



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Tap It Out** Tap dancing at the World Financial Center on Friday during the New York City Tap Festival.

## 150 Dancers and 300 (Count 'Em) Feet

The choreographer Brenda Bufalino once dreamed that if she got enough tap dancers together laying down interlocking rhythms, the sound could take the roof off a building.

**BRIAN SEIBERT**  
**DANCE REVIEW**  
That dream inspired Ms. Bufalino's American Tap Dance Orchestra, which in turn became the American Tap Dance Foundation,

started by her disciple Tony Waag. On Friday afternoon Mr. Waag fulfilled a dream of his own, marshaling 150 tap dancers outside the World Financial Center (not far from where the now defunct orchestra gave its first concert, in 1986) for three performances of "Tap It Out."

Part of the River to River Festival, "Tap It Out" was also the culminating event of this year's New York City Tap Festival, a once vital annual occurrence that has of late become more about student showcases than about presenting tap at its best. A program shake-up was welcome, and this one involved some 75 resonant plat-

forms smaller than yoga mats arrayed on steps facing the Hudson.

Except for Mr. Waag, who wore a tuxedo, the dancers were dressed casually but uniformly in gray and black. But in body type and age they varied widely. Students mixed with professionals, all dancing without accompaniment (though Christiane Matallo played saxophone for two numbers, one while also tapping).

The opening group number (choreographed by Mr. Waag and Lynn Schwab) had a pedantic feel, working up from the basics to an effective demonstration of how three phrases might fit together simultaneously. Later ensemble pieces mostly belabored the notion, though the powerfully meshing phrases in excerpts from Ms. Bufalino's choreography could have given the architects of the building cause for concern.

While the ensembles' rhythmic execution was tight, the dynamics were fairly crude (stop/start, loud/soft) and apart from the display of diversity, visual interest

was lacking. "Fifty-Three," a brilliant tap étude created by Leon Collins for his students in the early '80s, benefited from savvy staging by Barbara Duffy that helped it instruct and entertain.

Cartier Williams, a young and emphatic virtuoso, represented solo tap, charming the crowd with a galloping allusion to the "William Tell" overture. But it was left to Max Pollak and his small Afro-Cuban group, Rumba-Tap, to bring everything together. Tap as music, rhythms that harmonize: here the program's ideas became art. On a hot day it was like a mojito, going down easy with a kick of rum.

It was indicative of Mr. Waag's priorities, however, that professionals were followed by students in the Tap City Youth Program — who, though cute in their sunglasses and their skill, were still doing classroom steps. "Tap is for everyone," Mr. Waag asserted in the written program, and "Tap It Out" was inviting to the uninitiated. But New York's tap festival needs to do more than introduce.