Articles

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This page will feature articles that we hope are of interest to our subscribers:

Contents (abstracts below)

James Nott: The Dancing Front. Dancing, Morale, and the War Effort in Britain during World War II

Toby Thacker: Using Music as Historical Text in Teaching European History


During the Second World War dancing boomed. This article, which discusses social dancing in Britain during the war, is oriented towards questions of morale; the "myth of the Blitz"; and the evolution of attitudes towards popular culture. It looks at how the unofficial efforts of dance hall owners dovetailed with official government efforts to raise morale; how such efforts shared in national myth making, creating a host of images and examples of philanthropy and bravery vital to patriotic propaganda. It also examines how the dance hall industry successfully navigated the challenges of wartime in order to alter perceptions about dancing and secure both its immediate and long-term future. ... This article will thus provide the first detailed examination of dancing's wider wartime role. Moreover, it speaks to several key aspects of the historiography of the Second World War and of twentieth century British popular culture. It provides new evidence for the use of recreation and leisure as a strategy for boosting morale during the war. It helps us better understand the nature of propaganda and morale boosting measures taken during the war and highlights the often sluggish response of the government to utilizing all avenues of propaganda. Furthermore, it allows us to consider changing attitudes towards popular culture during wartime.


With a greater emphasis on understanding how meaning has been constructed by past societies, historians and university students have in recent years become familiar with using a wide range of historical sources. This article considers practical ways in which music – of different kinds – can be used as source material for historical investigation in university teaching. It suggests that by relating musical examples to categories of analysis already widely used in history, such as class, race, gender and citizenship, music can profitably be integrated with and used alongside other kinds of historical evidence, for example literary sources and visual images.