

Tapping Through Time: The Evolution of Tap Dance



WHAT IS TAP DANCE?

Dance style that uses shoes with metal “taps” on the bottom to combine **movement** with **music**



“What the eye sees is sharpened
by what the ear hears, and the ear
hears more clearly that which
sight enhances”

—Paul Draper



TAP SHOES

Oxford-style shoe

Leather shoe

Two metal
taps

Thick toe
box

Heel made of wood
or stacked leather



TAP SHOES



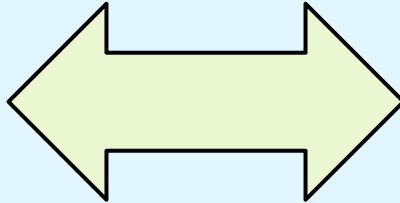
Mary Jane



Character Shoe

HOW DID TAP BEGIN?

West African Dance



Irish Step Dance



SUBGENRES OF TAP

Rhythm Tap

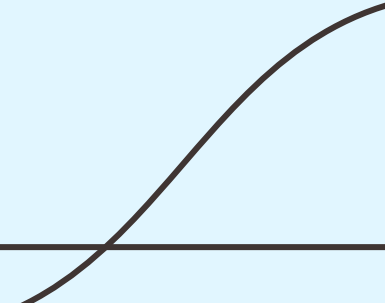
- Roots in African dance styles
- Grounded
- Little to no arm movement
- Includes improvisation
- Strong focus on musicality

Savion Glover on *Good Day New York* (2016)



SUBGENRES OF TAP

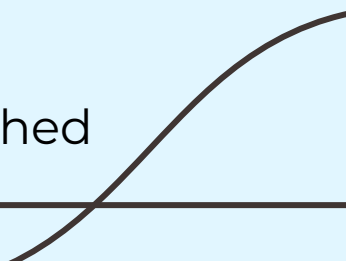
Broadway Tap

- Roots in European dance styles
 - Lifted
 - Upper body movement
 - Choreographed routines
 - Strong focus on performance
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Anything Goes - Sutton Foster (2011)



EARLY HISTORY

- 19th Century: African slaves and Irish indentured servants observed each other's dances on Southern plantations
 - Post-Civil War: performers spread tap dance through traveling minstrel shows
 - Terrible racism and blackface during this time
 - William Henry Lane broke racial barriers and played a major role in the invention of tap dance
 - Soft shoes or wooden shoes, sometimes with pennies attached
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VAUDEVILLE

- Tap shoes were first created in the 1920s
- Tap dance became increasingly popular and increasingly complex
- Introduction of tap battles
- Collaboration between tap dancers and jazz musicians



Alice Whitman

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

- Tap quickly gained popularity in jazz clubs
 - Cotton Club, Apollo Theater
- Appreciated by both Black and white audiences, though segregation continued
- Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, John Bubbles, the Nicholas Brothers, Jimmy Slyde



Stair Dance - Bill “Bojangles” Robinson (1932)



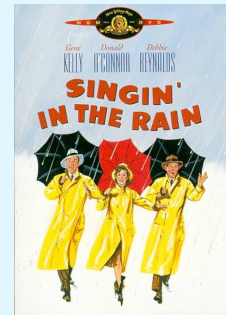
TAP IN THE FILM INDUSTRY



1935



1943



1952



1936



1948

Pick Yourself Up, *Swing Time* - Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers (1936)



Jumpin' Jive, *Stormy Weather* - The Nicholas Brothers (1943)

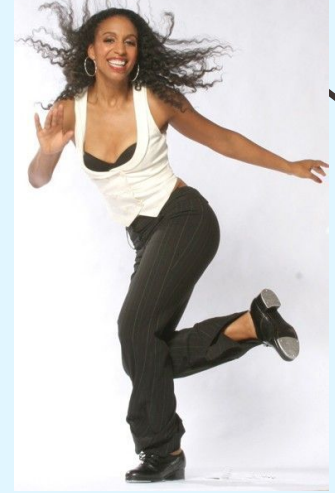


Singin' In The Rain - Gene Kelly (1952)

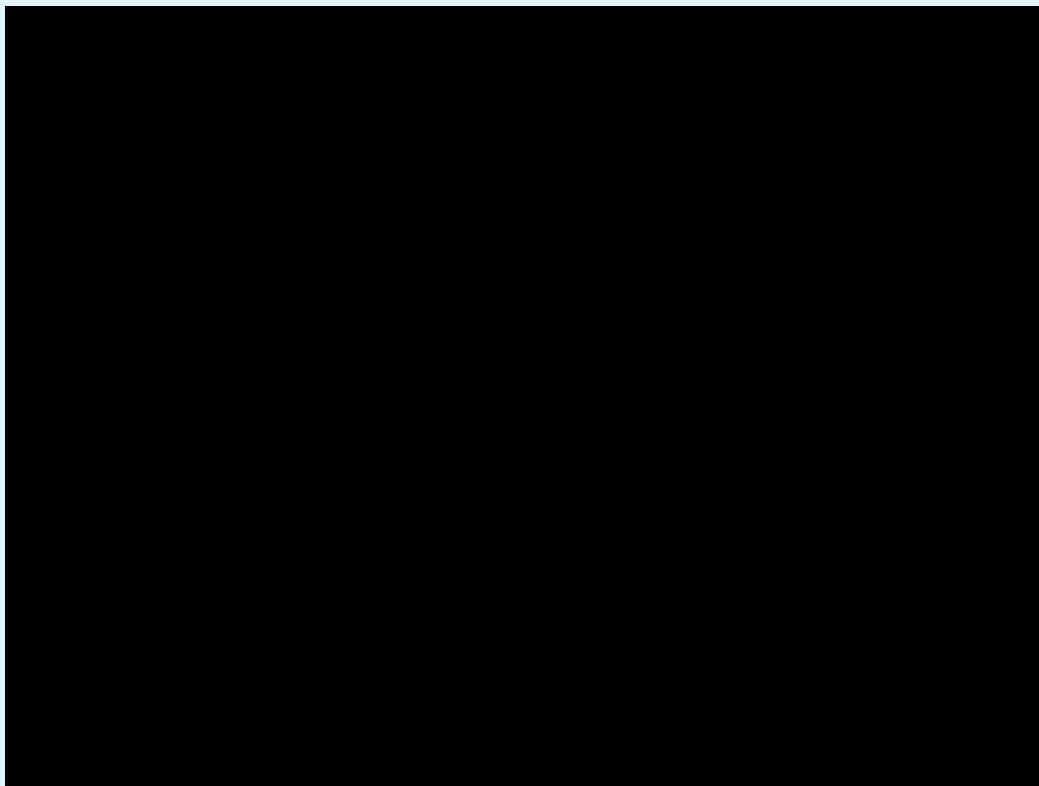


TAP IN THE PRESENT DAY

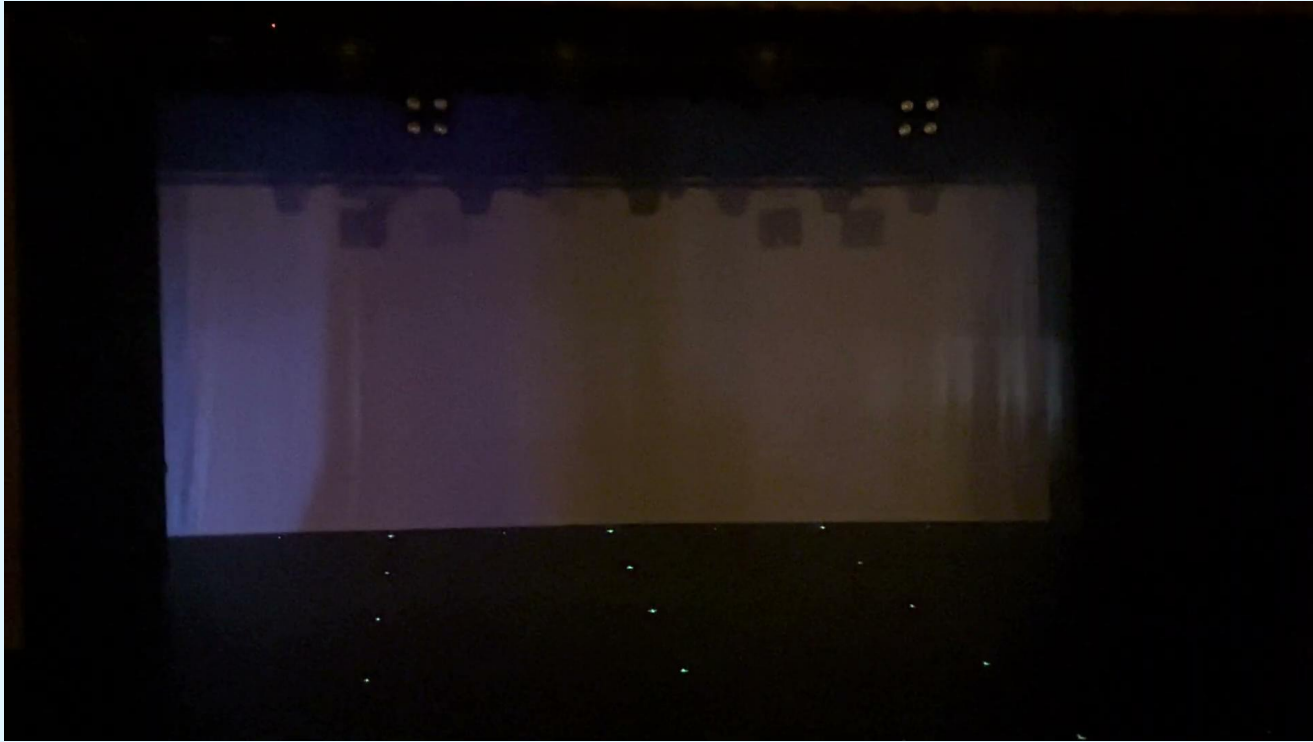
- Continues to be found on Broadway and in occasional movies
- Savion Glover, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Jason Samuels Smith, Chloe Arnold



Friend Like Me (2023)



Diablo Rojo (2024)



Ball Heel



Brush



Spank



Shuffle



Flap





THANK YOU!

