Chapter 8

Traditional Appalachian Dance
Personal Choice in Diversification, and Cultural Change, Stylistic
Wild and Yet Really Subdued.
I was determined to learn this dance that had the power to open doors to local acceptance. Late at night in the privacy of my own room, I did my best to mimic the dance movements that I had witnessed. I also eagerly attended Saturday night dances at the Maggie Valley Playhouse dance hall. At these dances I learned how to respond appropriately to popular square dance calls such as "The Grapevine Twist," "Georgia Rag Time," and "Walk the King's Queen's Highway." During the dances I also picked up the essential rhythm of the accompanying dance footwork—feeling this rhythm through the hands of my fellow dancers so often that eventually my feet knew what to do. My favorite part of these dance events were the times, in between square dances, when a small group of self-appointed dance masters, often including my friends George and Amos Wood, got up and confidently walked toward the middle of the room. I watched with total fascination as these "buck dancers," virtuosos of the local style, congregated in a small conversation-like circle in the middle of the room. Responding to commonly understood cues, each buck dancer would take their turn showing off for the others while the rest held back and either clapped in rhythm for them or yelled phrases of encouragement. When Amos and George Wood eventually asked me to join them in the buck dancers' circle, I glowed inside, knowing that all those years of practice and observation had finally paid off.

After enrolling in a course on dance ethnography at Indiana University with noted dance scholar, Amy Peterson Royce, I discovered that very little scholarly research examined mountain dance. It seems that early collectors were so intrigued by Appalachian ballads and coverlets that they gave scant attention to vernacular dance. My childhood experiences and the continuing vitality of dance in western North Carolina led me to believe that dance is intimately connected with mountain identity. I postulated that a detailed study of mountain dance would provide valuable information about the cultural landscape.

In 1982 and 1983, I conducted the research for my master's thesis on dance in Haywood County, interviewing dozens of dancers, collecting their oral histories, participating in social dances at the now defunct Maggie Valley Playhouse on Saturday nights, and attending private dances as well as public competitions held at local schools. I chose Haywood County not only because of its reputation as a hotbed of traditional dance, but also because my father was raised there in the paper mill town of Canton—many of my informants went to school with him. Because I learned how to dance by watching my father, I could draw on his knowledge of the area and my own dance experience to aid my research.

In this chapter I hope to convey not only the appearance but also the spirit and meaning of traditional dance in Haywood County, North Carolina. I want readers to consider the connections between the recent proliferation of Southern Appalachian dance styles and the overwhelming socioeconomic changes in the mountains since the 1940s. When we view this traditional dance within its broader cultural context, we can better understand the connection between mountain dance style choice and larger issues of individual values and community identity.
THE ORIGINS OF CLOGGING

During the past twenty years, folk dance enthusiasts across America and Europe have taken to clogging with a fervor that rivals Jane Fonda's aerobics craze. Clogging has a strong contemporary following, but part of the dance's appeal is that it is considered to be an old dance that is part of our heritage.

As a trained folklorist, I am expected by most people to know the "true" origin of this tradition. Unfortunately, the history of using footwork while square dancing is as elusive as it is fascinating. Many scholars and popular writers who deal with clogging and traditional mountain dance base their work on outdated scholarship, impressionistic travel accounts, how-to step books written by non-Appalachian dancers or physical education teachers, and observations of non-Appalachian revival dance communities. While these sources provide fascinating primary data for studies of revival dance and the adaptation of regional dance for general audiences, they do not teach us much about earlier social dance traditions in the Appalachian mountains.

After sifting through the available information and considering other problematic works with a grain of salt, I have concluded that the reliable documentation about this dance is extremely scanty. I doubt that anyone will ever know the precise family tree of mountain dance, although it almost certainly is an amalgam of traditional West African, British Isles, German, and possibly Native American traditional step dance styles.1

Although the question of origins will never be answered conclusively, the people of Haywood County frequently discuss the dance's genealogy. During interviews, I would often receive unsolicited etymological information. Local interest in and opinions about this dance's origin are far more important than unverifiable historical theory; what is most important is that Haywood Countians believe that this dance is representative of their Appalachian identity.

Each person's understanding of mountain dance history is tailored to their individual perception of what it means to be Southern Appalachian. Kyle Edwards, owner of The Stompin' Grounds, a Maggie Valley dance hall that was opened in the early 1980s, perceives the culture as being relatively homogeneous: "Since our community is situated in the remoteness of the Appalachians ... the purity of the old English style remained intact here and was not influenced by western style dancing until the advent of television."2 In contrast, Albert Burnett, retired employee of Champion Paper Mill and caller for the legendary Champion YMCA dance team, favors a more multicultural explanation of mountain dance:

They called it [traditional dance] "buck and wing" because really it started off, it's an old dance, been handed down through the generations. I guess maybe they call it the buck and wing after maybe the Indians... The Indians used to dance too, you know. That's a body expression—everybody has it... The Irishman, he does the jig. The Scotsman, he'll do the highland fling. The English people, they taught'em to do the old Virginia Reel. Lot of that came down through the courts of England. They took all that stuff and mixed it up together, and when they brought it to the mountains, it stayed. They called that just buck and wing.
dancing. The old game rooster, he puts his spur through his wing and sort of runs sideways. He struts and cackles a little bit for the hens. So they figured that when he was dancing, he had his spur through his wing. ¹

Despite the fact that Kyle Edwards, Albert Burnette, and the other dancers in Haywood County disagree as to the cultural constituents that produced mountain square dance, they are all concerned with maintaining what they perceive to be the dance’s original form, intent, or essence. Advocates of the oldest dance styles, such as Albert Burnette, hold to a conservative definition for “mountain dance,” one that excludes newer forms such as precision clogging. Kyle Edwards, whose own children are the brightest stars in modern precision clogging, argues that the heritage of “mountain dance” includes a tradition of freedom and innovation—dancers should therefore be free to embrace precision styles if they so choose.

This argument about what is traditional and what is not, which dance styles are legitimate representations or manifestations of mountain culture and which are not, is as complicated as it is fascinating. I will try to explain the different dance styles and attendant aesthetics in detail. The most important thing to keep in mind is that, in their discussions about dance, these dancers are using dance as a vehicle for exploring powerful questions that concern all humans, questions such as: Which aspects of my parents’ lifeways do I want to emulate in my adult life, and which things do I want to change? In embracing the conveniences of modern society, will I lose the “personal touch” and informality that make life fun? Am I losing my sense of individuality in this age of technology? How much of my original culture can I change before I lose my “self,” my identity?

DANCE AND TRADITION

I will preface my discussion of Appalachian dance style with the warning that dance terms, like fiddle tunes and quilt names, vary from area to area. I worked very hard to understand how dancers in Haywood County talk about dance, but it is entirely possible that dancers in other states may describe their dance differently. There were even some inconsistencies within my own research in Haywood County. For instance, every informant told me that old-style dance, as opposed to precision dance, has no basic set of definable steps. However, as I worked with the dancers, they sometimes would show me their version of the “double shuffle” or the “Georgia backstep.” I came to understand that when dancers said they had no steps, they were trying to communicate that their dance learning process does not involve isolating steps in a self-conscious manner, even though some buck dancers do name their steps.

While it is true that “clogging” hails from the Southern Appalachian mountain area, the mountain dance I learned as a child from my father and his friends in Haywood County is radically different in form, intent, and essence from the clogging I have encountered outside the Southern Appalachian area. In fact many of the old-style dancers in this area claim that the term clogging is relatively new to the
mountains. In other words, they don’t even call their older percussive style of dance
clogging. When older dancers in Haywood County refer to their dance, they just call
it “dance” or “square dance,” omitting any reference to footwork because intermit-
tent percussive footwork is an assumed part of the dance. The only word used by the
old-time dancers themselves to refer specifically to footwork was buckdancing.
When they used the term buckdancing, they were referring to an individual dance
performed in a traditional style by virtuoso dancers within the community.

The casual observer may not notice any differences among precision clogging,
freestyle clogging, old-style social square dance, or buck dance and mistakenly lump
all dance that involves percussive manipulation of the feet together as “clogging.”
Some researchers may not even get their questions understood if they use the wrong
terms, for example, by assuming that clogging means the same thing as old-style
social square dancing or buckdancing. One dancer, Certie Welch, told me that when
a folklorist in Washington, D.C., referred to her old-style dancing as “clogging,”
she was mildly upset but did not correct the man because he was giving a speech at
the time, and she “didn’t want to embarrass him or hurt his feelings.”

It is amusing to note that although most people do not distinguish between old-
style dance and newer forms of clogging, those Appalachians who perform these diff-
ferent kinds of dances have very strong, often negative feelings about each other’s
dance styles. As with the distinctions between various Protestant denominations,
features that may seem minor to the uninitiated are crucial to the practitioner.

This proliferation of dance styles is congruent with the many changes that
Appalachian people have witnessed during the past sixty years as they have become
increasingly connected with the nonmountain world. Before World War II, many
people in western North Carolina never traveled outside their home county during
their lifetime. Haywood County had one of the largest enlistment percentages in the
nation during World War II. According to North Carolina geographer Bill Sharpe,
“In World War II the county [Haywood] sent more volunteers per capita than any
other county in the United States.” This massive enlistment during the 1940s, exten-
sive road improvement since the 1950s, and the spread of electricity in the 1960s that
made television and telephones accessible in even remote homes had a profound
impact on the cultural exchange between mountain and nonmountain people. Today
the choice of mountain dance style has become one way for individuals to make a
statement about their preferred lifestyle, world view, and relationship to change.

One way of exploring the cultural significance of traditional dance is to look at
what can and cannot be changed from the dancer’s point of view or, in other words,
what is and isn’t essential to the spirit of a particular dance form. For instance, a
dancer could wear jeans or a tuxedo, perform in the street or a ballroom, during
the daytime or at night, but in order to dance a waltz, you have to have ½ meter
music (i.e., music with a basic rhythm of 1,2,3,1,2,3). Therefore ½ time is essential
to the spirit of a waltz. Likewise, the freestyle cloggers I spoke with did not believe
that frilly clogging costumes, patent leather shoes, and electrified bluegrass or coun-
try music violated the spirit of traditional mountain dance, but they did object
strongly to predetermined precision steps. In addition to disliking predetermined pre-
cision steps, the more conservative old-style social dancers and buck dancers also resented high kicking and loud tap shoes. Not surprisingly, precision dancers have the least restrictive range of acceptance, only omitting what they call "tap dance" movements.

Ironically, it is often a confrontation with change that helps us clarify the essence, importance, and meaning of our traditions. Folk dance, as well as folklore in general, must continually change in order to keep up with the needs of the people who engage in it. We are constantly figuring out which new cultural options we will embrace or reject.

THE HAYWOOD COUNTY TRADITION

Old-style dancing differs radically from today's nonmountain clogging. The overall look of an old-style dancer is very similar to the lumberjack or dancing doll toy. Says former dance hall owner Hazel Bradshaw, "It's just a feather dance, that's just a little toe dance. You just kind of move from your knees down. The old timers said that when you were a smooth dancer . . . you could dance with a bucket of water on your head and never spill it." This stillness is not only aesthetically pleasing but it also enables the square dance group figures to be executed smoothly. In traditional mountain dance, the legs are usually slightly bent to act as shock absorbers for the torso.

Old-style dancers rarely raise their hands above their belt lines. Their arms are still, yet relaxed, with what Chief Howell, former Soco Gap Dance Team member, calls a "common swing." The footwork is very subtle and light. The feet are rarely raised more than six inches off the floor, a radical difference from the synchronized high kicking of modern precision clogging teams. It is also markedly different from the choreographed, high-kicking dance of post-1960s revival teams such as the Green Grass Cloggers, who have a home team based in Vanceboro and a branch team in Asheville, both in North Carolina.

Traditional old-style dance footwork is not defined by a set of standardized steps such as one encounters in the waltz or the box step. Although there are step names such as "Georgia Backstep" and "Double Shuffle" (the meaning of which varies depending on whom you ask for a definition), there is no basic step as there is in precision or revival clogging. Each dancer develops his or her own repertoire of percussive foot movements that matches his own interpretation of the music.

In order to learn how to dance traditionally, a person must first learn the guidelines of the aesthetic (i.e., keep the torso still, dance with your feet low to the ground), and then develop unique dance movements that do not violate the aesthetic. This method of learning takes many years; mountain dancers not only internalize the "how-to" aspects of the dance, the dance also becomes part of their identity in the same way that we recognize individuals by their distinctive voice and speech patterns. No two mountain dancers ever dance alike. According to old-style dancer Fred Moody, "Each person had his own step. Some would dance real good, and some not, but everybody did their own thing. There's no set way to do it."
Wild and Yet Really Subdued

Regional styles did develop over time, although today the differences are becoming less pronounced. Bob Phillips, a dancer from Canton, North Carolina, explains:

Each area had a characteristic type dance. For instance, right here we dance one way, and you can go up in Maggie Valley, and they'll be a little bit different—fact is, they call it a 'Maggie dance,' 'Maggie footwork.' It's different. Now I'd say fifteen years ago, I could go hear a team, I don't care where it was, and I could turn my back to them. Really now, I'm not exaggerating. Put ten teams up there, and I could pick out the ones from Haywood county. They had a characteristic beat. You have to hear it. You feel it.\textsuperscript{11}

To the Haywood Countian, square dancing is a beautifully balanced combination of freedom and discipline. The square dancers come together to execute geometric group figures; this is the element of community discipline in mountain dance. Yet in freedom of footwork style, mountain dancers are able to express their individuality. Each dancer has his or her own unique movements and style. For this reason Kyle Edwards calls traditional style dancing "the freedom dance."\textsuperscript{12}

The combination of freedom and group cooperation, in which sixteen or more dancers' unique styles interact within the precisely coordinated square dance figure structure, is similar to the excitement of hearing early hot jazz ensemble performances, in which musical improvisation occurred within a chordal structure. Both types of performance, jazz and mountain dance, involve artists who are so skilled and immersed in their traditions that they can take the risk of improvisation—which results in structured spontaneous interaction. This interaction between structure and improvisation creates a tension that traditional dancers and audiences find aesthetically appealing.

**CULTURAL AND STYLISTIC CHANGE**

I mentioned earlier that during the past sixty years, Haywood Countians have experienced many changes: the rise of tourism, television, radio, massive enlistment in World War II. Ironically, Haywood County's long-standing reputation as a tourist's vacation haven has helped perpetuate traditional dance in addition to encouraging dance style change. According to Sam Queen, Jr., son of the late Sam Queen who organized the legendary Soco Gap Dance Team:

The tourists started coming in here just as quick as the trains got here. The train came in here in the late 1800s. Tourists came out of the hot, malaria-infested country, they'd send their families in here. . . . In about the mid-1930s, square dancing became respectable through these mountains, and parents would let their children go, and then it mushroomed into just about the total social program by '38 'til about '50. . . . It was a real good type program, the most democratic social life you've ever seen, because you could blend any kind of a crowd, and you didn't have to rely on any kind of formalities. . . . People of all ages, especially the tourists that come in here, they really just loved it. It done a lot for the tourist program in this mountains in the late '30s and early '40s before the war, then right after the war.\textsuperscript{13}
While some other mountain communities gave up square dance in favor of more urban amusement, Haywood Countians discovered that tourists enjoyed participating in social dances while on vacation. Many social dances or barn dances during the 1940s up until the 1960s were multilayered events that included strong local followings as well as seasonal tourists.

The building of better roads has also facilitated travel into and out of the area. Contemporary freestyle and precision clogging teams travel from western North Carolina throughout the United States, and some teams even fly to Europe. This mobility has resulted in an increased awareness of nontraditional lifestyle options and an increased diversification of square dance styles; the complications and anxieties associated with large-scale cultural change are also evident in the contemporary square dance scene.

The late 1920s witnessed the emergence of square dance teams. All evidence indicates that before this time, dances were purely social in nature, and any competition was informal. At the inception of team dancing, there was very little difference between staged performances and social dancing. The dancers danced to slower old-style music and wore their Sunday best—no set costumes. Early social dances were performed in large circles of two-couple pairs, often referred to as "big circle square dance" (Figure 8-1). There was no limit to the number of people who could participate in a dance, provided that there was enough space in the room and an even number of couples. When dancing on stage, the early teams continued to dance in a big circle but limited their circles to eight couples who, when in their two-couple pairs, formed four two-couple squares that, taken together, comprise a fifth large square (figure 8-2). On the stylistic level, no changes were evident between the early square dance teams and the social old-style square dancers—each dancer still had an individualistic footwork style.

According to the accounts of older dancers, old-style buck dancers in Haywood County danced with their weight centered on the balls of their feet. Kyle Edwards speaks of early competitions in which chalk was drawn onto the dancer's shoe heel, and any dancer who rubbed the chalk off during the dance was disqualified. The traditional buck dancers that I have documented drop their heel only occasionally for emphasis. This is what Hazel Bradshaw meant earlier when she referred to old-style dance as a "toe dance." Today the only dancers who consistently dance on the balls of their feet are often called "Maggie Style" dancers, indicating that they are dancers who learned how to dance in the Maggie Valley area where this style has persisted.

Sometime between the mid-1940s and the early 1950s, team dancing began to change. These years witnessed the birth of clogging. For the first time, team costuming became de rigueur. The female clogging costume consisted of fluffy crinoline petticoats that supported dresses with closely tailored bodices and full skirts. There was nothing traditional about these outfits; they were in accordance with the fashions of the day. Yet what began as a very contemporary costume has become a clogging tradition. The basic clogging outfit has changed very little in the past forty years. The male clogging team members simply wear matching shirts and pants.
Figure 8-1. The Big Circle social square dance layout.
Figure 8-2. Traditional freestyle clogging dance formations.

With the advent of loud public address systems and bluegrass music, freestyle dancers began using taps as a practical matter so that their feet could be heard above the increased volume. Soon, however, the jingle taps became a trademark, signaling the advent of freestyle clogging as we know it today. Taps were not simply a stylistic hallmark of modern clogging. They profoundly changed the style of mountain dance in Haywood County because they only sound good when the music is fast (160 beats per minute or faster), and in order to "work" the taps, the body weight must be centered over the heel. By "work" the tap, I mean that the footwork is designed to make
the taps jingle. Movements that match the music without taps may not sound good with taps. This resulted in shifting the dancer’s center of gravity from the toe to the heel, which contributes to the heavier looking dance style that we associate with the southern mountain area. There are still a few clogging teams that do not require taps, but most cloggers wear them.

The original clogging teams of the 1950s were all freestyle teams; thus, freestyle clogging is referred to as traditional clogging. In freestyle, the freedom of individual style and footwork is maintained, even applauded. The figures commanded by the caller are executed by the group to a synchronized perfection, but the individual personality of each dancer is expressed in improvised footwork.

Precision clogging, a dance that involves two or more people executing the same step at the same time, was reportedly invented in the Piedmont during the late 1950s by James Kesterson, a dance choreographer who felt that it was time to update and modernize this traditional dance. In this most recent square dance form, each dancer executes the same footwork in the same way at the same time, much like the Radio City Rockettes. Unlike all other forms of mountain dance, precision clogging footwork involves high kicks, placing an emphasis on speed and technique over individualistic expression. Likewise, precision clogging figures and music are not necessarily traditional. Many precision teams have discarded the big circle dance format for line dances. These lines do not require an even number of dancers or couples. I have even seen these modern cloggers dance to 45 rpm records of contemporary pop and rock music, such as the song “Boogie Fever” sped up to play at 78 rpm! This speeding up of the music allows precision dancers to show off an almost athletic endurance, and the dance ceases to function as a group activity in which old and young, talented and untalented dancers can recreate together.

Many mountain dancers do not accept precision clogging. They often refer to precision clogging as “flatland” clogging, not only because many of the precision teams they see hail from the Southern Piedmont but also as a way of emphasizing how removed precision clogging is from the aesthetics and ideals of traditional mountain culture. Many of the people I interviewed indicated that precision clogging is such a radical departure from other forms of traditional dance that it should not be included in the constellation.

Ironically, it is the advent of precision clogging that has stimulated a controversy among mountain square dancers about the role and purpose of traditional dance. Many community members, disturbed by the new square dance styles, consequently talk about dance with a clarity and verve that would probably not have been possible before increased style diversification. For example, buck dancer John Reeves, speaking about a precision team that he had seen performing at a festival, complains, “The thing I resented most was they were advertising them as Southern Appalachian, and it wasn’t. It had nothing to do with it.” Hazel Bradshaw, former owner of the Maggie Valley Playhouse, an old-style social dance hall that was built by her husband Joe Campbell in 1949, observes, “After teaching [clogging] in the schools, the teachers brought that [precision] out more. They were not from the families that did the dancing. I think they just studied it. I don’t think they were from
any of the original families that danced." Finally, Chief Howell, buck dancer and old-style social dance caller, isn't one to mince words. "When they first started out with that [precision]," he recalls, "I made the remark, and I won't back down a bit, that I could get out there and train some horses to do that."

Amazingly enough, all of the previously mentioned dance styles, even the old-style social dance, now coexist (albeit not so peacefully) in western North Carolina. Thus the development and history of dance style has been an additive process. Each of the people I interviewed had an ardent opinion about the "best" style of dance and described the shortcomings of other styles. Precision was the most controversial style, disliked by both freestyle cloggers and old-style dancers. Albert Burnette, freestyle caller for Canton's historic YMCA freestyle team, spoke of precision dancing as if it were a pollution of the original style. Refusing to acknowledge that precision dancing exists in his county, he said, "I think dance stayed pure here." Freestyle clogger Bob Phillips explains that his distaste for precision style clogging stems not from any lack of proficiency on the part of precision dancers, but rather from the fact that his criteria for judging dance differs from that of the precision dancers. He says, "Now they [precision dancers] are good. I'm not arguing that. It takes a lot of practice and a lot of work, and it's difficult, and I can't do it. But the point is, the best judge of what the dancers like is what did your daddy or great-granddaddy or mother do?"

What is the significance of this stylistic proliferation? Why are freestyle and old-style dancers so deeply offended by precision clogging? What does this dance complex as a whole mean to the inhabitants of Haywood County? And finally, what role does mountain dance play in their lives?

DANCE AND IDENTITY: LAYERS OF MEANING

There are many reasons why some people feel compelled to dance—some of these reasons are obvious, while others are more subtle. Many dancers stated that they dance because it helps to keep them physically fit. This physical exercise aspect of dance motivation is probably more important today than it was in the past when most dancers got plenty of exercise while farming. Another obvious reason for dance is social in nature: it provides nonthreatening interaction between unmarried males and females. Finally, whenever I stray too far into my own theoretical musings, the dancers whom I work with remind me that the main reason they dance is simply because the dance is fun.

A less obvious, but clearly articulated, aspect of mountain dance is its role as a source of identity for individuals within the community. Mountain dance increases self-esteem because it allows an individual to excel and master a skill that is respected by other members of the culture; it provides those who have and those who have not succeeded in other aspects of mountain culture with the opportunity to become virtuoso performers.

I mentioned earlier that traditional mountain dance entails an interaction between the opposing forces of restraint and freedom. The square dance form, in
which dancers work together to respond to the commands of a caller, provides restraint within an overall geometrical structure. While adhering to the mandates of these calls, the individual dancers also have freedom to improvise their footwork within the established form. The educational value of traditional mountain dance may be found in recognizing a need for balance and the interplay between opposing forces of variation and tradition, order and freedom, and community responsibility and individualism.

This balance is one in which the dancer simultaneously engages in group cooperation to create geometric figures while maintaining a unique individual identity via dance footwork. In this stylistic fusion of freedom and group cooperation, traditional mountain dance celebrates the possibility of community members working together to achieve a goal while allowing each person to maintain and develop his or her unique identity. This ability to operate well as an independent person within a larger group effort was undoubtedly crucial to the collaborative barn raisings, farming, and harvesting of agrarian life.

When precision cloggers choreograph their footwork along with the square dance calls, they violate this traditional balanced perception of ideal order. Precision dance incurs the wrath of freestyle and old-style dancers because precision dancing's mechanical aesthetic negates the traditional dancer's personal creativity, thereby rupturing a balance and interplay between individual and community.

As it has become increasingly necessary for mountain people to know how to interact with nonmountain people, mountain dance has gradually taken on an additional educational responsibility. Freestyle clogging teams grew out of the new social educational needs characteristic of an increasingly urban community. Says Marty Phillips of freestyle clogging:

Socially it helped me. It has helped me to develop a pretty tough skin so far as how to handle myself in a certain situation. I've been thrown in with every type of person... I've also learned, too, from square dancing, that all people are alike, and there's really no difference in the person that's having a struggle to make ends meet and one that's very affluent. It has also made me able to adapt to any kind of music in any kind of dance.17

Not only does freestyle clogging teach the fine points of in-group interaction but also by being part of teams and touring all over the country, not to mention abroad, mountain children now learn via their dance teams how to deal with people who were not enculturated in the mountains. These touring experiences allow mountain dancers to present and share their traditional dance to outsiders within a positive and affirming context in which the outsiders want to learn more about Appalachian traditions. These tours in effect involve cross-cultural dialogue between mountain and nonmountain individuals. This is radically different from the in-group communication involved in old-style social dance. The differing stylistic formats and contexts of old-style dance and freestyle team clogging are aimed toward different educational purposes.
Compared with freestyle clogging and old-style social dance, precision clogging is a style that does not relate to the predominant values of the rural Haywood County community; rather, the aesthetics, goals, and ideals of professional elite dancing and the mass media are emulated. A product of more industrial times, precision dance encourages participants to operate as functional cogs within an automated society. The tight, crisp choreography of precision dance indicates that this dance caters mostly to nontraditional audiences. Precision dancers travel around the country to competitions that name the "world champion" or "national champion" of clogging. While at home in western North Carolina, precision dancers perform more often for tourists than for fellow community members. When asked what the dance means to them, precision dancers do not usually stress the idea of heritage or tradition; they refer to the dance as a sport or an art, reflecting the increased sense of competition in precision dance.

In recent years, since the completion of my research, venues for old-style social dance have decreased and precision dance has become increasingly popular among young dancers. While I have not heard any Haywood County precision dancers describe their dance as "traditional," I do know that the national precision dance "community" sees their dance as a continuation of traditional heritage. Formal precision dance competitions have categories that include "traditional freestyle" and "buck dance" as competitive categories despite the fact that the dancers who compete in these categories regularly wear taps, perform recognized precision steps, and engage in high kicking. Perhaps my interviews were conducted at a transitional turning point that marked a stylistic shift. I know that this possibility makes some Haywood County dancers anxious about the future life of their traditional dance.

Contemporary dancers in the Southern Appalachian area have their choice among a variety of dance styles; in deciding how they will dance, they also decide where they will stand regarding issues involving a choice between innovation and tradition. Stylistic choice has become a nonverbal statement about the way an individual dancer believes things "ought" to be, about the correlation that should or should not exist among dance, lifestyle, and world view. In modern society, we are constantly making lifestyle decisions from a vast and complex system of alternatives. Our choices, and therefore our values, are evident even in something as commonplace and seemingly frivolous as dance.

NOTES

1. For more discussion and an extensive bibliography, see Gail Matthews-DeNatale, "Kinesthetic Conversations: Statements about Identity and Worldview in Appalachian Dance," in Of, By, and For the People: How Dance Proclaims Political Ideals, Ethnicity, Social Class, and Regional Pride (Riverside, California: Society of Dance History Scholars/Congress on Research in Dance, 1993).

3. Albert Burnett, interview with the author, Chingquapin Ridge near Canton, North Carolina, Summer 1982. All subsequent quotes attributed to Albert Burnett are from this interview.


6. Hazel Bradshaw, interview with the author, Maggie Valley, North Carolina, Summer 1982. All subsequent quotes attributed to Hazel Bradshaw are from this interview.

7. A "figure" is a sequence of movements that the dancers do together, such as "all join hands and circle left" or "allemande left."


9. Robert "Chief" Howell, interview with the author, Jonathan's Creek, North Carolina, Summer 1982. All subsequent quotes with Robert "Chief" Howell are from this interview.


15. Howell, interview.

16. Despite the fact that some contemporary dance scholars question Kesterson's role in the development of precision dance, all of my informants described Kesterson as the father of precision style clogging. Kesterson lived nearby in Hendersonville, North Carolina. One possibility is that precision dance was an idea whose time had come and was born at about the same time in several different locations—polygenesis in action. For a detailed account of the Kesterson story, see Stephen March and David Holt, "Chase That Rabbit," Southern Exposure 5 (Summer/Fall 1977): 44-47.