



BWW Reviews: The American Tap Dance Foundation's TAP IT OUT

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There's a secret I've been hiding ever since making the move to New York City, and I think it's finally time that I come clean. I'm not from the city. I'm from the South. Where I'm from, dance doesn't have much of a scene. I was put in tap classes at a young age and loved it, but there was never much opportunity for me. Or, at least, that's what I always believed. But these dancers proved me wrong July 13th. Why am I telling you this? Because I was seriously moved today by seeing 300 tap dancers from around the world dance in NYC, the place that I've come to love and call home. As I saw this group, all clad in their blue t-shirts representing the tap group, wandering around Times Square before the show, looks of awe on their faces, I knew their dreams were coming true. They had all come together in the greatest city in the world because of one thing-tap. Who are these dancers? The American Tap Dance Foundation's Tap it Out hoofers.

The Tap it Out event featured dancers ranging from ages 6-76 tapping it out on the streets of New York City, where tap dance was born. The show began with all of the dancers standing in rows in their tennis shoes, before Tony Waag, the conductor for the event, called out, "Dancers, put on your tap shoes!" And that's when I knew I was in for much more than a show. To quote Waag, "It's not a show. It's a happening." I couldn't have said it better myself. The tappers opened with a number that flowed so cohesively, you would never guess that twenty states and twenty countries were being represented on one stage. Three groups performed separate pieces of choreography in a round, creating beautiful music. The second number livened things up even more, with groups of dancers taking turns jamming out, snapping their fingers along to the beat while other groups took their turns in the spotlight. They even broke out into the hand jive as they counted out loud and clapped along in time.

The third number featured a few solo hoofers, as the rest of the dancers stomped to the outer edge of the stage, creating a circle around the soloists, crouching down while a few talented individuals wowed the audience with their complicated and technically amazing solos. And even though there were some seasoned pro's representing tap out there, I was pleased to see that it was mainly teenagers doing these solos, showing the hard work and dedication they have given to this craft. The fourth number began as all the tappers clapped and stomped back into formation and added arms to the mix, waving their hands up in the air and resting their feet as they showed that there is beauty in the silence, and allowed the audience to just take everything in and pass the music on. For the fifth and final number, the Tap City Youth Program joined in, featuring a group of incredibly talented young kids doing the shim sham shimmy, a dance all tappers should know. Waag even turned around to face the crowd and tap along.

Some danced with their eyes closed, feeling the music through their feet. Some with smiles. Some laughing with each other as they danced. And as they danced, everything came together. They were showing us that they had made it. They were living their dreams- whether they came from Brazil, Japan, Germany, Canada, or New Jersey, they had all come together in New York City and proven to us that they could dance. And the joy on their faces passed that magic along to onlookers today, inspiring the next generation of hoofers.

July 13th marked the last day of tap week, this being the last event, but the NYC tap festival is in it's 13th year, and is only growing, so if you missed out, don't worry. It's most assuredly going to be back next year.