

Cakewalks Encyclopedia Article

Cakewalks

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An elegant and stately dance created by African slaves on Caribbean and North American plantations, the cakewalk enjoyed a long history. During slavery, plantation owners judged the dance and the finest dancer was rewarded with a cake. It became the first African-American dance to become popular among whites. The cakewalk was featured in several contexts including the minstrel show finale, early black musicals including *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk* in 1898 and *The Creole Show* in 1899, and on ballroom floors thereafter. The cakewalk embodied an erect body with a quasi-shuffling movement that developed into a smooth walking step.

Further Reading:

Cohen, Selma Jeanne, ed. *International Encyclopedia of Dance*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1998.

Emery, Lynne Fauley. *Black Dance in the United States from 1619 to 1970*. Palo Alto, California, 1972.