



Jump for Joy: Jazz, Basketball, and Black Culture in 1930s America

Gena Caponi-Tabery

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If the 1930s was the Swing Era, then the years from 1937 on might well be called the Jump Era. That summer Count Basie recorded "Jumping at the Woodside," and suddenly jump tunes seemed to be everywhere. Along with the bouncy beat came a new dance step?the high-flying aerials of the jitterbuggers?and the basketball games that took place in the dance halls of African America became faster, higher, and flashier. Duke Ellington and a cast of hundreds put the buoyant spirit of the era on stage with their 1941 musical revue, *Jump for Joy*, a title that captured the momentum and direction of the new culture of exuberance.

Several high-profile public victories accompanied this increasing optimism: the spectacular successes of African American athletes at the 1936 Olympics, the 1937 union victory of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Joe Louis's 1937 and 1938 heavyweight championship fights. For the first time in history, black Americans emerged as cultural heroes and ambassadors, and many felt a new pride in citizenship.

In this book, Gena Caponi-Tabery chronicles these triumphs and shows how they shaped American music, sports, and dance of the 1930s and beyond. But she also shows how they emboldened ordinary African Americans to push for greater recognition and civil liberties?how cultural change preceded and catalyzed political action.

Tracing the path of one symbolic gesture?the jump?across cultural and disciplinary boundaries, Caponi-Tabery provides a unique political, intellectual, and artistic analysis of the years immediately preceding World War II.

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