

TIP

TOP TAP

The American Tap Dance Foundation's (ATDF) second annual *Sound Check: A Tap Dance Journey*, was a fun-filled road trip with an eye on the horizon and a heartfelt look back. Co-directed by dance treasures Brenda Bufalino and Tony Waag, the latter also serving as Executive Producer, with Hjordis Linn-Blanford and Tony Mayes as Associate Producers, this memorable show had guest artists stepping out on the Dance Theater Workshop stage,

April 14-18, 2010. They did so to heart-bursting standards and explosive original themes composed by Ms. Bufalino and Jonny Peiffer, performed by Cameron Brown on bass, Charlie Tokarz on reeds, Basilio Georges on guitar, and Mr. Peiffer on piano and melodica, under the TNT direction of Bernice "Boom Boom" Brooks, sound design by Carl Casella and Wallace Flores. The tour was lit technically by Mr. Mayes and by fireworks performances in a show written and staged by Ms. Bufalino.

Footage, which premiered in 2009 in the touring production of *Thank You Gregory! A Tribute to the Legends of Tap*, created by Tony Waag and Forward Motion Theater, began the *Prologue*. Barbara Duffy's feet tapped Ms. Bufalino's choreography on worn floors in a kaleidoscopic film clip in an array of tints, right side up, upside down, and multiplying exponentially. Like an art gallery installation piece, this remix of segments from Ms. Bufalino's classic tap dance documentary *Great Feats of Feet*, was fascinating and fun. *Sound Check*, which followed, with Mr. Mayes as the Stage Manager, was just that. The Ensemble warmed up in whatever wear, readying themselves for the *Show*.

The dancers then burst into *Buff Loves Basie Blues*, which premiered in 1991, and was one of two major Bufalino revivals incorporated into the show. The other was *Haitian Fight Song*, danced toward the end of the program.



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Featuring Ms. Bufalino, that number was first seen in 1989 on PBS Great Performances Tap Dance in America. Both works were reconstructed this last year and danced by The NEW Tap Dance Orchestra for which they were created, members Warren Craft, Shelby Kaufman, Tamii Sakurai, Danny Wallace and Xander Weinman.

Interspersed in the *Show* section of the program were *The Jitterbug Waltz* to music by Richard Maltby, Jr. and Fats Waller, danced and choreographed by old-

timer Harold "Stumpy" Cromer and 20 year-old Cartier Williams; *Duets* danced by Mr. Williams and Ranya Renée; and *In the Groove*, which premiered at Tap City 2006 and is currently seen in *Stages*, a tap dance show created by Barbara Duffy. *Groove* was performed by the all-female tap ensemble Barbara Duffy and Company, members Cintia Charnicki, Chikako Iwahori, Monifa Kincaid with Ms. Duffy. Mr. Cromer was half the comedy act of Stump and Stumpy. He made his Broadway debut in the 1940 *DuBarry was a Lady* with Ethel Merman. He's still got it – big time! Cartier Williams kept up. Keep an eye on him.

After the *Prologue*, the *Show* began, the conceit of which was the promise of *The Last Rehearsal Hall*, a new musical by the multi-talented Ms. Bufalino. One of another three film montages showed narrow rickety stairs, dim studios owing to decades' dirty windows, a well-worn piano missing a few keys. The shots were entirely recognizable. This was Michael's or Fazil's, depending on your age and when you danced there. And everyone danced there, including several of us editors at Attitude! Now, even the building is gone – but not the memories. And these memories were the morsels yummied up in Ms. Bufalino's loving lyrics about longing for the steaming heat in summer, the frigid cold in winter, the climbing of those musty stairs after your day job, all for the love of dance. Thanks to ATDF, since the start of the

year, tap dancers have The American Tap Dance Center in Greenwich Village to call their own.

I've Watched Them Come and Go was a nostalgic song and dance by Brenda Bufalino and Tony Waag. *Where is Sheboygan* was sung by Ms. Bufalino and danced by the Ensemble. *Time Steps* by the dancers and musician showed what it's all about. A thoughtful element, for its accuracy, was the inclusive reflection on the dancers we met up those stairs at 8th and 48th. Middle Eastern dancers, who still have the studios at Lotus to go to, were represented by the luscious, vivacious Ranya Renee. Aurora Reyes and Basilio Reyes represented the flamencos, now dispersed all over Manhattan, with this couple's having the only dedicated flamenco studio in the theater district. Ms. Renée and Ms. Reyes each danced as though in her own rehearsal space at Fazil's, and then they met, as had the legend and the kid, respectfully, in *Duets*. Serious dancers, regardless of age and form, can always communicate.

The emotion welled up in the ensemble number, *It's the Floors*. The dancers were bundled up in hats and scarves in the freezing Hell's Kitchen studio overlooking the FDNY's 54 and 4, which we supported after 9-11. The song answered the question "Why do we stay here?" The answer that is especially true for tappers and flamencos with metal and nails attached to our shoes? "Because nobody else wants us." And because we loved those "magnificent hardwood maple floors."

This travelogue told the truth about dancers and the musicians who work with us. Where to next year? Follow the Sound Check fleet feet!

AMERICAN TAP DANCE FOUNDATION presents

Sound Check

A Tap Dance Journey

April 14-18, 2010
Dance Theater Workshop - 219 West 19th Street

Online: dtw.org By phone: 212.924.0077
At the box office: 219 West 19th Street (between 7th & 8th Ave)
Box office hours: Mon-Fri 5-9pm, Sat & Sun 12-5pm

For more information visit: atdf.org

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