences. However, more often than not, Britons demonstrated little awareness of these complex origins and responded to them according to broad understandings of cultural, national and racial differences. With motivations that were nationalistic, artistic – but also economic – commercial producers took up foreign dances and recreated them as British. This intrinsically British dancing style – emblemised in the syllabus of English style ballroom dance steps and popular novelties like the Lambeth Walk – was then regularly exported abroad to Europe, the Empire and North America. In these ways, I argue, British dancers, teachers and

entrepreneurs were active participants in the global system of cultural production and consumption that defined this period, helping to shape popular dance both within and beyond the British Isles.

The book's focus on the critical relationship between the producers and consumers of dancing – in both national and international contexts – accounts for why I employ the term 'popular' rather than 'social' dance as the primary analytical framework. In so doing, my understanding of how dance operates within societies is strongly indebted to scholarship in both dance studies and cultural studies – although it should be noted at the outset that the analyses and perspectives contained herein are very much those of an historian. Dance, as a participatory experience or viewed performance, can have dramatic social and cultural effects. In the words of dance scholar Julie Malnig, 'social and popular dance reflects and absorbs daily life as well as shapes, informs, and influences social patterns and behaviors'.[16] Scholars of dance have also long shown that the physical performance of dancing can construct, embody, and express meaning. As Jane Desmond observes, dance, 'as an embodied social practice and highly visual aesthetic form, powerfully melds considerations of materiality and representation together'.[17] In particular, according to Danielle Robinson, dancing creates 'a powerful space for body-based articulations of identities', wherein race, class, gender, or nation can be physically enacted.[18] In early twentieth-century Britain, an embodied expression of national identity was at the heart of efforts by the dance profession and dance hall industry to construct a British dancing style. Crucial cultural meanings were also produced at what Malnig has called the 'moment of dance', when Britons stepped onto the dance floor and with their moving bodies were able to reinforce or transform the vision of the nation being expressed.[19] These embodied negotiations between the producers and consumers of dance produced cultural meanings and shaped the national style. It was in this reciprocal process, I argue, that social dance became *popular* dance.

In keeping with theories from cultural studies, I mobilise the 'popular' in order to invoke the processes of a culture industry, wherein a dominant culture is produced through practices of commercial production and consumption, and possesses powers of manipulation and social control. Yet, as a number of historians and theorists have shown, within these processes consumers are often able to identify, suppress, and resist the domination of the producer, and to construct their own individual and collective meanings.[20] The analysis which follows will demonstrate that there were many occasions when the dancing public consumed and readily reinforced the style of dance and the meanings

about gender, class, race and nation that were produced by the profession and the industry. But at other times, dancers chose to perform a jitterbug when a quickstep was played, walked off the floor because they were intimidated by the tango, or flatly rejected dances – even 'British' dances – that were marketed to them by producers. There were also important moments when the dancing public was able to discern the motivations at work in the actions of the commercial producers of dance. Peter Bailey has called this awareness 'knowingness' within the context of the Victorian music hall, while James W. Cook, drawing on some of the later writings of Theodor Adorno, has described the ability of consumers to perceive and critically evaluate cultural products – to be 'at once shaped by culture industry formulas and conscious of the shaping' – as ' "split" consumer consciousness'.[21] The phrase 'popular dance' is thus meant to invoke the many nuances, complexities and contradictions of the dialectical relationship between dancing's producers (the dance profession and dance hall industry) and its consumers (the dancing public), through which British dancing and dance culture were forged.

The producers and consumers of popular dance

The first commercial producer analysed here is the dance profession. The profession emerged as increasingly formal ties developed between dancing teachers, exhibition and competition dancers, and writers of dance-themed books and magazines, starting around 1920. It was the profession that was most influential in shaping the evolution of modern ballroom dancing, and which had strong concerns about the reputation and artistic integrity of this style as it achieved popular ascendancy in the 1910s and 1920s. However, dance professionals were also businesspeople – invested in keeping their schools at peak enrolment, selling books and magazines, and commanding impressive salaries for public performances – all of which shaped their activities and interactions with the dancing public. Additionally, what I am calling the dance profession was constituted by a vast group of professionals and semi-professionals, with varying skill levels and qualifications, who were engaged in the wide array of employment opportunities – performance, instruction, and writing – connected with popular dance. The profession included everyone from the men and women selling dances at the palais for six pence each, to the dancers like Victor Silvester or Santos Casani who achieved global fame and celebrity.

Many dance professionals also worked for or alongside the second major producer responsible for commercialising popular dance in this period: the

dance hall industry. Following the opening of the Hammersmith Palais, the 1920s and 1930s saw the rise of a large number of public dance halls all over the country, which gradually consolidated into chains of halls, the most influential and renowned of which was the circuit controlled by the Mecca organisation. At the same time, other types of dance establishments continued to thrive – from nightclubs to independent dance halls – and promoters operated dances in rented spaces such as town and institutional halls, public baths, parks, churches and many other locations. The dance hall industry is therefore defined in this book as the whole and wide-ranging array of opportunities for dancing outside of the home, as well as many associated enterprises – from dance creation and music publishing, to dance band management and print media.

Finally, the consumers of popular dance, defined here and by many contemporary Britons as the 'dancing public', also contained a diverse group of people, engaged in dancing to widely varying degrees. In a primary respect, the dancing public was the dancers who frequented dance classes and dance halls, and engaged in the performance of dancing. However, Britons consumed popular dance in a multitude of ways beyond physical practice. Some people patronised dancing spaces, but never took a turn on the floor. There were also significant numbers of Britons who rarely or never went to a public ballroom, but who experienced dance music or the performance of dancing via the radio or cinema. Even those Britons who espoused no personal interest in dancing at all were exposed to it through advertising, fiction or newspaper articles. Popular dance was almost ubiquitous within British society – as a social practice but also as a cultural representation – providing numerous ways in which it was consumed. To unpack this complexity, I rely on a wide array of different sources including the popular press; dance-themed print culture; personal diaries and memoirs; the extensive research undertaken into 'music, dancing and jazz' by the social research organisation Mass Observation; published and recorded music; short stories and novels; films; police reports; and government and institutional documents. Indeed, that Britons consumed – and left traces of the impacts of dancing – via this plethora of material, makes clear both that the dancing public was not a monolithic entity, and that popular dance had dramatic historical effects.

Periodisation and book structure

The book's periodisation is based on the rise and then decline of modern ballroom dancing as Britain's predominant popular dance style. In the early

1910s, the arrival of the tango from Argentina (by way of continental Europe) and ragtime dances from the United States propelled British dancing into a self-consciously modern era. It was only after the First World War that the full impact of the new dances was felt, however, as processes of professionalisation and commercialisation led to the emergence of two producers of popular dance: the dance profession and dance hall industry. The early chapters of the book describe these events, as well as the profession and industry's efforts to standardise the steps and public experience of dancing, and the mechanisms of their relationships with the dancing public. The second half of the book then turns to how the popular dance culture produced by the profession and the industry – in conjunction with the dancing public – fostered redefinitions of gender, class, race and nation throughout the interwar years and during the Second World War. The book concludes in the early 1950s, when ballroom dancing was increasingly marginalised in favour of the more improvisational, independent and Americanised styles of dance epitomised in the jive.

Chapter 1 traces the early development of modern ballroom dancing in Britain, from its origins in the ragtime era prior to the First World War through the dance craze that came with the peace. It provides a history for the major dances that would predominate in Britain from the 1920s through the 1950s, particularly the so-called 'standard four' – the foxtrot, the modern waltz, the tango and the one-step (which was later replaced by the quickstep). The chapter also considers the social and cultural response to the new dances in Britain – particularly their perceived modernity – which was celebrated by some, but condemned by others. It explores some of the ongoing controversies that surrounded popular dance, and the active defence mounted by its proponents, who touted dancing's value for the cultivation of good health and beauty, among numerous other advantages.

Chapter 2 describes the standardisation of the English style of ballroom dance and the professionalisation of the dance community, showing that these processes were inextricably connected. The catalyst to the dance profession's consolidation was a series of conferences convened in the 1920s by prominent teachers who sought to standardise the steps of new ballroom dances arriving in Britain from the United States and continental Europe. From these events emerged the rudimentary English style, which the profession then passed on to the dancing public via dancing schools, exhibition dancing, dance competitions and print culture. However, the chapter also argues that the success – and even the steps and figures – of a dance were not determined entirely by this

top-down process. Not only did a significant segment of the dancing public eschew instruction, and remain largely oblivious to professional activities, but the two groups were not always aligned in their dancing preferences. The result was that questions about which dances would be danced in Britain, how they would be performed, and what the gradually evolving national style would look like, were continually negotiated between producers and consumers of popular dance.

Chapter 3 describes the evolution of the dance hall industry – the second major cultural producer that shaped the commercialisation and experience of popular dance in Britain during the interwar and wartime periods. The new purpose-built dancing spaces that began to emerge after the war were affordable to Britons of almost every class, and many adopted a standard layout and format, providing an increasing uniformity of experience throughout the nation. A standard dancing experience was in fact a major objective of figures such as Carl L. Heimann, managing director of Mecca, Britain's largest chain of dance halls, and a figure so influential that social research organisation Mass Observation called him one of the 'cultural directors' of the nation.[22] However, despite this commercial might and cultural authority, the chapter shows that patrons entered into negotiations with the dance hall industry just as they did with the dance profession. A great disparity remained in terms of the access to and quality of public dancing spaces for Britons of different regions and classes, but most significantly, the dancing public made important choices as to where, how, and why they consumed dancing. This served to individualise their experience and kept going to the palais from becoming a wholly homogenised experience.

Chapter 4 explores how the social perception and cultural representation of dancing – especially its chief enthusiasts, professionals and the public venues where it took place – were shaped by contemporary anxieties about gender, class and sexuality. It examines the controversies that surrounded the 'dancing girl' (also called the flapper or modern woman), as well as the male 'lounge lizard' or 'dancing dandy', within the context of the gender upheavals that occurred during and immediately after the First World War. The chapter also considers the negative assumptions about particular public dancing spaces, as well as the paid dance partners who were employed within them, showing that these were underpinned by class prejudice and anxieties about crime and sexual immorality. However, the chapter argues that social concerns about dancing were strongly contested from the very start of the modern dance era,

and that this leisure form became progressively more respectable and integrated into the national culture as professionalisation and commercialisation processes progressed throughout the interwar years.

Chapter 5 is the first of three that examine the creation and commodification of national identity within popular dance. The discussion returns to the efforts on the part of the dance profession to standardise the steps of the English style, and demonstrates that there was far more invested in that process than simply establishing a formal set of steps and figures. Within the context of broader fears about Americanisation, dance professionals sought to transform foreign dances like the foxtrot and tango in a way that made them more suitable to the national character or temperament. This vision of the nation was explicitly articulated in opposition to foreign and racial others, and emphasised English virtues like reserve and refinement. With its specific syllabus of standard steps and figures, the English style also became a marketable commodity which was sold at home as well as abroad. Yet the chapter shows that, in keeping with the dialectical nature of commercial nationalism, the profession's efforts to craft a national dancing style were greeted with mixed responses from the British dancing public. While dance enthusiasts were eager to perfect the English style's standard versions of dances such as the foxtrot, they showed little interest in the home-grown dances developed by the profession, such as the five-step and the trebla, which were marketed as explicit bulwarks against Americanisation. Instead, they retained a strong interest in foreign dances like the rumba and truckin', especially as they began to view the English style technique as stagnant and excessively regimented by the 1930s.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that the commercial nationalism that characterised the efforts of the dance profession to Anglicise dancing in the 1920s reached its apogee in the late 1930s, as the dance hall industry even more overtly commodified the nation as a way of encouraging more Britons to dance. It uses as a case study the series of novelty dances produced by the Mecca chain starting in 1938: the Lambeth Walk, the Chestnut Tree, the Park Parade, the Handsome Territorial, and Knees Up, Mother Brown. These were deliberately simply sequence dances, which Mecca director Heimann hoped would bring more patrons into his company's dance halls, particularly those who were untutored in ballroom dancing. While the marketing campaign for the dances stressed their ease and accessibility, another major focus was on the dances' British origin and character. The first Mecca novelty dance, the Lambeth Walk, was a staggering success, both at home and abroad, and was embraced by the dancing public for its connections to British culture. However, the

chapter shows that the other four Mecca novelty dances which followed the Lambeth Walk met with a mixed response, and argues that their success or failure was largely owing to their quality as dances rather than their national origins.

Chapters 7 and 8 each focus on different aspects of dancing during the Second World War. Chapter 7 demonstrates that the mechanisms of commercial nationalism contained within popular dance carried into the war years, though the meanings shifted to comply with hegemonic visions of the nation at war. Popular dance provided a potent means for producers and consumers alike to express and embody many of the ideals associated with the 'people's war', such as cheerful endurance, grace under fire, and social and imperial unity. At the same time, both commercial producers – but especially the dance hall industry – repackaged patriotism as a way of staying in business, utilising war-themed promotions and causes to attract patrons, or advertising their ballrooms as bomb shelters. As Chapter 8 reveals, the dance profession and dance hall industry also shifted tactics with respect to American culture, choosing to embrace the latest dance import, the jitterbug – albeit in a toned down Anglicised form. Indeed, questions about American culture achieved a new magnitude in wartime, owing to the physical presence in Britain of large numbers of American troops beginning in 1942. As part of their ongoing negotiations with producers, the dancing public expressed greater interest in the 'authentic', American jitterbug than the Anglicised versions presented to them by the profession and industry, in ways that reflected contemporary deliberations over racial difference. As a dance, the jitterbug also heralded a critical shift away from modern ballroom dancing as the nation's favoured style.

Finally, the epilogue reflects on popular dance in the post-war years. After the war, going to the palais remained as popular as ever, but the dances performed within the dance halls continued their long evolution. Following on some of the individualised and independent movements introduced by the jitterbug, modern ballroom dancing slowly began to give way to new dances which could be performed without a partner, or which better accompanied rock 'n' roll and later disco. Owing to their particular focus on ballroom dance, the dance profession began the modern dance era with arguably more cultural influence than the dance hall industry, but those positions had clearly undergone a switch by the 1950s. Ballroom dancing eventually became a niche professional art form, while many of the 1920s dance halls continued to operate for decades after their establishment, even as they faced new challenges of their own. In fact, while it went through many incarnations, the Hammersmith Palais only

closed its doors for a final time in 2007, before being demolished in 2012, perhaps heralding an official end to Britain's dance hall days.

Notes

1 Alec Mackenzie, 'Dancing in Paris and London', *Dancing Times* (June 1922), pp. 777–9.
2 This represents a vast literature, on a multitude of cultural forms. For recent examples, see Brett Bebber (ed.), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).
3 Mica Nava has identified a similar phenomenon that she calls 'commercial orientalism', wherein generic Eastern motifs were present in the commodity culture of the Edwardian department store Selfridges, and predominately female consumers were able to use these products as a means of self-expression and in the quest for political emancipation. See Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture, and the Normalisation of Difference* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 34.
4 Kenneth Lunn, 'Reconsidering "Britishness:" the construction and significance of national identity in twentieth-century Britain', in Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos (eds), *Nation & Identity in Contemporary Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 87.
5 Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 148.
6 Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 200.
7 See Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918–1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Martin Pugh, *'We Danced All Night:' A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Bodley Head, 2008); David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-earners in Interwar Britain* (London: Woburn Press, 1995); Dan Laughey, *Music and Youth Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).
8 On women, gender, and dancing, see Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Judith Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Melanie Tebbutt, *Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Lucy Bland, *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
9 Genevieve Abravanel, *Americanizing Britain: The Rise of Modernism in the Age of the Entertainment Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Rishona Zimring, *Social Dance and the Modernist Imagination in Interwar Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Theresa Jill Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

10 James Nott, *Music for the People: Popular Music and Dance in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); James Nott, *Going to the Palais: A Social and Cultural History of Dancing and Dance Halls in Britain, 1918–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also Allison Abra, 'Doing the Lambeth Walk: novelty dances and the British nation', *Twentieth-Century British History* 20:3 (2009), pp. 346–69; Allison Abra, 'On with the Dance: Nation, Culture, and Popular Dancing in Britain, 1918–1945' (PhD dissertation: University of Michigan, 2009); Allison Abra, 'Dancing in the English style: professionalisation, public preference, and the evolution of popular dance in 1920s Britain', in Brett Bebber (ed.), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 41–62.

11 Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

12 Select examples include R. Kroes, R. W. Rydell and D. F. J. Bosscher (eds), *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993); Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869–1922* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2005); Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005); Adrian Horn, *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Mark Glancy, *Hollywood and the Americanization of Britain: From the 1920s to the Present* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Kelly Boyd, 'Early British television: the allure and threat of America', in Erika Rappaport, Sandra Trudgen Dawson and Mark J. Crowley (eds), *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), pp. 253–68.

13 Robin D.G. Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Christina D. Abreu, *Rhythms of Race: Cuban Musicians and the Making of Latino New York City and Miami, 1940–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

14 Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers*, p. 10, original emphasis.

15 See also Peter Bailey, 'Fats Waller meets Harry Champion: Americanisation, national identity, and sexual politics in inter-war British music hall', *Cultural and Social History* 4:4 (2007), 495–509; Peter Bailey, '"Hullo, ragtime!" West End revue and the Americanisation of popular culture in pre-1914 London', in Len Platt, Tobias Becker and David Linton (eds), *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin, 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Abravanel, *Americanizing Britain*.

16 Julie Malnig (ed.), introduction to *Ballroom Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 6.

17 Jane C. Desmond (ed.), introduction to *Meaning in Motion*: *New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 2.

18 See Danielle Robinson, preface to *Modern Moves: Dancing Race during the Ragtime and Jazz Eras* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. xii. See also Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997); Beth Genné, '"Freedom incarnate:" Jerome Robbins, Gene Kelly, and the dancing sailor as an icon of American values in World War II', *Dance Chronicle* 24:1 (2001), 83–103; Desmond, (ed.), *Meaning in Motion*.

19 Julie Malnig, 'Women, dance, and New York nightlife', in Julie Malnig (ed.) *Ballroom Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 82.

20 For an excellent overview of how the study of culture industries has evolved in history and cultural studies, see James W. Cook, 'The Return of the Culture Industry', in James W. Cook, Lawrence Glickman and Michael O'Malley (eds), *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

21 Peter Bailey, 'Music hall and the knowingness of popular culture', in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Cook, 'The Return of the Culture Industry', p. 307.

22 Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge, *Britain by Mass-Observation* (London: Harmondsworth, 1939), p. 141.