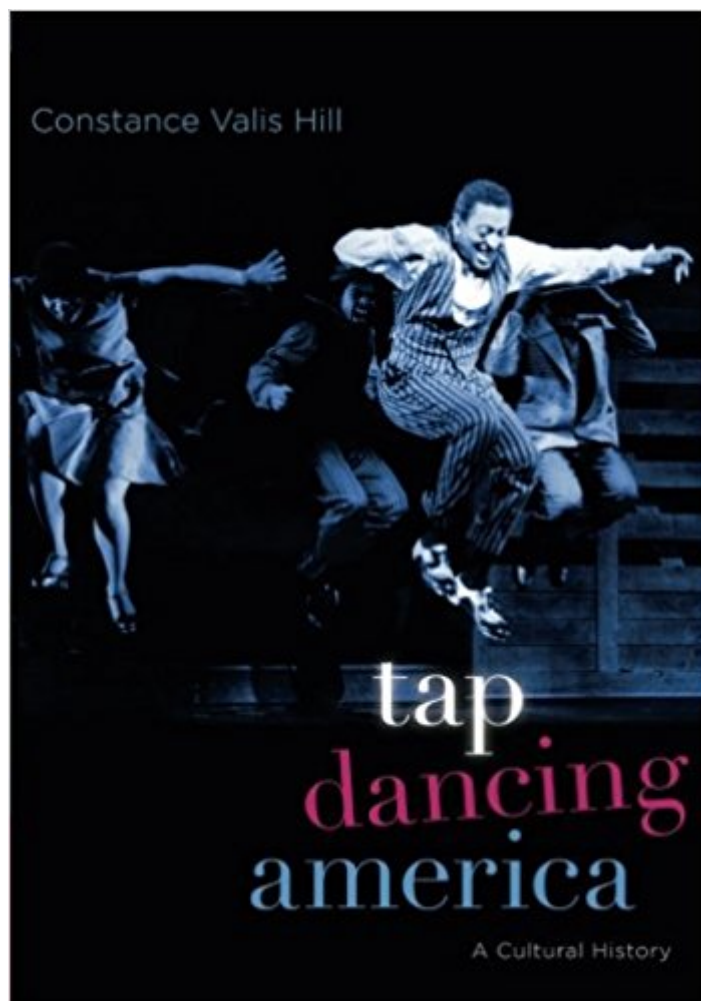


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# Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History



## Synopsis

Here is the vibrant, colorful, high-stepping story of tap -- the first comprehensive, fully documented history of a uniquely American art form, exploring all aspects of the intricate musical and social exchange that evolved from Afro-Irish percussive step dances like the jig, gioube, buck-and-wing, and juba to the work of such contemporary tap luminaries as Gregory Hines, Brenda Bufalino, Dianne Walker, and Savion Glover. In *Tap Dancing America*, Constance Valis Hill, herself an accomplished jazz tap dancer, choreographer, and performance scholar, begins with a dramatic account of a buck dance challenge between Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Harry Swinton at Brooklyn's Bijou Theatre, on March 30, 1900, and proceeds decade by decade through the 20th century to the present day. She vividly describes tap's musical styles and steps -- from buck-and-wing and ragtime stepping at the turn of the century; jazz tapping to the rhythms of hot jazz, swing, and bebop in the '20s, '30s and '40s; to hip-hop-inflected hitting and hoofing in heels (high and low) from the 1990s right up to today. Tap was long considered "a man's game," and Hill's is the first history to highlight such outstanding female dancers as Ada Overton Walker, Kitty O'Neill, and Alice Whitman, at the turn of the 20th century, as well as the pioneering women composers of the tap renaissance, in the 70s and 80s, and the hard-hitting rhythm-tapping women of the millennium such as Chloe Arnold, Ayodele Casel, Michelle Dorrance, and Dormeshia Sumbry Edwards. Written with uncanny foresight, the book features dancers who have become international touring artists and have performed on Broadway, won Emmy and Tony Awards, and received the prestigious Dance Magazine, Adele and Fred Astaire, and Jacob's Pillow Dance awards. Presented with all the verve and grace of tap itself and drawing on eyewitness accounts of early performances as well as interviews with today's greatest tappers, *Tap Dancing America* fills a major gap in American dance history and places tap firmly center stage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Hill's prose brings to life the visceral thrill that a well-executed virtuosic tap routine or improvisation can impart. Her work here will inspire readers--tap enthusiasts, dance historians, as well as nonspecialist scholars and students--to delve deeper into the complicated history of this eminently American dance form." --Dance Research Journal

"A great source of reference for Tap Dance culture and history, Tap Dancing America accumulates stories and articles in attempts to capture the essence of this elusive oral tradition. An important read. I highly recommend it!" --Jason Samuels Smith

"With breath that is bated we all have awaited the arrival of this book. Spanning the gaps and the taps across the ages and the stages of time, covering the various aspects of the art of this American dance form, Ms. Valis Hill has guided us through a definitive full-of-life exploration into the world of Terpsichore. It's a hard book to put down and calls out to you with its inclusion and accuracy whether it be about the dance patterns, the personal or the historical dates and times. With his love of dance and dancers my grandfather would have been most proud to be included within these pages." --Mercedes Ellington, President and CEO of The Duke Ellington Center for The Arts

"Comprehensive and compelling, Tap Dancing America places race, gender, individual innovation, and rhythm at the center of American dance history. Carefully researched and eminently readable, this landmark volume will inspire generations to explore a legacy of tap dancing as corporeal evidence of Afro-Irish fusion. Constance Valis Hill brings intellectual breadth and an abiding love for the dance and its dancers to this invaluable and definitive project." --Thomas F. DeFrantz, Professor, Music and Theater Arts, MIT and author of Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture

"Tap Dancing America casts new light on the hurly burly of class, culture, race and gender that fused into one of America's most original and popular arts. An indispensable resource for anyone interested in American culture." --Sali Ann Kriegsman, Modern Dance in America: The Bennington Years

"This handy source for tap history and personalities packs in lots of info." --Library Journal

"Brimming with info and energy...a fresh perspective that communicates the vibrancy of this art form with all its twists and turns, engaging readers in the complex history of its American life. A spectacular achievement!" --Lynn Dally, Artistic Director, Jazz Tap Ensemble; Adjunct Professor, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures

"This will be an invaluable resource for those interested in US cultural history and the history of dance in general, as

well as the tap dance genre itself. Summing up: Essential." --Choice"Hill is not only an accomplished tap dance historian (and performer), but an extremely descriptive and passionate writer; she is able to paint a colorful and dynamic picture for her reader...That is what makes Tap Dancing America: a Cultural History such a compelling read." --Southwest Journal of Cultures"By book's end, the reader will come away with an understanding of tap dance in the way one would expect from a similar study on American painting, opera or jazz. Hill writes with authority, yet in a voice that welcomes readers at all levels of knowledge...Tap Dancing America will bring the conversation around to tap, and perhaps even bring another generation into the tradition Savion Glover most recently has spotlighted." --Broadside

Constance Valis Hill is a dance historian and choreographer. She is Five College Professor of Dance at Hampshire College and the author of Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History (OUP, 2010) and Brotherhood in Rhythm: The Jazz Tap Dancing of the Nicholas Brothers (Oxford University Press, 2000), winner of a 2001 ASCAP Deems-Taylor award. She has composed a chronology of tap dance for the Library of Congress in "Tap Dance in America: A Twentieth-Century Chronology of Tap Performance on Stage, Film, and Media by Constance Valis Hill," a 3,000 performance record database with 180 biographies of twentieth-century tap dancers.

Great

I am not a dancer by any means, but for my dance term paper I wrote about each man in the "Challenge" scene from the movie TAP. This book had everything I needed.

GREAT BOOK!

This wonderful book tells SO MUCH tap dance history... It is a MUST-HAVE for every tap dancer!

Excellence abounds in this history of tap dancing. I have read many books on the history of tap dancing and this book is so detailed. Would highly recommend it!

This book is FANTASTIC! It's a great resource for all dancers and dance historians. I assigned this book for my students to read this semester and I think it will be hugely successful.

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