

let's talk

TAP

with Christine Denny from Tapatak Oz

TODAY

LET'S TALK PERSONALITY

Hey Everyone. Welcome back to the second column. **Let's Talk** about the importance of personality when we are tap dancing.

As with all forms of dance, it is incredibly important to connect with your audience and bring them to you when you perform! Whilst it is paramount to have a strong tap technique underpinning what you do, the addition of showmanship and personality is the proverbial 'icing on the cake' and what makes people want to watch you. It doesn't matter how good a technician you are - if you can't connect with the audience, they will decide to go buy their popcorn while you are dancing - and none of us want that!

pic: Keith Hovey

SO – HOW DO WE CONNECT WITH OUR AUDIENCE?

1. Dance with **PASSION!**

If you look like you are enjoying yourself when you tap, then the audience will enjoy what you are doing as well. If you look bored or unsure of yourself, then the audience will be bored or worried about your performance also. But if you look excited by the steps you are doing and tap around the stage with enthusiasm and energy, you can be sure to take the audience with you and to receive an equally enthusiastic response.

It is true what they say – you get what you give! So you have to give your all and put yourself out there to really connect with the people watching you. If you want a committed and energetic response, then you have to give a committed and energetic performance!

58

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2. Your **EYES** are the windows to your soul.

Resist the urge to look at the ground when you tap. Even though it's cool to look at your feet occasionally when tapping, you still need to look up and out to connect with the crowd. Making that connection is so important. The audience want to see into your eyes, to see the passion and excitement you are generating by your performance.

3. Establish a relationship with your **FEET!**

The rhythms that come pouring out of our feet have to have a reason, a motivation and a connection to us as the dancer. We should be reacting to the sounds our feet are making all the time. This will make the performance cohesive – that is your beats, your music and your expression are all reflecting the same feeling.

You need to **TELL A STORY** every time you dance – whether it be an exercise in class or a show to 10,000 people. So every time you put those tap shoes on, ask yourself:

- why am I doing this step?
- how does it make me feel?
- what is the choreographer's intention?
- what's the story to this step?

Perhaps it is a **TRAVELLING STEP**, so there could be any number of scenarios as to why and how you do the step: someone is chasing you, you are jumping through puddles on a rainy day, you're going to see a friend, you're walking through the park etc. If you are **STAMPING YOUR FOOT** then perhaps you are surprising a friend, playing a trick on someone, attracting someone's attention or simply loving making a really loud noise and the rhythm of the step. If you look at every step you do in this way, you will find all your classes so much more fun and you will be able to develop a style that has a lot more depth, maturity and entertainment value!

4. Be **SINCERE!**

As you dance your expression should change to match the step or rhythm you are doing at that time – but it must always look genuine as opposed to put on or contrived. This may seem easy, but actually takes a lot of practice to master. Knowing you are going to look over your right shoulder and raise your eyebrow to look surprised when you stamp your right foot for instance, takes practice to come across as spontaneous rather than rehearsed. But it is this spontaneity that will win over the crowd and have them eating out of your hand as you tap across the stage!

QUICK RUN DOWN OF TODAY'S TAP TIPS

- Tap with passion
- Use your eyes to connect with the audience
- Establish a relationship with your feet – reacting to the sounds they make
- Strive to be spontaneous
- Find a story and motivation for every step and sell it to the crowd

Now – have another look at the latest step or routine you have been learning in class or for a competition and ask yourself – what's the personality and story for each step or section of this choreography. Should I be looking and feeling happy, wistful, surprised, excited, showing off, tricky, flashy, flirtatious, mellow and hanging out, competing with others I am tapping with or just enjoying the funky beat of the music and the rhythms that are flowing out of my feet – the list of reasons to tap your troubles away and lay down some cool rhythms is endless!!

GO TAP UP A STORM and stamp it with your unique story and **PERSONALITY!**

Have fun and till next time
Happy Tapping

Christine

For more tapping lips check out Christine's fantastic new DVD series
www.tapatakoz.com.au

59

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