



let's talk

TAP

with Christine Denny from Tapatah Oz

TODAY → LET'S TALK VARIETY

Hi Guys – and welcome to the first installment of LET'S TALK TAP. Our very own space to discuss all things TAP – very exciting! Australia has such a vast array of tapping talent all over the country, including teachers, choreographers and dancers, that it is great to have this special section of DANCEtrain dedicated to all you tapping enthusiasts out there! So if you have any questions or ideas for this column then drop me a line. I would love to hear from you!

Over the coming issues, I am going to share some great tips on enhancing your own tap technique and performance skills. Subtle but significant ways to improve your tapping. So stay tuned!

pic: Keith Rowley

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Today we are looking at the huge variety of styles in tap and the differing approaches they require to be performed successfully! There are so many genres out there – **Broadway tap, street tap, slow tap, bluesy tap** – in fact I am sure that there is someone in the world right now creating a new style of tap we have never seen before.

Tappers everywhere are breaking boundaries every day.

And that is one of the most exciting and challenging aspects of tap today – being open to and appreciating this wonderful art form in all its genres, past and present, and being able to take on the style and approach of different choreographers.

Going into a jazz class, we expect the teacher to have their own signature style – the same is true for tap!

I can think of at least 10 tappers in Australia who are all fantastic in their own right, but who have totally different styles and ways of tapping. **It is important to remember that each style is valid, unique and special** and that each requires a different approach to bring out the intention of the choreographer. Whilst the basic technique remains the same, the way you approach the steps rhythmically and visually has to change, so they match the choreography and music.

LET'S LOOK AT A SLOW TRADITIONAL STYLE OF ROUTINE

The beats here need to be pressed gently into the floor in a very tactile manner – like you are peeling your feet off newly laid bitumen. Your body needs to use much more rise and fall to fill out the space between each beat and your arms need rounded lines with breadth as you glide seamlessly across the floor. It is very important when tapping in this style that you don't bash any accents or stamps, as that would interrupt the easy, smooth rhythmic flow of the routine.

PERFORMING A FUNKY TAP ROUTINE TO AN EDGY PIECE OF MUSIC WILL NEED A TOTALLY DIFFERENT APPROACH

Your beats would now need to be much stronger, with more accent and energy to match the music and choreography. Arms would need greater strength with relaxed, angular lines and a casual look and your personality would need to be quite different in this style of routine as well. Often these 'relaxed' routines require the dancer to develop an element of 'individuality' within the given style, which can be challenging if you haven't been exposed to this funky approach before.

A BROADWAY PIECE REQUIRES VERY STYLIZED, SET ARMS AND HAS YOU PICKING YOUR FEET UP IN ALL THE STEPS!

This needs a much neater, sharp and focused approach with everyone looking exactly the same. It may be imperative for you to hit exact positions very precisely, with no room for this more 'individual approach' and the beats need to have a sharp, crisp and light footwork to match the routine.

So you can see there really is an awful lot to think about when you are tapping. Of course we all have our favourite way of tapping – that is only natural! However, being open and flexible to different styles and knowing how to perform them effectively is very important if you want to achieve the choreographer's aim, and connect successfully with your music and audience.

SO REMEMBER...

- If the music is mellow...
the beats and rhythms must be mellow.
- If the music is bright and tinkly...
the beats must be light and tinkly.
- And if the music is funky and heavy...
then you need to beef up your beats and accents to match the strength of the music. And on top of this you need to change your style and personality to compliment these different rhythmic approaches!

These are all important elements to consider whether you are tapping for enjoyment, competition or looking towards a professional career.

So...find yourself some contrasting pieces of music and give it a go!

Till next time. Happy Tapping!
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