

**The Evolution of Ballroom Dance  
in the United States**  
**- with a Focus on Ballroom Dance into Dancesport**

A Thesis

by

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## **I. Introduction**

The purpose of this thesis is to describe how ballroom dancing evolved in the United States and how it led to competitive ballroom dancing. Competitive ballroom dancing, also known as Dancesport, has its origins in England, but simultaneously developed in America over the last 100 years. This research thesis will provide a historical perspective of how Dancesport developed from social ballroom dance in the United States, what it has become, and current trends.

As a competitive ballroom dancer now residing in the United States, I am interested in how Dancesport originated in the United States. I began Dancesport in my native country South Korea, and earned the title of Professional Latin Rising Star Champion in Korea. Based on my success, my partner at the time and I decided to train in England for several months. Our decision to travel halfway across the world for dance lessons was due to the high caliber of professional coaches in England. Modern Dancesport has its origins in England and this is where high level competitors tend to gravitate. Professional ballroom dancers all tend to have at one point trained or spent time coaching in England. The experience of training with some of the best competitive ballroom dancers in world, such as Jukka Haapalainen and Sirpa Suutari, led me to pursue a career in ballroom dancing.

When I was in England I realized that in order to travel abroad to compete or receive coaching in dance, I needed to learn English. So I decided to travel to the United States and study English at an intensive year long course. While attending English school in the United States, I spent my free time in the ballroom dance community, where I took classes and socialized with other ballroom dancers. My previous experience in ballroom dancing was focused mostly in the International Latin style. However, in Korea I

belonged to a dance company where I was introduced to other dance styles that the company performed.

When I became involved in the ballroom scene in America I initially remained focused on my specialty, International Latin. However, as I spent more time in the dance community in the San Francisco Bay Area, I began to learn and enjoy other forms of dance that are more popular in America, such as American Smooth & Rhythm, Salsa, West Cost Swing, and Argentine Tango. Some of these dances are seen in my native Korea, such as Salsa and Argentine Tango which have a worldwide following. Other dances like American Smooth and Rhythm are almost strictly seen in the United States.

Since I am currently residing and teaching in the United States, I focused my research on ballroom dancing in America. With the phenomenon of dancing shows on television in the United States, Dancesport has started to gain the attention and respect of Americans. More and more people are showing an interest in the sport and competitive dancers are gaining celebrity status. Professional dancers on shows such as *Dancing with the Stars* are frequently covered in magazine and newspaper articles. As a dancer who knows the physical and mental benefits of dance, I hope this trend continues.

## **1. Objective and Necessity of the Thesis Paper**

The objective of the thesis is to provide an analysis of the history of competitive ballroom dance, also known as Dancesport. In America Dancesport is becoming a more popular sport for a number of reasons, including the explosion of television shows and movies featuring Dancesport, the immigration of Eastern European Dancesport competitors, and the movement to make Dancesport an Olympic event. These influences on Dancesport are making it grow rapidly in America and more accepted as

sport versus a social activity or art form, which Americans previously perceived it as.

The thesis will explain how Dancesport evolved differently in America compared to other countries, specifically England. The thesis will show that ballroom dance developed simultaneously in England and America at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the competitive form of ballroom dance was formed much earlier in England. The thesis will explore the reasons that Dancesport developed later in America. It will also examine how the English rules and regulations of Dancesport influenced the American system of dance competitions.

Despite the English influence, America retained its own style of ballroom dance. The thesis will examine how the American Style developed and the reason it is popular in America, but generally not seen in other countries. The differences between the American Style and the International Style, which is what the rest of the world and the Dancesport community generally consider ballroom dance, will be analyzed.

Due to globalization of the world, the Dancesport world is becoming more closely knit. Professional Dancesport competitors travel the world to compete and train for competitions. I believe that America had an impact on ballroom dance and now with the growing popularity of Dancesport, it will have more of an impact. I think it is important to trace how American Dancesport developed to fully understand the reason Dancesport is different in the United States versus other countries.

In the course of my research, I found thesis papers about the history of Dancesport. Some of these papers touch on the subject of Dancesport in America. However, the discussion of American Dancesport was very limited because these papers focused on the world history of Dancesport. I did not

uncover any papers that focused on the evolution of Dancesport in America. I wanted to fill the void and contribute a thesis paper centering on the development of Dancesport in America.

Thus, the objective of this thesis is to provide a historical perspective of how Dancesport evolved in America from ballroom dance. It will explore the early roots of ballroom dance going back hundreds of years. The thesis will examine how ballroom dance developed simultaneously in England and the United States, but each country went on their own course. It will discuss how the English system of Dancesport was eventually accepted in America, but an American Style of ballroom dance was still preserved. The thesis will examine the people and organizations that led the way in Dancesport and continue to make progress by campaigning to make it an Olympic sport. Finally the thesis will discuss the current trends in America, such as the higher level of acceptance of Dancesport as a sport and the explosion of movies and television shows featuring Dancesport.

## **2. Limitations of the Thesis Paper**

In my research, I did not find any other Master thesis on the topic of the evolution or history of ballroom dance and Dancesport in the United States.

The focus of the thesis paper is on the dances traditionally considered ballroom dance: Waltz, Foxtrot, Viennese Waltz, and Tango. These four dances comprise the American Smooth category of dance and can be compared to the International or English Style category called “Ballroom” by various organizations that regulate Dancesport, including USA Dance. Included in the thesis are statements and research done on the other major categories of dance, International Latin and American Rhythm. However, the histories of these other categories of dance in the United States are much

shorter and are more relevant to research on Latin America's influence on ballroom dance.

There were a limited number of resources available on the subject of the transition from social ballroom dance to Dancesport in the United States. Most of the resources available, including a vast number of websites, discuss the early histories of how the original ballroom dances were developed, but fail to explain how these social dances were transformed into competitive dances. However, a few resources were found to help provide a chronology of how Dancesport developed in the United States and even these resources cite the lack of progression from social ballroom dance to Dancesport. One source states that this lack of distinguishing between social dances and Dancesport helps maintain the fantasy that both types of dances are the same (McMains, 2006). This elusion provides a boost to the ballroom dance industry by making beginners feel they can quickly develop the ballroom skills seen by professional level Dancesport competitors.

## **II. Introduction Background of Ballroom Dance**

### **1. Definition of Ballroom Dance**

**Ballroom dance** - in its crudest form - is any partnered dance where one partner is designated the lead and the other is designated the follow (USA Dance, 2009).

Encyclopedias on dance also make attempts to define ballroom dance. In *The Dance Encyclopedia* 'ballroom dance' is defined as "social dances, usually performed by couples, at balls, in night clubs, restaurants, and at other social gatherings" (Chujoy & Manchester, 1967).

*The Oxford Dictionary of Dance* expands the social nature of ballroom dance to include that beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was performed in competitions in Britain and America (Craine & Mackrell 2000). The definition then continues to state how English organizations led the way in competitive ballroom dancing and still currently lead the development of it. The author then lists out numerous ballroom dances similar to other encyclopedias that define ballroom dance (Craine & Mackrell, 2000).

In the book *Ballroom: Culture and Costume in Competitive Dance*, the author explains that the definition of ballroom dance in *The Oxford Dictionary of Dance* is too simplistic (Marion, 2008). Marion (2008) points out that the term ballroom dance is sometimes used to give a broad name to a variety of partnered dances which is very expansive and most of which are taught at ballroom studios in the United States. However, Marion (2008) explains that ballroom dance has a “much tighter meaning” and refers only to the dances that are included in dance competition events (p. 19). These competition dances that Marion makes reference to are International Standard and Latin dances that are danced across the world. In America, in addition to the International Styles, the dance style appropriately called “American Style” is also considered ballroom competition dances and includes the categories American Smooth and American Rhythm. The American Style dances are typically only seen in the United States (Marion, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Similar to America, Australia has their own style of ballroom dance called New Vogue. The New Vogue dance style is an Australian form of sequence dancing that originated in the 1930s. Since then it has become an important part in the Australian ballroom scene, holding as much importance in social and competition dancing as Latin or International Standard dances (Wikipedia website).

The focus of the thesis is on the competitive ballroom dances that Marion refers to in his book. However, these competitive dances cannot be viewed without putting them in context of how they were formed through social dances and other influences going back many centuries.

## **2. Early Forms of Ballroom Dance**

According to Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), authors of *The Complete Book of Ballroom Dancing*, ballroom dances have their roots in social dances dating back to the 1300s. They explain that the social dances were folk and peasant dances that came in to favor of the nobles and aristocrats of their time (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). In Driver's (2001) book, *A Century of Dance*, he explains that new styles of dance prior to the twentieth century evolved from European rural or peasant dances. The prosperous social class at the time that took up these dances did little to show their appreciation for the source of the dances. However, it was these one time peasant dances that for "centuries Europe had been the sole source of original social dance styles" (Driver, 2001, p. 12).

Europeans going back many centuries used the ballroom to demonstrate their abilities to dance as well as show off the latest fashions. The ballroom affairs took place at the courts in Europe, where wealthy citizens and royalty had the means to hire a dancing master to teach the ballroom dances. These masters of dance or your modern day dance instructor taught complex dances that began in the High Renaissance period (1550 - 1650). These masters of dance, developed dance manuals that documented and standardized dance steps. One of the first books on dance was *Orchesographie* written by a priest under the ghost name Thoinot-Abreau in 1588. This is one of the first codifications of dance steps and included information about social dance,

style, steps, and etiquette written in the format of a discussion between a teacher and his student (Aldrich, 1998).

However, it was not until the late 1600s that “hard and fast rules” were developed for the court dances. The French King Louis XIV set the stage for the development of dancing in high society at his court at the palace of Versailles. Louis XIV founded his Acedemie Royal de Musique et de” or Royal Academy of Dance to formulate specific positions for dance steps (Silvester, 2005). As part of the Royal Academy, in 1700 the French dance master Raoul-Auger Feuillet published a dance notation system. This system of noting the positions of the feet, arm, body movements and hundreds of dance steps allowed for the same dances to be performed in every palace and manor house. This new style of dance spread throughout Europe (Aldrich 1998).

### **3. The Beginning of Modern Ballroom Dance**

According to Sylvester (2005), the modern ballroom dance era began with the development of the Waltz in 1812. Silvester (2005) points out that the French trace the Waltz to the Volta, a dance which Thoinot-Abreau (1588) wrote about in his book *Orchesographie*. Other dance historians date the Waltz further back in time to a peasant dance in Austria and Bavaria (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). Regardless of the origination of the Waltz, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century “the peasant dance had been accepted into high society and was here to stay” (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980, p. 15). Thus, the Waltz had a lasting appeal based on its long history dating back hundreds of years.

Sylvester (2005), a pioneer of the English ballroom dancing community, refers to the beginning of the Waltz when it was introduced in England ballrooms. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) note that though the Waltz

developed earlier in time, “the true Waltz period did not begin until the cultural climate was ready for it” (p. 13). A common theme seen throughout this thesis is how current culture dictated dances of the time. In essence, dances may have existed and were danced by a group of people for a length of time. However, it is not until the popular culture of the time accepts the dance that it fully develops through the embracement by society.

Before the Waltz became popular, dance partners tended not to face each other. Ballroom dances prior to the Waltz, such as the court dances the Minuet and Gavottes were danced by a group of people moving in a circular motion. With the advent of the Waltz, couple dancing began and ballroom dancing as it is known was born (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

No matter the origins, when the Waltz began to become popular in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it caused a great stir as a result of the closed dancing position. The closed dance position was considered shocking because of the intimacy of the hold. However, part of the reason for the Waltz’s popularity was due to this intimate position. This new dance position led to great protest and was considered scandalous on moral grounds. Newspapers chronicled how it caused one of the greatest sensations in English society (Silvester, 2005).

Articles in the English newspaper *The Times* stated how the dance was indecent and an obscene intertwining of body parts fit for prostitutes and adulteresses. Even the famous English poet Lord Byron got involved and criticized the Waltz on moral grounds (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

When the Waltz was imported from England to the United States it faced the same type of opposition from religious and moral leaders. Ballroom dance halls were considered immoral places and the act of dancing in closed body part position was considered sinful. In order to make the dance more acceptable there were attempts to make the Waltz a highly sophisticated style

of dance for the elite upper class to enjoy. However, these early attempts failed because “the closed dance position and the abundance of fun seemingly “caused” by dancing the Waltz continued to be a problem for the religious and moral leaders of early America”(Holden). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many books discussing the moral sins of the Waltz (Holden).

T.A. Faulkner’s (1892) book *From Ballroom to Hell* is cited by many of the ballroom dance historians as an illustration of how attempts were made to condemn ballroom dancing and specifically the Waltz in America. Faulkner (1892) was a former dance instructor in California and the ex-President of the Dancing Masters' Association of the Pacific Coast. Faulkner (1892) became an earnest Christian condemning dance as extremely evil. Faulkner (1892) wrote an example of how women who dance become the prey of men and it results in the loss of their virginity. In the concluding pages of the book other ex-Dance Masters and religious leaders note their support of the book and also condemn the Waltz. Supporters wrote such statements that “Waltzing is the spur of lust” and that the book is based on facts that dancing leads to sinful activity (Faulkner, 1892, cover page).

However, the result of all the opposition to the Waltz was only an increase in its popularity (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). As Driver (2001) notes, the Waltz revolutionized ballroom dancing in the early nineteenth century.

Silvester (2005) notes that “[A] dance like any other living thing, must develop or disappear, it cannot remain unchanged” (p. 13). This is exactly what occurred with the Waltz and a reason why it remains today, unlike earlier dances that Silvester (2005) refers to such as the Minuet or the Gavotte. As time passed the Waltz evolved and went through many changes. Names of the newer versions of Waltzes included the ‘Hop Waltz’ and ‘Slow Waltz’ (Silvester, 2001).

The original Waltz was a fast dance and more in line to the modern day Viennese Waltz which is played at 55-60 measures per a minute (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). According to the authors Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), every dance requires the availability of the appropriate music to help a dance flourish. In regards to the fast Waltz, the music composer Johann Strauss filled this role and “is known to musicians and dancers alike as the King of Waltz” (Holden). Strauss set the standard for the Viennese Waltz and as shown below other musicians including Victor Silvester set the stage for ballroom dance music during their time.

However, due to the problems of the fast tempo a slower version of the Waltz was developed called the ‘valse a duex pas’<sup>2</sup> (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). However, it was the Waltz with three steps or the valse a trios temps that became the standard (Silvester, 2005). This is the Waltz that survived the test of time and is what people generally associate with the dance called the Waltz. Note that Waltz music follows this three step movement, meaning that there are 3 beats within a measure which is also called 3/4 timing.

An American version of the Waltz came in to existence in 1834. The American version of the Waltz was first danced in Boston in 1834 by the dance master Lorenzo Papanti who performed it at an exhibition. The Waltz was then spread to other cities on the eastern coast of the United States, such as New York and Philadelphia (Stephenson and Iaccarino, 1980). As a result of the American Waltz first being seen in Boston, they called the dance the ‘Boston.’ The Boston varied from the other Waltz’s of the period because of its slow tempo (Dance History Archives). The Boston also varied from the

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<sup>2</sup> Translates to Waltz with two steps

old-style Waltz in that was not about rhythm and beat and instead it was a dance that involved emotion of melody (Driver, 2001).

In the wake of the original Boston other versions developed in America such as the French Boston, the Philadelphia Boston, and the Short Boston. These versions of the dance varied in speed and dance steps. It is important to note that it was a two way street in terms of dances being shared between England and America. When the Waltz was exported to America it became the Boston. In return, the modified version of the Waltz now called the Boston was exported to England, where it was further modified to become known as the Cradle Boston. This version of the Boston eventually stimulated the development of the permanent International Style version of the Waltz. Thus the slow Waltz that is danced in competitions all around the world today is a revised version of the Boston (Dance History Archives).

#### **4. Ballroom into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Up until 1910, the Waltz remained as the “unchallenged queen of the ballroom” (Silvester, 2005). Though the Waltz began as scandalous, it had become tame and old fashioned. However, by World War I, the Boston and the old-time Waltz had faded from the dancing scene in both the United States and England as Ragtime music came into favor (Driver, 2001).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ragtime music is a popular American style that flourished from 1896-1918. Its main trait is its ragged (i.e. syncopated) rhythm. Although now thought of as a piano style, it also referred to other instrumental music, vocal music and dance. Most instrumental rags follow the forms of earlier duple- and quadruple- meter dances - the march, two-step, polka and schottische - with three or more independent 16-bar phrases, each consisting of four-bar phrases in patterns of repeats and reprises. There might also be an introduction or interpolations. A school of ‘classic’ ragtime whose principal exponent was Scott Joplin achieved considerable sophistication, though simpler, more accessible rags were more

At the turn of the century, American dance music called Ragtime became popular and changed the development of dance. Instead of the prim and proper appearance of dancing the Waltz, new dances such as the bull-frog hop, turkey trot, or grizzly bear took hold in the United States. These so called “animal dances” required dancers to be closely embraced which similar to the Waltz a hundred years earlier caused a great stir (Stephenson and Iaccarino, 1980).

The animal dances which were partner dances pushed the envelope further with erotic moves and rotating hips in a close embrace. Some women even took to wearing protective padding to prevent overly excessive contact by their male dance partners. Even the Vatican made an official announcement denouncing the turkey trot as immoral in 1914. Dance instructors also jumped on the bandwagon and condemned the new ragtime dances. The Dance Teachers Association of America refused to teach these dances when they were first introduced due to their highly controversial movements (Driver, 2001). However, despite the initial condemnation of the new dances by these teachers, including a well-known teacher named T. George Dodworth, they eventually taught a “purified” version of such dances (Stephenson and Iaccarino, 1980). This not unlike the Waltz, where after religious leaders and dance teachers (who had a financial stake in maintaining the status quo) originally condemned the dances, they eventually open up to the idea that these are socially acceptable dances. Once again, the popular culture of the time led to these new dances being within the social norms of society.

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popular. Ragtime gave way to jazz after World War I. The change was at first more in terminology than in the music; and many ragtime musicians such as Morton began to call themselves jazz musicians (The Answers website).

One of the most enduring of the animal or ragtime dances was called the Foxtrot, which is danced in both American and International Styles today. Unlike the other dances at the time that were aptly named for the animal moves that shaped the dance steps, this dance was so named the Foxtrot because the person that invented it was named Harry Fox. The original Foxtrot as described by Driver (2001) as Harry Fox dancing around alluring women is hardly anything that is seen today in ballroom dance. However, the steps and the movement to music gained popularity quickly in the summer of 1914 when Harry Fox began performing the Foxtrot during vaudeville performances in New York (Driver, 2001).

By the end of the summer of 1914, practically all teachers in New York taught the Foxtrot. The American Society of Professors worked on standardizing the Foxtrot steps by September 1914. According to Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) the Foxtrot “was the most significant development in all of ballroom dancing” (p. 35). The Foxtrot allowed the dancers to perform steps with greater flexibility rather than following strict rules. The Foxtrot allowed for a variety of different moves and this made the dance more pleasurable, but at the same time “the hardest dance to learn” (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980, p. 35). In my interview with a current ballroom dance instructor, Jeff Chandler, he confirmed that the Foxtrot still to this day remains the most difficult ballroom dance to master. Mr. Chandler explained that it might be easy to do the basic steps, but to perform the foxtrot at a high level is extremely complicated. Additionally, the Foxtrot as initially developed and described by Stephenson and Iaccarino is very illustrative of American ballroom dance – flexibility in moves and the availability of a variety of patterns.

Similar to the Waltz, variations of the Foxtrot developed. There was a slow Foxtrot and a quick Foxtrot that came to be known as the Quickstep in England (Stephenson and Iaccarino, 1980). The ability of the Foxtrot “to

evolve and adapt to new styles” is a reason for its survival and that it is still seen in the ballroom (Driver, 2001, p. 31). Again this is not unlike the Waltz, in order for the Foxtrot to survive as it has today, it had to be flexible enough for changes imposed on it by society and cultural norms.

The American dances based on ragtime music traveled to England during World War I. U.S. soldiers stationed in Europe and England brought the ragtime “animal dances” to the dance halls during their off-duty nights. Dance teachers in England took notice of these dances and were alarmed by the lack of standardized steps. This led to a crusade by these dance instructors to stop these free form dances for two reasons. As in America, there was a great uproar in England over the lack of morality in the ragtime dances. However, the more important reason for the denunciation was the teachers’ concern of the economic effect. “If dancing became a free-form frenzy with no standards or techniques, dance teachers would soon be out of jobs” (McMains, 2006, p. 80). Thus, the teachers wanted to establish rules and standards for such dances and any additional ballroom dances. This led to the formal standardization of ballroom dances that started in England in the 1920s.

### **III. Evolution of Ballroom Dance in England**

In the research for this thesis, it became clear that England is the original source of competitive ballroom dancing. The English ballroom dance community led the way in standardizing dance steps, formatting dance competitions, and promoting their style of dance around the world. Though the ballroom dance industry faced similar challenges in both America and England, it was the English ballroom dance instructors that led a more structured approach to developing uniform standards to ballroom dance. American ballroom teachers had a more difficult time following the English

method of standardizing dances and formatting competitions due to the large geography of the United States (McMains, 2006).

The dance industry in the United States eventually accepted the English system in the 1960s as explained in a later section of this thesis. Thus it is important to provide a thorough historical perspective of how ballroom dance became standardized and the competitive format was born through the English system.

### **1. Standardization of Ballroom Dance in England**

In the 1920s, the two main goals of ballroom dancing industry leaders in England, which consisted of teachers and exhibition dancers, was to determine what was danced at ballrooms and to control the rising number of ballroom competitions (McKibbin, 2000). According to the author of *Classes and Cultures*, McKibbin (2000) explains that controlling competitions was more easily done than the first goal which was basically codifying dance figures.

Early traces of the codification of ballroom dance in England started in 1920 with the first *Dancing Times* Informal Conference, which led to other informal conferences (Silvester, 2005). The series of conferences in the 1920s began when an American dance instructor, Monsieur Maurice wrote to PJS Richardson to arrange a meeting with dance instructors in England (Creswell, 2006). Maurice explained in his letter that he did something similar with dance teachers in New York to standardize dance steps for various ballroom dances, such as the Waltz, Foxtrot, and Tango. Maurice said this was necessary to abolish “ungraceful and undignified forms of dancing, which were gradually creeping into both public and private dances” (Creswell, 2006, 129). Richardson was a powerful political figure in the ballroom dancing world in England as the founder and editor of the

influential *Dancing Times* (Creswell, 2000). Richardson (1946) who was a leader in the ballroom dance community in England chronicled how ballroom dancing became standardized in his book *A History of English Ballroom Dancing, 1910-1945: The Story of the Development of the Modern English Style*.

The first Informal Conference organized by Richardson brought together nearly 300 ballroom teachers to give demonstrations and to address the attacks religious leaders and moral crusaders had against ballroom dance (Richardson, 1946). The Informal Conference met on two occasions in 1920 to codify steps of the Foxtrot. In the following year, the *Dancing Times* Informal Conference codified the Waltz (Silvester, 2005). These informal conferences led to the formation of organizations that provided a uniform strategy to standardize ballroom dances and format rules for dance competitions.

## **2. English Dance Organizations & the Development of the English Style**

Organizations played a prominent role in shaping and developing modern ballroom dance in England. Some of these organizations are still around to this day, such as the Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society, which continues to play a prominent role in ballroom dance around the world. Certification from the Imperial Society is recognized worldwide and is considered the most “respected certification available” (Marion, 2008, p. 33).

The Imperial Society of Dance Teachers (which changed its name to the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing in 1925), was an organization that was formed in 1904 to supervise teachers of all forms of dance, including ballroom, in the British Empire (Craine & Mackrell, 2000). In 1924 the

Imperial Society reorganized and formed a separate branch that dealt strictly with ballroom dancing (Chujoy & Manchester, 1967).

A reason why the Imperial Society formed a separate branch was due to news that Richardson and several other prominent ballroom dance teachers considering forming their own organization specializing in ballroom dance (Silvester, 2005). Richardson was concerned that other ballroom dance organizations would soon be propped up and this would prevent the standardization of ballroom dance. Richardson, was a vocal opponent of the animal dance craze and concerned that ballroom dances would not be able to retain its level of refinement (Creswell, 2006). Upon the Imperial Society forming the Ballroom Branch, Richardson felt there was no need to form his own organization to address the issues of ballroom dance (Silvester, 2005). Richardson (1946) said that the formation of a separate ballroom branch within the Imperial Society “had as great an influence on ballroom dancing as did the founding of the Acedemie Royale by Louis XIV of France on the ballet” (p. 51).

Victor Silvester, who at one time became the president of the Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society, agreed with the significant impact of the separate Ballroom Branch (Driver, 2001) Silvester was the first Englishman to have won the world championship of ballroom dance in 1922<sup>4</sup>. Although Silvester was only 24 years old at the time of the formation of the separate branch, he was a dominate member in the Imperial Society (McKibbin, 2000). Silvester would later on play an integral role in the development and

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<sup>4</sup> As a result of codifying of steps and the formation of the “English Style,” dancers from England had an advantage in international contests. The result was English dancers like Silvester winning international contests (Creswell, 2006).

growth of modern ballroom dancing in the middle of the century as a dance teacher, historian, and successful orchestra leader (Driver, 2001).

According to the dance historian Driver (2001), the formation of the Imperial Society Ballroom branch was a landmark date in the history of ballroom dance. This is the origin of the standardization of ballroom dance steps. This is the “point at which modern ballroom dancing, with its characteristics of high level competition and pursuit of excellence, broke away from the everyday world of recreational dancing for good.” Driver (2001) continues by explaining that ballroom dance distinguished itself from the wild dances originating in America by codifying steps. British people preferred the toned down versions of American music and thus the Imperial Society transformed the American style of dances for the British tastes (Creswell, 2006). The toned down versions and standardization of the dances was a successful strategy to the survival and growth of the ballroom industry (Driver 2001).

It did not take long for the Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society to act. Within a year, the Ballroom Branch published a syllabus<sup>5</sup> listing dance steps for four different forms, music, and carriage of the body (Creswell, 2006). This literature was published in the Dance Journal, the official publication

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<sup>5</sup> Each dance has a list of recognized steps associated with it. This list of steps is known as the “Syllabus.” The syllabus for each dance is broken into three parts - the bronze steps, the silver steps, and the gold steps. In general, it is preferable for dancers to learn first bronze - then silver - then gold. But one does not need to know the entire bronze syllabus before progressing to silver. Generally, the steps of a given level are grouped together because of the level of difficulty. For example, the bronze level steps are fairly basic and provide a good grounding and understanding of the nature of each individual dance. The silver level comprises all of the bronze steps plus a few more, slightly more advanced steps. Predictably, the gold level incorporates all of the bronze and all of the silver steps, with the addition of more advanced steps.

from the Imperial Society (Silvester, 2005). Silvester and other ballroom instructors taught dances based on this syllabus.

During this time frame, the “Great Conference” of ballroom teachers met in 1929 to standardize four ballroom dances, the Waltz, Foxtrot, Quickstep, and Tango<sup>6</sup> (McKibbin, 2000). These dances have held steady throughout the test of time and are 4 of the 5 dances included in the modern day International Style dance competitions. The fifth dance is the Viennese Waltz, which is the original Waltz that was abandoned in favor of the slower Boston version of the Waltz. In the 1930s, the Viennese Waltz gained popularity again and began showing up in competitions.

The codification of ballroom steps was a 10 year project for Silvester. However, it took a bit longer to put together charts of dance steps and to define ballroom terminology that eventually became known as the “English Style.” Creswell (2006) credits Silvester and the Imperial Society with codifying social ballroom dances in England and importing it to other countries. They developed the “correct steps, abolition of unnecessary ones, the production of accepted terminology and handy dance charts” (Creswell, 2006, p. 141).

The English Style of ballroom dancing was quickly accepted in other countries such as Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, France, Japan and even China (McKibbin, 2000). The English style was successfully imported to every country where Western-style dance was taught. Although the English Style

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<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the Tango, all of the originations of the Standard ballroom dances have been discussed. The Waltz is a modified version of the original Waltz (which is the modern day Viennese Waltz). The Foxtrot was developed in America and the Quickstep is a modified and quicker version of the Foxtrot. The Tango originated in Argentina and was brought to Europe where it was modified from the original Argentine style.

was seen in parts of the United States, it wasn't until the 1960s that this style permeated the North American dance scene (McMains, 2006).

Silvester is also attributed with the broad worldwide success due to the popular book that he wrote, *Modern Ballroom Dancing*, which had sold over 1 million copies by 1945 (McKibbin, 2000). In 1931, Silvester's technique book was translated to Japanese (McMains, 2006). The 2005 edition version of the book is used as an invaluable source in this thesis paper. According to Silvester (2005), "the English Style of ballroom dancing has been copied by practically every good teacher throughout the world because it is acknowledged to be the best" (p. 45). Silvester (2005) credits the worldwide success of the English Style, which was also known as the "Imperial Style" based on it being developed by the Imperial Society, because the dance steps were codified as precisely as Ballet. According to Silvester it was the English teachers that refined crude and unorganized steps to make modern ballroom dance technique popular internationally (Creswell, 2006).

According to the author McMains (2006), promoting the "English Style" as being superior was a "major project of the Imperial Society" (p. 85). The English style was formed by a desire to challenge France's role as the center of ballet. McMains (2006) continues further by stating that "[b]y Silvester's logic, since modern ballroom dancing is the most 'natural' and therefore the most graceful form of movement, it is superior to ballet" (p. 86).

The Informal Conferences held by Richardson and *The Dancing Times* led to the formation of the Official Board of Ballroom Dancing (Silvester, 2005). The Board formed in 1929 helped to further standardize dance steps (Marceau, 1998). According to a website, Richardson became the first Chairman of the Board in 1930 (Blackpool Dance Festival History). The Official Board of Ballroom Dancing also formed and shaped competitive

dance with another organization, the National Society of Amateur Dancers (Silvester, 2005)

The Official Board of Ballroom Dancing, despite going through a few name changes, survives today as the British Dance Council. According to the Council's website, this organization is the "governing body for all matters pertaining to all forms of ballroom, Latin American, and disco freestyle dancing throughout England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Channel Counties" (British Dance Council). The website also list that an important role of the Council is to "formulate and administer the rules for competition dancing" (British Dance Council). In fact, the Council regulates all dancing competitions in England to this day.

### **3. Early Ballroom Dance Competitions in England**

Silvester (2005) also credits ballroom competitions for playing an important role in the development in the English Style. According to Silvester (2005), the dance steps being fashioned at the time (referring to when the English Style was in its infancy) were perfected at the competitions being held in England.

Silvester's (2005) chronicles the beginnings of how the English Style of dance competitions began simultaneous to the codifications of steps. He describes the 1920 Open Foxtrot Competition held in England that led to other competitions, such as the Ivory Cross All England Competition. As competitions began to increase in popularity, the format of the competitions evolved with multiple heats and qualifying events. For example, in 1921, after a series of dance competitions in several cities in England, the 'Grand Finals' were held in London with the winners from the qualifying events competing against one another (Silvester 2005).

The first big national competition event that garnered much publicity was put together by an England Newspaper the *Daily Sketch* in 1922. The *Daily Sketch* contest consisted of an amateur level Foxtrot and Waltz competition. A major development from this contest was that professionals, consisting of exhibition dancers and ballroom teachers, convinced the producers that due to the significance of the event, only professionals should be the judges. Up until this time, most competitions were judged by amateur dancers. Thus the *Daily Sketch* competition led to all other major competitions being judged thereafter by professional ballroom dancers (McKibbin, 2000).

In March 1922, the first major competition that involved determining the best “all around” dancer for multiple dances was held. The dancers were judged on 3 dances the Foxtrot, the Waltz and the One-Step. This led to the first World Championship of dance held in England which involved couples dancing 4 different dances, the Waltz, Foxtrot, One-Step, and Tango. The competition format had some of the same elements seen in today’s events. There were categories for different level dancers (professional, amateur, and mixed). Additionally, the finale of the competition consisted of the top three finishers in each division dancing against each other in the grand finals (Silvester, 2005). The different categories and a finalist round of competition are both featured in current dance competitions.

Other newspapers were involved in sponsoring dance competitions. In 1925, according to Silvester (2005), the *Star* newspaper organized “the first of the big competitions” (p. 30). Silvester (2005) considered this competition the event of the year for ballroom dance. The *Star* held the big competition for 7 years and at the time was the equivalent of the British Championship (Silvester, 2005).

By the 1930s, Richardson (1946) notes in his book that there was a distinction between the competitive and social dancer in England. The

competitive dancer was a serious student of dance, whereas the social dancer was considered a restaurant dancer and enjoyed dancing as part of a dining experience or at another social activity (Richardson, 1946). This distinction between social and competitive dancer resulted in the elimination of improvisation from ballroom dance in England (McMains, 2006). Furthermore, McMains (2006) notes that unlike in America, studying and becoming proficient in ballroom dance in England did not result in a person reaching a higher level of social class. In fact, learning ballroom dance in England was for the middle-class and “not the upper-class or aristocracy” (McMains, 2006, p. 83). Whereas in America, as noted in the section of this thesis on Arthur Murray, ballroom dancing was marketed to all classes of people as a mechanism to increase their social level status.

#### **4. Blackpool**

Any discussion of competitive dance in England cannot leave out a section on the Blackpool Festival. The Blackpool Festival is the site of the “most prestigious” ballroom dance competition in the world, where the Open British Championship is annually held (Marceau, 1998, p. 356).

According to the author Marion, the history of the Blackpool dance competition “is central to the history of competitive dance” (Marion, 2008, p. 36). The first dancing competition that took place in Blackpool was held in 1920 (Marion, 2008). This predates the codification of dances by the Imperial Society. Dance competitions were held at Blackpool throughout the 1920s with both professionals and amateurs competing in various dances and formats (Blackpool Dance Festival History).

In 1931 after redecorations to the Empress Ballroom, the first British amateur and professional were held there. The amateur event was the culmination of 250 qualifying heats which led to 40 district finals. The 40

district champions were allowed to compete at Blackpool in the Grand Finale (Blackpool Dance Festival History).

A major innovation to ballroom dance competitions was introduced at the Blackpool competition in 1937. For the first time, the Skating System<sup>7</sup> was used to judge competitors at Blackpool (Blackpool Dance Festival History). The Skating System is still used at Blackpool today, and more importantly around the world in other dance competitions. For example, all competitions in the United States use the Skating System as defined by the IDSF (USA Dance Rulebook).

The Blackpool website notes that a major change occurred in 1961 with the introduction of Latin American Dancing, also referred to as International Latin. This “made a great impact on the dancing world” (Blackpool Dance Festival History). Initially only an amateur Latin tournament was held with a professional event in the following year. By 1964, International Latin gained full competition status and from then on was considered as Championship status and on par with the International Standard or Ballroom category (Blackpool Dance Festival History). The Blackpool Festival continues to thrive and is still seen as the most celebrated event of the competitive ballroom dance world.

England continues to be the central hub of the ballroom dance world. Based on my personal experience, I traveled from Korea to the ballrooms of England solely for the purpose of taking lessons from the best competitive ballroom dancers in the world. These championship level dancers were from all over the world, but taught in England which has retained “the primacy in

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<sup>7</sup> The Skating system is a method of compiling scores in ballroom dance competitions. The skating system consists of 11 rules, 10 of which determine the scoring of the final round (Wikipedia website on Skating System).

the ballroom dance scene” (Marceau, 1998, p. 356). Additionally, according to Marion (2008), American ballroom dancers currently still compare themselves to dancers in England, similar to the way students look to their instructor for a model of good dancing.

#### **IV. Evolution of Ballroom Dance in America**

As Richardson and Silvester shaped ballroom dance in England, a number of Americans shaped modern ballroom dance in the United States. However, the emergence of ballroom dance took a different course in America and resulted in a different style of ballroom dance called American Style.

The evolution of dance in America was derived from other social revolutions, such as the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, an immigrant surge, and growth of the middle class. These changes in America led to a different social dance scene previously enjoyed by upper-class at private balls (McMains, 2006). In addition to the societal impact on dancing, the American tradition of entrepreneurship and business had a more severe influence on ballroom dancing than in England. For example, In England teachers put aside their potential individual monetary gains in the 1920s and 1930s to standardize ballroom dance and develop a common vocabulary. This did not occur in the United States as illustrated below with the Arthur Murray era that began with his mail order dance steps in the 1920s. However, the American and English process of developing ballroom dance shared the idea of refining dances so that they were deemed acceptable for higher social classes (McMains, 2006).

##### **1. Origination of Ballroom Dance in America**

In America like England, dancing originated for higher social classes and dance teachers or “dance masters” played an important role. According to

the authors Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), the first dance master came to New York in 1686 to give lessons to children of the well-to-do. By the mid-1700s dancing had retained respectability and in New York City there were 7 dancing academies by 1800 (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

One of the first families to play an important role in the formation of modern ballroom dancing was the Dodworth family. According to Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), “the Dodworth family set the pace for society dancing in New York City” (p. 10). The Dodworth family opened up its first dance academy in 1842. The academy taught manners and proper etiquette as well as providing dance lessons (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

During the early stages of ballroom dance, the point of taking ballroom dancing lessons was to train children to enter high society. At the time, similar to what occurred in England when the Waltz and closed position dancing was introduced, there were opponents to teaching children dancing. These opponents felt that dancing led to social immorality. However, Allen Dodworth, preached that teaching proper dancing would have the opposite effect. By incorporating manners and etiquette into the dance lessons, students would learn to respect each other and show high moral standards (McMains, 2006).

## **2. Ballroom Dancing in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America**

As mentioned above in the section on Ballroom Dancing at the turn of the 20th century, the ragtime music led to a craze of animal dances. At the time the ragtime dances were becoming popular, there were significant transformations going on in American society. Stephenson and Iaccarino’s (1980) book on dance explains that class distinctions were crumbling as a result of the industrial revolution taking place. The relationships between the sexes were also “becoming easier and less formal” (Stephenson & Iaccarino,

1980, p. 25). The formation of the middle class through the evolution of industry led to new public forums for people to take up the recreation of dancing. At these new dancing halls different classes of people mingled and forged new ideas along with new dance steps (McMains, 2006).

The ragtime dances of this time period were a part of the social revolutions that were taking place. Dancing was no longer for the upper class with formal training that depended on form and learning formal steps. According to McMains (2006), the ragtime and improvisational dances were not just a symbol of this time period, but was also a catalyst for enabling the progress. The steps allowed for one to express themselves and show their individuality (McMains, 2006). This philosophy of individualism and creativity continues in American ballrooms today and in the American Style of dance.

During this time frame as England ballroom dance instructors were attempting to codify dance steps, their American counterparts also wanted to codify the steps. However the American attempts were done differently with a notably wider acceptance of the ragtime dances of this era.

During this transitional period in ballroom dance in the 1910s, the most popular dancers of the era were Irene and Vernon Castle. The Castles popularized the ragtime dances of the time as acceptable dances for “middle and upper-class white Americans” (McMains, 2006, p. 73). The Castles sought to standardize the improvisational steps of the various trots and other animal dances (Driver, 2001). However, Marion (2008) notes that the Castles also faced the same scrutiny from dance opponents and addressed it in their dance manual at the time. In the Castles’ instructional book they state that “dancing, properly executed, is neither vulgar nor immodest, but, on the contrary, the personification of refinement, grace and modesty” (Castle, 1914, p. 18). The Castles were successfully at branding their style

of the ragtime dancing as wholesome and downplayed the sexuality (McMains, 2006).

The Castles drew much fame from their performances at nightclubs, exhibiting their dances (McMains, 2006). A version of their One-Step dance gained popularity and was aptly named after the duo, the Castle Walk (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). According to McMains (2006), the Castles contributed to the “early standardization of ballroom dancing, but not all social dances followed their doctrine” (p. 74). Meaning that there was a division between the refined dances by the Castles and the animal dances involving dips and hopping.

It was during this boom of the ragtime era that a viable ballroom dancing industry emerged in America. The dance industry consisting of dance teachers, publishers of manuals, and dance schools, began to compete for the business generated from the growing dance craze. Advertising and the growing consumer culture led to early marketing strategies linking ballroom dancing with attaining higher social status. The strategy changed over time as ballroom dancing waned in the late twentieth century, but the dance industry was established by this model set in the 1910s (McMains, 2006).

In the early twentieth century, the ballroom dancing community in both England and United States faced the similar battle of fighting the ragtime and improvisational dances. There were economic reasons to overcome these new animal dances that threatened dance teachers ability to make money from lessons of standardized steps. McMains (2006) notes that the American dance organizations the American National Association of Masters of Dancing and the American Society of Professors of Dancing banded together in attempts to standardize steps. However, compared to England, America was a lot less successful at overcoming the individualism seen in new dances. McMains (2006) cites the large geographic area of the United States and the fact that the English dance industry did a better job of forming a

united front. Instead of grouping together, dancers like the Castles worked on their own to harness the dances of the day and attempted to make them wholesome. Additionally, the entrepreneurship and competitiveness of America led to rival styles of dance (McMains, 2006).

### **3. Arthur Murray, The Father of American Ballroom Dance**

One of the most famous names in ballroom dance if not the most famous in America is Arthur Murray (Murray). To this day a chain of dance studios across the United States and in many foreign countries adorn his name and is where a vast number of people get their start in ballroom dance. The Arthur Murray Studio website boasts that it has studios across the world in all the continents and trained 40 million people to dance (Arthur Murray International Studio website).

The Murray story dates back to 1912, when at the age of 17 he won a Waltz contest. During that year he became a student of Vernon and Irene Castle and invested \$200 in dance lessons. Murray soon afterwards became a dance instructor (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

According to the author Driver (2001), Murray had an entrepreneurial spirit and was one of the first people to recognize the popularity of ballroom dancing in the United States. Murray saw an untapped market for dance instruction and pioneered the concept of mail-order dance instruction (Driver, 2001). Murray sold his trademark footprints so that people at home could learn basic dance steps without personal instruction. Murray's dance program was based on the simplicity of learning dance and the similarities of one dance to another. Murray's dance steps standardized ballroom dancing steps and techniques across the United States (McMains, 2006).

Over 5 million people purchased dance lessons from Murray through his mail order business. This did not sit well with the International Association of Masters of Dancing, who in 1923 made sure to disassociate themselves and any other teacher who claimed to be able to teach via the mails (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). Murray replaced the live dance teacher with paper footprints (McMains, 2006). This obviously had a negative economic impact on dance instructors.

However, by the late 1930s Murray's mail order business waned (Driver, 2001). Murray moved on to his next venture to expand his ballroom dance franchises. Murray had his own ballroom studio in New York as early as 1925 (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). In 1937 Murray discovered a new dance in North Carolina and seized on the opportunity and promoted the dance which was called the Big Apple<sup>8</sup>. As the dance caught on with the public, a hotel chain asked for Murray to send dance instructors to teach the dance. This blossomed into Murray sending dancers to the hotels and Murray receiving a commission from the instructors. This was the method that led to Murray establishing a franchise of ballroom studios. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were 200 Arthur Murray studios across the world (Driver, 2001).

Murray's studios, similar to the mail order system that he oversaw, homogenized ballroom dance in America. At the studios, the same dance steps and techniques were being taught. The studios taught simple steps that

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<sup>8</sup> This dance originated in a church in South Carolina which had been turned into a black nightclub called the "Big Apple." Mr. Arthur Murray did the choreography as we know it. The dance includes all the earlier Swing steps and requires a caller. The caller shouts "Shine" and asks for one of the swing steps. A single couple steps into the center and takes the initiative by performing an exhibition of that popular step. This dance was very popular in the 1930's (Lexington Arthur Murray website).

shunned the idea of variation (McMains, 2006). Like the Imperial Society in England, Murray almost single handedly standardized ballroom steps in America.

Part of the Murray marketing technique was to make ballroom dance to appeal to people that would like to move up the social ladder. Murray wanted people to think that learning ballroom dance would improve or secure a person's social class status. According to McMains (2006), Murray suggested to students that if they were able to master the steps like other famous students, they too could reach the same high level socio-economic status (McMains, 2006). As discussed above, this is markedly different than the way English people felt about only middle class people having the time to master ballroom dancing.

This selling of "social mobility also contributed to the elimination of improvisation from the dances"(McMains, 2006, p. 77). Murray promoted doing every step exactly the way it was taught. The precision of each step without any variance "projected the high-class image his students sought" (McMains, 2006, p. 77).

In Driver's (2001) book, he explains that what Silvester did for ballroom dancing in England, Murray did for America. Murray made dancing available to the public. Driver (2005) continues that "[b]oth men laid down the foundations that allowed ballroom dancing to endure long after the social climate that foster them had changed" (p. 151). Driver (2001) explains that in the 1940s ballroom dancing faced many obstacles such as new music that was difficult to dance to, the imposition of a dance tax, and the advent of the television. Although ballroom dancing was not popular at times, Murray and Silvester ingrained ballroom dancing as we know it, so that it lasted through down spells (Driver, 2001).

A further comparison between Murray and Silvester is the distinction between Murray building upon ballet, whereas Silvester rejected it. Murray emphasized ballet technique such as positions of the feet. In contrast, Silvester noted the modern ballroom dancing was done in a natural and comfortable way, without dancing on the toes (McMains, 2006). The influence of Murray using ballet in his ballroom dance steps can still be seen today in the open positions that are seen in American Style dances.

#### **4. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers**

Another set of names in America that greatly influenced dance was Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. According to Driver's (2001) book, Rogers and Astaire brought dancing to the movies that will probably never be matched. Stephenson & Iaccarino (1980) note that in the 1930s they provided a major boost to dancing in their musical comedies.

Astaire began his career as a vaudeville child act with his sister. This eventually led to Astaire starring in Broadway musicals. Astaire's first appearance in a movie was a small role in the movie *Dancing Lady*. Astaire appeared under his own name opposite of Joan Crawford (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). Rogers also made it to Hollywood via vaudeville and Broadway shows (Driver, 2001). Their first movie together was the film *Flying Down to Rio* in which but for a dancing sequence by Rogers and Astaire was not met by much praise. Due to the stir caused by the sequence of Latin American dance, the pair proved to be a financial success and a total of ten movies were made by the pair. Driver (2005) notes that although they came together in one more movie in 1949, it was the 1939 movie, *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*, that marked the end of their partnership.

The Rogers and Astaire movies promoted dancing in the 1930s to college students (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). The president of the Dancers

Teachers Business Association credits their movies with influencing 6 million people learning to dance (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980). Driver (2001) notes that Astaire had an impact on dancing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century second to none. Astaire incorporated all forms of dance into his routines that led to offering the public something new. Astaire “saw no barriers between different dance forms: tap, ballet, ballroom” (Driver, 2001, p. 106). The convergence of the different dance styles distinguished the Astaire style, which eventually emerged into the American Style, from the English or International Style.

Astaire, similar to Silvester and Murray before him was involved in opening dance studios in his name. The Fred Astaire Studios were cofounded with another businessman who used the Murray franchise business model (McMains, 2006). The Fred Astaire Studios are still a functioning business with studios across America and promoting the idea of establishing more franchises (Fred Astaire Studios website).

## **5. Introduction of the English Style to America**

In the 1950s the American Style of ballroom dance still dominated with its improvisation and individuality. The individuality was reflected in the regional differences in dance steps. Evidence of the individuality differences were exhibited at the regional competitions in New York and Chicago (McMains, 2006). Meaning that depending on where you danced, steps were slightly different. Not unlike the variation seen in the 1800s with the Boston form of the Waltz, then the Philadelphia form of the Waltz, etc.

There was also growth of American Style dances outside of the dance studios. In New York City, night club venues saw an explosion of Latin dances. The Mambo and Cha Cha replaced swing dances and started a Latin

dance craze in the 1950s. These dances continued to fuel the improvisational nature of American style dances (McMains, 2006).

By the late 1950s there were only a few dancers from England that were teaching the English Style of ballroom dancing in America. McMains (2006) notes that there were also only a few dance competitions similar to the ones held in England. Instead, Arthur Murray Studios still dominated the dance scene and focused on social dancing. In place of competitions, the studios had showcase events where a student would perform a choreographed routine with their teacher. Dance competitions in America were infrequent events and little was done on a national scale (McMains, 2006).

It was not until the 1960s that the English system of ballroom dancing permeated America which led to a shift in America to competitive ballroom dancing. (McMains 2006). Though McMains (2006) does point out that the English medal system<sup>9</sup> was already adopted in the 1950s by the Arthur Murray studios. In the early 1960s, the English style of dancing started to have more of a presence in America. The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing had an impact on bringing the English style of dancing and competition to America. To promote the English style, the Imperial Society began having one competition in the United States. This led to the formation of a United States branch of the Imperial Society (McMains, 2006).

Murray also was involved in helping to introduce the English style to America. In 1965, the Arthur Murray Corporation organized an American

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<sup>9</sup> The system which specifies different levels of dance, (bronze, silver and gold) where bronze is the least technical and gold is the most difficult to master. The purpose of adopting the English medal system was done similar to other business decisions made by Murray, to make more money by selling dance lessons (McMains, 2006).

tour of the reigning world champions of the English Style of ballroom dance. The champions, Bill and Bobby Irvine toured the United States and gave demonstrations and lectures on ballroom dance. They introduced “thousands of American dancers to the English Style for the first time” (McMains, 2006, p. 88). McMains (2006) notes that the Irvines were surprised at the ballet style of ballroom dancing that was taught as part of the Murray technique. However, as the English Style became more prevalent in the United States, five years later when the Irvines taught in America, they commented that the English Style took hold in America (McMains, 2006).

McMains (2006) writes that the English Style of dancing began to take shape in America at a time when ballroom dancing was at its low in regards to social activity. Chubby Checker’s 1960 appearance on the TV show *American Bandstand* led to a revolution in social dance with the introduction of the Twist. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) wrote that when Checker’s song “Let’s Twist Again” arrived in England in 1961, “the dance world seized upon it” (p. 42). Silvester (2005) made the analogy to the way the ragtime dance the Charleston arrived 35 years earlier that was easy to learn and fun to dance.

As a result of the Twist, ballroom studios took a different path and were more willing to teach the English style of competitive dance. McMains (2006) argues that the reason for the shift was because social dances, like the Twist, did not need to be taught. Ballroom dancing was no longer seen as a valuable social skill, but instead it was easier to gain new students by selling them on the idea of competitive dance. “Ballroom dance competitions offered students a new forum in which to be recognized for their mastery of refined movements” (McMains, 2006, p. 90).

Another event that affected ballroom dancing was the government investigation into the business practices of Arthur Murray Studios. In 1960,

the government ordered Arthur Murray Studios to stop their aggressive sales tactics, which included bogus competitions and the use of long term contracts. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) note that some of these long-term contracts required initial down payments of \$12,000 or more. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) said that the effect of the government investigating the practices of dance studios caused the public to develop a negative attitude towards dancing schools and dance teachers. However, Stephenson and Iaccarino's (1980) explain that most teachers are honest good natured people that teach dance because they enjoy it, often teaching it as a second job.

## **6. Competitive Ballroom Dancing in America**

Dance studios in America from the 1930s through the 1950s rarely focused on preparing a student for competitions. Instead the reason for developing and mastering dancing skills in America was to enhance a person's social status. McMains (2006) points this out through noting that Murray's manuals on dance included as much information about etiquette as dance instruction. McMains (2006) notes the distinction in England where the individuals that mastered dance technique and participated in competitions did not seek an elevation in social status. Instead, in England it further distanced these individuals from reaching a higher social class (McMains, 2006).

Up until the 1960s competitive dance competitions in America remained a regional affair. As a result, there was some variation in the contests and the dance steps. However, as the English system and style became accepted in the United States, regional variations diminished. As dancers began competing against one another in nationally organized contests they mimicked each other. This resulted in contestants showing similar patterns and movements in competitions (McMains, 2006).

The English style had been developed over 30 years and McMains (2006) writes that it was “successful as a competition form because it defined such clear standards for measuring achievement, methods of comparing skill, and techniques for teaching standardized steps” (p. 91). This system attracted organizations in the United States and they based their rules and formats on the English Style system (McMains, 2006).

## **7. Dance Organizations in the United States**

There were different associations that led the way to standardizing competitions in England, such as the British Dance Council and the Imperial Society. Similarly, it was national dance organizations in America that helped bring about the same change in America. It was through these organizations that competitions began to become regulated.

There were dance associations in America as far back as 1885 and probably earlier. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) note that the American Society of Professors of Dancing had their annual convention in New York City in 1885. However dance organizations in America did not take complete shape until the 1960s. The first internationally recognized dance organization from America is the National Dance Council of America (NDCA), which was originally called the National Council of Dance Teachers Organization (NDCA website). The NDCA was formed in 1948 as a non-profit educational organization that was designed to oversee ballroom dance instruction. The organization eventually received international recognition when the English system was being imported into the United States. According to the NDCA website;

In 1962, the NDCA was admitted to membership in the World Dance and Dance Sport Council (WD&DSC) previously known as the International Council of Ballroom Dancing, (ICBD) to represent the

interests of professional dancers and teachers from the United States in world-wide dancing affairs. In addition to formulating the rules by which NDCA recognition of competitions and championships are granted, the NDCA has the exclusive right to select the Professional couples and judges who will represent America in all World Professional Championships.

The World Dance and Dance Sport Council (WD&DSC) was renamed in June 2006 as the World Dance Council (Marion, 2008). According to their website, the WDC is “the world authority for professional Dance and DanceSport.” The WDC basically oversees the world championships and the various national governing bodies for professional dancers. The WDC lays out the rules for competitions in which they award world championship titles for various dance styles, such as International Standard and Latin (Marion, 2008).

McMains (2006) notes that the acceptance of the NDCA into the WDC “marked the United States entry into the circuit of competitions in English Style ballroom dancing being conducted worldwide” (p. 88). The NDCA continues to thrive today as the governing body for professional dance competitors and teachers in the United States. The NDCA like most other dance organizations has its own rule book describing its purpose and listing out the rules and regulations for competitions, such as divisions and judging (NDCA website). In addition to sponsoring these events, the NDCA also regulates dance teacher professionals throughout the United States. An illustration of the attempt to regulate professional dance teachers was a press release in 2000 stating that they do not endorse amateur level dancers teaching at dance schools in the United States (NDCA website – News).

It is important to note that some of the main members and contributors to the NDCA are the major dance studios in the United States, such as the Arthur

Murray and Fred Astaire franchises. Part of the evolution of ballroom dance in America is that the dance studios recognized the need to standardize ballroom dance competitions. By the big studios sponsoring the NDCA, they were able to accomplish the need to have a main governing body for dance competitions with rules and regulations.

The NDCA is not the only governing body that established a foothold on regulating dance competitions in America. USA Dance is another organization formed in the 1960s that paved the way for ballroom competitions in America. USA Dance was formerly known as the United States Amateur Ballroom Dance Association (USABDA). It was originally formed in 1965 to promote ballroom dancing into the Olympics. According to the history of USA Dance, the early attempt to get into the Olympics failed. However, out of the failed attempt USA Dance was able to define guidelines and understand the needs of American dance competitors and social dancers in America (USA Dance website).

USA Dance's focus is on ballroom dancers that compete at the amateur level and on recreational or social dancing. During the early years, USA Dance was not seen as a national organization and was limited to members in New York, Washington D.C., and a few other places. In 1985, there was a reorganization of USA Dance to promote the growth of ballroom dance at the competition and social dance levels. This led to establishing members across the country and promoting ballroom dance in colleges and secondary schools (USA Dance website).

USA Dance continues to be an important organization involved in ballroom dance. It is active in conducting national, regional and local Dancesport competitions. USA Dance now promotes social dance through its Social Division that was established in 1999 to guide the growth of social ballroom dancing in the United States. Ultimately, USA Dance has a goal to promote

dance as a “healthy lifetime recreational activity, suitable for families and for those who are so inclined a progression to competitions is [sic] encouraged” (USA Dance website).

USA Dance also continues to contribute to the effort of making Dancesport an Olympic event. In 1987 the International Dancesport Federation (IDSF) recognized USA Dance as the governing body of amateur Dancesport (USA Dance website). Then in 1999 USA Dance became an affiliate member of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), the national organization that represents America and its athletes in the Olympics (USOC website).

The NDCA and USA Dance both are involved in regulating competitions and each has their own rulebook. However, each organization sanctions different types of competitions. The NDCA sponsors events where professionals compete for a championship title. In addition to the professionals competing, there are amateurs and junior level events at these competitions. These events take place all over the United States and culminate with the most prestigious competition in America, the NDCA sanctioned United States World Championships (United States Dance Championship website). In comparison to the NDCA, USA Dance sponsors events that are solely for amateurs, with categories for preteen, junior, collegiate, adult and senior dancers.

Each organization has other roles in the dance industry. In addition to the amateur competitions, USA Dance promotes non-competitive dance through its social division and has a hand in making Dancesport an Olympic event. NDCA on the other hand is more involved in regulating dance professionals and dance instruction at dance schools or studios.

As recently as August 15, 2008 there has been consideration of combining both organizations to form one national body for ballroom dance in America.

In a press release published by the NDCA they explained that members from each organization formed a group to consider the possibility (NDCA website).

The American design of how ballroom dance is regulated mimics how England and the rest of the World divide their governing bodies. As the chart below as copied from Marion’s (2008) book shows, there is a division between regulating professional versus amateur ballroom dancers.

**<Table 1> Governing Dancesport (Ballroom Dancing) Bodies**

Region	Professional	Amateur
World	World Dance Council (WDC)	International Dancesport Federation (IDSF)
USA	National Dance Council of America (NDCA)	USA Dance
England (UK)	British Dance Council (BDC)	English Amateur DanceSport Association (EADA)

## **V. Divergence between American Style and English (International) Style**

Early ballroom dance competitions in America were operated by the Imperial Society and were limited to the English Style dances, which at the time included the Waltz, Foxtrot, Tango, Viennese Waltz, and the Quickstep (McMains 2006). This group of dances are known by many names including Ballroom, Modern, Standard or International Style. However, the American Style of dancing, which was characterized by individuality and less standardization and taught at the big dance studios, did not disappear.

Instead teachers in America “adapted the American Style to fit into the English competition system” (McMains, 2006, p. 91). McMains (2006) notes that dance studios began holding competitions using the same format found in the English system, in which all couples dance simultaneously and a winner was determined through the process of elimination. This English system replaced the single couple showcases that were previously seen at American studios (McMains, 2006).

In addition to the way competitions were formatted, the English Style of a medal system to determine competition levels was adopted in the United States. This system of being able to level the playing field of dance competitors continues to this day as shown on the USA Dance Dancesport Rulebook (2008, p. 13).

As a result of the adoption of the English system, dance steps for the American Style had to be codified. This was a change to the American Style dances because specific dance steps were not usually defined. The American Style was more about improvisation. However, in judging competitions, improvisation was not rewarded. (McMains, 2006) This led to the emergence of a new style of American dance, competitive American Style ballroom dance. This style was taught by teachers who put English techniques to American steps. McMains (2006) describes the new style as “preserving neither the playfulness and social qualities of earlier American dances nor the technical rigor and structure of the English Style” (p. 88). Thus a compromise of the two styles formed the American Style of competitive ballroom dance.

At the time the English Style was being imported to the United States in 1960s is also when it became known as the International Style in America. I have the great fortune to currently work with Stephen Cullip, who is a two time United States International Style champion. Mr. Cullip explained that

his parents were pioneers in bringing the English Style to America, more specifically Southern California. Mr. Cullip stated that when the English style was introduced at the Arthur Murray and Fred Astaire dance studios, they objected to the style being called ‘English.’ Thus in the 1960s when the National Council of Dance Teacher Organizations (now known as the NDCA) was organized with a heavy constituency of Murray and Astaire studio teachers, they decided to replace the name ‘English’ with ‘International.’ Mr. Cullip explains the purpose was to set apart the American Style, which really was not in full existence at the time, per the demand of the powerful Murray and Astaire studio chains.

### **1. American versus International (English) Style**

Each style has two categories. The following table lists the different dances performed in each Style under the two categories:

**<Table 2> Dances Performed in International and American Style Competitions**

#### **International (formerly English) Style**

Standard (Ballroom) Dances	Latin Dances
Waltz	Cha Cha
Tango	Samba
Viennese Waltz	Rumba
Fox Trot	Paso Doble
Quickstep	Jive

#### **American Style**

Smooth Dances	Rhythm Dances
Waltz	Cha Cha
Fox Trot	Rumba

Tango	East Coast Swing
Slow Viennese Waltz	Bolero
	Mambo

In researching the differences between the two styles, one website page describes it succinctly:

Contemporary ballroom dancing comes in two major styles, American Style and International Style. American Style was developed by the major U.S. studio chains, Arthur Murray and Fred Astaire, and by the independent U.S. studios. International Style was developed by the British, particularly through the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) and the International Dance Teachers' Association (IDTA). While most of the world uses International Style exclusively, both styles are popular in North America (Tbee website)

The above statement generally explains how the dance styles were formed, but not what the differences are. Based on my research, views on the how they differ vary. Though there are clear distinctions between the two styles, there is some variance in opinion as to the fine details between the two styles.

In order to further compare the styles, each category within the styles should be compared to its corresponding category. As shown in the above table, the corresponding categories have overlapping dances. Thus, American Smooth corresponds to International Standard and American Rhythm corresponds to International Latin dances.

Since the focus on the thesis has been on dances typically understood as ballroom dances (Waltz, Foxtrot, Quickstep), more emphasis is devoted to the details of how American Smooth differs from International Standard. In

addition, the difference between Smooth and Standard also provide a better example of how America retained its own form of dance despite the great influence of ballroom dance from the English. In comparison, the International Latin and American Smooth (which according to the USA dance website is frequently referred to as American Latin) has less differences and according to McMains (2006) are “both modeled on and largely determined” by the English system (p. 128).

## **2. American Smooth versus International Standard**

A dance instructor with 25 plus years of dancing and teaching experience explained the distinction between Smooth and Standard in one basic statement (Jeff Chandler Interview). Mr. Chandler stated that Smooth is any dance figure done in an open position, whereas any figure done in a closed position is Standard. (Ibid.) In terms of dance figures, Mr. Chandler referred to steps or patterns done while performing any of the dances that fall into the category of Smooth or Standard. Closed position means that dancers face each other in a typical hold as fully described in detail in the International Encyclopedia of Dance<sup>10</sup> (Marceau, 1998). Open position means any dance position other than closed, such as where dance partners are positioned side-by-side, back-to-back, one behind the other, etc. (Atkinson).

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<sup>10</sup> In the standard dance (closed) position, the woman stands slightly towards the man’s right side, with her right hipbone slightly to the right of his naval. This permits the couple to move on separate tracks; their feet are slightly dovetailed, their right sides touch, and their left sides are free. The man places his right hand outside the woman’s left shoulder blade and holds her right hand in his left; she places her left hand on his upper right arm, with her arm resting along his. The elbows are generally held on a plane parallel to the floor, creating breadth in the couple’s outline. This position with body contact is the only one allowed in competitive Standard dancing; in American Smooth, however, open and apart positions are allowed.

To further breakdown Mr. Chandler's statement, the Standard style only permits dance figures in a closed position. When dancing Standard, partners never break the closed position hold. In comparison, Smooth allows for dancers to do open or closed positions, and even solo actions (Aktinson). Thus it is relatively easy to distinguish between the styles because as soon as the dancers break the closed position, or perhaps start in an open position, this indicates that they are dancing Smooth. According to Marion (2008) the term 'Smooth' refers to "the premium this style places on smoothly moving in and out of the closed dance frame of Standard" (p. 22).

A Dancesport UK article on the website [dancesport.uk.com](http://dancesport.uk.com) briefly describes the difference between Smooth and Standard. The article states that Standard or Ballroom (the term used in the article) is often heard to be boring because of the restriction of the closed position. The article then describes how Smooth uses the same principles as Standard without the restriction. This permits the dancers to do steps not allowed in traditional ballroom dancing (referring to Standard). The article states that the Smooth technique is refreshing and interesting with a rich list of dance figures. It then concludes that as a result of Smooth being taught in the UK, competitions involving the American Style will follow suit in England.

The difference in open versus closed position results in emphasizing different skills when dancing. Creativity and individual expression are part of the focus when judging a couple dancing Smooth (It's About Dance Internet Article). For example, a couple may add Latin flair to a Smooth Style dance with a "theatrical opening or an extravagant turn" (Picart, 2006 p. 91). This is similar to what was seen in the Fred Astaire movies, the root of Smooth.

In Standard dances, the stress is put on showing flawless technique. In Alex Moore's famous book on standard ballroom dance originally published by the Imperial Society and now in its tenth edition, Moore (2002) writes that examiners look for "technical accuracy, good poise and movement, and style that does not offend" (p. 297). A comment made by a writer on the website dancesport.uk notes that American Style competitors frequently get coaching from teachers that specialize in the International Style to improve their technique (Dancemax).

Other differences between Smooth and Standard include names of different closed dance patterns to the clothing worn at competitions. Mr. Chandler explained that most of the names of Standard dance steps have a different name in the realm of Smooth. However, the steps are identical to one another. For example, the dance steps the curl feather and feather finish in Standard are known in Smooth terminology as the hairpin and continuity ending, respectively. The footwork and body positions are exactly the same. Furthermore, in a book that details the culture of Dancesport, Picart's (2006) *From Ballroom to DanceSport: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Body Culture*, the author writes about the differences in women's gowns between Smooth and Standard competitors. As a result of dancing Standard, the women's gowns tend to be less flamboyant than their Smooth counterparts. The reason being that in Standard the closed position is never broken and the front of the women's gowns are concealed. Therefore to draw attention to judges and audience members when dancing Standard, the contestants often wear boas or other accoutrements to add an element of drama. In Smooth such additions would be an obstacle to perform with because of the different open positions that occur (Picart, 2006).

In one of the many on-line articles on the differences between Smooth and Standard, a contributor discusses the idea that Smooth is more than just Standard using open positions (Atkinson). The article cites many award

winning professionals (two of which I had the great honor of working with) who have contributed to making Smooth have its own “unique look and feel which is anything but Standard” (Atkinson).

### 3. American Rhythm versus International Latin

The differences between American Rhythm (Rhythm) and International Latin (Latin) are probably a little more difficult to notice with the exception that there is less overlap in the dances performed. As the table above shows, there are only two dances that overlap in name between the styles, Cha Cha and Rumba. However, Jive and East Coast Swing are basically the same type of dance. Both Jive and East Coast Swing developed from early swing dances that started in America in the 1920s (Marceau, 1998). The following table shows where all the Latin and Smooth dances originated:

<Table 3> Origins of International Latin and American Rhythm Dances

Dance	Country of Origin	Style (Rhythm or Latin)
Cha Cha	Haiti (Developed from the Mambo)	Both
Samba	Brazil	Latin
Rumba	Cuba	Both
Paso Doble	Spain	Latin
Jive	USA	Latin
East Coast Swing	USA	Rhythm
Bolero	Spain / Cuba	Rhythm
Mambo	Cuba / Haiti	Rhythm

(PBS website ballroom challenge)

In addition to having the different dances, the overlapping dances Cha Cha and Rumba also vary between Latin and Rhythm. For example, the Rumba’s

are different in the basic timing count and dance figures (Marion, 2008). A further difference is the hip motion between the two styles (Atkinson). As a Latin dancer that was introduced to Rhythm in America, I am aware that in Rhythm a dancer steps onto a bent leg, whereas in Latin, the leg remains straight. This results in a different look to the dance that may not be noticeable to a non-dancer.

Another difference between the styles is the continual body movement in Rhythm dances. The rhythm of the body takes precedence over the clean lines seen in Latin dances. McMains (2006) states that short or stocky people are encouraged in America to practice Rhythm over Latin, where long and lanky body shapes can make elongated lines similar to ballet.

However, in Marion's (2008) book, he notes that the differences in Cha Cha between the two styles is decreasing as many internationally trained dancers perform both Rhythm and Latin. An internet article notes that while Smooth has been moving in a different direction that makes it more unique than Standard, Rhythm is "moving in a direction closer to its International counterpart" (Atkinson).

## **VI. Revival of Ballroom Dance and Development of Dancesport**

As noted above when the English style was being introduced in America during the 1960s there was a lull in ballroom dancing. Stephenson notes that the 1960s marked a time in America when young people exhibited their independence (Marion, 2008). This was seen in the dances of the time where a person could dance to rock and roll without a partner. Lounges and restaurants where social ballroom dancing may have once occurred were converted to bars designed for the rock music of the time. "By 1970 ballroom dancing was once again at a very low ebb" (Marion, 2008 p. 52).

## **1. Revival of Ballroom Dancing in America**

Several historians on ballroom dance in America explain that there was a revival of ballroom dancing in the 1970s. The revival began with the disco era and the reemergence of partner dancing. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) notes that the Hustle dance greatly facilitated the return of ballroom dancing.

In the book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Ballroom Dancing*, the Hustle is described as a dance born out of the nightclubs in New York City (Allen, 2002). As seen before with the Waltz where multiple variations developed, the same thing happened with the Hustle. According to Allen (2002), the original American Hustle was 'boring.' The Latin population which was blossoming at the time in New York City added flair to the Hustle with their version rightfully named the Latin Hustle. Other variations of the Hustle include the Lindy Hustle, the Tango Hustle, and the three-count Hustle (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

The disco craze in the 1970s was also marked by the famous 1977 movie *Saturday Night Fever* starring John Travolta. Following the tradition of American movies featuring dance, John Travolta was the Fred Astaire of the time period exhibiting the popular disco dances of the period including the Hustle and Nightclub Two-step (McMains, 2006).

The popularity of the disco dances did not go unrecognized by the dance studios. Based on the demand of young people, many studios began teaching the Hustle. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) who published their book at the time that the Hustle was becoming popular explain that the Hustle must be reigned in. Similar to what the Imperial Society did in the 1920s and 1930s, Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) make a call to

standardize the Hustle. Although I was unable to find any direct sources that explain that this is what happened, based on the Hustle still being taught in America with names for various steps, it appears the Hustle was indeed standardized (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

At the dance studio where I teach, the Hustle and Nightclub Two-step are still taught. Based on the age group (mostly in their 50s) of the students now participating in such classes, it appears these were the same young people doing the dance back in the 1970s and still enjoy it. Similar to other specialized dances like the Swing and Lindy hop that were once the popular dance of their time period, there are Hustle competitions, such as the World Hustle Dance Championship now in its ninth year (World Hustle Dance Championship website)

The revival of partner dancing did not just happen in the nightclubs. As mentioned above, the dance studios also used the opportunity to get more young students dancing. Arthur Murray studios reported a 25% increase in students during 1974 and noted that there was a 30% jump in people under thirty. The 1970s also marked the rebirth of colleges and universities offering ballroom dancing. Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980) cite many schools that started ballroom dance clubs and the large amount of attendees at ballroom dance events at these schools. In 1977, there was a college dancing competition in New York City that attracted 500 entries from all over the United States (Stephenson & Iaccarino, 1980).

Dance programs and clubs in the United States continue to thrive today. For example, one website lists over 100 schools that have ballroom dance clubs. The Harvard College dance club website lists 37 other schools that participate in their competitions and include schools from across the country (Harvard Ballroom Dance Club website). Furthermore, the USA Dance website also provides an easy three step process for anyone that is interested

in starting a ballroom dance club at their own college or university. USA Dance offers their assistance and even put together a video for students (USA Dance website).

The revival of ballroom dance in 1970s can be safely said to have started with a youth movement. The Hustle got young adults back in dance studios. These students may have started with the Hustle, but in my own experience, one dance class can easily lead students to become interested in other dances, such as the traditional ballroom dances. Additionally, college dance clubs also had a significant impact in reviving the ballroom dance industry. There is probably no doubt that many of these students who had their first taste of ballroom dancing in college carried their interest further. It was probably these students from the 1970s who led the charge in trying to make ballroom dancing an Olympic sport in the 1980s and 1990s.

## **2. Competitive Ballroom Dancing Becomes Dancesport**

In the United States as elsewhere in the world, the term used in place of competitive ballroom dance is Dancesport. In the introduction to the book *Glamour Addiction – Inside the American Ballroom Dance Industry*, the author Juliet E. McMains (2006) notes that competitive ballroom dancing was “renamed Dancesport in the 1980s to facilitate an international campaign to win Olympic status” (p. I). Throughout the 1980s various amateur ballroom dance organizations were consolidating to promote international competitions (IDSF website). This led to an intensive effort to seek acknowledgement from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to recognize ballroom dancing as an Olympic sport. As a result, the term Dancesport began to be officially used on November 11, 1990 when the International Council of Amateur Dancers (ICAD) changed its name to International Dancesport Federation (IDSF). Although the term Dancesport

was used in Europe for years before this event, this marked the day of the official recognition of the term Dancesport (Picart, 2006).

Other organizations followed suit and began to officially use the name Dancesport in the title of their organizations. In 1996 the world governing body of professional ballroom dance changed its name from the International Council of Ballroom Dancing (ICBD) to the World Dance and DanceSport Council (WD & DSC) (WDC website). However, in 2006 the WD & DSC went through a restructuring of the organization and it is now known as the World Dance Council (WDC).

In regards to the IOC's consideration of Dancesport as an Olympic event, Picart (2006) provides a historical analysis of the successes and setbacks that occurred. In 1997, the first big step towards recognition of Dancesport as an Olympic event occurred when the IDSF became a member of the IOC. This led to other successes for Dancesport, such as its inclusion in the Asian Games in 1998, which helped raise its visibility as a sport. This issue of sport versus art was raised during this time period. The IDSF decreed that the competition rules must reinforce the promotion of Dancesport with a "sports image as opposed to a performing arts image" (Picart, 2006, p. 72). As referenced before in this thesis, during this time frame in the late 1990s, USA Dance became actively involved in the journey to the Olympics (USA Dance website).

In 2000, in a move to further the effort of making Dancesport an Olympic event, it was featured as an exhibition event at the Sydney Olympics. Originally what would be thought of as a high point in the road to making it to the Olympics, turned out to be a disaster. At the closing ceremonies, 500 Dancesport competition couples danced. However, the dancing was not met with much praise by the TV announcers. Instead, as Picart (2006) and Marion (2008) both cite in their books, the commentary was condescending

and rude. There were lame jokes made about a dancer that became injured. According to a leader in the Dancesport publishing business, the broadcasters “didn’t just insult an individual, it insulted an entire sport” (All Business website). There were hundreds of complaints regarding the treatment of Dancesport at a time where it was supposed to shine.

The notorious broadcast did not stop the effort to make Dancesport an Olympic event from going forward. An attempt was made to get Dancesport in the 2008 Olympics. However, during this time frame the IOC was removing already approved sports and did not include any new sports. The earliest date that Dancesport can hope to be added as a full status Olympic event will be in 2012 (USA Dance website). In the meantime, Dancesport continues to participate in the World Games which also features sports not yet designated as an Olympic event (USA Dance website).

### **3. The Athletics of Dancesport**

The term Dancesport was introduced to separate the competitive and more athletic form of ballroom dancing as compared to its social counterpart (Picart, 2006). Dancesport is the result of making ballroom dance stricter in format and following specific steps that can be judged by an international criterion. Another issue that the promoters of Dancesport had to deal with is distancing this type of dancing from other forms of dance, such as ballet or modern dance (Picart, 2006).

According to Marion (2008), ballroom dance is often not taken seriously as an art form within dance. However, he adds it also is not taken seriously as a sport either. Marion (2008) devotes a chapter in his book to making the argument that Dancesport has a lot of the physical, social, and competitive elements that make it a true sport. In Marion’s (2008) final analysis, Dancesport is compared to figure skating. Both activities share some of the

same cultural and historical traditions. Marion (2008) also cites the overlapping between the sports including Dancesport coaches being used by figure skaters, using the same dress makers, and working on syllabus figures.

Picart (2006) also addresses the debate over whether Dancesport is a sport or art. Her analysis and argument relies on a multitude of studies that show Dancesport athletes require the same level of fitness as other Olympic athletes. One study cites the comparison of the Olympic event the decathlon, where the athlete does 10 different events spread over several days. In contrast, a Dancesport competitor in a ten dance competition (performing all the Standard and Latin dances) does the event in two sessions with a two hour break between sessions. During each session the dancers perform five dances each lasting two and a half minutes with a one minute break between dances. The Dancesport athletes are not afforded the luxury of long breaks between events that decathletes receive. Instead, the Dancesport athletes strive to show the mastering of each dance, which has its own elements and techniques not unlike the various decathlon events. Upon the completion of a dance session, the Dancesport athletes are breathing hard and winded as any other athlete. However, these Dancesport athletes are trained to smile and make it look simple similar to many other Olympic athletes in the sports of gymnastics, ice skating, or synchronized swimming (Picart, 2006).

Picart (2006) cited another study done in Germany that many people in the dancing industry commented on. The study showed the breathing and muscular exertion by Dancesport athletes doing one dance was similar to athletes that compete in swimming or track and field events. A former US Dancesport Council president commented that the dancers have to do five dances in a row as compared to a runner sprinting for just a minute and a half. He also notes that the ladies are moving backwards (Picart, 2006).

Another element of sport referenced by Picart (2006) is the injuries and setbacks suffered by athletes. A promoter of Dancesport replied to a person that questioned Dancesport as a true sport because of the lack of drama from failure. The promoter cites common examples of drops, falls and injuries in his 16 years of experience as a dancer. The promoter said that if the skeptic of Dancesport participated in competitive ballroom dancing, he would have a different opinion. A former United States Dancesport champion adds that she has suffered black eyes, bloody noses, and split lips from dancing. Another dancer stated that injuries sustained during practice or competitions, can sideline the dancer for many months (Picart, 2006).

There are many other arguments made to validate Dancesport as a true sport compared to other sports and a viable Olympic event. The summary of arguments include, the attraction of a huge international TV viewership, strict anti-doping requirements and testing, and the regulation by a governing body (Picart, 2006). As shown below in section of the thesis about ballroom dance on television, there has been an explosion of viewers that are interested in professional Dancesport. Picart (2006) notes that drug testing for Dancesport competitors has been done since 1996 at the World Championships. Furthermore, the regulators of Dancesport in America (USA Dance) and abroad (IDSF) have drug testing procedures as part of their strict regulations.

Dancesport still has a way to go to firmly establish the perception as a true sport. As Picart (2006) notes there is still a perception of Dancesport as being too effeminate or gay based on men participants wearing as much makeup as women. However, there are numerous good arguments that validate Dancesport as a sport and more importantly worthy of full Olympic status.

## **VII. Dancesport in the United States**

As noted in the Limitations section of the thesis, there is not much literature on the transition of ballroom dance from the social dance history to the competitive Dancesport version (McMains, 2006). Many dance studios show a brief history of some of the dances and where they originated from. There is no detailed explanation of Dancesport other than the campaign to make it an Olympic sport as detailed above.

### **1. Separating Dancesport from Social Ballroom Dancing**

According to McMains (2006), the lack of a clear distinction between Dancesport and social ballroom dancing creates the illusion that Dancesport is merely a highly developed version of the social ballroom dances. This illusion is purposely maintained by the dancing industry for economic reasons. In order to develop an interest in Dancesport, non-ballroom dancers or novices are trained to think that there is not much of a difference between taking a few ballroom classes and what is done at the professional level. There is an obvious financial incentive for the ballroom industry to maintain this fantasy to encourage the enrollment of new students (McMains, 2006).

McMains (2006) continues by explaining that the new students who are initiated into ballroom in America enter the ballroom world through social dancing. These students learn the basic steps and expect to be dancing after a few lessons. In the tradition of Arthur Murray and similar designed dance studios, there is the incentive to get social dancers involved in Dancesport. These newly minted Dancesport students can take years to master competition level technique (McMains, 2006). This provides a stream of revenue for the studios and dance instructors.

An illustration of the push to attract social dancers into Dancesport is the integration of social dancing within competitive dancing events. At

competitions across America, famous named dance teachers instruct group classes and workshops for novice dancers. Additionally there is general social dancing between competitive rounds. Another illustration cited by McMains (2006) is that in some studios it is not unusual for a Dancesport champion to receive coaching next to a beginning level couple. I can confirm that example with my own experience of seeing a professional dancer from the television show *Dancing with the Stars* training next to couples being taught beginner steps. (McMains, 2006).

Another point expressed by McMains (2006) is that Dancesport professionals generally do not participate in social ballroom dance. Teachers of social ballroom dance are typically Dancesport competitors or retired competitors. Rarely do these Dancesport teachers ever dance socially, and if so they typically consider it work and not play. As a Dancesport competitor and teacher myself, I feel the exact sentiment expressed by McMains. I agree that my motivation or measure of success is as a Dancesport competitor and there is lack of desire to dance socially.

My own perspective is that Dancesport competitors that compete at a high level are not generated through the social dancing in America or elsewhere. My experience with dance partners in Korea doing International Latin or in America doing American Style has been similar. Dancers that perform at a high level have formal dance training at a young age, including taught competitive dance. The Dancesport competitors that I have met in America did not initiate dancing through social ballroom dancing then raise their ability through dancing socially. Most of the high level dancers have a ballet or modern dance background and then enter ballroom dance with their sights on Dancesport. However, I would never discourage a one-time social dancer from the prospect of becoming a great Dancesport competitor. My opinion is that it would just be a very tough journey.

## **2. Immigration of Dancesport Professionals to America**

McMains (2006) also describes how the immigration of Eastern European Dancesport professionals to America have affected the sport and the American Style. These immigrants were taught Dancesport at a young age when Communist governments in Eastern Europe supported the activity. The trend in the 1990s was for these Dancesport trained dancers to move to America where there was opportunity to profit from their dancing skills and continue their passion for dance. One immediate result was the higher standard in International Style competitions in America. These immigrants were raised as youths on this style (McMains, 2006).

The influx of foreign Dancesport participants had other effects on the dance community in America. The immigrant dancers were raised on Dancesport and do not have much experience differentiating between social versus competitive dance instruction. When these foreign born dancers instruct students they tend not to distinguish between competitive and social ballroom patterns and movements. However, this can result in the misapplication of using Dancesport techniques in the social ballroom setting. According to McMains (2006), posture and gestures when dancing end up looking graceless and out of place.

An additional impact of the influx of International Style dancers is the tendency for them to associate International Style as competition style and link the American Style to social dancing. McMains (2006) argues that there is the misconception and failure to recognize the American Style as being able to be practiced both competitively and socially. Part of this misconception is due to International Style being defined earlier in time and also being “universally recognized as the more serious, technical, and implicitly higher form” (McMains, 2006, p. 95).

The discussion of the misconception of American Style is mostly geared towards comparing American Smooth to International Standard. However, there is also a lack of respect that American Rhythm dancers receive from their International Latin counterparts (McMains, 2006). Rhythm is often perceived as a lesser version of Latin. Of the four main categories of dance in America, Rhythm is the least serious and dancers in the division are “often stigmatized as less skilled dancers” (McMains, 2006, p. 27). My experience of living in America for several years and being active in the American ballroom industry has led me to agree with the statement. However as discussed above in the section on the different styles, there has been a trend for foreign born dancers who originally trained only in International Latin to cross over to American Rhythm.

As stated below in the thesis section of Current Trends, there has been a push to feature showcase dancing, which has elements of both American and International Style. Though showcase dancing is limited to less serious competitions and seen more as a performance, the theatrical features and relaxed rules show the opening up of the strict rules of International Style and the acceptance of the American Style.

### **VIII. Current Trends**

Ballroom Dance and Dancesport has been increasingly getting more popular in the United States and abroad through its portrayal in movies and now with its explosion on television in America. This trend is not something new to happen in America. In the 1930s and 1940s the Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire movies sparked a large interest in ballroom dance. Ever since that time period there have been movies using the ballroom motif to get people into the ballroom. According to the author Picart (2006), “[T]he transformation of ballroom into Dancesport to some extent is rooted in its popularity in contemporary films” (p. 39). Additionally, since the advent of

television, dancing shows have been regularly aired for viewers at home. However, now more than ever television is bringing the world of ballroom dance and Dancesport to the general public. Through this opening, Dancesport is being more accepted as a sport.

## **1. In Movies**

There are various examples of movies that follow in the tradition of Astaire and Rogers films, but include a plot that revolves the sport of ballroom dancing. The first example is the Australian movie *Strictly Ballroom*. The movie won the top award at the Cannes film festival and according to a news article “breathed life into a pastime many thought of as stuffy and out-of-date” (ABC news article from website). Although the movie is somewhat of a comedy, the plot follows some of the common issues of Dancesport, such as terminating a dance partnership and finding a new partner for competitions after the breakup. Although the 1992 movie is somewhat old to be called a recent trend, it is still cited as a must see movie for all Dancesport competitors. It is considered a classic in modern times for people in America that have become involved in the ballroom dancing scene, competitive or not.

The 1998 movie *Dance with Me* is more American in nature and focuses on the Latin or Rhythm dances. The film features real Dancesport competitors with realistic high level dancing. The focus on the Latin dances versus Smooth or Standard (dances typically seen as ballroom and danced in competitions) made the movie appealing to young people in America and abroad. The Latin dances are less refined and restricted. This type of dancing is probably thought of as easier to do and more fun compared to Standard, which appears more formal and looks like it takes years of lessons. However the plot of *Dance with Me* revolves around Dancesport and shows that there is a seriousness to dance that most young people never get to

know. The movie illustrates that professional dancers in the Latin or Rhythm divisions are highly trained dancers and require as much training as thought of when doing the traditional Standard ballroom dances.

I must also confess that as a young person that watched *Dance with Me* in Korea, it changed my life. Although I was already focused on dancing and majoring in dance in college, this movie opened my eyes up to Dancesport and resulted in me devoting myself to dance. Although I may have ended up in the dance industry without seeing this movie, I doubt that I would have traveled the world in the pursuit of Dancesport were it not for *Dance with Me*. This movie ultimately altered the path of my life and resulted in me now living in America as a Dancesport competitor and ballroom instructor, which is a very happy and fulfilling life.

A more recent movie, *Shall We Dance*, centers around ballroom dance and shows the transition from a novice ballroom dancer to their first competition. The original movie was made in Japan and was such a big hit it was remade with an American cast. Although the movie's plot is mostly about relationships between a middle aged man, his wife, and a ballroom dance instructor, these relationships revolve around the impact of ballroom dance. The movie illustrates the stigma of males involved in ballroom dance and how they should hide their interest from others. However, it also shows the rewards of ballroom dancing and the goal of competitive dancing for beginners. In addition, the movie also follows a plot line about a professional Dancesport competitor who reached the highpoint of being a finalist at the Blackpool Dance Festival. The movie does a good job of showing the divergence between amateur level competitors' concerns and issues versus what a professional dancer faces.

*Shall We Dance* is frequently talked about in the ballroom dance environment and there is no doubt it has led countless middle-aged people to

seek their first lessons. The only controversy about the movie is people's opinions comparing the original Japanese version to the American version. Many people, including myself, think the original version was better. Although I am a fan of Jennifer Lopez, I think she was miscast as an International Standard Style dancer and she is more fit to represent an International Latin dancer.

## **2. In Television**

In addition to cinema, with the advent of television in America in the 1940s, dance shows eventually hit the air. The first such ballroom dance show came from Arthur Murray in 1950, when he and his wife gave dance lessons on the television (Dance Tonight website). This led to the highly popular show the *Arthur Murray Dance Party* that ran for 12 years on television in the United States. Since then dancing shows have been on television, such as American Bandstand that ran for 30 plus years featuring teenagers and young adults dancing to popular music of the time (Wikipedia website on American Bandstand). Other American shows featured dance contests, such as the 1970 - 1980s show *Dance Fever* where celebrities judged amateur dancers who danced to disco music (Wikipedia website on Dance Fever).

In addition to the above TV shows, professional Dancesport competitors have also been featured on television. Beginning in 1980, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) channel first brought competitive ballroom dancing to United States Television viewers. The show lasted until 2000 and featured the final heats of competitions held in America in the four major categories of Dancesport in America: International Standard and Latin and American Smooth and Rhythm (PBS website). Beginning in 2006, the show started again and the format was revised with a new name, *America's Ballroom Challenge*. The competition is no longer limited to the competitors dancing within their own category of dance. Instead, 24 world class

Dancesport couples compete against each other, dancing their own category of dance in pursuit of the champion title “America’s Best” (PBS website).

### **3. Explosion of Ballroom Dance on TV**

As with lots of things having to do with ballroom dance, England originated and imported the most popular dance show in America, *Dancing with the Stars*. The English version of the show is called *Strictly Come Dancing* and was based on one of the longest running television shows *Come Dancing* (Wikipedia website on *Come Dancing*). Based on the *Come Dancing* theme of dancers competing in various types of dance in front of a panel of judges, *Strictly Come Dancing* features celebrities dancing with professional Dancesport competitors. As shown on its website, a lot of styles of ballroom dance are performed on the English show, including American Smooth (BBC website).

In America, as far as television goes, no dance show has been more successful than *Dancing with the Stars*. A look at the headlines about the TV series and a historical search on the television ratings shows its great success (Hollywood Insider website). It consistently has been the number one show on many weeks and always in the top ten (Nielsen Media website). The show follows the format of *Strictly Come Dancing* and even features two of the same judges. The show debuted in 2005 and is still going strong into its 8<sup>th</sup> season currently running on television in the Spring of 2009.

In one article published in February 2006 after only a 2 seasons on the air, it declared that Ballroom dancing was cool again (ABC news article). The article states that ballroom dancing gained momentum after the movie *Shall We Dance* and there has been a strong interest in ballroom dancing similar to a fashion trend. According to the article, the influence of the *Dancing with*

*the Stars* has also led to higher enrollment at dance studios. At the Arthur Murray dance studios enrollment was up a total of 30 percent in 2006 compared to 2005.

McMains (2006) writes that several American ballroom dancers are enjoying high-profile media exposure from the television show *Dancing with the Stars*. However, she continues that the professional Dancesport dancers are not the “Stars” of the show and they are merely service industry workers. She mentions that the dancers benefit from being on the show with their celebrity students, but she finishes by stating that the show is never about the dancers.

There is no doubt that McMains has a point about the dancers playing a secondary role on the show. However, the dancers are shown a lot of respect on the show and are seen as more than just providing a service to the celebrities. In McMains defense, her book was published shortly after the show became a television sensation in 2005. The dancers are now featured regularly in popular American magazines like *People* or on daily television shows featuring entertainment news. For example, when one of the dancers recently decided to leave the show, an article mentions how disappointed the viewers were going to be (Fox News article).

In addition to popular media outlets covering the dancers, dance industry publications have also turned these dancers into celebrities. In a *Dance Magazine* article one of the dancers, Cheryl Burke, is interviewed about the show (Dance Magazine, Mar. 2008). Burke reflects on her competitive dancing career and the differences between Dancesport competitions and the competition format on the show. Burke explains that Dancesport competitions are more difficult and the television show is more for entertainment. Burke also adds that the dancers are now getting more

recognition from the show, especially after doing professional level performances that do not involve the celebrities on the show.

As a result of the great success of *Dancing with the Stars*, other television shows featuring dance hit the air. A *Dance Magazine* (Sept. 2008) article described the various dance shows that are attempting to draw on the success of competitive dance. Although most of these shows do not feature ballroom dance, there are some ballroom dance aspects to them. For example, the article's highest reviewed show and also the overwhelming favorite among the magazines reader's is the television show *So You Think You Can Dance*. The article explains that the show can be interesting because it sometimes features dancers trained in one genre, such as ballet or break dancing, attempting to do ballroom dances like the Tango or Viennese Waltz. The show has been a great success and four other versions of the show are televised in other countries. However this does not come close to the 27 versions of *Dancing with the Stars* in countries as remote as Poland and South Africa (*Dance Magazine*, Sept. 2008).

Another article on the recent explosion of dance shows explains that some dancers and celebrities go from one show to another (Kubicek, Aug. 2008). The article mentions how several of the celebrities featured on *Dancing with the Stars* go on to host their own dance competition show. The article also explains how one dance competitor from *So You Think you Can Dance* is now a featured dancer on *Dancing with the Stars*. As an avid viewer of both shows, I know of another dancer that made the same leap to *Dancing with the Stars* in 2009.

#### **4. Acceptance of Dancesport as a Sport**

The recent trend of dancing shows featuring ballroom dance does not show any sign of letting up. These shows do not necessarily provide a thorough

look at the Dancesport world. However, it does provide an opening for the general public to learn more about ballroom dance and gain respect for these Dancesport athletes. In fact, the competition results from *Dancing With the Stars* shows that the sports stars have an advantage over other celebrities due to their athletic background. An article chronicles 12 sports stars that participated on the show and explain that as of the sixth season, four out of the six contests were won by sport stars with two other athletes finishing second (Millar, Aug. 2006). These results underscore that Dancesport does have athletic attributes. As the show features these same athletes out of breath during training and performances, it demonstrates that Dancesport may require more endurance, skill, and training than other sports where these stars had careers, such as American football, basketball, and boxing.

As illustrated above, there has been a push to get Dancesport in the Olympics. In the course of doing research, I also found that the former world champion of body building, Hollywood movie star and current governor of the state of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger supports the idea of considering Dancesport as a legitimate sport. In March 2009 as part of a festival in America to get young people interested in participating in sports, one of the events is Dancesport and is called the Arnold Juvenile, Junior, Youth and Collegiate Dancesport Classic (Arnold Sports Festival website). This event features young Dancesport competitors ballroom dancing at a high level. This reflects a current trend of Dancesport being seen as a sport parallel to gymnastics, weightlifting, and wrestling that are also featured at the festival sponsored by Arnold Schwarzenegger.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Competitive Ballroom Dance or Dancesport has its roots in social dances that started in Europe and other countries, such as Latin America. As ballroom dance evolved and competitions began forming in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America

competitive ballroom dance evolved differently than most of the world, which was led by England. It was the English Style that dominated the world and formed the basis of the competitive format. Despite the formation and recognition of the English system abroad, ballroom dance competitions in America remained an informal affair. Competitions in America were mainly driven by and influenced by business decisions at dance studios until the 1960s. It was during this time period that ballroom dancing was at low in America and the dance studios adopted the English format of competitive ballroom dancing. However, America retained their own style of ballroom dancing, appropriately called 'American Style' and applied the English system of rules to this style.

Competitive ballroom dance developed in America through the later half of the twentieth century. America participated in the campaign to make Dancesport, the adopted name during the promotion, an Olympic event. Dancesport also made progress in America as it began to separate and distinguish itself from the social aspects of ballroom dancing. The influx of European Dancesport professionals to America has also benefited the ballroom dance industry in the United States. Lastly, in light of recent movies and television shows featuring ballroom dance, Dancesport is now more than ever gaining popularity and considered a sport in America.

The evolution of ballroom dance to Dancesport in America took a lot longer than it did in other countries. Although ballroom dancing in the last 100 years was developed simultaneously in America and England, the difference in the way it developed in America caused it to occur much slower. In England there was a systematic and organized approach of developing competitive ballroom dance. Through the united approach of English dance industry professionals, they standardized dances and developed the format for rules and regulations of competitive dance. Whereas in America, ballroom dance was seen as a money making affair and led by the entrepreneurship ventures

of a few individuals, most notably Arthur Murray. The lack of opportunity to make money from ballroom dance competitions resulted in America being focused on the social aspects of ballroom dancing instead of competitions. However, eventually in America the prospect of making money through competitive dancing came to light. It was during this time frame that organizations were set up and the rules of the English system were adopted in American competitions. Once the infrastructure of organizations and rules were arranged, Dancesport in America has steadily made progress. As seen on television and in movies, Dancesport has gained the attention and respect of the American public.

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## **Abstract**

The thesis paper explains how ballroom dancing developed from its originations in court ballrooms in the 1300s to its current competitive format called Dancesport in the United States. The paper provides a historical analysis of the origins of dance seen in ballrooms in European courts dating back hundreds of years. From this starting point, the paper explains how modern ballroom dance developed in Europe and was eventually imported to America. The paper then explains how in the last hundred years ballroom dance matured and developed simultaneously in the United States and England. However, the methods by which ballroom dancing evolved into Dancesport was different between the countries. This paper accounts for the differences that led to the current form of Dancesport seen in the United States. The paper concludes by examining current trends in Dancesport in the United States, including its portrayal in the media and its acceptance as a sport.

In addition to providing a chronology of the development of ballroom dance, it explains how various individuals and organizations had an impact. The paper explains the reasons for the individuals' involvement and the battles and criticisms they had to endure to make advancements. The paper explains the importance of organizations that came together to help promote ballroom dance and their current existence.

The paper focuses on the competitive ballroom dance in America while providing an overview of the originations of competitive ballroom dance that occurred in England. The English history is necessary to provide a perspective to compare how ballroom dancing developed differently in America than the rest of the world, which followed the English system. The paper explains how America eventually adopted the English competitive

system, but retained its own style of ballroom dancing. The American Style of ballroom dances is analyzed and compared to the English Style, which is the style seen in most competitions around the world.

The current trends of Dancesport in America are analyzed in the last part of the paper. The trends include how American ballroom dance organizations with other international organizations are attempting to make Dancesport an Olympic event. The paper also explains how movies and television shows featuring Dancesport have had a significant impact on the American public. Dancesport more than ever in America is gaining popularity and viewed as sport.