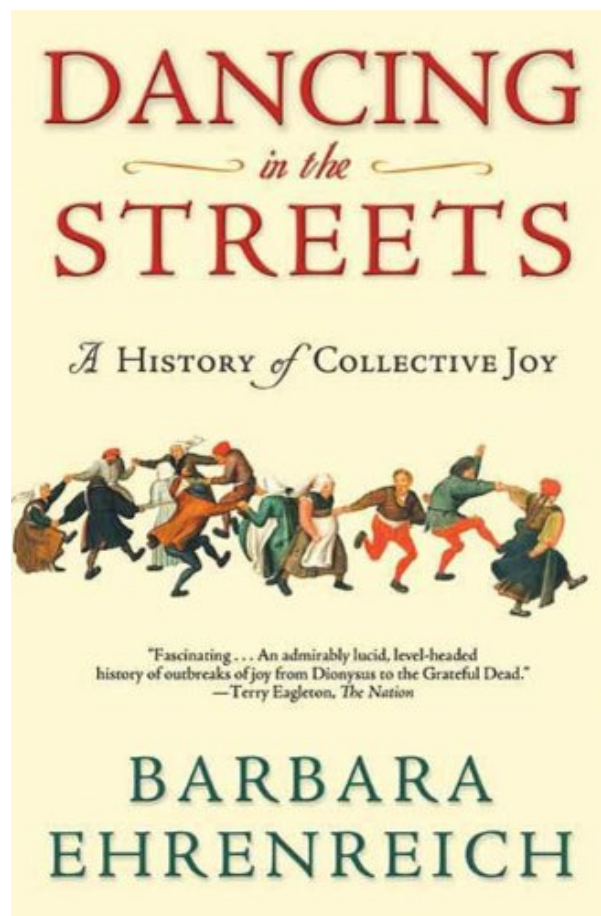


**DANCING IN THE STREETS: A HISTORY OF
COLLECTIVE JOY BY BARBARA
EHRENREICH**



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DANCING *in the* STREETS

A HISTORY of COLLECTIVE JOY



"Fascinating . . . An admirably lucid, level-headed
history of outbreaks of joy from Dionysus to the Grateful Dead."
—Terry Eagleton, *The Nation*

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DANCING IN THE STREETS: A HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE JOY BY BARBARA EHRENREICH PDF

From the bestselling social commentator and cultural historian, a fascinating exploration of one of humanity's oldest traditions: the celebration of communal joy

In the acclaimed *Blood Rites*, Barbara Ehrenreich delved into the origins of our species' attraction to war. Here, she explores the opposite impulse, one that has been so effectively suppressed that we lack even a term for it: the desire for collective joy, historically expressed in ecstatic revels of feasting, costuming, and dancing.

Ehrenreich uncovers the origins of communal celebration in human biology and culture. Although sixteenth-century Europeans viewed mass festivities as foreign and "savage," Ehrenreich shows that they were indigenous to the West, from the ancient Greeks' worship of Dionysus to the medieval practice of Christianity as a "danced religion." Ultimately, church officials drove the festivities into the streets, the prelude to widespread reformation: Protestants criminalized carnival, Wahhabist Muslims battled ecstatic Sufism, European colonizers wiped out native dance rites. The elites' fear that such gatherings would undermine social hierarchies was justified: the festive tradition inspired French revolutionary crowds and uprisings from the Caribbean to the American plains. Yet outbreaks of group revelry persist, as Ehrenreich shows, pointing to the 1960s rock-and-roll rebellion and the more recent "carnivalization" of sports.

Original, exhilarating, and deeply optimistic, *Dancing in the Streets* concludes that we are innately social beings, impelled to share our joy and therefore able to envision, even create, a more peaceable future.

- Sales Rank: #468802 in eBooks
- Published on: 2007-12-26
- Released on: 2007-12-26
- Format: Kindle eBook

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Ever heard of Trance Dancing?

By Amazon Customer

Ever heard of Trance Dancing? Sound like fun? You can get together with your friends and try it for yourself. Yes, this is a well researched book about the history of "muscular bonding" among small (tribal) and large (the Roman army) groups and everything in between. This is the history of the "rave"; where it came from and why it emerged again in the 1960's after centuries of repression. Trance dancing, aka Ecstatic Dancing is how we love and bond with each other, strengthen our group identity and togetherness; and it's fun! I enjoyed reading about all the various manifestations of this natural form of human expression. It has showed up in many forms through the ages and will continue on in one form or another as long as humans inhabit this planet. Read this history and you will be inspired to give your inner dancer permission to come out and play much more often. Enjoy.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A celebration of dancing and a condemnation of the authorities

By SpunStories B.

Barbara Ehrenreich's *DANCING IN THE STREETS* is both a celebration of dancing and a condemnation of the authorities who are trying to prevent large groups of people from running amok in the interests of law and order.

This wonderful book is a potted history of dance, from its roots back in the misty past, through various ancient civilizations and up through the present day. Ms. Ehrenreich conveys how natural it was to dance and how this is a knack that many of us have lost today. People who either live in Northern Europe or can trace their ancestry from that part of the world have difficulty loosening up enough to dance even for a few minutes, let alone for hours or days. And since this somewhat Puritanical attitude has pervaded the world, all of us suffer from a lack of dancing in our lives.

I am in awe of how much research Ms. Ehrenreich has done for this book. Of course, dancing is not just about dancing. In the ancient past, it was used to cure people of sadness. Since the early Middle Ages, it seems to have taken on more political overtones, and people who danced often did so for reasons of social justice. In fact dancing impinged on so many aspects of people's lives from religion (where people danced to their prayers) to the military, to sports. And what is fascinating is how Ms. Ehrenreich argues that relatively recently the young men and women of the 50s and 60s who would not sit down in their seats during a rock concert, were merely reaching back (albeit unconsciously) into a Dionysian past.

For those of you who have often wondered about dancing, and its various social incarnations, this book is for you. Five stars.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A salute to partying

By Newton Ooi

For English readers, there have been about 3 famous female authors over the past three decades; Barbara Tuchman, Doris Kearns Goodwin and Barbara Ehrenreich. The third is the only one of the trio to have not won a Pulitzer Prize, even though her works are just as good. In this one, she takes a serious look at the history of partying in Western civilization. Starting with cave art and rock art from the earliest age of mankind, the author then progresses to Hellenistic times and focuses much on Greek culture and myths. From there, the book contrasts the Greeks with the Romans, and how the former emphasized communal participation in their social activities, whereas the latter emphasized social stratification. The former was built on crowds, whereas the latter demanded audiences, a contrast that the author continues to use throughout the book. Next, the book examines the rise of Christianity, in particular drawing parallels between Jesus and Dionysus. This was very insightful. The book also covers modern festivities such as the modern-day rock concert, American sporting events, and military parades. Overall, this was quite a good sampling of human activities. Unfortunately, the book did omit or skim over some subjects of potential interest. For example, she could have compared the atmosphere at professional sporting events with that at more localized events such as high school football games or Little League baseball games. Or the modern-day US presidential conventions, or the festivities surrounding Chinese New Year in various countries. Of course all of this would only expand the book's length. For what it covered, it was worth the time and effort to read it.

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