

"Dancing Blues"

One of my favorite comedy movies is "The Blues Brothers". Of course, seeing the exhibit picture below, I couldn't pass-up the opportunity to take a shot at both a photo and some words. I can't think of a better story - though fictional - to relate to the combination of both Blues and dancing.

To begin with a brief on the movie's storyline (in case you may not know), Elwood and Jake Blues(hence, "The Blues Brothers") have been rejoined from *doing time* in Joliet prison.

"On a mission from God" - as Elwood puts it - they finagle their way into the hearts of most while keeping the authorities in pursuit. Of perhaps their greatest challenge however is convincing their old school nun that their intentions are good. In a moment of truth, they are driven from her presence though still committed to the cause while bearing the burden of un-absolved sins.



Psalm 11...

You did it: you changed wild lament
into whirling dance;
You ripped off my black mourning
band
and decked me with wildflowers.
I'm about to burst with song;
I can't keep quiet about you.
God, my God,
I can't thank you enough.

- The Message

Besides the comedy (of the movie) is the real saga of their rather checkered past: both orphaned and evidently swept-up into some illegalities; yet by all the present manners, appear to be pretty good people - who just want to help the little guy...of whom they both know too well. Ok, these guys have their quirks but, again, they also have some qualities as well as a swinging collection of Blues-tunes such as: "I'm a soul man", "Gimme some lovin'.."; and "Everybody needs somebody to love". With tunes like that, and the instrumental to back it up, who can deny that prospect that Blues and dancing do have a partnership

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What little of I know of this genre of music, Blues (by its name) is written and performed in a backdrop of sadness and sorrow. A brief history from the Internet offers some basics of an origin in the deep south around 1900. The Clarksdale Railway Station, in the northern Mississippi Delta, is said to be the birthplace. Steeped in the saga of the African American in the deep south, the Blues has the raw element of experience as well as talent and skill of "the ear" of music to give a total effect of depth and meaning.

Not unlike their descendents of our land, these peoples had not realized or been privilege to the *American Dream*. Even before The Great Depression, they lived depressed lives - where music like The Blues became an outlet or artful way of expressing themselves. The Blues has its features but, with the general description of its origin, could apply to the Gullah music of the Low Country or the Bluegrass of the Appalachian. It is a music that came out of human want and suffering that, among other things, provided some momentary diversion from an otherwise dismal experience. It has influenced other genres and remains an interwoven part of the fabric part of Americana.

Perhaps the very origin of music (and dance) came from similar experiences or conditions. Consider the American Indians and their tribal traditions; or the Africans too. Still, you might have studied the history of music to know of earlier cultures where these performing arts were an outlet against the deprivations of the day.

In his own day, David (not yet "King David") was on-the-run. Someone who had providentially been ordained as king yet, by the demented jealousy of the present king (Saul), was a political (and personal) fugitive. David knew how to play and write music, and he apparently knew how to dance as a form of worship. As much distress as having been brought upon him - with his life in danger - dancing and music could have been his common means of coping. Ironically, he played the harp to sooth King Saul but, when finally "given over to Satan", such means have no effect on one driven to destroy another.

God offers to his children the supernatural gift of turning sorrow into joy and offering peace in a time of distress. Obviously, David was experiencing

(or receiving) these "gifts" and acknowledging his gratitude and praise to the Father. To be relieved of the pressures on him was reason to dance and sing against all he had witnessed in the changes of his relationship to the present King. David was experiencing both the sorrow of his King's disobedience and the consequential threats made on his life.

A contemporary song reminds us that *God* will turn your sorrow into dancing. Other scripture reassures the believer that **God binds-up the broken**, receives the rejected, and chooses (or selects) those who are without...over those who seemingly have it all. David was one who seemingly lost everything - to include the king's favor; yet, with the apparent loss, he could not stop the music or dancing given him by the real King; he had the "Dancing Blues".