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*An Abbreviated History of Concert Jazz*

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Arts and Dance

The history of American jazz dance on the concert stage is one of popular beliefs, forgotten names, and a lack of comprehensive documentation as jazz dance has proven difficult to define. Its connections to African American culture have given it a rich history. However, just as African Americans struggled to gain a hold in a country that rejected them, concert jazz dance was not recognized until the 1960's with Gus Giordano's jazz company. Initial general research pointed to Giordano, who founded what is popularly believed and claimed as the "first" jazz/ modern dance company in 1962. Interviews with former company member Michael Williams and colleague Zoe Sealy shed light on Giordano's roots, which were based in modern and jazz. After further research, however, I discovered the forgotten jazz dance expert Mura Dehn. Dehn's love of jazz dance led her from her home in Europe to the U.S. Through old newspaper reviews and the autobiographical documentary on Dehn entitled *In a Jazz Way*, I learned that she formed a company of African American jazz dancers, the Traditional Jazz Dance Company, and toured around the United States. She also created a documentary, *The Spirit Moves*, which preserves traditional jazz dances from the 1920's to post WWII, which has also been viewed by dance students at the U of Minnesota to bring awareness to Mura Dehn's studies. Dehn's writings on jazz have been largely unpublished, and so my project will continue after traveling to New York to obtain her archives. The discovery of Mura Dehn proves that the study of dance history is immensely important in the correction of skewed histories that are caused by social ideology of the past.

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