American Swing Dancing – Interactive Presentation

Jaclyn J. Gishbaugh, The Ohio State University
American Dancer Brings Swing Dancing to Jakarta

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Christi Hang

Swing dancing’s quick and intricate steps probably look both impressive and intimidating to newcomers, but Jaclyn Gishbaugher’s presentation, “Swing Defines a Generation,” broke down the basics and had the packed audience at the America cultural center at Pacific Place mall jumping, jiving and wailing in no time.

Gishbaugher, a swing dancer and former instructor, presented an interactive program on Sunday about the group of dances that evolved in the United States primarily during the 1920s to the ‘50s.

She sprinkled in some historical information, photos, videos, music and even some dancing that further enlightened the crowd about a resurgent dance form.

Swing dancing encompasses a number of different dance forms, including the Lindy Hop, the Charleston and the Jive, all of which are performed to big band music.

“You are going to see an American traditional dance that is now international,” Gishbaugher said. “Everyone can claim it.”

Swing dancing’s roots date back to slavery in the United States. Slaves from West Africa brought along their songs and musical styles, art forms that ultimately formed the basis of jazz music.

The swing dance and its trademark “triple step” move originated from the infectious rhythms of jazz. In the hands-on demonstration, Gishbaugher had everyone stand and learn how to do the move.

As its name implies, the triple step consists of three steps either to the right or to the left. She then demonstrated the rock step, a move that (unsurprisingly), rocks the body back and forth. The audience caught on in no time, and within 10 minutes, everyone was dancing.

Swing became a genre of dance in the United States during the 1920s, as women defied social norms and began to flaunt their independence by smoking, wearing shorter skirts and shaking it to the new and provocative dance, the Charleston.

“They used the music of swing dancing to say what they wanted,” Gishbaugher said. Swing kept evolving, and picked up distinct characteristics from the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Depression.

During this time, dancer Frankie Manning introduced high-flying aerials and impressive, dangerous-looking lifts and throws into the Lindy Hop.

Also critical to swing was big band music, which reached its height during the Great Depression in the United States during the 1930s as well as during World War II. “Big band music helped people forget about their lives, and run away from reality [during the Great Depression],” Gishbaugher said.

She played some of the most popular songs from that era such as “Sing, Sing, Sing,” popularized by Benny Goodman, and “In the Mood,” by Glenn Miller and his orchestra. She backed those up with clips of swing dancing, including choreographed scenes from movies including “Malcolm X” and “Swing Kids.”

The familiar tunes seemed to transport the audience to a bygone time.

After the war, swing dancing and big band music ultimately gave way to the rising popularity of rock ‘n’ roll.

But a swing revival started in the 1990s as the big band sound was brought back to popular culture by groups such as the Cherry Poppin’ Daddies and The Brian Setzer Orchestra.

Gishbaugher said the revival didn’t ignore swing’s history, and found inspiration from dance master Manning, who, after swing died down, became a mailman. He gave lessons and talks, which helped spread swing’s renaissance.

The new wave of swing, however, hasn’t made it to Indonesia, according to Gishbaugher.

“There are swing exchanges in Singapore and Korea,” Gishbaugher said. “When I moved here, I looked for a swing community and more than a year later, I still haven’t found one.”

But after a demonstration from Art Motion, a dance troupe invited to the event, and a short lesson and group dance led by
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Gishbaugh, that could all change. Gishbaugh taught the audience some jazzy moves including the yodi, tick-lock and boogie, setting them to music. After running through the song twice, the crowd begged for yet another go around.

Claudia Horvenda of Art Motion said her group performed many different styles such as ballet, jazz and hip-hop, but it was the

Although the group only had four rehearsals before performing on Sunday, Claudia said the experience was great and she hoped there would be more opportunities to swing dance in the future.

“The dance is just so fun,” she said. “Anyone can do it.” Claudia wasn’t the only one excited about the program, as many audience members lingered after the presentation to ask Gishbaugh about where they could learn more about swing, or if she taught dance in Jakarta.

The unexpected level of interest, Gishbaugh said, has prompted her to try to arrange a regular swing program at @america.

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“I love swing because the people who are swing dancing are always so happy. Everyone is clapping, jumping around and trying new things.”

“Mom’s time out” is nothing but a copy of the

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You could see today, people were getting really wrapped up with the video clips,” she said.

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