

Lindy Hop

TIMELINE

pre-1920s

Precursor jazz dances like the Charleston & Black Bottom

1929

Lindy Hop first appears on film in *After Seben*

1930s

Savoy Ballroom era

1930s-1940s

Lindy Hop appears in Hollywood films

1935

Benny Goodman at the Palomar

1950s-1980s

Popular music evolves, leading to new dances

1980s to today

Swing resurgence

“

I'm not interested in fame and glory. It's just that I would like others to know what a happy dance this is.

- FRANKIE MANNING



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The Breakaway, Oakland
Woodchopper's Ball, San Francisco
Wednesday Night Hop, Palo Alto
Cats' Corner, San Francisco
9:20 Special, San Francisco
For Dancers Only, Sunnyvale
Dancers Den, Oakland
Bal Haus, San Francisco
Bootlegger's Ball, San Francisco
Lindy in the Park, San Francisco

Lindy Hop

ITS ORIGINS, INNOVATORS, AND LEGACY

ROOTS

Lindy Hop was danced predominantly by Black dancers starting in the 1920s. Many of them lived in Harlem, where there were dance clubs such as the Savoy and Alhambra Ballrooms.

Lindy Hop emerged in America as a defiant, joyous response to financial hardship caused by the Great Depression, harsh living conditions, and systemic racism.

The dance evolved out of several forms of social dance that preceded it, such as the Cakewalk, partnered Charleston, and the Breakaway. A uniquely American dance, Lindy Hop combined the African traditions of social and circle dance with European partnered ballroom dancing.



THE SAVOY

Nicknamed the “Home of Happy Feet,” the Savoy Ballroom stretched over a full city block in downtown Harlem. Two bandstands allowed continuous live music all night, and provided the setting for famous battles of bands led by house bandleader Chick Webb and other swing-era greats such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman.

World-class dancers like “Shorty” George Snowden and “Big Bea,” and second-generation dancers such as Frankie Manning and Norma Miller would throw down at the Savoy till the early morning hours.

Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers were also formed at the Savoy, when the club bouncer Herbert “Whitey” White brought some of the best dancers together and became their *de facto* agent. These dancers went on to become ambassadors of Lindy Hop on film, stage, and through worldwide tours.



“*The Savoy was the ballroom because it had the best orchestras, and from that they got the best dancers.*”

-FRANKIE MANNING

1980S TO TODAY

As America’s popular music evolved, Black dancers continued to develop new forms of social dance to accompany the new sounds including Hand Dancing, Hip Hop, and House. In the 1980s, younger dancers from New York, California, and Sweden saw Lindy Hop on film, sought out the folks who pioneered it (including Frankie Manning and Al Minns), and invited them to show the new generation how it’s done.

The Lindy Hop we dance today is very different from the Lindy Hop of the 1930s. It’s influenced by the original dancers, the dances that sprung up around and after it — Balboa, Carolina Shag, West Coast Swing, Boogie Woogie, St. Louis Shag, and more — and by those who teach and dance it. While dancers of color remain important contributors to the dance, the international scene now looks a lot whiter and more affluent than where it began. It’s important that we learn about and honor the past while we continue to bring the dance into the future.

The spirit of Lindy Hop today is about inclusivity, creativity, and improvisation. Lindy hop is now a flourishing community with tens of thousands of dancers worldwide — throughout the US, Europe, and countries like South Korea, Lithuania, and South Africa.

“*The opening of the Savoy marked a change in the social pattern. For the first time in history, the status quo in America was challenged.*”

- NORMA MILLER