11-5-1998

UD Students Join 'Jump, Jive & Wail' Trend with On-Campus Swing Club

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The UD Swing Club is sponsoring a dance Friday, Nov. 6, in the Kennedy Union Pub as part of the activities for Parents’ Weekend. The Xavier University Swing Band will play for the event and introduce some original swing music. A swing dance lesson will be offered from 9 to 10 p.m., and the dance is scheduled from 10 p.m. to midnight.

UD STUDENTS JOIN ‘JUMP, JIVE & WAIL’ TREND WITH ON-CAMPUS SWING CLUB

DAYTON, Ohio — Like the mini-skirt and the jean jacket, some fads continue to resurface. One of the newest trends in the United States is the rebirth of swing music and dancing.

Students at the University of Dayton have recognized the national trend. The UD Swing Club has grown from 30 members in the 1997-1998 school year to between 150 and 200 dancers this year.

Frank Mathias, retired UD professor who specialized in American history, played tenor saxophone during the original swing era. He says he has been waiting many years for swing to return, but he knows it will never come back the same as it was in the 1930s and 1940s.

“You could hear swing music from the finest hotel or the White House down to the lowest dive,” Mathias says. “From the top layer of this country clear down to the penitentiaries, swing music unified the United States during World War II and the 1940s.”

Mathias played his first swing dance at age 15 at the VFW club in Paris, Ky. He played several years ago at the New Orleans Super Dome with a 14-piece dance band and watched as the music gave the dancers the energy to move and twirl around the room.

“Swing was the most popular music our nation has ever had,” Mathias says. “Ninety percent of the nation danced to it or listened to it, and it provided the beat for the war machine. Every GI knew the names of the band leaders. Swing owned the day.”

The day ended when rock ‘n’ roll entered the music scene in 1953, and “split the nation,” according to Mathias.

“Rock ‘n’ roll never commanded allegiance like swing,” he says.

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Caroline Gerenyi, co-chair of education for UD's Swing Club, says she can’t decide if she
likes the original swing music or today’s modern style better.

“Benny Goodman is fun to dance to,” Gerenyi says. “But the modern music has the
same beat as the original swing music and we do the same basic dancing. Modern music seems
to incorporate more vocals, and the original seems to be more instrumental.”

Gerenyi, a senior public relations major, began swing dancing her senior year of high
school and continued as a first-year college student with the UD Swing Club. She says she has
seen a resurgence in the interest of swing music and dancing since she began college.

“The UD Swing Club was created in 1993,” Gerenyi says. “It was still very young in
1995, when I came in as a freshman. Now we see a lot of interest from students. The new swing GAP commercial and movies like Swing Kids and Swingers may have helped to spark interest
about swing style in college students.”

The club meets every other Monday, and has had to expand to two practice sessions to
accommodate all of the interested dancers. The first group meets from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., and
the second group dances from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. Basic dance steps and new moves are taught at
each session to include beginning swingers and to keep the more advanced dancers interested.

Gerenyi says she thinks students are sick of “shaking their stuff” in the middle of a
group of people doing the same.

“Swing is more social,” she says. “You have to interact with a swing partner. And a lot
of times the music comes from a talented, live band which doesn’t hurt your ears.”

According to Amy Overman, a new member of UD’s Swing Club, swing dancing is fast-
paced and provides a great workout.

“The first time I went to one of the Monday night dances, I felt like I had run three miles
by the end of the evening,” Overman says. “My muscles were sore the next day, but I felt great.”

“Swing just makes you smile,” Gerenyi says.

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