

Study Guide



Jazz Tap & Drums





**Tap Origins:
A Brief History**
by Paul Corr

Except for the Indians' ritual dances, the first indigenous American art dance is tap dancing, whose roots lie in spirited Irish and English jigs and clog dances and in the rhythmic African improvisations that immigrants and free Africans combined spontaneously during the 1840s. Characterized by rapidly tapping toes and heels, usually in shoes fitted with metal tips, tap dancing evolved through both those of African descent, and European minstrel shows, revues, vaudeville, musical comedy, and film, accumulating sophisticated new sounds for the feet, such as brushes, slides, hops, rolls, and complex new accents for the upper body as it went along. In 1900 the Floradora Sextet performed the first synchronized tap routine. The 50 girls of the first Ziegfeld Follies (1907) constituted the first tapping chorus line.

Ziegfeld Follies

Florenz Ziegfeld's variety shows, Ziegfeld Follies brought the revue to its high point in the United States. Inspired by the Folies-Bergere, Ziegfeld in 1907 created the first of his 21 annual Follies. Priding

himself on "glorifying the American Girl," he turned the beautifully costumed Ziegfeld Girls into symbols of glamour and elegance. The Follies used top people in their fields, composers such as Irving Berlin, designers such as Joseph Urban, singers such as Eddie Cantor, and comics such as Fanny Brice, W. C. Fields, and Will Rogers. Ziegfeld had many imitators, but none shared his taste, talent, sense of timing, and commitment to artistic excellence.

Tap has a long history of "stealing steps" and "challenges."

In reading any tap history performers will speak of dancing on street corners or outside clubs trying to outdo other dancers.

These street games of "one-upmanship" were called "challenges." Challenges survive today in tap jam sessions and the technique of "trading fours" in a performance with several dancers.

"Trading fours" refers to each dancer giving his or her best for four measures before passing to the other dancer with a non-verbal "top this!"

The other phrase "stealing steps" refers to dancers trying to figure out what another dancer is doing, how he or she is getting that sound. The step is rarely taken literally by the viewing dancer. The motto is "Thou shalt not do another's step, exactly." A step is usually shaped and changed and incorporated into that dancer's personal style.

A reference to tap giant John Bubbles and "stealing steps" occurs in Marshall and Jean Stearns' *Jazz Dance*: Bubbles, however, had little trouble adopting other dancers' steps. He had a reputation of being cagy, and his technique for extracting a step from a competitor became notorious. Watching another dancer practicing at the Hoofers Club, Bubbles bides his time until he sees something he can use. "Oh-oh," he says, shaking his head in alarm, "you lost the beat back there—now try that step again." The dancer starts only to be stopped, again and again, until Bubbles, having learned it announces, "You know, that reminds me of a step I used to do," and proceeds to demonstrate two or three variations on the original step. The other dancer usually feels flattered."

Tap dancing's early history includes "challenges" and "stealing steps." Tapper and documentarian Jane Goldberg recently wrote in the ITA newsletter that tap "came out of the lower classes, developed in competitive 'battles' on street corners by Irish immigrants and those of African descent and slaves."

Tap's Patriarchs "Juba"

In Haskin's "Black Dance In America" the first name mentioned is "Uncle" Jim Lowe a black man that did jigs and reels in saloons and who was listed as an influence on the first great rhythm dancer William Henry Lane, also known as "Juba." Lane was born in 1825 and was well known by the 1840s. His dancing included African steps, like the shuffle and slide, added to the jig steps. He was the first to add syncopation and improvisation to his dancing. Haskins writes of an "emphasis on rhythm and percussion rather than melody."

William Henry "Juba" Lane toured through New York and New England as well as traveling to London. He had a memorable series of challenges in Boston and New York with noted champion Irish step dancer Jack Diamond which had no clear victor. This didn't keep Lane from declaring himself "King." He also is known to have toured with white dancers dancing as a solo act (something that wasn't easily

accomplished by black dancers in the early years of tap's explosive growth in the 1920s.) "Juba" Lane died in 1852 at the age of 27.

King Rastus Brown

Another name that appears frequently in discussions of early tap dance is King Rastus Brown. I studied tap briefly with Robert Burden a protege of LaVaughn Robinson. Robert created and choreographed a presentation of the story of Cinderella called "Cyndi `Ella" using tap dance and a narrator to tell the story.

In this telling King Rastus Brown appears as an apparition that gives Cyndi magical tap shoes after a "tap challenge." It was explained later by Robert that early tap was initiated by King Rastus Brown (and then changed stylistically by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and John Bubbles.)

Brown is also mentioned by one of the Four Step Brothers in Rusty Frank's book. Brown whom he called "Mr Tap" had influenced him to become a tap dancer and "tell the story" during one of Brown's solo tours through Ohio in the early 20s. King Rastus Brown was already an older man by this time. (Rastus Brown has an entire chapter in Jean and Marshall Stearn's book "Jazz Dance," another required book for tappers.)



Bill "Bojangles" Robinson

Setting The Stage

The Irish and Scottish immigrants had a cultural history **James McIntyre** around the turn of the century. It was a flat footed step dance where the foot of the free leg would rise and arc to the side while the elbows moved outward in "wing" pattern. The shoes had wooden soles and heels to amplify the rhythmic sounds of the dance.

In the early part of this century several disparate activities contributed to the further development of tap. Toots Davis and Eddie Rector did tap in the review "Darktown Follies" in 1913. The Volstead Act was passed in 1919 which began the Prohibition Era and the **Jazz Age**. Prohibition outlawed the sale of alcohol thereby assisting the growth of organized crime who created and owned "speakeasies," clubs where alcohol was served and entertainment was provided.

These venues hired many black entertainers as singers, dancers and 'exotics' to entertain their white clientele. The Cotton Club being a noted example. The choreographer **Clarence Robinson** is listed as bringing tap dancing to the Cotton Club in 1934 by the Haskins book.

Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle created a Broadway show in 1921 called "Shuffle Along." According to Haskins "The dancing was jazz dancing, including just about every current dance step, and heavy on tap, which 'Shuffle Along' helped to legitimize." The Charleston was introduced in a black show called "Liza" but truly took off after the "Charleston" song written for the musical "Runnin' Wild" featured tap dancers Pete Nugent and Derby Wilson in 1923. Another show "Dinah" (1924) introduced the "Black Bottom" a dance that featured slapping the backside while hopping forward and back.

Many early tappers needed this dance as well as the 'buck and wing' in their repertoire.



Gene Kelly

A Word About Hardware

The early buck dancers used shoes with wooden soles and heels. According to a letter from Maxine Reddell in a (Nov/Dec '94) issue of the International Tap Association (ITA) newsletter there were also 'split clog' tap shoes used. It says: "These shoes were used as early as 1920 and since then. Capezio has a patent on them." They were used by Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, Eleanor Powell and Ann Miller. The letter states: "Split clogs are hardwood beechwood soles in three sections with beveled edges and honeycomb hollow wood heels. When split clogs are used there are no aftertones but a solid tone, thereby enhancing one's tapping technique." (These are still available and can be heard on the cassette of "My One and Only" danced by Tommy Tune.)

Metal taps developed later and aluminum became the standard. There were also jingle taps used earlier which were metal taps with a washer loose under the tap

for more sounds.

Following this early period tap really expanded and grew. It was included in club revues, traveling shows, Broadway and Hollywood films. Tap was performed by duos, solo acts and choreographed group routines. I'll leave you to read other authors to chronicle its explosive development. A good start would be the Rusty Frank book listed below which covers the years 1900 to 1955.

The Time Step by Tony Curtis

The Time Step is a repetitive tap combination which was initially used as a means by which a tap dancer could communicate to his band, what type of tempo was required, as dancers all preferred different tempo's or music speeds according to their ability. Back in the 30's there used to be many many tap dancers who each had their own distinctive sound and time step, and subsequently could be recognized by the sound they made. Before the emergence of many of the main innovators, tap dancers used to begin all of their routines by beginning with a time step which was then followed by a routine or improvisation.

The Time Step is a rhythmic tap combination which is repeated just like a drummer who plays along with a band in accompaniment. The basic time step has a rhythm that

can be instantly recognizable by saying the words, "Thanks for the bu-gy ride", which is a 6 beats phrase with an accent on the fifth beat "gy".

Although the Time Step is taught to students in standard single, double and triple form of execution, it is possible to just create your own. By just putting together your favorite steps in a one or two bar sequence, as mentioned above, each tap dancer had their own time step by which they could be recognized.

Form this basic Time Step, other steps can be added, in order to create different sounds, beats and musical time signatures which may be required. Today the Time Step is only really used as a training aid for developing rhythm in students and is also a good way of putting all of the shuffles and other combinations into one repetitive rhythmic sequence.

The Time Step became such a standard association to a tap dancer that it was use as a compliment by saying some one is so good they even make the time step look good, or the reverse was used as a put down.

No one really knows where the Time Step comes from or where it originated from, but where ever it came from it shall continue to be taught and used as an essential part of a tap dancers repertoire.

When there are two or more in a tap group, they usually fell into two categories. Flash

Acts and Class Acts.

Although some act's managed to attain a performance which was some where between the two, the distinctions held for the majority of acts.

The Class Acts

The Class Acts built up reputations, and were more refined than Flash Acts. They were mainly geared to performing at class venues mostly. It was very rare to see any gymnastic moves in there performances as it would interrupt the way the dancers carried them selves.



Class Act: Coles & Atkins

One of the unmistakable Class Acts was Coles and Atkins, who carved out a solid reputation for them selves which became a bench mark for others to copy.

There act unlike other acts of the time did not incorporate splits, gymnastic flips or gimmicks, as there sheer grace and style had standing ovations from audiences all over the world.

They were also famous for there slow soft shoe tap

routine which was later copied but never bettered by other acts of the time.

Before Honi Coles teamed up with Cholly Atkins, he was a well established tap dancer, who after a rough start in a few duo's and trio's decided to become the best that he could. He practiced diligently for years until he felt that he was ready to perform again and he came back as one of the fastest tap dancers of the time.

Honi's was well respected through out the tap community, during the latter days of his life he suffered some ill health that halted his dancing but he still maintained a presence at many tap celebrations. And also compared at many of them.

Among the flash act's rivalry between them was common, as they tried to out do each other until the actual taps were no longer the important aspect of the performance. They became so acrobatic that it was more like a gymnastic competition and some groups even performed with out taps on there shoes.

The Nicholas Brothers,

The Nicholas Brothers, who seemed to encompass the qualities of both Class and Flash act, which is possibly why they became so popular, not to mention that the were a sensation as they were relatively young too.

For specialty the **Condos Brothers** who were the wing kings were more Class than Flash as even with their near athletic wings, they still maintained a certain grace and composure.



Young Hoppers

Essay References:

"Black Dance in America" by James Haskins (Harper Trophy, 1990.);

"Tap! The Greatest Tap Dance Stars and Their Stories" by Rusty Frank (Wm. Morrow and Co., 1990.)

International Tap Association Newsletter, Nov/Dec (1994), Vol 5:No.4 [ITA c/o CDF, PO Box 356, Boulder, CO 80306.]
Inquirer Magazine, Sunday, Feb. 19, 1995 "Tap Roots: Ira Bernstein" article by Maralyn Lois Polak. Pp 9-10.

"Black Dance from 1619 to Today", Lynne Fauley Emery Princeton Book Co. 1988

"Hot Jazz and Jazz Dance", Roger Pryor Dodge Oxford University Press, 1995

"The Black tradition in American Dance", Richard A Long, Prion 1989 (more classically oriented), "Stepping on the Blues" Jacqui Malone

Tap! The Greatest Tap Stars and Their Stories - interviews with a wide variety of living tappers (at that time.) Great anecdotes and killer indices on tap dancers and filmography. A must have for tap reference.

Book: Jazz Dance - The Story of American Vernacular Dance - written in the early sixties, this documentary of American dance includes much on tap and its practitioners to that time.

A must read for tappers. Inside Tap by Anita Feldman - subtitled "Technique and Improvisation for Today's Tap Dancer" this book is an introduction to tap that offers traditional and improvisational instruction for the beginner as well as new and innovative material for the intermediate and advanced dancer. 200 pages, numerous photos. 1996, Princeton Book Company, Publishers.



Dance Over The Years

1812 Waltz

The 19th Century's answer to the lambada, this German import won the scorn of even romantics like Lord Byron, who denounced its "lewd grasp and lawless contact." The first dance to owe its popularity to the hoi polloi and not the moneyed or the titled, the "turning dance" reached the apex of its popularity in the 1890s, then petered out after World War I.

1830 Polka

After it was performed in Paris, this plucky Bohemian folk dance caught on in royal circles, and was soon giving the waltz a run for its money.

1913 Fox-trot

Ziegfeld Follies performer Harry Fox's two-step caught the eye of the show's producers, who helped refine and market it. In their time out of the foxholes, American GIs fox-trotted, helping popularize it in Europe during the Great War.

1910 Tango

A dance with a tangled pedigree, the tango traveled from villages in Spain to the bars of Buenos Aires (where it mingled with the dance idioms of African slaves), to Paris-bound luxury liners where rich Argentinians repatriated it to Europe. The tango spread in America at lightning speed, and by war's end encompassed close to 200 different steps. But its erotic overtones led to its banning in cities like Boston and Cleveland.

Late 20's Rumba

The original rumba (or, as it's sometimes spelled, rhumba) started out as a come-hither display in Caribbean brothels, then landed in the United States in a less flamboyant form via Cuba. Perhaps imitative of the courting maneuvers of barnyard fowl (including flouncy costumes resembling ruffled feathers), the sexually charged dance merges Moorish, African and Spanish elements.

1927 Lindy

Named after Charles Lindbergh, who in that year flew across the Atlantic, the lindy hop, as it was also known, got its start in Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. Like the famous pilot who lent it its name, the dance featured a striking "flying" element - the female partner.



- Polonais
- 20th Century
- 1900-1910's**
- Hesitation Waltz
- Animal Dances
- Fox Trot
- Castle Walk
- Maxixe
- Tango

1939 Samba

This folk dance shuttled from Rio de Janeiro to Queens, where it bowed at the New York World's Fair. Another sensuous Latin step, the samba's signature was a forward-backward leaning motion.

- Quaternaria
- Saltarallo
- Piva
- Balli

16th Century

- Pavanne
- Branle
- Allemande
- Cascarde
- Galliard
- Canari
- Saltarello
- Lavolta
- Italian

Dance suites

18th Century

- Allemande
- Bouree
- Branle
- Canarie
- Chaconne
- Contradanse
- Courante
- Gaillarde
- Gavotte
- Gigue
- Menuet
- Passacaille
- Passepied
- Pavane
- Rigaudon
- Sarabande

19th Century

- Waltz
- Polka
- Galop
- Schottische
- Mazurka
- Country Dance
- Quadrille
- Waltz Cotillion



1950 Cha-cha and Merengue

An evolution of the mambo, which was popular a decade earlier, the onomatopoeic cha-cha was supposedly named for the sound made by slip-on shoes worn by female cuban dancers. The loose-legged steps of the merengue, which hails from the Dominican Republic, were purportedly inspired by a crippled general whose deferential guests mimicked him on the dance floor.

1970 Hustle

This homegrown American dance form started in the social clubs of East Harlem and then filtered down to the gay clubs. The 1975 disco anthem "The Hustle" spread this salsa-rooted dance into the mainstream.

15th Century

- Bassadanza

1920's

- Black Bottom
- Charleston
- Lindy

1930's

- Shag
- Lambeth Walk
- Big Apple
- Jitterbug

1940's

- Swing
- Rhumba
- Conga
- Samba

1950's

- Rock n' Roll
- Mambo
- Line Dances

1960's

- Twist
- Fad Dances

1970's

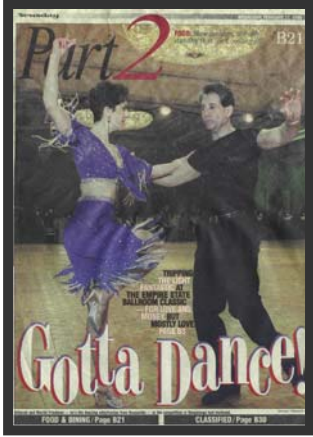
- Disco

1980's

Punk
Break

1990's

Hip Hop
Vogue
Country Western



Ref: Dancetime Publications – List of Dances & Compiled from "Panati's Paralk! of Fads, Follies and Manias" by Charles Panati (HarperPerennial).





COLES STROLL TAP DANCE

By Charles Honi Coles

“A-TRAIN”

By Duke Ellington

This is a circle dance that rotates in a counter clockwise direction. Starting Off SR with the right foot:

I.) WALKS

Walk (16 Steps)

Heel Toe (16 Steps)

Brush Heel Toe (Left) Heel Toe (Right) (16 Steps)

Brush Heel Toe (Left) Brush Heel Toe (Right) (16 Steps)

Brush Hop Heel Toe (Left) Brush Hop Heel Toe (Right) (16 Steps)

FANCY STEP: Brush Hop Heel Toe (Left) Brush Step (Right) Heel Toe (Left) (SIX times)

Walk (Right Left Right Left) to come out of the circle and make two lines

II.) GRAPEVINE

Brush (Right foot to the side) Step (Cross right in front of left) Step (Left foot to the side)

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Repeat and reverse Grapevine

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III.) SHUFFLE COMBINATION with BREAK

A.) Shuffle Step Heel (Right Foot To Right Side) Touch (Ball of Left Foot Touches Floor Next to Right Foot)

Repeat and Reverse A.)

B.) Shuffle Step Heel (Right Foot to Right Side) Step Heel (Left) Step Heel (Right) Step Heel (Left) Step (Right)

Repeat and Reverse Whole Shuffle Combination

“ “ “ “ “

BREAK: Shuffle Ball Change (Right) Riff Brush Step (Right) Riff Brush Step (Left) Shuffle Ball Heel (Right crosses in front of Left) Toe (Left Toe in Back of Right Foot) Flap (Left foot to side)

THE END



Napoleon Revels-Bey, Drummer-Percussionist, Composer and Arranger, Educator, Artist director



Moorish-American, by nationality, no stranger to the music world having performed in many Broadway productions such as *Bubblin' Brown Sugar*, *Eubie*, *Bob Fosse' Dancin'*, *Rogers & Hart's On Your Toes*, *Ain't Mis'Behavin'*, *Late Great Ladies of The Blues and Jazz* as well among many productions as the *Ice Capades*, and *Essence Award Program*, *Kool*, *JVC*, *Umbria*, *Bermuda*, and *Newark Jazz Festival* and a teacher and leader of Revels-Bey Music with Arts-In-Education programs. Performances with a variety of artists, *Aretha Franklin*, *Englebert Humperdink*, *Sandra Reeves*, *Ruth Brown*, *Irene Reed*, *Harlem Philharmonic*, *Cab Calloway*, *Bobbie Humphrey*, *Gloria Lynn*, *Arthur Prysock*, *Freda Payne*, *Gladys Knight and the PIPS*, *Gregg Hines*, *Savion Glover*, *Pharaoh Saunders*, Organist *Larry*

Young, *Rashid Ali*, *Sam Rivers*, *Reggie Workman*, and *Bernard Purdy*. His recording "**New Mo Swing**" CD (**Moor-Moor Records 11247-1**) which feathers some of New York's finest musicians *Cecil Bridgewater*-Trumpet, *Roger Byam*-Flute, Sax, *Onaje Allan Gumbs*, & *Edwin McKinley*-Piano, *Bryan Carrott*-Vibraphone, *Kim Clarke*-Bass, *Ayodele Maakheru*-Guitar, *Guilherme Franco* & *Andre Strobert*-Percussion, *Annette St. John*. & *Estee Leger*-Vocals

Traci Mann, Director/Teacher /Choreographer

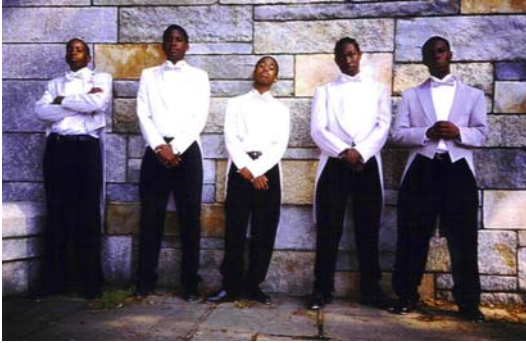


Ms. Mann has been producing tap dance showcases in NYC since 1990. These showcases were designed to involve young dancers with older tap masters. This could help our dancers gain knowledge, experience, and theatrical credits. As a teacher, she realizes the importance of dance as a therapy, as a creative expression, as a discipline, "American history, fun, and an avenue for releasing energy! Ms.

Mann not only instills in her students a strong tap technique, but also the history of the steps and the tap masters who created them. Tap is fun! It is a celebration of music, rhythm, and dance.



The YOUNG HOOFERS



LITTLE RHYTHM KINGS



An Acrobatic Team of Young Rhythm Tap Dancers, ages 5-15, are young men who have achieved a level of professionalism through hard work, long hours, and dedication. They have danced in Mann Arts & Entertainment programs; "Tapping Into the Environment; This Joint Is Jumping' " (starring tap legends, Peg Leg Bates and Chuck Green the Godfather of Tap, also the late great stride pianist, Howie Wyeth); "Dancing Under the Desert Moon; New York City Street Beat," and "The Legendary Sandman Sims's NYU Tap Workshop." Additional performances include: "Baby That Is Rock and Roll; Welcome Back to Brooklyn" street festival with Mecca Bodega music; "Dance Giant Steps" at the Brooklyn Children's Museum; Comet's "Tapping Into Clean Water," with Sandman Sims, Buster Brown, and the Silver Belles; FOX Network's "Good Day New York, Tribute to Savion Glover;" starring Savion, Jimmy Slyde, Buster Brown, 'Bring In Da Noise, Bring In Da Funk' dancers, and NYOT; CBS' "Sally Jesse Raphael Show;" featuring Shakir Torbert and Buster Brown, "Rupaul," on VH1; and have recently created their own entire show, "Hoofin' In Harlem." These young men enjoy tap dancing to live music, incorporating gymnastics, hip-hop, and challenge steps as part of their improvisation. They are contributing to the dance community by helping to keep the art of tap dancing alive, as it is an original, indigenous American folk dance.

