

**International Tap Association
National Tap Plan**

By Suzanne Callahan
With Brooke Belott and Jane Jerardi
July, 2006

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Findings	7
Surveys from Artists and Tap Organizers	
Overview of Survey Respondents	
Artists: Who They Are	
Tap Organizations	
Comparison of Artists to Tap Organizers	
Accomplishments	
Perceived Challenges	
The Growth of Tap Over the Last 10 Years	
Quality	
Sharing Resources with a Tap Network	
Interviews with National Dance Leaders	33
Background	
Presenting: The Context for Today's Market	
Barriers to Booking: Factors that Affect Tap's Success	
Booking Advice for Artists	
Quality: A Frank Assessment	
Marketing Potential and Ideas	
The Tap Community	
Funding: Context and Ideas	
The Case for Supporting Tap	
National Strategies to Support the Art Form	
III. Recommendations	72
Introduction	
Collaboration/Infrastructure Among Tap Festivals	
Booking and Presenting	
National Advocacy and Infrastructure Development	

**Quality
Tap as an Institution
Community Building
Funding**

IV. Authors' Note	94
V. Company Profile and Authors' Biographies	95
VI. Steering Committee Priorities	98
Appendices:	102
A. Steering Committee Members	
B. Interviewees	
C. Survey Respondents	
D. Cover Letter to Interviewees	
E. Interview Questions	
F. Cover Letter to Survey Respondents	
G. Survey of Artists	
H. Survey of Tap Organizers	
I. Survey Methodology	
J. Summary of Issues for the Tap Field	
K. Summary of the National Jazz Network	

I. Introduction

[Audiences]are more excited about tap than anything else they have seen, absolutely enraptured. We had some of the best audiences for tap. They were thirsty for it.

The audience really feels that they are the other half of the work, that they really are participating...and not by applauding but by their engagement, which can be so intense... There's a feeling of intense enjoyment...when you feel you are part of a community of people experiencing the same thing at the same time. You don't always get that in performances.

Of all the dance forms, tap has had the most visible and positive crossover to the commercial world.

- Interviewees

In August, 2005, Callahan Consulting for the Arts was retained by the International Tap Association (ITA) to conduct a national planning process for tap, which would assist the field of professional artists and administrators in setting goals and making decisions for its future. This document reports on that planning process, including its scope, findings and recommendations.

Founded in 1987 as the only national/international service organization for tap, the mission of the International Tap Association is to promote the understanding, preservation and development of tap as an art form. ITA aims to:

- Educate people about tap as an art form, through advocacy programs and special projects;
- Encourage the creation of new tap performance venues and touring circuits;
- Preserve the history of tap through archival documentation and research;
- Establish support mechanisms and communication networks for tap; and
- Unite tap dancers and enthusiasts around the world.

The planning process is directed toward the tap field overall, rather than the ITA or any one organization.

The tap field has strong and unique assets that set it apart from other dance forms. The development and growth of a national network of tap festivals, even if informally connected, support education and performances for its artists. Its service organization is international in focus, with nearly 1,000 members. Tap draws from the enormous popularity of amateur activities. It operates successfully through nonprofit as well as commercial structures. It appeals to a broad cross-section of audiences, many of whom don't regularly attend other forms of dance. It has been presented in a range of settings, from night clubs to museums to universities, as well as mainstages.

The Rationale for a National Plan

The planning process comes at a critical juncture when, despite increasing tap activity primarily through the tap festivals and studios, which have multiplied across the country, the art form lacks a solid infrastructure of support. Such a comprehensive planning process had never before been undertaken for the *entire* field of tap dance, which includes performers, educators, presenters, producers, and writers/critics/historians. Nationwide the lack of coordinated efforts has hindered the development and sustainability of this art form. Tap is not well-connected to the system of resources that exist for dance in the US. The art form has had a limited presence in academic dance programs, dance service organizations and major presenting series. Outside of the tap practitioners and those closest to the form, there is not an understanding of its history, influence on other dance forms, audience development opportunities, or technical and artistic needs.

Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from So'Danca Dancewear & Shoes and individuals, the goals of this year-long planning effort have been to:

- Assess the major issues and needs facing the tap field, including opportunities and gaps in resources and capacity;
- Identify areas where national collaboration would serve the field, and make recommendations about pursuing such collaboration;
- Determine the most effective ways to raise the visibility and understanding of tap dance on the part of the dance field's administrators, funders and others; and
- Ultimately, to lay the groundwork for developing a more formalized structure to support this art form that draws from so many cultures and has flourished on American soil.

At the culmination of the planning process, it was hoped that ITA and its committee would have achieved the following outcomes for the tap field:

- Recommendations in the following areas:
 - Communication/advocacy
 - Management and infrastructure building
 - Several major areas of need, including marketing as well as booking and/or performance opportunities.
- A greater level of awareness and enthusiasm for the national tap field and its programs.
- Identification of individuals who could help the tap field grow and establishment of relationships with some of them.
- Documentation of findings from the tap community as well as ITA and its supporters.
- A tool in the form of a written plan that would help with fundraising and communication.
- Completion of a managed planning process, which lends credibility with funders and other community leaders.

Key Questions and Issues

The planning process was designed to gather information on key issues, as seen through the perspectives of two distinct and equally important segments of the dance field: 1) **The tap field**, broadly speaking, including artists, teachers, and festival directors, who work each day teaching, performing, and

choreographing, and leading organizations; and 2) **The national dance leadership**, including presenters, agents, funders, writers and other administrators, who have extensive experience with resource development, presenting, booking, planning, and service provision for a variety of dance forms (including ballet, modern, jazz, hip-hop and a host of other folk and traditional forms).

In the summer of 2005, a national Steering Committee was finalized and was instrumental to the planning process. The Committee includes ITA staff, nationally known artists, and several with background in the national dance scene as well as in funding and presenting. The names of steering committee members appear in Appendix A. As determined by the Steering Committee, key questions to be addressed in the planning process were:

- *How do each of the key issues (see below) play out in the tap field? To what degree are they a problem for tap artists and festival producers? What are any ideas for solving them?*
- *What were national dance leaders' impressions about these same issues? What ideas might they have, from a national vantage point, about solving them?*
- *To what degree are those two groups operating on different assumptions?*
- *How might these two spheres be brought closer together? What information should be shared? Specifically, how might the national dance field better understand the impact and needs of the tap field, and how might the tap field better understand the ways in which national presenters function?*

The issues defined in initial planning meetings echo many of the concerns that had been expressed in other meetings, some of which dated back to 1986 at the Colorado Dance Festival's Tap Summit, the first ever gathering of the tap field.¹ *It is important to note that many of the initial ideas discussed at the 1986 Summit have since been accomplished, including the formation of the ITA itself.* However, a number of those issues are ongoing concerns for the field, and continue to affect progress; they are as follows:

1. **Performance Opportunities.** This is a top concern. The relative lack of performance opportunities is a major barrier to tap's visibility and economic health. While festivals benefit those within the tap community, who both perform and attend, they don't feed into mainstream presenting. *What are the reasons why tap is not being booked, and what could be done to interest presenters in the art form and ultimately present it?*
2. **Infrastructure and Relationship Development.** There currently exists very little infrastructure to support tap artists. *What might be a workable infrastructure for a field that has such limited resources, and operates differently than other kinds of nonprofit dance?*
3. **Audience Development.** There is little understanding among presenters about the ability of tap to attract audiences of all ages, races, ethnicities, and walks of life – as well as appreciators of both music and dance. *What might be done to increase presenters' understanding?*

¹ These issues and related accomplishments are covered in more detail in Appendix J.

4. National Marketing. There is little knowledge of the history of tap – not only its aesthetic sensibilities, but its achievements in being at the forefront of breaking political and racial barriers in the US. *What are the most effective ways to share this history?*
5. Production Quality. The lack of professionally produced tap shows is a major barrier for increasing performance opportunities and visibility. *To what degree is this affecting bookings and what might be done to improve quality and production values?*
6. Artistic Development. There was concern about the mixed level of quality that exists in the field and the lack of opportunities and resources for artists to develop their craft. *To what degree is quality an issue, and what might be done to address it?*
7. Media Education. The need for media education is threefold: 1) Working directly with reporters to encourage more coverage; 2) Developing the understanding of tap as a music and dance form; and 3) Developing the kind of language that would describe this dance form to those who are unfamiliar with it. *Given that media coverage is a conundrum for all dance forms, what might be done to encourage coverage?*
8. Booking and Artist Representation. Very few tap dancers have agents who can assist with booking. Those who want to book themselves face challenges when there is no place to go to get help or information on booking, production or management. Experience in these areas is a necessary skill for survival, but young artists are not being trained to handle such challenges. *To what degree was booking representation a problem? What do presenters need to book artists?*
9. Understanding of Tap History Among Younger Artists. There was concern that young tappers lacked information about the history of the form, as well as its potential. *How might this information be shared?*
10. Outreach to Musicians. *What are ideas for how to strengthen the connections between tap dancers and musicians?*

Methodology

While the Steering Committee brought considerable insight and many decades of experience in tap, it was important to gather information from the field at large in order to present a truly representative picture and determine if the tap field supported (even disputed) these assumptions. The research methodology was designed to: a) determine the relevance of these ten issues to the broader tap field, b) substantiate them with a sizeable amount of data, including statistics on tap activity, c) determine the ways in which these issues have played out for the national field who appreciate the art form but who are not as active in it as they used to be, and d) ultimately provide the background information from recommendations.

The planning process took place as follows:

Launch. In 2004, the National Endowment for the Arts granted funding to the ITA for the planning process. This was a major endorsement and encouraged matching support. A preliminary meeting was held in June 2004 in Pittsburgh, to begin to discuss pressing issues for tap, as well as some potential solutions. The consultant was hired in August, 2005 to facilitate the process, conduct research, and write the plan. (Bios for the consultant and staff appear at the end of this report.)

Steering Committee Meetings. In the summer of 2005, a national Steering Committee was finalized and was instrumental to the planning process. The Committee includes ITA staff, nationally known artists, and several with background in the national dance scene as well as in funding and presenting. The names of steering committee members appear in Appendix A. After a number of conference calls, in October 2005, the first meeting of the Committee was held in Boulder, CO, to discuss the current state of the tap field, specifically its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. The group then set priorities; decided on the scope and timeline; and recommended and selected the artists, organizations and other leaders to be researched. The Committee held their final meeting in May 2006 to review the findings, make recommendations, and set priorities for using this plan.

National Research. The information in this plan was culled from a variety of sources. Data was collected from a total of 49 individuals who support the tap field across the country in key ways. The research generated a total of approximately 800 pages of information. Components are as follows:

- Review of Written Documents. Historical information pertinent to the planning process was reviewed and summarized. It included notes from prior tap planning efforts; minutes from Colorado Dance Festival tap summit meetings with leading artists, historians, presenters and educators; an informal survey of international artists and students from one festival; information about the National Jazz Network; and other public documents such as grant applications and final reports. A summary of the National Jazz Network, which offers useful comparisons and received national funding, can be found in Appendix I. A summary of the issues that arose in the Colorado Dance Festival tap summit meetings appears in Appendix J.
- Research on Tap Artists and Organizers. A survey was designed for artists as well as key individuals who organize events for tap, including festivals and tap day celebrations or maintain tap studios (which are known throughout this report as “tap organizers”). In this survey, a group of 31 artists and tap organizers were asked to provide statistics on the scope of their activities, budgets and administrative characteristics; commentary on their accomplishments and challenges; and opinions on issues that are relevant to the broader field. Together, this information illustrates how tap is currently taught and promoted throughout the country. Of those, 25 responded with in-depth information. The list of artists can be found in Appendix C, and the cover letter and list of questions can be found in Appendices F and G, respectively.
- Interviews with Dance Leadership. Interviews of 30-90 minutes each were conducted with 24 dance leaders from around the country to more fully understand the experiences and

perspectives of those who fund, present, and provide services for the broader dance field. Together this group of individuals, many of whom have presented tap, bring a national perspective, a love of tap, and the desire to see the field be successful. The list of interviewees can be found in Appendix B and the recruitment letter and interview script can be found in Appendices D and E, respectively.

Review by Steering Committee. A follow-up meeting was conducted on May 14, 2006, to review this Plan and decide upon recommendations. The steering committee was, therefore, instrumental in: understanding the issues faced by the tap field; setting the priorities for the research; as well as making final decisions about what will be recommended.

Review by Resource Consultants. Following the review by the Steering Committee, the report was shared with a select group of individuals who know the broader dance field well and agreed to read it and provide feedback. Those conversations began to increase awareness of the findings and issues in this report.

Dissemination and Uses of the Plan

The ITA will disseminate the final Plan to funders, artists, educators, presenters, producers, writers/critics/historians, libraries and others for implementation. It will be used in a variety of ways, including:

- It can serve as a tool to fundraise for the national tap field, focusing on the specific areas set forth in the recommendations section.
- It can also serve as a tool to fundraise in local communities. Tap artists and festivals are encouraged to use the findings to justify their funding requests and legitimize the impact of their own work and tap overall.
- It can inform and educate national dance leaders, including funders and presenters, to build understanding, relationships and possibly resources for the many artists and entities.
- It illustrates to tap organizations and artists that there can be strengths in numbers; working together, the field can accomplish what no single organization could on its own.
- It may be released in full form and in an executive summary, and possibly excerpted in the ITA magazine *On Tap*, so that the broadest possible segment of the tap field will know about and learn from it.
- It can be used by students, who are learning not only tap but other dance forms and arts administration, to better understand the inner workings of this segment of the dance field and how research can be used to make decisions for the betterment of the field.
- Finally, it can be a tool to understand the enormous appeal and value that tap has for the countless audiences who view and study it.

As a whole, it is hoped that the planning process will build upon, celebrate, promote, and connect the efforts of those who teach, perform, administer and advocate for tap in various locations in the US. The generosity with which people gave their time and information illustrates their enormous passion for tap and interest in helping the field. Where there is interest and passion, progress often follows. This Plan sets the stage for that progress.

II. Findings: Surveys from Artists and Tap Organizers

Overview of Survey Respondents

Two surveys were administered to two groups active in the tap field – tap artists and tap organizers. The artists and tap organizers (all of whom were artists, whether performers and/or teachers) were selected based on a variety of criteria including knowledge of and contribution to the field; demonstrated leadership; geographic location; organizational affiliation (e.g. they had founded major festivals, companies, and/or education programs); regional/national view; and an ability to see beyond their own immediate needs for the greater good of the entire field. All could be considered “pioneers.” In making these selections, the steering committee strove to include a wide range of people in terms of age, ethnicity, race, geography, and perspective on the tap ecosystem (e.g. from the vantage points of performers, teachers, educators, choreographers, improvographers, coaches, producers, etc.). The tap organizers included those who produce festivals and events or run tap schools and programs.

A total of 31 people were surveyed. However, since many in the tap field fulfill multiple roles, in quite a few cases, it seemed most appropriate to send both surveys to the same individual. The content of the two surveys was slightly different, with some overlapping questions. Artists who run festivals were asked to fill out one survey from the point of view of their work as an artist and the other in terms of their organization. The breakdown of those surveyed and those who responded was as follows:

	Sent both surveys	Sent only Tap Organizer Survey	Sent only Artist Survey	Other*	Total
Sent	17	4	10		31
Responded	8	3	9	5	25

**Other refers to five tap organizers who only responded to the artist survey, even though they received both surveys.*

As the chart above shows, a total of 27 received the artist survey and 21 received the tap organizer survey. The response rate was high – 81% (or 25 of the total 31) responded in some way. More specifically, 81% or 22 of the artists and 52% or 11 of the tap organizers supplied information for this study. It is important to note that eight of the respondents answered both surveys. A total of 33 surveys were received.

The respondent artists came from eight states (CA, FL, GA, OH, NC, NY, TX, WA) and the respondent tap organizers came from 10 states plus Canada (CA, FL, IL, MA, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, TX, and Ontario). The names of respondents can be found in Appendix C and details about methodology can be found in Appendix K. Nine of the 11 organizations that responded run tap festivals. Additional information on tap festivals was secured through public sources such as websites and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Artists: Who They Are

The Demographics of Tap Artists²

Of the 22 artist respondents, 70% are female and 30% are male.³ Artist respondents tended toward the older age bracket. More than half are over 50 and over three quarters are over 40:

Age range	Number	Percent
20-30	1	4%
31-40	4	17%
41-50	6	26%
51-60	7	30%
61-70	3	13%
NR	2	9%

Over two-thirds of respondent artists are white/Caucasian; a third are people of color, with one respondent not specifying race:

Race	Number	Percent
White/Caucasian	14	61%
African American	5	22%
Middle Eastern	1	4%
Other	2	9%
Didn't specify	1	4%

Artists' Activity

Survey respondents balance a striking number of different roles in their tap careers. As the high percentages show, almost all of the respondents fulfill multiple roles, with an emphasis on teaching, creation and performance.

Activity	Number	Percent
Performer	20	91%
Choreographer	20	91%
Teacher	20	91%
Mentor	17	7%
Improviser	14	64%
Writer	10	45%
Lecturer	10	45%

The majority work as performers, choreographers *and* as teachers (82%). In addition to these activities, respondents specifically mentioned other contributions to the tap dance field such as publishing a tap journal, creating a tap shoe for manufacture, teaching intensive workshops,

² In instances where artists partner to run a festival, but submitted a single survey together, their demographics are counted separately, but their overall survey response is counted as one.

³ Of those who did not respond, four were men and one was a woman.

directing a school, producing shows, leading an after school enrichment program, acting as an oral historian, documenting through videography, training teachers, advertising, and directing a production company or dance company.

One example of multiple roles was a respondent who listed 10 areas: as presenter, dancer, archivist, video producer, exhibit organizer, grant writer, populist who encouraged others to embrace tap, student of the masters, concert producer for seniors, and educator.

Artists' Performing Patterns

For over three-quarters of these artists, performing is one of their paid activities. Over half self-produce their own shows, perform in festivals and offer lecture demonstrations as well as other types of engagements. In addition to festivals, most perform for other presenters.

Type of Performance Engagement	Number	Percent
Perform for presenters other than festivals	17	77%
Self-produce shows	14	64%
Perform in festivals	13	59%
Lecture demonstrations	12	5%
Perform as a part of tap jams	6	27%
Other	14	64%

Artists' Collaborations

In an average year, these artists make possible an estimated 270 artist engagements. Over three-quarters of artists (7%) hire other dancers and musicians, and work with a range of four to as many as 80 artists in a single year (an average of 21 times each year).⁴ Of these, 84% were identified as master artists. Almost a third (32%) of these artists come from out of town to perform and over two-thirds (68%) were local.⁵ While many of the artists surveyed find collaborating artists through word of mouth (55%) and through other festivals (36%), two-thirds identify artists by seeing them perform (64%) and through classes (64%). A smaller number rely on press (9%) and none of the artists reported using an agent to find dancers or musicians as performers.

⁴ Three of the tap organizers that also responded as artists reported the same artist engagement figures for both themselves as artists and for their festival or organization.

⁵ In a few instances, numbers were adjusted due to addition errors.

Tap Organizations

Scope of Festivals

Most of the organizations that responded – nine of the 11 (or 82%) – present multi-day tap dance festivals – and one organization runs two festivals each year.⁶ These grassroots festivals range from two days to two weeks with the average lasting about six days. In a given year, respondents' festivals attracted a total of 1,220 students, ranging from 80 to 425 students at a single festival.⁷ Festivals presented from five to 90 solo artists in performances. These nine festivals alone brought tap to 6,450 audience members around the US, reaching an estimated 7,670 total participants, or an average of 852. Given the fact that there are some 24 major tap festivals, tap day celebrations, and intensives worldwide, 17 of which are in the US (according to the ITA's Spring issue of *On Tap*, vol. 16, no. 5) the true reach can be extrapolated to be much higher. (As one example, through information gleaned from public sources, a Chicago-based festival, which is one of the largest in the country, reached 3,800 participants alone during its 2005 festival, including 290 children, which would increase the audience totals substantially to 11,470 and raise the average number of audience/participants at each festival to 1,147.⁸)

Presenting

These organizations also present tap artists throughout the year. **A total of 91% of respondent organizations present anywhere from a single show to 50 performances in a year (an average of 18 shows).** Seven organizations mentioned specific additional activities including producing and distributing newsletters, maintaining archives, teaching tap and creative movement to toddlers, serving on panels, teacher training, university classes, and sponsoring out of town artists for master classes.

Engagement of Artists

Together, the 11 organizations last year provided an estimated total of 291 artist engagements. Each year, each of these organizations pay between five and 80 artists. Of these, 38% were identified as master artists. About one-third (32%) travel from out of town to perform or teach and over two-thirds (68%) were local. Like the artist respondents, these organizations do not identify artists through agents or press (with none of the organizations identifying these methods), but rather, through word of mouth (81%), through classes (81%), and to a lesser extent, through other festivals (64%) and performances (55%).

⁶ This respondent gave figures from just one festival.

⁷ This does not take into account the numerous students who take tap at thousands of studios around the country. The steering committee felt this impact nationally is enormous.

⁸ Refer to the last page in this section for information on that festival.

Comparison of Artists to Tap Organizers

Organizational Structure

Over half of the artists who responded maintain both private studios *and* a non-profit structure to offer their classes and performances and support their projects. In total, over two-thirds of artists own private studios and almost three-quarters work through non-profit organizations. Similarly, over three-quarters of tap organizers lead non-profit organizations. A quarter of tap organizers run private studios or businesses.⁹

Organizational Structure	Artists		Tap Organizers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Both Non-profit and Studio	12	55%	1	9%
Non-profit only	4	18%	7	64%
Private Studio only	2	9%	2	18%
Independent/Other	5	23%	1	9%

Teaching/Classes

Nearly all of the artists who responded (91%) teach tap dance regularly. For those who do teach, the frequency of instruction ranged from occasional master classes to as many as 21 classes per week by one artist, with an average of over nine classes taught every week. Class sizes range from small advanced coaching sessions of three students to technique classes of as many as 40 students. Class size averages at about 16 students. This small sample – 22 artists – provides 2,332 potential “class slots,” or opportunities to take class per week (acknowledging that many students may study regularly through multiple classes per week). Nearly all those who responded teach master classes (95%).

All of the respondent organizations offer tap dance training. Seven of the tap organizations, or over half, offer regular weekly classes throughout the year (63%); one organization offered just summertime workshops. The number of classes offered ranged from six to 100 classes per week. With eight to 20 students per class, these seven schools’ education offerings provided an estimated 3,598 “class slots” each week (or an average of 514 potential slots each week).

When asked about specific styles taught, artists and organizations self-described the following forms: rhythm tap, swing tap (30s and 40s styles), classic Vaudeville Tap, music-based tap and jazz tap in addition to improvisation, composition, jazz, vernacular jazz, rhythm-focused jazz, lindy hop/swing, Broadway, ballet, modern, salsa, flamenco, African, Afro-Cuban, and Afro-Brazilian dance, plus drumming, yoga, and music for dancers.

⁹ Most of the tap artists that answered surveys as both artists and as the leaders of tap organizations answered this question differently on their two surveys, indicating that they were careful to put on their artist “hat” or their festival “hat” as required.

Space

Clearly, both artists and organizers rely almost solely on rented space. Artists access space for their events primarily through rental (86%) with some also sharing space (27%) and bartering for space (9%). Only one respondent (5%) owned space used for events. Similarly, all of the responding tap organizations rent space to accommodate their events and only one organization owns space. One organization (9%) also shares space and 27% of the respondents co-present events to access space.

Budget Size and Range

The budgets of artists' companies ranged from under \$10,000 to over \$300,000, but a high concentration were below \$100,000.¹⁰ Of artists who reported financial information, *over three-quarters have budgets under \$100,000 and almost half have budgets that fall below \$50,000.*¹¹ Almost two-thirds of tap organizations reported budgets of less than \$100,000 to support their activity. Budgets ranged in size from under \$10K to \$1 million; no organizations' budgets fell in the \$100-300K range, indicating a sizable gap. Of those organizations that reported specific budgets over \$300,000, budget sizes ranged between \$525,000 and \$1 million. Note that five artists did not report budget size and are excluded from the percentages below.¹²

Budget Size	Tap Artists		Tap Organizers	
	Number in this range	Percent in this range	Number in this range	Percent in this range
Under \$10,000	2	12%	1	9%
\$10-25K	0	0%	1	9%
\$25-50K	6	35%	2	18%
\$50-100K	7	41%	3	27%
\$100-200K	1	6%	0	0%
\$200-300K	1	6%	0	0%
Over \$300K	0	0%	4	36%

Clearly, earned income is a major source of support.¹³ Artists' budgets came from a range of sources, with over three-quarters (76%) of artists noting earned income and half securing contributed (50%) and in-kind (45%) donations. More specifically, these artists generate significant income from classes (which is unsurprising given the amount of teaching reported) as well as from performance fees.

Tap organizations also secure their budgets through a range of sources. All of the organizations reported earned income and most identified contributed (73%) and in-kind (91%) sources. Matching the tap artists, *all* of the tap organizations generate income from

¹⁰ Twenty-four percent didn't self-report their budget size.

¹¹ In a study of contemporary dance artists in Chicago in 2005, *Serving Dance in Chicago: A Planning Process for Small to Mid-sized Companies and Independent Artists*, by Suzanne Callahan with Brooke Belott, the budget breakdown was virtually the same.

¹³ Organizations were not asked to report what percentage of their income comes from these sources.

classes. Nearly all generate income from box office receipts and many report individual donors contributing to their budget. Perhaps most striking, almost three-quarters of respondents support their organizations through income from their own performances and teaching, or other work, or other personal sources.

Income Source	Artists		Tap Organizers	
	# who derive some income from this source	% who derive some income from this source	# who derive some income from this source	% who derive some income from this source
Classes	18	82%	11	100%
Performance Fees	17	77%		
Individual Donations	8	36%	9	82%
Box Office	7	32%	10	91%
Foundations	7	32%	7	64%
Government	7	32%	4	36%
National	3	14%	2	18%
Regional	3	14%	1	9%
State	5	23%	2	18%
City	4	18%	3	27%
Corporations	5	23%	3	27%
Small Businesses	4	18%	5	45%
Income of another person such as spouse	3	14%		
Personal Income ¹⁴			8	73%
Other ¹⁵	2	9%	4	36%

Staffing

The tap organizations surveyed operate with very little administrative staff, relying instead on volunteers. However, they provide substantial work for artists. (This question was not asked of the artists surveyed.) In total, 13 full-time and 11 part-time administrative staff members support these organizations’ operations, in addition to the support of some freelance staff. The striking level of activity is undoubtedly made possible by a reported total of 192 volunteers. In comparison, these same organizations provide 223 artists with part-time and freelance employment.

¹⁴ This was referred to in the Tap Organizer’s Survey as “Income from your own performances and teaching, or other work or personal sources.”

¹⁵ Other income sources referenced include university teaching (including a part-time salary), reduction of costs in exchange for sponsorship, and three also mentioned merchandise and tap product sales.

Administrative staff	# of Orgs Reporting	% of Orgs Reporting	Total # of staff
Full-time	4	36%	13
Part-time	3	27%	11
Freelance	3	27%	9
Volunteer	11	100%	192

Artistic staff	# of Orgs Reporting	% of Orgs Reporting	Total # of staff
Full-time	1	9%	8
Part-time	3	27%	68
Freelance	7	64%	155
Volunteer	2	18%	3

One organizer describes the challenge of compensating dancers and running an organization through volunteer support in this way: “If my company of dancers gets a paid gig, then and only then will I pay the dancers (split the pot). We are very grassroots...we will perform for anyone! All administrative work comes from volunteers...[who] help with the organizing, finding gigs, etc. Without the volunteers I wouldn’t be able to do what I am doing.” Another said: “I do this every year from scratch...pretty much. It is a labor of love.”

Marketing

Both artists and organizations employ a range of marketing techniques to get the word out about their performances, workshops and activities. “Word of mouth” was frequently mentioned as one of the best forms of marketing. However, nearly all utilize email campaigns and take advantage of free print advertising to fuel these efforts. Over three-quarters of artists have websites and receive press coverage. An even higher percentage of tap organizations had a web presence. Nearly all organizations take advantage of free advertising and use direct mail pieces to reach their audience. Only one studio owner did not need to use these methods, and relied on word of mouth alone – which for many, proves to be a key aspect of their marketing plans.

Marketing method	Artists		Tap Organizers	
	Number who use	Percent who use	Number who use	Percent who use
Email Campaigns	19	86%	9	82%
Free Print Advertising	19	86%	10	91%
Website	17	77%	10	91%
Press Coverage	17	77%	9	82%
Direct Mail Pieces	15	68%	10	91%
Paid Advertising	14	64%	8	73%
Other Marketing Methods	10	45%		

When asked which type of advertising was most effective, both the artists and organizers listed email, websites and direct mail equally high as top methods. A close second method referenced was word of mouth, which one organizer called “the most powerful tool there is.” Artists and organizations mailing lists ranged from 600 to 8,000 names. Most artists and organizations spent around \$1,000 on advertising, though one or two spent up to \$10,000.

Over a third of the artists had distributed an audience survey at some point with a majority of them finding them useful (63%). But, most didn’t mention specific conclusions made from these surveys. Only one indicated using an audience survey in a substantive way – in programming an exhibition that became “the sleeper hit exhibit of the year.” The organizer learned that audiences “craved the live tap programming” that accompanied the museum show and were “thrilled to see...living tap treasures.”

Geographic Reach

Both artists and organizations were asked about the geographic reach of their tap activity and whether they viewed their organization as a city/state, regional, national or international resource. While most artists and organizers clearly saw their organization as a city or state resource, a striking number – over half of both artists and organizers – also perceived the impact of their organizations on the regional, national and even international scale. One artist/studio owner illustrated the range of her activities: “As a local dance studio, I’m a huge resource for the dancers in my own community. As a producer of weekend workshops, I attract people throughout [my] region. As the producer of an annual National Tap Dance Day event, I hire performers from around the country and the world.”

Geographic reach	Artists		Tap Organizers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City/State	19	86%	9	82%
Regional	18	82%	9	82%
National	18	82%	7	64%
International	18	82%	9	82%
All levels	13	59%	6	55%

Accomplishments

Artists and tap organizers list a broad and impressive range of accomplishments that illustrate the diversity of function and reach of the tap field.

Education

Virtually all of them teach, reaching thousands of young people. One program enrolls 400 children ages four to 18 each year. As one artist explains, “Teaching and passing on the traditions and sharing my passion with my students has been my greatest source of accomplishment.” Another comments that she “inspires and nurtures kids to become professionals.” Some artists reach beyond private studios through outreach and after school programs. One artist described efforts to build links with the New York City public school system to teach students about the roots of tap dance and its connection to African and African American history. Some also teach on the university level, offering not only technique, but integrating tap history and traditions into the curriculum.

Many maintain schools, some of them quite large. One school has six studios plus a gymnasium to accommodate its classes; another operates five. They are proud of the range and high technical level of the classes they offer to students, both young and old, amateur and professional. One tap leader taught in a segregated area of town 40 years ago, and has continued to teach ever since then.

They offer scholarships to young people. One organization offers half of its students full or partial scholarships based on need and ability. Many speak of efforts to provide kids the opportunity, as one artist put it, to “dream big.”

They give youth opportunities to perform. Several artists run youth companies that tour locally, nationally and even internationally. Another hopes to restage works to celebrate her company’s anniversary by “putting together idealistic fresh young talented performers to really relish material.” Another artist/educator cultivated five young artists over the years who went on to win Princess Grace Awards. Others boast of students’ performing in the casts of Broadway and touring shows. One professional youth ensemble “maintains our roots and embraces the cutting edge of contemporary choreography.”

They offer a diverse curriculum. One wrote of their students, “Their training is holistic and complete... [They] understand history, heritage, technique, autonomy, style, and self-expression.” Some have academic requirements, with one school noting that it requires its students to maintain a B average to participate in its programs. This tap organizer also spoke of the quality and stature of the school’s instructors who came from the “Bolshoi, Kirov and Alvin Ailey.” Most offer year-round classes and some offer intensives (or a series of multiple classes often scheduled all day over a concentrated span of days).

A few **maintained dancers on contract**. One artist, for example, supports seven resident artists with a 32-week paid annual contract.

Administrative

The tap organizers have **maintained festivals**, some of them for as long as 15 years. Several spoke of their pride in sustaining high-quality festivals, and individualized attention within the festival format; as one said, “Students really get a chance to interact with the master teachers. Most who attend come back annually. The master tappers that come to teach always want to come back. To me this is my proudest accomplishment! I always hope that more students will attend each year. I feel like a pioneer here.”

They **obtained press**. The participation at one tap organizer’s festival skyrocketed from 30 participants in 2003 to an estimated 1,000 in 2006, perhaps due to growing media coverage. Coverage not only included listings and previews in local print media, but an interview segment on the local television news, which was picked up by other networks. The festival secured coverage through a variety of tourist resources such as an airline’s in-flight magazine, travel websites and other print sources bringing further visibility to tap in their area.

Many have **obtained funding** from local, state and national sources including the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the National Performance Network, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and other regional funding for their seasons, making it possible to commission new work by artists in the field. At the same time, a considerable number (two festivals and about half of the artists) **made all of their activity happen without funding**. One tap organization described its festival as one of the largest in the US – the lone festival serving its geographical region – all without any corporate funding or grants. Most of the tap organizers indicated that they contributed to these activities from personal income sources.

A few had **obtained some degree of infrastructure**, with one highlighting their board, paid staff and even a strategic plan.

Most have obtained and **maintained a space** for tap, which often serves as a home for the art form in various locales whether through a private studio facility or through festivals acting as the hub for tap dance in a given region.

Many tap organizers **serve as the de facto staff for master artists**. They function as fundraisers, managers, archivists, and publicists in addition to often providing performance opportunities to the “greats.” Several described their efforts to promote veteran artists so that they might receive “long-overdue recognition” for their “contributions to the art form.”

Several **helped to found the ITA** and many value it. As one tap organizer said, “I love the ITA. Marda has this great passion for tap – she wants to see these things happen. I’m sure it’s un-thanked.”

Many **use tap as a mechanism to encourage community involvement**, by having their companies or students perform for events such as benefits for AIDS, breast cancer awareness, and hurricane relief as well as at other telethons, or hosting events for arts and other organizations. One artist spoke of her own efforts as “setting an example that young people can make a difference.” Another artist described her work as a “populist” going on to say that “looking for ways [to bring] high-quality tap and jazz dance and music to often under-served or ‘depressed’ communities is challenging but tremendously satisfying” and brings talent “into communities with often very limited resources.”

Many tap artists boast of **longevity**, and making due with remarkably low resources. One artist summed it up by saying she’s “survived 25 years. Amazing!” Another counted “staying in business” as a true accomplishment.

Choreography and Performance

Artists have performed with master artists such as Peg Leg Bates, Buster Brown, Eddie Brown, Ernest “Brownie” Brown, Brenda Bufalino, Lon Chaney, Honi Coles, Steve Condos, Charles “Cookie” Cook, Harold Cromer, Arthur Duncan, Chuck Green, Savion Glover, Gregory Hines, Fayard Nicholas, the Nicholas Brothers, Donald O’Connor, Sarah Petronio, Leonard Reed, LaVaughan Robinson, Jimmy Slyde, the Step Brothers, Dianne Walker, and Chester Whitmore.

Despite balancing numerous roles, these artists have found ways to **create work and choreograph**. One artist mentioned 150 choreographic premieres to date in her career. Others noted creating work or appearing with a range of tap companies such as Lane Alexander, Chicago on Tap, The Great Tap Reunion, Just Friends, Manhattan Tap, Masters of Tap, Peggy Spina Tap Company, Rhapsody in Taps, Sound Effects, Tap City, and Tap Do/Wop, among others. Others have seen their role as the repository of historical repertory by tap masters.

The **sheer amount of touring** of many of these artists is striking. Some tour for months every year, as one artist described spending three and a half to four months a year in Europe performing. Many **tour internationally** to countries including Austria, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Cuba, Cyprus, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, and Switzerland, as well as to Southeast Asia and Central and South America. One mentioned hosting international artists each year. Often these engagements include extensive teaching.

Several founded and some still **run tap ensembles and companies**, boasting residencies and seasons at such venues as The Joyce and Lincoln Center. One early tap dance company founder described the import of bringing tap dance into a concert format and stage: “In the 1970s and early 1980s, it was certainly the case that artists, audiences and dance writers found the concert format [for tap dance] novel, even controversial. In the ensuing years, I think it would be safe to say that ours was the only tap company engaged in major concert tours in the United States, Europe and, to a lesser degree, Southeast Asia.” For another artist, an ensemble structure “provides a solid platform” for its dancers’ and musicians’ “individuality and creativity.”

Many consistently **explore and show the connections between jazz music and tap dance**. As one artist noted, “musicians are much more excited about working with tap dancers now than they ever were before.” Another artist’s company sought bookings in the international jazz festival circuit and secured presentations at the Salzburg Jazz Festival in Austria, among others. She went on to explain that she continues to present “some of the best jazz musicians” with her company, who “develop new charts and new instrumental ideas with the dancers.” Another artist presented a tap and jazz masters series of performances. Others tour specifically with jazz musicians.

Some work to **bridge the traditional with the new**. One artist described her dual interests in representing the style of her mentor as his main protégé “even as,” she says, “I dig deeper into exploration of my personal aesthetic in tap.”

Most create opportunities for and pay artists, or as one artist wrote – that help “dancers make a living doing what they love to do.” Many artists and organizers noted their role in offering others opportunities to perform and teach, supporting both luminaries and newcomers alike.

They **present and commission artists, including the masters**. When asked about the accomplishments of her career to date, one artist wrote simply, “Bringing dancers together; giving master artists work.” One was instrumental in obtaining nine tap doctorates at a university, as well as “bringing masters out of retirement, who from there, got jobs from other festivals,” including Maceo Anderson and Prince Spencer of the Four Step Brothers, as well as Peg Leg Bates and Leonard Reed.

Building Community

They **mentor younger artists** in a wide range of ways and provide **opportunities for the younger generation**. Many clearly see their success not only in themselves, but in those they mentor and teach. As one artist described, “My work with young adults...is a great source of pride for me.” Another respondent wrote of pride in “the ability to make stars and encourage them to be whole dancers and great people.”

Most of the artists see their role in passing on the tradition as they strive for the young to **understand their historical roots**. One captured this sentiment when saying, “I have felt a responsibility, as one of the few dancers today who were able to study in an in-depth way with a number of our wonderful masters, to pass on the traditions and spirit with which these great dancers approached their work. This feels like a real responsibility.”

A number spoke of **being part of—and rallying—an international network of artists**. One spoke with pride of “presenting the variety of styles inherent in tap dance instead of one voice” and being “historically connected with the masters of the form and at the same time, work[ing] with new contemporary artists.” Another, through their awards, “include[s] an occasion in which the masters are formally honored ...in the presence of as many of their peers and aspiring students as possible.”

Among them are some of the most **influential women of tap**, who had worked hard to make a place for women in the art form. As one artist wrote, “I saw the ‘need’ to put two disenfranchised groups together, women (who were instrumental in reviving tap in the 70s) with the old masters (be they male or female). At first it was hard to ‘find the women’ ...the veteran tap women, but they came about eventually...” More than one artist referenced the challenges of balancing parenting with performing, touring, teaching and running companies.

Many work with different audiences; one found that 95% of her audience is outside of the tap community. Another wrote, “In large part, I’ve tended to work on building local communities of tap enthusiasts.”

Many spoke of the **sheer joy** of tap dance as sustaining their dedication to the form. As one artist wrote, “The daily experiences and reward of expression through art is the main accomplishment. The ‘gravy’ is touring.” Another spoke of “all these wonderful people and friends.” Another said that tap “changed my life and [has] brought so much joy.”

Recognition and Products

Many have **received and sponsored awards**, including Emmys, FloBerts, Alpert Award in the Arts, the Savion Glover Award, Tradition in Tap award, as well as other regional and state awards like a city’s arts hall of fame.¹⁶

Many **write about the form** publishing books, articles, and contributing to scholarly journals, newspapers, and magazines through regular columns, in addition to regular submissions to the ITA’s magazine, *On Tap*. Publications mentioned include *Ballet Review*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Dancer Magazine*, *Dance Teacher*, *Dance Spirit*, *The Real Paper*, *Soho News*, and *The Village Voice*.

A few successfully **sell retail merchandise**, including dancewear; one artist even has her own shoe.

Several **produced documentary films** about tap, its history and the great artists. More than one produced archival videotapes or audio interviews and other materials left as gifts to national institutions like the Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center and the Shomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Others produced broadcast videos for PBS or other media outlets. Others **created and toured exhibitions** on tap luminaries and maintained other archives including photos and other documents working as one artist said, to “keep tap alive.”

Many **referenced the importance of history**, naming master artists by first name, seeing the importance of connecting these mentors “with the new generation” and feeling a responsibility to “pass on the lineage, the heritage” given to them. One artist viewed herself as the “prime repository of the style and repertory” of one master artist.

¹⁶ Though not referenced specifically, tap artists who were surveyed or interviewed have also received Guggenheim Fellowships and National Heritage Fellowships.

Perceived Challenges

The survey asked both artists and the leaders of tap organizations to consider the challenges they face, by rating them on a scale of one to five, with one representing the least challenging and five being the most challenging. **Artists and tap organizers alike ranked many of these challenges with a rating of three and higher speaking to the range of concerns that impact their work. Nonetheless, the three challenges that rose to the top of both groups' lists as key concerns were infrastructure, media education, and public awareness.**

Respondent's Challenges	Rating 1= Least Challenging, 5= Most Challenging	
	Artists	Tap Organizers
Infrastructure - <i>having paid administrative staff and expertise</i>	4.4	4.0
Media Education - <i>increasing coverage by print & broadcast media, and educating those who write about it</i>	4.1	4.5
Public Awareness and Understanding - <i>making the general public aware of the history and significance of tap</i>	4.0	3.9
Production Quality - <i>having resources for staging, dramaturgy, lighting, live music, etc.</i>	3.8	3.5
Performance Opportunities - <i>having the ability to get paid work</i>	3.6	3.8
Booking and Representation - <i>finding tap agents, improving marketing materials, & knowing more about booking systems</i>	3.7	3.0
Audience Development - <i>increasing attendance at tap activities beyond family, friends, and tap artists</i>	3.6	3.1
Health Insurance - <i>obtaining & paying for a policy</i>	3.3	Not asked
Artistic Development - <i>having opportunities to choreograph, mentor or be mentored, receive commissions to create new work, etc.</i>	3.3	2.6
Copyright Issues - <i>securing rights to perform works</i>	3.1	2.6
Collaborations with Musicians	2.6	2.3
Sharing Tap History - <i>educating younger artists in tap history</i>	2.1	1.4

When artists and tap organizers were later asked to select and rank *just three* of these issues as their top priorities, *paid performing opportunities* and *opportunities for artistic development* surfaced as key challenges. Since creating and performing drives most dance artists in their careers, it's unsurprising that respondents found performance opportunities to be the highest priority. Increasing public awareness and audience development stayed as strong issues for both artists and tap organizers. For tap organizers (who run festivals, workshops and

studios), developing audiences ranked equally as high as performance opportunities, speaking perhaps to the importance of ticket sales and class participation, which directly affect their success. In fact, the order of all their priorities was almost identical, as the chart below shows.

One artist’s comments illustrate the shift for many when asked to weigh these different challenges. She wrote, “If your point is to prioritize, then I would look to the question of money and how it relates first to individual artists and their ability to survive and then next to more ‘institutional’ changes needed to assure success for the field and for the artists and all those that it takes to get them before the public.”

Challenges	Artists		Tap Organizers	
	# who prioritized	% who prioritized	# who prioritized	% who prioritized
Performance Opportunities	11	50%	5	45%
Artistic Development	8	36%	4	36%
Public Awareness	6	27%	4	36%
Infrastructure	6	27%	2	18%
Audience Development	5	23%	5	45%
Media Education	5	23%	2	18%
Booking and Representation	4	18%	1	9%
Sharing Tap History	4	18%	0	0%
Copyright Issues	1	5%	1	9%
Health Insurance	1	5%	Not asked	
Other: Space	2	9%	Not specified	

Artists were then asked to elaborate on their ratings. Their comments reveal the ways in which these challenges play out in their professional lives; the limitations they set on the field at large; and the potential that could be offered if they were addressed.

Infrastructure. **Many artists spoke of a lack of staffing and infrastructure as a barrier to their artistic development.** Administrative support and stronger infrastructure “would free me up to be creative,” one artist commented. “Although I’ve learned how to run a business, my talents are better spent in the classroom or in the studio creating new work.” Or another artist put it this way: “When we as artists have to do all the admin work and artistic work, some things will inevitably fall through cracks.” Another artist described the stress of an “overwhelming amount of work” and another echoed concerns about the many artists who “wear too many hats.” One artist illustrated this uphill battle when she wrote, “After 12 years, I was finally able to hire a permanent part-time staff person.” More than one spoke to the importance of planning, but as this same artist lamented, “How do we manage to break the cycle of challenges with infrastructure?” A tap organizer summed it up this way: “In order to fundraise, you need programming, but in order to program, you need a staff! But, you need money to pay staff! It’s a catch 22.” Infrastructure needs perhaps underlie many challenges for tap artists. As one explained:

I'm so busy teaching, choreographing, administrating, and producing, that I never have time to do the follow-up and get articles in papers and even in the ITA. I'm personally frustrated at not being able to develop my own performance skills, as I'm always teaching and developing my students' skills and/or supporting other tap artists who come to my studio to teach or to perform. Because I self-produce I have the opportunity to perform but I never have the time to work on new material or collaborate with musicians. The demands of owning a studio and directing a youth ensemble are huge. It's not easy to get good tap teachers and I find that I have to personally train young people who come to me wanting work.

Media Education. Many artists expressed frustration with the lack of educated responses to tap dance in reviews and coverage. One artist spoke to the importance of media coverage that shows “the historical importance to our nation’s history – that tap is a part of our country.” As another artist wrote, “If tap is to gain and maintain respect as a dance form, tap artists need to be able to accept and use informed critique. Informed and rigorous critique can happen only if dance writers gain better understanding of what they are seeing and listening to when they attend a tap performance.” Another artist echoed this sentiment when saying, “Most reviewers are ignorant... They either shower you with praise and no insight or just don’t get it. [It’s] difficult to educate someone that thinks they already know.” One artist’s solution called for tap artists to “take over” their own press, “to learn how to write about tap” and how “hard it is.”

Public Awareness. Many artists felt that increased public awareness of tap – including knowledge of its history and of the form – would lead to greater audience interest. Another artist encouraged peers to “put references in [performance] programs” and to “credit your own history by giving credit to your teachers and who inspired you.” But one artist warned that “until [audiences] see what we have to say now and our relationship to the past, history will not be of interest to the general public.” One tap organizer agreed: “All dance needs to address the social relevancy to the general public or at least lift their spirits for a ‘time-out’ from the challenges of life or help them find a way to improve their lives. This is the key.”

Performance Opportunities. Many artists saw performance opportunities as the root of their craft, as a way to develop artistically and build audiences. As one artist said, “More opportunities to perform helps [artists] to develop new work, their unique voice, and performance chops.” Another echoed this sentiment: “Getting paid opportunities to work on interesting projects is what drives me to create.” Many artists spoke specifically to the need to provide master and senior artists with paid performance opportunities. Specifically, a senior artist pointed out the unmet potential of being included in the performances of younger artists who “do not always produce or open markets the way we did. When we were young we included the older generation. I don’t expect the American dancers to include us older dancers in their projects. [But] this is not the case in Europe, thank goodness, [which has offered me] continuous support both financially, artistically and emotionally.” There are exceptions to that rule, such as “Clara’s Dream” by Drika Overton, a tap “Nutcracker” that includes older artists. One lamented that “unguaranteed ticket sales” makes it impossible to pay master teachers more money and engage soloists throughout the year at performances. But, another artist saw the potential of featuring senior artists at jazz and multicultural festivals.

Artistic Development. Given the many hats these artists wear, funding for creative time is rare, but desired as a way to refuel. One wrote, “I need to be on the receiving end of some support so that I can keep giving to the community that depends on me.” Overall quality of work could improve then, as another artist commented, “if the financial burdens [on] an artist were not as prevalent.” One artist spoke to the challenge of just figuring out “where to apply” and “taking the time out to apply” for funding to support artistic development. Another artist described a real need for “low pressure, low tech and low budget forums for experimentation” to spur further innovation. For another, however, studying and teaching can spawn new collaborations.

Production Quality. Several artists felt that the overall quality of tap performances might improve if production values increase. They acknowledged that achieving higher production quality is a mutual responsibility of the presenter as well as the artist. Another artist wrote, “Presenters need to get better at presenting tap. But tap artists need to become more knowledgeable of sound, lighting, etc. Addressing this need would help us stand on more equal footing with other dance genres.” This same artist noted proper venues that can offer high production quality as her greatest challenge: “Too often I feel like I’m having to make-do with what’s provided by a presenter that is not knowledgeable about good tap surfaces, how to mic tap, or how to light dance. Overcoming this challenge is partly the responsibility of the presenter, but I have a responsibility to learn to be more articulate about what I need.” Another artist reported the difficulty of securing venues with appropriate facilities: “Over 60% of our programs are in venues/spaces with limited or no sound, tech staff or the proper floor for tap. [It’s] especially difficult to find spaces with wooden floors [and it’s] too expensive to rent and transport tap mats.” One interviewee tied the quality of the performance to the quality of production values, and surmises it has hindered the art form’s visibility: “I suspect that the biggest factor in the “decreased” popularity of tap is because tap, for the most part, has not supported conventionally consumable performance/production values associated with popular entertainment...rarely as fully-produced spectacle.” A clear exception is “Tap Dogs”, and to a lesser degree, “Bring in Da Noise”. Mostly, live tap performances are low budget, low tech events that barely nod to conventional production values, like sets, costumes, live music, etc.”

Audience Development. Artists and organizers alike called audience development efforts critical to sustaining the form. More than one artist emphasized the need for quality performances “and only quality performances,” as one said, to engage audiences. For one organizer, at least some forms of tap demand sophistication on the part of audiences: “Tap is like jazz music. It’s an intellectual art and it requires appreciation from someone who can listen and hear.” Perhaps for this reason, she spoke of those “who grow up studying tap, in our schools” as future audiences “who love the art,” giving power to tap teachers to create the next generation of tap patrons. While one artist pointed to higher visibility for tap through more Broadway shows and movies that feature tap dancing, most artists suggested grassroots cultivation of audiences would build performance opportunities. One artist suggested working more closely with school systems as potential venues for performing – combining education with entertainment to engage kids. One tap organizer commented on the difficulty accessing audiences with so many competing events and activities for both children and adults explaining there are “barriers these days in presenting anything, not just tap. People have so many options [on] TV [and with other

events] happening. [It's] hard for symphonies and ballet...Kids know so little about [tap] history – even Gene Kelly. They're so busy with school." Another artist suggested the importance of starting small by "producing un-paid opportunities" and slowly building an audience to develop further work for artists.

Booking and representation. Unsurprisingly, several artists and tap organizers commented on the challenges the tap field faces when it comes to booking and representation, given the emphasis for many on performance opportunities. One artist wrote that "the biggest challenge is to find an agent that thinks artistically, someone who can respect the individual tap artist and find the appropriate venue, even if it's outside of the tap world." Another artist envisioned increased bookings by educating "promoters as to the entertainment value and accessibility this dance form has over all the other ones," seeing tap's broad appeal. The organizer of an artist-led ensemble commented that even with touring representation, "Consistent work is hard to come by...presenters in general are gun shy to contact smaller or mid-size dance companies for fear of losing money. Many times a company must sacrifice a fair fee to get the job. Companies should not have to sacrifice funds that support the artists, technicians and expenses of touring. Presenters book known artists who will bring in guaranteed ticket sales for the most part. Currently, [tap] is not a hot bed of touring activity." Another artist and tap organizer also noted, "There are very few venues to begin with" mirroring concerns about having to "convince producers to take more of a risk," and be more imaginative in their choices. The solution for one artist is to "revamp press materials" acknowledging that targeted promotion is a must for successful bookings.

Mentorship and Connection to Tap History. A number of artists expressed concern about retaining and cultivating a connection to tap history and the "masters." As one artist commented, "As the masters were dying we forgot their teachings. Over the last ten years, we are not seeing their influence," going on to express the need to "teach [the] younger generation of tap artists about the spirit of the mentors – being an individual and that as soon as you touch the floor you are a musician – the need to respect the floor and the shoes as instruments." Or, another artist wrote, "Our legacy is rich and knowledge is power. Many young tap dancers are not tied to the masters as they were in the 1970s and 80s. We must find a way to preserve this work and heritage as well as lay the groundwork for solid art in the future beyond current 'fashion.'" Many spoke to their efforts to combine history into classes and performances. Others actively mentor younger artists, and wish for younger artists to seek them out. The oral lineage of the tap form emerged again and again throughout respondents' comments. One artist summed it up this way: "If we educate younger artists about history, then it won't be lost. It's important to have that link to our teachers and mentors. Everything is about people! A dancer's connection to the history creates a through line and legitimizes their own career."

Music. For several artists, access to funding for live music and collaborating with musicians is critical. One artist emphasized this priority: "For me personally, it's not worth performing if I have to do it to taped music...I can't tell you how many times I've spent my entire fee, or even gone into my own pocket in order to hire the musicians I enjoy working with." Another artist echoed, "You can learn a lot from musicians and working with them live...Tap dance is after all, music!"

Artists Priorities When Related to Funding

Artists and tap organizers were asked about how they would use additional funds, if they had them. Rather than drawing from a predetermined list as with the charts above, respondents could speak freely about their needs. This hypothetical questioning allows respondents the freedom to think broadly about the field's needs rather than censor their thoughts due to money constraints. The needs they expressed appear below, in order of their frequency:

Similar to the priorities expressed in the chart above, the top two areas were tied (with eight respondents each): **artistic development and promotion**. Artistic development would be pursued through choreography, research, training and performance. As one said, "I would hire another teacher so that I could devote more time to choreography and personal growth as a performer." Three specified "public awareness" rather than promotion.

The next highest priority was staffing and human resources. Eight commented that they would hire staff and six would pay their existing staff and themselves more. One desires to, "give my instructors a liveable salary to exist to teach tap." Additionally a priority was specified for master teachers; six respondents would "work with or pay more to master teachers and artists" and would "create a fund for senior artists to create and promote more of their own work. With the demise of the NEA fellowships, many... artists have suffered." One artist summed it up this way: "I certainly know the people I bring in are deserving of what I pay but, at the end of the festival, everyone gets paid except me. There is a limit to how much the consumer will pay for tickets and classes."

Tied with staffing was the priority to institutionalize tap and/or form a national center also with six mentions. One artist fantasized about the range of what such a space might offer:

"It would be a school, a theatre, a big website for tap enthusiasts, a digital production facility, and an archive. It would be part of an active network of dancers, teachers, choreographers, writers, scholars, documenters, presenters and publicists. It would provide fellowship and residency opportunities for tap artists to develop their work. It would provide educational facilities for students, writers, and presenters to learn about the extraordinary range of the field. It would have high standards for excellence, but it would not privilege one approach to rhythm dancing over another. It would provide ongoing learning opportunities for anyone interested. It would be like Dance Theater Workshop and the National Performance Network, but for rhythm dance artists. Where would such an institute be located? Take your pick of any major city: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., or....."

Next on the list was to create media that would be of use to the field at large. Four would complete books; one talked about a bibliography; one hoped to leave her decades worth of documentation of tap artists in order, because "I recognize the artists in the photos [whereas others would not]." Another four would produce films/DVDs including one who would finish a

tap documentary that was started in 1990 and another who would “create a new format or live tap presentation with built-in digital documentation to DVD.”

Education was also a priority. Three would put more funding toward a school or educational programs and another three would give or increase scholarships.

Three would buy or revamp a local home/space, some for the second time: “Create a space again...where we can have a conservatory, performance and archival space.”

Areas that received one or two mentions were better flooring; attending festivals/conferences; dealing with copyrights; giving awards; and conducting lobbying.

The Growth of Tap Over the Last Ten Years

Almost three-quarters of artists (72%) report growth in their amount of work over the past ten years, while 14% saw their work stay the same and 14% saw a decrease in work. **Many artists attributed this to their own determination and ambition,** or as one artist commented, to “practice and [a] continued pursuit of learning,” or as another said, to “hard work.” **Others attributed the growth of their own work to the multiplicity of their roles as company directors, presenters and teachers.** Some credited their ensembles as supporting their own visibility and for many, their talents as teachers draw continued interest in their work. As one artist wrote, “I have grown as a performer by becoming a presenter and a teacher as well.” Another explained, “My skills as a teacher have [become] more and more sought after from other individuals and organizations.” Another artist diversified her teaching to include swing dancing “and for the first time was able to run a full-time dance business.” A third artist spoke of not only her own success as a teacher but her “commitment to bringing in master teachers” as attracting students and in the process, growing audiences for her own work.

Tap organizers reported an even more optimistic view of the growth of tap in comparison to tap artists. Nearly all reported growth in their own organization in the past 10 years with only one respondent noting their activity staying about the same. Significantly, none saw a decrease in their organization’s activity. Only one saw their organization’s programs as staying the same over this period. Some attributed this growth to the popularity of tap dance in general, calling films like *Cotton Club* and *White Nights* a “big factor.” Other films mentioned included *Polar Express*, *Happy Feet* and *Bamboozled*, as were television sitcoms. **But, more often, tap organizers connected this development with their own marketing efforts including word of mouth about strong programs.** Many saw their “emphasis on quality of programming” and securing “top name faculty” as the key to contributing to this growth and earning a strong reputation for their successful events.

Some also saw the rewards of investing in an infrastructure. One tap organizer credited a strategic planning process, board development, expanded programming, fundraising efforts and consistent staffing as factors for growth. Others mentioned their efforts to further develop organizational skills, their emphasis on networking, and greater promotional budgets as

impacting their organization's greater capacity. For one tap organizer, whose organization's activities stayed more consistent, it was the desire to "retain some artistic vision" and to *not* become full-time administrators that limited growth in activity.

However, those who did cite a decrease offered explanations that echo trends in the field.

One artist saw an inverse relationship between performance and administration: as the demand for her work as a producer, teacher and executive director increased, her work as a performer decreased. A few artists decided recently to pursue less touring or teaching, explaining that quality was just as important as quantity. One artist commented, "I am satisfied to do a handful of high-quality performances...the projects I do currently are more artistically challenging and fulfilling." Another artist also spoke of a personal, conscious move away from ensemble work at the same time that the demand to perform decreased:

Now I work almost exclusively as a soloist. In a sense, this shift has been a function of my own choosing: I'm no longer interested in performing others' works, and I want the freedom to pursue my own artistic interests...From a different perspective it is clear that I'm no longer much in demand as a performer...my movement/choreographic/performance style is no longer very fashionable...and I am not actively seeking new performance opportunities these days.

Those artists whose work had decreased cited as a factor the significant drop in support. One artist spelled it out this way: "The biggest factor...is the cancellation of the NEA artist fellowships.¹⁷ As I get older I cannot afford to invest so much money in my work...The prejudice and lack of presentation support for tap dance as an ensemble form has held back tap dance and kept us on the fringe. Tap dance cannot grow properly if it stays only as a star, solo form. It cannot grow properly if it stays only as a variety act in a festival, but there is no support for innovation." Another artist reiterated the lack of support for ensembles when she described moving from running a twelve-member company "that was in residency in a different New York venue every year" to performing solo work in Europe.

Perceptions of Tap's Popularity Across the US

When asked about their impressions of the tap field overall, 73% of tap artists saw growth in tap's popularity, while a smaller number saw its popularity decreasing (9%) or staying about the same (5%).¹⁸ **Similarly, 73% of tap organizers perceived growth in popularity**, with 9% seeing tap's popularity staying the same, 9% seeing a decrease, and 9% not responding. Artist and organizers attributed this growth to a range of factors:

- Several artists and tap organizers credited **specific shows like "Bring in Da Noise/Bring in Da Funk"** (aka "Noise/Funk"), **"Lord of the Dance"**, and **"Tap Dogs"** for increasing visibility. As one artist observed, "The all-powerful entertainment industry –

¹⁷ Many tap artists without 501(c)3 status were given support at all stages of their career through the NEA's Choreographers' Fellowships.

¹⁸ Three artists (14%) didn't respond.

Broadway, TV, movies – has re-embraced the art form.”

- Others credited **specific role models** like Savion Glover, Gregory Hines and Brenda Bufalino for their stewardship of the art form. One artist explained, “Savion Glover’s work as a real force from his early work, to more recently in “Noise/Funk” and currently as a soloist, teacher, leader and innovator. His funk style has encouraged a whole new generation that previously would have considered tap ‘old-school.’” New “young tap artists” like Savion as well as Derick Grant and Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, another artist commented, “have helped to bring a new form of tap to the forefront.”
- Artists commented on the **importance of high-quality teaching**. An artist spoke of the “dedicated work by individual teachers who have been inspired by the old artists” as fueling the popularity of the art form. Another artist commented, “The level and quantity of students has grown; the dancers today have excellent technique and spirit. There are many more capable teachers.”
- Several artists spoke of **the ITA** itself as key in raising visibility and even their own awareness. As one artist explained, “The ITA has been a tremendous force in allowing us to be in touch with each other.” Another said, “Having the ITA journal to read has helped me see what else is going on around the country.”
- Many artists saw **the tap festival circuit** as “really getting the word out” on a grassroots level through their programming and promotional activities, by drawing an increased number of students.
- More than one artist mentioned **tap’s broad appeal** to audiences. One artist explained, “The broad stylistic diversity of tap allows it to appeal to audiences and practitioners who are widely diverse in age, geography, ethnicity, and musical taste.” Another artist spoke of it as a uniquely American form. A third artist commented on “a growing perception of tap as a more engaging enjoyable alternative to ballet, modern and other conventional dance disciplines.”

Some artists, though, did see reasons for concern about what they saw as a more stagnant, or decreased, interest in tap across the US.

- Some artists commented on **fewer professional performance opportunities**. While, there may be more classes available with a large number of private studios and the development of the tap festivals, some perceived fewer professional opportunities. One artist expressed it this way, “If you take into account the amount of tap dance training that exists today, especially in private studios devoted to the dance competitions ‘scene,’ it may well be that there has been an increase in the popularity of tap over the past ten years. From a professional view, though, it’s clear that there has been a decrease in the popularity of tap. Tap dance companies can barely eke out a few performances annually.” More than one artist expressed concern about a “lack of ability for younger dancers to see their futuristic profession as paid tap dancers.”

- Though there are “lots of kids tapping,” as an artist explained, some see a **lack of coverage of tap in the media**, which is “where it counts in the ‘public perception.’”
- Some artists spoke of the **power of single stars or touring shows as a double-edged sword**. One tap organizer acknowledged that it “takes a big name to get [an audience’s] attention.” Another artist commented, “In more recent years without a major tap show, the visibility [of tap] has decreased. However, on a smaller scale (than Broadway), more dancers are producing their own work.” A third artist summed it up this way: “The popularity of Savion Glover is (comparatively) huge. He attracts large audiences wherever he goes; and he certainly qualifies as a national/international celebrity. But I don’t see much else; certainly no one else compares in fame or popularity, nor, I believe, does the whole field qualify as actually popular these days.”

Quality

While the survey did not specifically ask about the quality of tap dance currently in the field, it emerged in artists’ and tap organizers’ responses to a number of questions. Therefore, it is presented here as a main concern.

While artists and tap organizers were proud of the proliferation of the art form in the past several decades, they recognize the need to establish and promote higher standards of professionalism. At a point in time when, as one said, “There’s not much innovation choreographically,” artists recognized that high quality plays a role in their own goals to cultivate audiences and increase support. One artist explained, “I think that too much... gets presented in the tap genre with an almost ‘anything goes’ attitude. We need to develop standards of quality without constraining the range of personal aesthetics and visions.” Another artist emphasized that “only qualified acts should go for the paying jobs. One amateur act will cause that promoter to prejudge all tap acts.” One artist lamented the prevalence of amateur acts: “We will always be fighting the amateur. Exposure is exposure. However, bad and mediocre...always prevail. Most people have no clue of the quality and diversity of tap dance today.”

In particular, artists expressed concern about the blurred distinction between professional tap and what should be promoted as avocational or children’s dance. One linked the mixed quality level to the festival circuit: “Tap dance must leave the ‘family reunion’ atmosphere of most festival concerts. Until we can do this, we will not gain the respect of the average theater/dance patron and contributor.” A second artist also referenced the festivals as a help and a hindrance: “The tap community has to break out of festivals. I have a hard time performing at [them]. While they helped to multiply student interest in tap, they now have “created a circuit where you can hardly ever perform outside the community. In a strange way it starts to resemble the amateur competition circuit. We are preaching to the choir at the festivals. It’s time for the circuit to work into something else.” Another artist emphasized the need for “consistent paid work of quality and not competing with children’s groups for work.” There were some exceptions, of course. Another tap artist who leads a youth ensemble, spoke from a different perspective on “attempting to ‘make it’ in the professional market place.” She acknowledged

that, “It is sometimes difficult to convince promoters of the professional level of our work because of the name ‘youth.’ To date, we are uncompromising in our insistence that youth and professional can go hand in hand.”

A major aid in increasing quality, artists thought, was mentorship. One artist commented, “Earning the position of sharing the stage with a master is vital,” giving weight to the “master/apprentice relationship” that this artist perceived “has been lost.” For another artist, “mentoring is important [in] helping us develop [a] language and process that supports constructive critique.”

Other artists also expressed concern about the lack of tap in academia. **Professional training in universities might increase quality.** Though there are a growing number of kids who want to be professional but there are only a few programs in universities that teach tap.¹⁹

Sharing Resources with a Tap Network

A number of artists hoped that the tap community at large could work better together in the future through some kind of network. As one stated: “I would like to see the organizations be more supportive of one another and less competitive.” In addition, several hoped for more innovation in general: “The tap community doesn’t allow for change – art is all about change. When asked what they might share with a national tap network, artists and tap organizers alike offered a range of possibilities:

- Some artists specifically mentioned their **tap curriculum** as a valuable tool to share.
- Several respondents would **write articles, share books and materials**, and seek out ways to share **archival videos, photos and full-blown exhibitions**.
- Several artists expressed interest in **consultation, coaching and mentoring** whether to support artistic development, inspire better teaching, or to encourage the growth of other tap organizations. Many artists expressed a desire to use their wealth of experience in creating and performing as well as running festivals and studios.
- Artists mentioned specific **sample marketing materials** such as promotional materials like ads and media kits or sample audience surveys.
- One artist specifically mentioned experience in using **TV and film to promote tap** nationally, referencing a sense of the “pulse” of youth.
- Several artists referenced more **generally sharing past experiences** and in particular, collaborating with other disciplines - in essence sharing best practices.
- Multiple artists also spoke to the desire to more generally **create a sense of community**. This extended to advocating for the form and for inclusive programming. One artist offered, “a sensibility towards presenting programming that tap should be accessible to everyone, not just tap dancers.”

¹⁹ There is no definitive source on the prevalence of tap dance in university dance programs. According to the ITA, *Dance Magazine’s* 2006 on-line College Guide currently lists 90 US college and university dance programs that include tap classes. Only a few (Oklahoma City University, and UCLA most prominently) include tap in a major way.

- Finally, one artist was hesitant to specify what could be offered to a “national network” until it is better defined.

As will be seen in the next section, there were considerable instances in which the national interviews overlap with artists’ perceptions. Just as important, there were other areas in which the interviews provide deep insight into why some of the circumstances described above exist, and how they might be addressed.

Addendum

One festival in Chicago did not submit a survey, but due to its relatively large size, information was gleaned from their website and the National Endowment for the Arts, through a Freedom of Information Act request. It runs a four-week festival annually. Information about it was not included in the figures above, but offers a more comprehensive picture of the reach of these tap festivals. In 2005, this Chicago-based festival worked with 92 artists and presented 11 performances in addition to 149 lectures, demonstrations and workshops. In addition, its 2005 programs included a comprehensive training program for pre-professional teens, workshops for a variety of levels of expertise, a kids program for 7-11 year olds, a newer “Syncopated Seniors” program, as well as year-round instruction. In 2005, it planned to present 30 master soloists and 14 youth tap companies in addition to six professional tap ensembles (five of which toured from outside the US). If its programs were included in the artist engagements figure, the total figure would equal 451 engagements (including workshops and performances). Their final budget for its 2005 festival was \$161,000 and its overall budget for the year ending December 2004 was almost \$295,000; income projections for 2005 were slightly higher. If it were included in the survey budget figures, the number of tap organizations with budgets projected to be over \$300,000 would increase to five. The festival presents several international artists and companies. Last year, it presented two international companies alongside a Los Angeles-based company and numerous local artists.

II. Findings: Interviews with National Dance Leaders

From January to March, 2006, 24 interviews were conducted with individuals who had a national perspective of the larger dance field, as well as the specific issues and needs of tap. These interviewees play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the tap field and the presenting/booking world. Interviews lasted from thirty-five to ninety minutes in length and were analyzed on a computerized system.²⁰ National dance leaders were selected by the steering committee, ITA staff and the consultant. Their selection was based on a variety of criteria including their demonstrated knowledge of and contribution to the tap, dance, and/or arts world over time; their understanding of a particular aspect of the dance/arts ecosystem (e.g. as producers, presenters, librarian/archivists, writer/historians, service organization directors, agents, or funders); and their ability to understand and/or envision the information, and/or support systems that would need to be in place in order to have tap thrive. Some national dance leaders were selected specifically because of their familiarity with tap. Others were selected specifically because of their track record as national dance/arts leaders who had *not* been interested in tap – particularly to find out why not.

The following summaries illustrate the interviewees' perspectives on the art form of tap and the field's current strengths and challenges. As is the nature with any community, the research generated a variety of viewpoints that do not always agree. While some of the information may be new to the reader, and perhaps even difficult to hear, it was offered thoughtfully and constructively by individuals who collectively have an extraordinary amount of wisdom, insight and experience and who want to help the tap field succeed.

This summary begins by highlighting the interviewees' enormous experience with and love for tap dance. They then provide deep insight into the barriers that have kept tap from being booked in the past decade, and also offer advice for how to increase its bookings. The interviewees then spoke about the broader picture of what would help tap as a field to better market itself. There follows a frank, yet constructive, conversation about artistic quality and the tap community overall. The summary ends with funding ideas; a compelling case statement for "selling" tap to presenters, funders and audiences; and a compendium of other ideas for how to coalesce the tap field on a national level.

²⁰ In order to maintain objectivity and consistency, interviews were documented via field notes and analyzed using a computerized qualitative coding system. Three staff people reviewed each interview. This content analysis revealed major issues and themes, including the frequency with which issues arose, and the intensity of the comment for the interviewee. Words such as "some", "many," and "most" are used judiciously to convey the consensus, or divergence, of opinions.

Background

Overview of Participants

[The first time I saw tap] I was completely transformed. I did not realize art could rise spontaneously and be so joyous and unpretentious. It completely changed my idea about dance.

—A dance writer

As a group, interviewees had a high level of experience with tap, among the highest in the country. What made them unique was their experience with professional dance, including tap. Interviewees included dance presenters, agents, artists, funders, historians, archivists, professional choreographers, producers, professors, writers, administrators and service organization heads. Several had been major or occasional tap presenters at one point in their careers, and had since segued into a range of other positions. Many brought national understanding to the table, while some could also share a local perspective, from states such as New York, Massachusetts and Texas. Though the majority had worked mainly within the non-profit world, a small number had commercial experience.

Some interviewees had a strong understanding of tap history and most referred to the tap legends by name throughout the interviews. Though only a few had studied tap as kids, and many did not embrace the art form until adulthood, tap nevertheless seemed to be a part of their upbringing on TV and on film. As one remarked, “I had grown up on the Nicholas Brothers, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Gregory Hines and his dad, Ed Sullivan...in some ways tap was much more in the mind of the public than it is now.” About half of the interviewees had seen performances, and some had had working relationships with artists such as Gregory Hines, Charles “Honi” Coles, Steve Condos, Ernie Smith, LeRoy Myers, Sandman Sims, Charles “Cookie” Cook, Chuck Green, the Nicholas Brothers, the Copasetics as well as living legends like Bunny Briggs, LaVaughn Robinson, Jimmy Slyde, and Dianne Walker.²¹

In fact, it is interesting to note that a significant portion of interviewees’ most positive and compelling experiences were in some way connected to these master tappers. Whether interviewees had developed knowledge of their roles in the art form’s history, had been inspired by their performances, or had developed personal or professional relationships with them, it was clear that this generation of masters had a strong and inspiring influence on leaders in the tap field.

Pivotal Moments Create Lifelong Tap Lovers

Many interviewees described key moments in their lives when they were “bitten by the tap bug” and became lovers of the form. For some, their conversion was brought about by a friend, spouse or colleague who told them what they were missing. One interviewee was turned on to tap by a spouse in 1968 and described the experience upon seeing it as follows:

²¹ Throughout this report, tap masters will be referred to by first name or by a nickname in quotes.

I was very upset if not pissed off that I had never learned about this kind of tap, as opposed to the formalized tap of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, which was really “nice” ... but THIS had guts, rawness, was done out of a necessity. It was a dance of survival as opposed to a dance of art, though it was extremely artful. Soon thereafter, I saw Honi Coles in ‘71 or so, in a performance by Agnes de Mille for ABT. I was completely enamored again of the artistry and the skill and his elegance. Also, he was fierce in that street sense. No matter how elegant he was, he danced with a ferocity of commitment that had a ballet audience repeatedly up on its feet. I was off and running.

Many became inspired by seeing tap at performances and festivals, and in particular, several described vivid memories of watching some of tap’s legends perform. These experiences seem to have truly inspired interviewees and significantly impacted their support of the art form. Upon seeing a 1979 DC tour organized by Jane Goldberg, featuring Cookie Cook and a number of other tappers, one interviewee said, “I suddenly realized there was a whole world of people still alive and working, who had unique things to say. I fell in love.” Going on to describe a later series by Goldberg, *By Word of Foot*, this interviewee said: “She invited everyone, including Honi, [John] Bubbles, Brenda Bufalino and younger dancers. It was revelatory. She was one of the earliest to do anything like that.” Later, the Colorado Dance Festival’s 1986 two-week tap festival was instrumental in coalescing many outstanding artists and generating new momentum in the tap field. One presenter’s experience at CDF was the primary catalyst for starting a new tap festival: “I found myself in a hotel room, in a corner with Gregory, Honi, Jimmy, and Steve Condos, sitting around talking about old times, and how nothing was happening with tap.” In fact, CDF spurred the development of numerous other festivals and presentations, notably in Boston, Texas, San Francisco, Chicago and eventually New York City. One interviewee specifically highlighted the role that Gregory Hines played in both lending his name to help launch ITA²² and in ensuring the energy generated there continued: “He wanted festival producers to understand and believe that they didn’t really need him any more to advertise and secure their audience...He proved that they could do it without him...We really are moving in that direction. Here we are now, and it may feel strange since all those people are gone, but I have always thought of how Gregory laid it out. He almost prepared us.”

Experience with Presenting and Booking

Among the interviewees were people who had put together and presented major tap tours and events that have been remembered by audiences and the dance field for decades. One interviewee’s 1979 tap festival raised interest nationwide and was called “the grandest tap tribute I’ve ever been to” by Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times*. Several years later, a tap program at BAM’s Black Dance Festival that was produced by one interviewed leader influenced yet another interviewee: “I remember learning to appreciate more about the form...I had thought of tap as Shirley Temple and Broadway, and [BAM’s staff] did a huge service by...having a multi-night, well-curated, contextualized festival of black dance, [in which] tap played an important role...It connected tap to other forms throughout black history.”

²² At that time, Gregory Hines served as Honorary President and Honi Coles as Honorary Chairman.

Because interviewees had booked a wide variety of dance and other art, they could often speak of tap within the context of other disciplines or dance forms, making their perspectives useful in understanding how tap fits into the overall dance ecosystem. They had presented dance and other art forms in festivals, national and international tours, conventions, major museums, annual seasons at concert halls, contemporary arts centers, and mainstream presenting venues. Their experience with booking includes dance, performance art, theater, music (world music, jazz bands and musical revues), and special attractions (magicians, circus arts and clowns). Regarding dance, they had experience representing and presenting modern, ballet, contemporary, aerial, flamenco, wheelchair and social dance. However, two of them emphasized that the institutions for which they currently work book contemporary forms exclusively. One described booking “people who are forging new directions... We don’t do anything that maintains a tradition – it’s out of our purview.”

Many interviewees had booked some tap, though clearly less than other dance forms. Examples of past involvement included having NPN tap companies in residence; selecting tap artists for the Jacob’s Pillow season; booking a touring tap show; hosting or planning a tour or festival; organizing a joint tap artist initiative for a theater in a small city; and representing tap artists for a period of one to three years. In comparison, **the presenting experience of several had primarily consisted of engagements with Savion Glover, revealing few other current connections into the tap world.** As another said, “Even when we did bring in elders, it was through our relationship with Savion...We never did a large-scale tap initiative without Savion.”

Interviewees’ Other Contributions to the Tap Field

Many have been part of the tap field by profession at some point, or have interacted intensively with it, and their own personal contributions ranged from presenting and management to scholarly work to producing tap festivals, touring shows or commercial choreography. A few had played multiple roles as volunteers in order to help tap artists, in such areas as management, grantwriting, booking, documentation, publicity and fundraising. One interviewee’s love of tap gradually led to the need to know its full history: “To understand tap you have to understand social dance. I studied everything I could find, interviewed all the tap artists...I got interested in African dance. I saw every tap performance in a 25-mile radius.”

Other interviewees had impacted the field by generating a “buzz” about tap through performances and artist collaborations. One presenter brought a legendary duo, Steve Condos and Jimmy Slyde, together for the first time: “They had never worked together and they fell in love with each other, and had a great relationship from then on.” A more recent, successful show, *Cool Heat Urban Beat*, produced by one interviewee, featured Jimmy Slyde, Savion Glover, Tamango and Dianne Walker, among others, in a 14-city international tour and was compared to *Stomp* and *Riverdance*. Another, who worked in a different area in the tap field, had choreography credits throughout significant television and theatrical pop culture productions including *I Love Lucy*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Solid Gold*, the *Academy Awards* and for The Jackson Five. As several noted, many of these now fondly recalled events were actually huge risks for them as presenters and producers. Using The Copasetics as an example, one said, “I saw

them and thought they were incredible, but wasn't sure if anyone would show up...and over 800 people showed up." Speaking for many of the interviewees, this interviewee explained, "When I started, tap was not even a bookable category. This is one of the unspoken contributions we've made, since 1980."

Current Involvement in Tap

Currently, only a few interviewees are professionally involved with tap – a handful are engaged in renting theaters to tap artists, representing tap/percussive companies, or booking a smattering of artists and festivals that might involve the form. One interviewee was involved in a recent tap commission, had provided early support to a young, innovative tap company and produced an annual tap gathering. Despite all the positive feelings interviewees had about tap, their passion for the art form and their experience serving the field in various ways, as a whole, they are currently seeing very few or no tap performances, due to the infrequency with which it is presented. Most saw no tap at all, or only saw it by chance when it was part of a mixed evening or showcase. Of those who had seen tap recently, the vast majority had only seen Savion Glover. When asked about the amount of tap typically seen each year, one interviewee made this telling remark: "One artist, if Savion is in town."

Presenting: The Context for Today's Market

Interviews revealed that there is a marked contrast between presenters' past experiences with tap and their current level of exposure. This was influenced by factors such as the funding cuts at the NEA, which used to support a number of tap artists, as well as the death of many of the master artists who presenters had come to know and love over the years. They also spoke candidly about the realities of the presenting world, in order to help the tap field learn to approach presenters more effectively.

A vicious cycle exists for tap: presenters' low exposure to tap artists limits bookings, which in turn limits exposure. Presenters lack exposure to tap, particularly contemporary tap artists; in fact, interviewees reported seeing tap just once or twice a year, if that often, and usually their viewing was limited to Savion. (And this group of interviewees' attendance of tap performances is equal to, or more likely higher than, the typical dance presenter.) Compared to other forms, tap lacks visibility and a consistent presence in venues: "whereas there is a history with presenting other dance forms, there is not a history with tap." The result is a lack of awareness of tap: "We know the names of Misha, Ailey, and could list ten stars from ballet and modern, but how many of us could list ten folks off the top of the head from tap who have been legends and stars?"

One consistent finding emerged from most interviews. Even agents and presenters who care deeply about tap find themselves without guidance on up and coming artists whose careers they could follow and eventually book. Presenters and agents lack a reliable source for this kind of information, as one described: "I am a little lost now about what do to with tap and I am not getting a lot of material. I am not hearing from other presenters via word of mouth." This interviewee made a direct request: "At the end of this [planning process]...I would like to know who is out there that I should be looking at?...If people said to me 'go here to see work' I would

make the effort to do that.” By all accounts, Savion Glover was the exception to interviewees’ lack of awareness – all were familiar with his work, and most had seen him perform in the last year or so. From their point of view, no other contemporary tappers had become “marquee names.” One presenter drew a parallel with jazz music: “I cannot find the Dizzys or the Coltranes and there is not a next generation of well-known names. Tap faces the same problem.” One interviewee summed up the lack of name recognition and visibility as a vicious cycle: “Artists are not known, so they’re not booked, so presenters do not know them.”

This leaves many presenters unaware of what is new or cutting edge in tap. As one explained, “I reflect many people in the field’s question as to whether tap survives in an interesting and innovative way beyond Savion.” Without a visible next generation, presenters have a hard time making the case for tap’s relationship to contemporary art, which has also been a problem for jazz: “People perceive [tap] as dead...I know there are exciting young tap innovators, but they have to work extra hard to get over the hump, the conception that tap is mostly a historical thing and that there is nothing new or interesting.” This interviewee provided a key insight saying, “The presenting world is about what is happening now.”

Through many of the interviews, there was an underlying conviction that champions are needed to vouch for the work of tap artists to presenters, agents and even funders.

Interviewees indicated that presenters are strongly influenced by each other’s programming decisions and look to the choices of other leaders in the field before booking artists. In the past, it was tap’s history in show business that had the most influence: “The tap we accept as excellent is on film or in nightclubs or on TV, such as the Ed Sullivan show. It comes vouched for by an authority.” Today, curating decisions are in the hands of a few dance leaders, and there is no one advocating for less well-known tap forms and artists. As this interviewee continued, “I don’t think [presenters or audience members] are confident that they can identify excellence.” Another added that presenters “would think if other presenters are doing it, they *must* be good.”

Several believed that these strong patterns of influence, if used strategically, could work to the field’s benefit by raising tap’s visibility in the eyes of presenters at large. More long term, these efforts could also bring new tap artists into the circle of those who have become a “safe bet” for presenters. Several suggested the formation of a peer working group of national tap leaders with strong reputations, including artists and current and former presenters. The group could create a short list of the best tap artists for the next year and perhaps curate a dynamic tour or performance. This list of “the must-sees, the A-list in tap” would serve as a powerful endorsement. As one described, “It’s the idea that ‘I will push my colleagues to do the same,’” much as presenters have come behind contemporary choreographers like Ron Brown and John Jasperse. “With presenters you really have to find a few that are interested in the same work as you are and get them... committed to supporting it over a period of time...They can help with... the education of other presenters.” As another explained, “We have to separate quality by having places where quality tap can be seen. If you haven’t seen it, you don’t know it exists. And if you don’t know it exists, you think that what you have seen is representative [of quality, even if it’s mediocre].” Interviewees wondered if ITA (or another organization) could play a role by facilitating gatherings for a consortium of four to five presenters nationally. The consortium could undertake projects such as commissioning for emerging and established artists, developing

contextual materials and presenting a high-quality showcase of tap artists at booking conferences like the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.²³

Interviewees also urged the tap field to understand the following key points:

- **Presenters receive massive amounts of promotional materials every day.** As one exclaimed, “I should get combat pay for the stuff I have to sit through and watch! I get 20 videos and DVDs per week. Some I request and a lot I have not...I feel bad for the artists. They send all this stuff and never get an answer.” With this volume of materials, an artist or company has to really stand out to interest a presenter: “I cannot tell you how many hours and hours and hours, on nights and weekends, I spend looking at stuff trying to find new things. I think maybe the next one will reveal some beautiful pearl. I find it difficult to find enough [dance] that I am excited about or that makes sense for us. Just finding enough that is strong, artistically, [is difficult].”
- **Presenters try to represent many art forms in a reduced schedule of events.** Dance is one of many art forms that they present each season, and tap is just one form of dance among the many that they may book. Some interviewees wondered if the tap field realized how many different art forms they are pressured to present each season and the amount of information and consideration that goes into their decisions.
- **Some presenters research and develop relationships with artists for years before booking them.** “All of my curating is based on research, even when I know artists,” explained one interviewee. “First and foremost, I don’t book artists based on press packages, promotional tapes or CDs. I have to see it live. And then, even after I see it live, I usually have to have followed an artist’s career for two, three, five years before I decide to present them. During that time I am not only seeing work, I am going to the web, looking up magazines, and really try to find out as much as I can.
- **Presenters need to sell tickets and be accountable in other ways.** They must adhere to their mission; operate in accordance with the financial bottom line; and be accountable to their board of directors.

Barriers to Booking: Factors that Affect Tap’s Success

Building on their descriptions of their own working environment, interviewees were asked in great depth about their reticence to book tap dance. They were encouraged to be as frank as possible. Their comments generated the following list of “barriers,” or factors that make it difficult to present tap.

The decline in overall dance presenting has implications for the tap field. The most significant barrier cited by interviewees was the decrease in dance presenting overall. Agents and presenters stressed that it is a problem for all dance forms, not just tap. As one described, “We

²³ The Association of Performing Arts Presenters is also commonly referred to as APAP or Arts Presenters, both of which are used in this report. This annual booking conference is the largest in the world and meets each January in New York City.

are seeing a downturn in dance booking. Presenting organizations are closing. They are reducing the number of dance companies they are presenting...It is really difficult to...be successful right now in getting a huge new interest.” With the exception of a small handful of dance-only presenters, dance already makes up a small percentage of any season and these decreases are being felt across many dance forms. A recent survey of APAP members suggested that approximately 80 percent of presenters do international work, while only 20 percent present dance. One interviewee found the statistics “shocking” and said, “If it’s representative, presenters may be doing three companies per year and that’s it.” Another interviewee, however, argued that tap “loses out” because some presenters “can only do one dance per year and they don’t use it up with a tap slot – they pick a modern master or a jazz dancer.”

The booking costs for dance in general are expensive. One interviewee explained that “It is really hard to get presenters to spend \$15,000-20,000 on a dance company. Money is very tight right now. Their perception has to be that somehow they will be able to sell tickets.” Another interviewee agreed saying the cost is “more a variable of visibility and name recognition of the artist [and] the presenter’s willingness to take a risk.” However, interviewees suggested that cost is probably not much of a barrier to presenting tap, as compared to other dance. Tap costs are comparable to those for modern dance, and tap may even be less expensive to present than some forms (particularly those that require extensive sets, equipment or a full dance light plot). The only factors specifically related to tap that might increase costs were special floors and live music, including instrument rentals and fees for musicians who are used to higher paying commercial gigs.

Interviewees observed with regret and respect that tap is seen by the broader world as an outdated art form and can be perceived as passé. A few interviewees, either agents or artists themselves, said that tap is seen as lacking variety and as a throwback to another generation. Consequently, many presenters are not interested in booking it because they think “I know what it is and it’s all the same.” As one said, “There are some presenters who heard the word tap and immediately said ‘No, we are not interested in that art form.’ Contemporary dance does not conjure up a particular picture but when you say ‘tap’ people get an image – it’s easily identifiable but it’s not really accurate...It limits their imagination.” Another agreed saying, “The vision in their mind is something that is archaic. We still have a big job to do in educating audiences as to how far the bar has risen in this dance form.”

Specifically, hoofing and jazz tap are the least understood and appreciated by the broader world. One agent who had represented such forms encountered a lack of interest because presenters did not know who the artists were. Even if given the opportunity to learn about these forms, another interviewee thought that presenters probably would not respond, “unless there was a carrot of money or extreme pressure.” Another surmised that this lack of connection stems from the fact that “There’s a huge gap between what we grew up with – a Hollywood bastardized form [done by] white boys like Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly – and this incredibly rich African American hoofing tradition...A lot of it has not been seen.”

A few interviewees pointed to a prevailing tokenism regarding tap, which probably exists as a result of presenters’ limited exposure. For some presenters, “[Tap] is still ‘ethnic’ work and not

high art, and treated differently. It's booked differently and there's no ongoing commitment." One described the Jacob's Pillow's Presenters' Forum²⁴ as "so focused on ballet and modern aesthetics." Another commented on how this plays out in presenters' decisions: "They would not say 'We did modern dance last year,' but they will say this about tap."

Tap's links to commercial entertainment limits understanding of the breadth of the art form. As nearly everyone in the U.S. grows up with some level of exposure to the stereotypical images of tap dance seen on television or in musical theatre (or through their own study of tap as kids), their preconceived notions can act as barriers to a real understanding of tap. One interviewee spoke of the challenge of getting people to embrace the full breadth of the form: "Like jazz, it is a form that has a niche connection but isn't mainstream enough – like orchestra, classical, ballet – to warrant a broadside appreciation."

Many interviewees felt that tap is commonly – even solely – perceived as commercial entertainment, with associations such as Shirley Temple, the Rockettes and popular Broadway shows like *Noise/Funk*. Tap is a well-respected form of entertainment in this realm, but the downside is that this leads presenters as well as audiences to draw certain assumptions about the entire art form. Since the advent of Savion as a profitable solo figure, presenters value tap primarily for its commercial possibilities with an attitude that "If you book it, you should be able to make money off of it." Audiences do not attach a real weight or identity to the form itself, because they are used to seeing it as just one facet of commercial entertainment. Even when tap is showcased, explained one interviewee, "The dancing is all part of it, but people don't separate it out as a [distinct] concert form. It's primarily identified as an element in a production."

Though Savion has made an impact on both presenters and audiences, his success has not translated into increasing interest in other artists: "They want to see Savion and the masters and they don't make an effort to know the breadth of the field." In part, this may be because "Savion is a star, like Baryshnikov, something that's perceived as being different from a tap company." Another interviewee mentioned that a number of tappers have found fleeting success working with Savion, but are all "struggling again – until his next show."

Interviewees described how the perception of tap as amateur may relate to the lack of value for popular art forms and partially account for tap's underrepresentation. Tap struggles to be accepted among the fine arts due to its "popular" nature, and associations such as children's recitals and teenage tap classes. As one explained, "It does not have the same respect in the artsy world as it does in the entertainment world." Another interviewee offered this telling explanation: "The perception of seriousness is a big barrier...Somewhere ingrained in the American psyche is the idea that some things are more important than other things. The symphony is more important than folk music. Even jazz had to battle its way up the ladder...In dance, the perception of validity is ballet and then modern...with tap being on a lower rung."

Interviewees described the pros and cons of solo versus ensemble formats. Opinions varied; while some thought a solo show might be more attractive due to lower costs and the possibility

²⁴ An annual meeting of dance presenters at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

of presenting in a smaller theater, interviewees had concerns about the ability of soloists to sustain evening-length performances. Many thought that only the most gifted artists, such as Savion, could pull it off, which causes presenters to “avoid soloists, assuming they would find it difficult to hold that stage and audience for 1_ to 2 hours.” Specific frustrations were mentioned such as artists’ poor choices in program content and long-winded evenings that lack structure. As one artist acknowledged, “We have a nasty reputation for going on so long...When you overstay, you have lost that audience – they will not come back.” One interviewee said that even the most exciting artists have a hard time creating a full evening-length experience: “It takes incredible innovation and imagination to figure out how to sustain a performance beyond 15 minutes.” Another commented that even a successful solo artist like Savion is repetitive in a way: “He names a new theme or a new title each year, but essentially... the viable content is about him as an individual genius artist.”

A few interviewees thought that the solo versus ensemble issue was irrelevant because most audiences are not aware that this diversity of formats even exists within tap. As one said, “People think of tap dance as 30 girls doing a routine or the Rockettes. For them to see it as a solo art form, you gotta experience it that way first.” On the other hand, tap ensembles, typically made up of individual tappers from different cities, were seen by some as a challenge to work with due to added travel costs and artist fees. Citing a lack of variety in single choreographer companies, one agent chooses shows that feature group numbers, a mix of young and old tappers and a variety of music “so people don’t...get bored with it in the middle.” As a solution, interviewees felt that well-packaged productions would be very appealing to presenters and audiences alike, particularly if they featured excellent artists and were contextualized in an intriguing way.

Interviewees were divided in their opinions about whether improvised versus choreographed tap poses a barrier. Some simply thought that the majority of audiences, and even the majority of presenters, are not aware that tap can exist in both improvised and choreographed form, and wouldn’t be capable of observing the difference in a performance. Some interviewees felt improvised tap requires more risk-taking and challenges a presenter’s typical approach to marketing and producing an event. As one said, “You don’t know until it’s there. For people who really need the security of knowing moment to moment what’s happening, it’s a risk.” Situations such as last minute cast changes and some tappers’ resistance to rehearsal can make presenters uncomfortable, especially when they are unsure of what to expect on stage. Additionally, many presenters do not fully appreciate the place of improvisation within tap. As one artist explained, “Many presenters think that improv is easy and therefore not valuable or challenging. Whereas those of us that practice that part of the art know what it takes to do it and be good at it.”

Several thought that tap deserved to take its place alongside jazz music and that improvisation should be considered one of the form’s great strengths: “It’s the art, part of the magic of it, folks go to jazz concerts to see the spontaneous.” Perhaps a greater understanding of the relationship between tap and various music forms is needed to put improvisation in tap in perspective. Another agreed saying “I don’t know why...since the forms are so similar, in terms of their improv nature and historical roots...they haven’t developed on a parallel track in terms of

prestige and prominence.” Others called improvisation “the problem of presenting tap” and said that the form is “not necessarily tourable.” One interviewee agreed: “To a degree it is the same as booking a musician or instrumental soloist, since it isn’t ‘classical,’ I think most presenters would assume it belonged in a club or cabaret setting, not a formal concert hall.” Several suggested that tap cultivate new marketplaces, such as jazz and world music presenters, to develop new opportunities for the form. In particular, a tap repertory company that could do both improv and choreography could be successful on a typical jazz circuit where an open program, spontaneity and a “jam-flavor” would be better understood.

Many interviewees said that tap artists’ lack of management is a major barrier in their booking success. They cited problems such as artists’ last minute decisions about performances and the fact that few artists have staff who can send out videos, photos, descriptions of their work, accurate costs or fees, and technical specifications. As one interviewee said, “It’s difficult to get straight answers. They don’t plan far out in advance...and we need information six months out, such as a description of the show and marketing materials.” Tap artists are accustomed to working in festivals and commercial venues, which creates a “disconnect with the business of nonprofit presenting.” Differences in expectations and guiding principles can also make working together difficult: “[Tap agents from the commercial world] are looking at the bottom line profit...and nonprofits are looking for artistic quality. Commercial agents are looking at ‘making deals’ and we don’t do that.” Other issues arise due to presenters’ daytime versus artists’ nighttime working hours, which can make voicemail the primary means of communication and lead to misunderstandings. One interviewee described the unrealistic expectations of a nonprofit presenting engagement by an artist who: “expected venues to book and pay for airfare... I tried to say that the venue is not your travel agent...But it’s the culture of musicians and tappers – they are used to festivals that book hotels, airfare and pay in cash.”

Interviewees said that a primary goal should be to find one or several agents who would agree to represent a few tap artists. Getting even one agent to commit would be a major accomplishment, not only for those artists, but for the field in terms of visibility, performance opportunities and audience development. One interviewee suggested IMG as an agency that might make a good match as they “have high visibility and great taste. They have clout...and total integrity...It would put [tap] in a whole other perspective if it were handled by them.” Another interviewee encouraged the tap field to be selective about which artists are promoted: “It’s thorny, if you pick some [artists] and not others. If the field can come together around this National Tap Plan, people would need to be patient for a year or two while others get their start this way. They may be willing to give up their own place for a while. Will the mission be greater than any one of us? It’s not impossible.”

The few unfortunate experiences that presenters have had with artists can deter them and other presenters from booking tap. Although most experiences are positive, several interviewees said that stories about bad experiences with tap artists were widely circulated among presenters, and acted as a deterrent to tap presenting. Whether the problem is late program copy, or an artist not showing up at a gala event, “Presenters get wind” of these occurrences.

Interviewees expressed mixed opinions about specific flooring and acoustic requirements as barriers to presenting tap. About half said that the cost of renting or buying a specific kind of flooring for tap was a barrier. As one said, “If you don’t have access to that [kind of floor], you don’t have a show.” Several mentioned that presenters also worry about damage to their rehearsal facilities or stage floor from artists’ tap shoes. Others felt that tap flooring required research, but was “not a hard problem, just something we had to budget for.” Another stated that “It was no more of an impediment than when we booked other dance forms such as Irish or Graham or folk.” One interviewee mentioned that three artists had owned and even travelled with their own flooring: “Gregory at his level owned more than one floor. The story was he had them stashed around the country.” Another interviewee suggested other options including using masonite as an informal floor, renting interlocking wood blocks for ballroom floors or buying a vinyl flooring called Time Step. A few mentioned the importance of good stage acoustics and noted that the expense of working with experts to mic floors or set up wireless microphones could be prohibitive for some.

Poor-quality writing is also an issue for all dance forms, and the lack of print media coverage hinders audience growth. Interviewees agreed that the state of writing is no worse for tap than for any other dance form: “Just getting writers to write about any kind of dance is pulling teeth.” As another said, “It’s the same fight as modern dance. We have to demand the coverage.” While new writing outlets are developing online, the quality of them is mixed. One interviewee commented that “Print outlets for any arts writing and particularly dance have shrunk enormously. Dance critics are looking for work.”

Improving the state of dance writing requires effort on the part of both artists and writers. Interviewees pointed to tried and true ways that artists can impact the situation by clarifying their message and communicating more effectively with writers. As one said, “All of the arts groups forget that what gets news is *news*, not promotion,” and suggested that press materials can be recast to announce timely events such as a program or national study. Others suggested that finding “the hooks that are interesting and exciting” and gearing features to highlight those compelling elements could lead to more media attention. Providing a brief background and history of tap could help to educate reporters about the form and lead to better quality writing. In addition to knowledge of tap’s history, interviewees believed that an understanding of music is essential, and thought that perhaps jazz writers should be recruited.

Several offered examples of current efforts that are positively impacting writing about tap. *Dancer Magazine* has made tap more visible through cover stories and frequent features on up and coming tap dancers. Suzanne Carbonneau’s training program for critics at the American Dance Festival was lauded as vital in educating the next generation of dance writers. Along with these encouraging efforts, interviewees pointed out the need to improve writing quality field-wide. Several cited the ITA newsletter as a publication that is holding tap back; many good writers are not interested in being published there, due to its quality level.

Interviewees had ideas for some specific projects related to tap writing. One effort already underway is to create an anthology of tap writing over the years. A noted scholar in the field²⁵ is currently working on a book about tap, which will be one of the field's few reliable historical references, and as one said, "Having models out there of really good writing is one of the best things to do." Another interviewee suggested utilizing any space allocated to tap, even the space in programs, as a chance to educate audiences about the art form. Having recently seen Emio Greco, a contemporary dance artist based in the Netherlands, who used program notes to expose audiences to other Dutch artists, this interviewee emphasized "capitalizing on any visible opportunity to raise the profile for tap dance." Another thought that publications such as Dance/USA's newsletter, *Inside Arts*, *Jazz Times* and others could feature articles or commission writing on tap.

Some interviewees thought that tap's over-reliance on its past can obscure their awareness of innovation by contemporary artists. Tap's history is interesting and complex, and some may be drawn to the form by nostalgia. However, there was consensus that general audiences lack knowledge of tap history, and over half of the interviewees believed that audiences would not be interested in learning much about the art form's heritage. Since most people's tap references date back to musicals in the 30s and 40s and because they are not aware of how the form has developed since then, audience members are unlikely to understand or feel compelled by the history of the form. While a general understanding of tap's history and influences might excite some audiences, the tap field is cautioned not to depend too heavily on its history to generate audience interest. The sentimentality that artists may feel in remembering the elders, whom they knew well and who were wonderful performers, does not translate for audiences who are not familiar with the tap masters. Even one who knows the history cautioned against using it as the primary selling point: "People who go see the Nutcracker don't care about ballet heritage. They go to enjoy it. The tap field feels that unless you understand everything about its struggle, and the nameless, faceless people who have built its name [you can't appreciate it]...It's important, but...[a show called] 'The Heritage of Tap' would flop, it's the wrong way to [market] it." Another agreed saying, "It's like multi-vitamins," meaning that just because knowing tap history would be good for us doesn't mean we are compelled to learn it.

In addition, presenters whose mission statements focus on contemporary, rather than historical, art forms are deterred by the tap field's insistence on the primacy of its history. As one said, "It's a double-edged sword. Those who want to focus on history sometimes then work toward undercutting the relevance of today's expression." One presenter who books some tap feels that audiences might be more apt to make connections to historical and contemporary artists if they are presented in innovative ways, "which is why we need to educate ourselves more so that we are not only better at presenting it but selling it to our audiences... This is why we go back to

²⁵ Constance Valis Hill has been working for the last several years on a volume tentatively titled *Tap Dance America: A Twentieth-Century Chronology and Cultural History, 1900-2005*. The book is meant to be encyclopedic and referential in that it will provide factual information on performances; cite specific tap dance numbers in films; provide birth dates and important biographical information on tap dance artists; and include a series of essays that provide historical contextualization of the practice. Hill recently received a Guggenheim fellowship to support the writing of the essays in the volume.

Savion and ask him to bring new and old, but unfamiliar faces, and then when people see his signature, they are more apt to perk up, take notice and find out.”

Booking Advice for Artists

Given these barriers, interviewees offered a number of practical ideas about what must be done, on the part of tap artists, to make tap more “bookable” in the eyes of presenters.

Improve the Quality of Booking Materials and Get Them to Presenters. Many said they receive few materials from tap artists and those that they do receive either don’t look professional or are not compelling enough to warrant further research. One stated, “If they are not seeing it, they are not gonna book it.” Though there may be some enlightened presenters who are already interested in tap, “If they are not getting the materials to craft [the case for presenting tap] to their audience, they are left on their own to go figure out how to market it,” and are less likely to take on a tap performance.

They advised artists to be patient in developing relationships and improving materials. One agent described working with a tap artist who had low-quality materials: “What resonated with me [in the performance] did not show on the videotape.” After working to book a performance in a better theater with good lighting, the artist created a better tape and eventually had better photos taken but, “By the time it got assembled and mailed out, a year had passed. Then the materials are out there, but that’s the first decent piece of footage people are seeing...Rarely will they pick up the phone after watching the first DVD and book.” The interviewee emphasized that “This is a two-, three-, if not five-year process...not a quick fix.”

Several offered advice to artists about approaching presenters and communicating clearly. As one agent suggested, “If you think you are really good, you have to know who those people are that you need to show your work to.” The problem is that artists are assuming their work will not be considered. Though it’s true that sometimes their materials will not be reviewed, “Artists should be careful about not getting too involved in their own feelings of marginalization if that is what is happening.” With a different suggestion, another presenter described a built-in prejudice among the “inner mafia of the dance world” against tap, such that “the stereotypical presenter...does not care about tap. You need a translator” (i.e. a champion who endorses your work).

One presenter described the process of reviewing booking kits saying, “The first thing is I look at is the work. I don’t care where they are from...old, young, purple, famous, not famous. Then I look at the rest of the information. Do they have decent photos? Have they been reviewed? If so where? What’s the history of the company? Where have they been, studied? What’s in their bio?”

The following are some basic guidelines for creating good press kits, culled from interviewees’ responses:

- **Keep press kits basic and straightforward.** Interviewees advised artists to remember the large volume of materials that presenters receive and to include only the most pertinent and compelling information.
- **Include well-written narrative biographies.** Many young tap artists have never learned to write their own bios, particularly if they have done a lot of commercial work, but interviewees considered it an important skill and a mark of professionalism.
- **Provide a DVD.** Most felt strongly that having a good DVD is critical in getting booked. As one agent said, “I will not represent anyone who does not have a DVD. To sell any dance, it is necessary.” Another suggested that an artist’s DVD should contain both full works and excerpts: “Presenters are divided about this. I like full work; excerpts are useless. I want to know what I will sit through as an audience member. But to satisfy everybody, have both.”
- **Include high-quality photos.** Interviewees were split on the role of photos. Some thought they were a critical element, but that the tendency to use low-quality photos made a negative impression. One described poor photos as “a chronic problem in our field,” while others described typical tap photos as “unsophisticated” and “cheesy.” Several urged artists to hire professional photographers, but one added that basic elements of their photographs could be improved without added cost including: vertical and horizontal shots; bright lighting; high-contrast between the performer and the background; accurate representation of the work, ensemble and/or the artist; and overall professional look. Some interviewees, on the other hand, felt that static photos could not convey enough to have a strong impact on presenters, especially when a DVD is available. As one said, “A photo means nothing. I have never booked a company from a photo or quote sheet in my life.”

Despite the issues raised in this report, a few interviewees said they would be open to representing tap in the future, with one describing the likelihood as “very high.” As another said, “Yes, we will pick up another tap company in a second” and described how, in order to represent a tap artist, “quality, commitment and a willingness to hear feedback and incorporate it” are required. In this agent’s words, “I take artists on at a minimum for a five-year commitment, unless I close the show or they decide they are done...Then the quality always comes first. I work closely with clients. I have a lot of comments and need to know you will be willing to hear them.”

Quality: A Frank Assessment

Virtually all interviewees brought up quality as a concern.²⁶ In considering whether or not to book tap, they need to not only hear from more artists, but they want to know which artists are of the highest quality. They did not wish to offend, and hoped the field could use this feedback constructively.

In discussing what defines high-quality tap, interviewees noted such elements as technique, artistry, surprise, musicality, distinctiveness, elegance, creativity and a passion to communicate with the audience. As one said simply, “If you see it and hear it, you know it.” Interviewees

²⁶ This concern was echoed in the surveys of tap artists and organizers.

shared their impressions about quality, and their specific comments illustrate their interpretation of the following elements:

Technique

I take it for granted that there has to be phenomenal technique. You have to be able to hear the sound of taps very distinctly, a dynamic range, not all at the same level all the time. A dancer or evening needs to have contrast, some lyrical and some fast.

Musicality

An internalized sense of music... you have to be able to watch them and try and see the kinds of choices they are making in their heads. That is what the good ones do – they are working polyrhythmically, they are translating those immediate impulses that are essentially musical impulses. I can only compare it to really good jazz. It has to be really unpredictable, so you can say “Wow I cannot believe they made that choice” or “Where is this going now?”

Innovation

I am interested in seeing the best – [such as] Savion, that virtuosity...I am less interested in the more mundane, mainstream types of tap... I am looking for something new, out of the box, breathtaking because it is so virtuosic, because it pushes the envelope.

Artistic Expression

Aside from technique (which I assume is solid if not spectacular given the opportunities to study these days)...There is something beyond that, that the dancer has something to say. This is harder with the young ones – they are not old enough and wise enough to have so much to say, or it's not very deep. It's the difference between cocktail party gossiping and...interesting conversation.

Connection with Audience

The more artists work at it, the more they have to say. You become more adept at becoming an entertainer... The greatest thing you can say about an artist is “he's a wonderful entertainer” no matter if it's tap or whatever. When you become a seasoned performer, audiences believe you.

Models of Excellence. Interviewees gave several glowing examples of top-quality artists in the tap field. The legendary Jimmy Slyde was mentioned by a majority of interviewees and is clearly looked to as a standard of excellence. Dianne Walker was lauded for her technical skill and musicality, as when one said, “I am not talking about tapping to the beat, [but] where the music begins in the feet and is therefore experienced by the observer, throughout the whole body...The feet and legs are supposed to sing...When you see Dianne the music is moving all over her, you can practically write a narrative to it.” Although not all agreed, many interviewees painted vivid pictures of Savion Glover's performances and clearly admired his achievements in pushing the form forward: “Savion does incredibly complicated rhythms, not because he's a superstar, but because he's an unbelievable dancer.” Younger artists, such as Jason Samuels Smith, were seen as beginning to come into their own after learning so much from working with Savion and others: “Jason is doing extraordinary things, he and others are at the highest professional level.”

One who was particularly knowledgeable about booking offered insight into the close connection between high-quality work and the more practical, bottom-line concerns of presenters. “There

are not many tap groups that have the quality and administrative capacity to take on engagements [at nonprofit performing arts venues]. We need a size and stature...and the quality to attract an audience because legitimate theaters for dance try to avoid the entertaining stuff and go for the artistic.” The bottom line is that even companies who self-present need to be able to sell tickets: “We want first-rate quality. We are concerned about their ability to take that on.” Jazz Tap Ensemble was cited for its one-of-a-kind success in touring and self-producing for many years.

A Common Misperception. Attempting to dispel a misconception prevalent in the tap world that audiences can’t discern high-quality tap, one interviewee said, “Tap isn’t successful because there is an awful lot of bad tap out there! It is not because people cannot hear...There are a lot of excuses going on about [how] the audiences don’t get it.” Using the example of Steve Condos who held audiences “in the palm of his hand,” this interviewee argued that audiences are fully capable of hearing and appreciating rhythm: “He could made incredible rhythms. They were spellbound. He would start with a simple paddle and roll, changing his beat and emphasizing different things. He kept building like that and the audience went right with him.” Young people in particular can appreciate tap’s musicality: “The average ear of the American teenager, the complexity of rhythms they are listening to on a daily basis is staggering, sophisticated, complex.” The problem, as one described, is that “there is this kind of egalitarianism that is holding the field back.” Another interviewee with a broad dance perspective explained, “It’s the same issue in all dance forms. There are strikingly wide ranges of quality in choreography and performance. It is not unique to tap – [it’s] the democratization of dance – everyone thinks they can do it because they’ve done a bit of it and want to say something. [But] the cream rises.”

Interviewees talked about their reservations with quality and highlighted a few visible problems within the field. Several cited some tappers who are known more for their service to the field than their performance ability. Some artists still produce and sometimes star in their own shows, but lack a sophisticated stage presence. While this approach might attract broader audiences, some felt it diluted true quality in the tap field and diminished the field’s efforts to project a strong, vibrant image. Describing the real key to drawing new audiences, one said, “The main thing is quality, quality, quality.”

A related issue, the lack (or lack of awareness) of new, distinctive voices, was also cited as a major problem. There are multitudes of tappers who can only mimic the style of great artists, in self-conscious work that is “imitating Savion but generally without the sophistication of the choices he makes” or what one called “Taffy Tapping – imitation Fosse wannabes on college campuses and in dance school recitals everywhere.” One presenter pointed out the fact that, in the past, “Everyone had their moves – they were moves that people wanted to steal...And I am not seeing that...It is not coming up to the surface...So stylistically things have become generic.” As one artist described innovation, “I like to keep it fresh. You don’t want to be too predictable.” The result of such predictability is that “either it looks like Savion or not very much of anything. Who is inventing their vocabulary that someone else wants to steal?... A lot just looks like good dancers who have taken a lot of classes, but nothing distinguished.”

The pervasiveness of moderate-quality tap, several said, is due in part to poor teaching and the lack of performance opportunities. One interviewee suggested, “We could look at the

whole ecosystem. Who is teaching and where? What is being passed on? The quality has to do with technical skills.” Another interviewee said that many of those teaching tap are not actually strong teachers, but teach anyway because “There is not that much work otherwise in the field, so somehow they must survive.” The key to improving quality is to keep improving as performers: “When I came along, there was an era called show business. You could see performing arts in the theaters and clubs, not just the concert halls and Broadway shows. It was an everyday occurrence...You cannot go see a dance act anywhere, now... [But] you cannot have quality unless you have consistency of performances. You learn as you perform what audiences react to...That is lacking now... [Yet], that’s how you survive.”

Interviewees recognized that the broader appeal of tap encourages many to take classes, but very few will ever be virtuosos. One who had assessed quality in auditions for decades shared a fresh perspective on the question of quality in the tap field. Simply put, “There are not very many Savions.” As an illustration, this interviewee asked, “How many singers go on tour and sell out? There is maybe a handful...It is all about really perfecting their craft and making their talent so great that they will get respected. Then it depends on luck and breaks.” For that reason, artists should have a realistic view of their talent and some might lower their expectations, though this interviewee advocated “continuing with your passion and love for it,” pointing out that you can start tap lessons at any age and don’t need a certain body type to do it. In this interviewee’s words, “How much fame in life do we think we can really have? ...If they are working on a local level, they are achieving fame. People should be inspired to pursue their dreams, which may not be to be famous... If you are a mother of four and a great hooper and taking classes, maybe that’s as far as you are gonna go.”

Marketing Potential and Ideas

Once interviewees had laid out the barriers, they were forthcoming and enthusiastic in offering many solutions. They can be used by any tap artist who want to promote themselves.

The vast majority of interviewees, including those with background in nonprofit arts and commercial entertainment, felt that high-quality tap is an extremely engaging art form.

[Audiences]are more excited about tap than anything else they have seen, absolutely enraptured. We had some of the best audiences for tap. They were thirsty for it.

The audience really feels that they are the other half of the work, that they really are participating...and not by applauding but by their engagement, which can be so intense... There’s a feeling of intense enjoyment...when you feel you are part of a community of people experiencing the same thing at the same time. You don’t always get that in performances.

With its background in the entertainment and commercial sectors, tap can draw from such popular appeal with particular audiences, especially as compared to other dance forms that have never bridged the gap to popular culture. As one described, tap is “an easier sell than abstract modern dance,” and “It is not tough to convince someone to go see it.” Others echoed this sentiment: “I don’t think [audiences] are so inclined to buy a tap ticket, [but] they don’t have an

aversion to tap like they do to modern [dance].” One example given was that some presenters personally love the work of moderns like Ralph Lemon, but don’t want to book artists like Tamango even though “audiences completely love it.” As one interviewee surmised, “Presenters are really missing out on things – they would not lose money doing it; it is enormously popular.”

Though a large pool of regular tap-goers may not already exist due to the limited amount of tap being presented, interviewees shared their firsthand observations of audience responses. The art form has a unique energy and joy and is “so engaging [to] every single person in the audience.” One stated, “It has universal appeal – the sound is interesting, the movement, and the magic of making those sounds with our feet. It’s an Americana art form.” One presenter explained that “Seeing tap is not an impediment [to building audiences], but it’s instead one of the things that shows people the breadth of it, and the talent and facility it takes to do it.” If more regular performance opportunities are created, interviewees believed tap’s audience would grow. As one said, “I have never been to a tap performance...where audiences don’t go nuts. Never. I saw a five-week tour that Jeremy [Alliger] put together with Savion, Tamango, Josh, Dianne and Slyde. The audience was totally changed.”

Many interviewees noted a resurgence of public interest due to the stellar success and unique style of Savion Glover and the popularity of hot ticket shows such as *Tap Dogs*, *Stomp* and *Noise/Funk*. Though Savion has garnered visibility for the form, his success has also created a “star-driven” culture, which one interviewee aptly described as “the boom and the bust of the field.” The problem with presenters, said one, is that “They are not dying to present tap unless they can get a star vehicle.” Though Savion was described as the “one person who is carrying the mantle, the legacy, in any way that is visible,” one interviewee also pointed to the ways his prominence is limiting the field: “Savion represents one kind of tap ...[it’s like] if there were only American Ballet Theater and nothing else...His style has become the predominant style of tap.” Presenters have not moved beyond booking Savion because of their lack of familiarity with other artists. Savion may be the only tap artist working now who can reliably draw crowds but, as one interviewee said optimistically, “Not everyone is Savion, but there is a lot of amazing talent out there now.”

Interviewees cited numerous examples of tap’s crossover appeal and its ability to reach diverse target audiences. Its existing and potential appeal has implications for success in future booking and makes a strong case that there is sufficient audience interest to support a great deal more tap presenting. Tap, with its ties to the entertainment world as well as to music and other dance forms, could potentially draw from these other audiences if they knew more about tap and had more opportunities to see performances. As one dance presenter commented, “It brings in a different audience for us... [As] a crossover art form into the entertainment world...It helps to build an audience to see [our] other shows.” In particular, tap performances featuring high-quality jazz musicians had drawn interest from music audiences. In this way, “[Tap has] relevance to contemporary audiences, to formal traditions that [are presented] regularly anyway.” One example is *Classical Savion*, which combined classical music and tap in an innovative way, and was “a real breakthrough, very intelligent, and might attract presenters who would not have thought about tap otherwise.” The same kind of crossover could also be created with younger

audiences, by highlighting tap's connections to hip-hop and other art forms that resonate strongly in youth culture.

African American Audiences

Tap has the potential to draw increased African American audiences: "As with jazz, the aspect of tap being an American reinterpretation of hard shoe step dancing, but absolutely American – taking credit for that and having African Americans take pride in its development is a great opportunity. That could be used to great effect in New York City. Some of the obvious locales are the cities where jazz has its roots."

Youth Demographic

Interviewees cited tap's ability to reach this important demographic for presenters. As one described, "What tap has, like poetry has, is a pool of younger artists who can relate to younger audiences, like college students and K-12 students, with a vocabulary and comfort level and jargon that is more in line with the world students are coming from... If you can take advantage of youth culture and pop culture and pop music...than you can reach audiences that you will not reach when you do Paul Taylor."

Multigenerational Demographic

Several thought it might work to make connections between the younger artists and the older generation, to show tap's lineage and draw multigenerational audiences. Older adults who had learned tap as children, had seen tap in old films, or who tap today as a physical and communal activity have very strong relationships to the art form. Though these different demographics might be interested in different kinds of tap, such as more contemporary forms versus nostalgic vaudeville-style shows, one explained the need to expose audiences to the variety within tap dance, calling for "A mixed evening [of] family fare."

Tap Students in Dance Studios and Former Dancers

Two interviewees wondered if a target audience might exist in tap studios across the country and among those who trained in dance as kids. Though they may not already be dance-goers, as one interviewee said, "That's not to say there isn't an audience... There's a different place [to target] that is not the university performing arts center marketplace that I know and work in." Another interviewee stated that "connecting with people's own experience in childhood has been used with great affect" and felt that it might be possible to interest former dance students in tap events.

Interviewees repeatedly wished for major group productions that would showcase artists of the highest quality and tour nationally. They thought these "packages" would make a significant, positive difference in their appeal to presenters. The problem is that "so few things are ready to go onstage. Presenters have their work cut out for them," but yet presenters don't know how to market tap artists themselves. One interviewee commented that tap shows, such as the Copasetics and Jane Goldberg's tours, occurred at the beginning of the tap revival, which perhaps helped to fuel tap's resurgence at that time. Important characteristics of such a production were cited including: excellence of the artists; smarter contextualizing of work; being put together by someone of authority; and a production that is "artistic rather than opportunistic."

Several interviewees suggested ways of packaging and presenting larger productions successfully. They offered their suggestions on: 1) *The best production formats*, such as an evening featuring a roster of solos, trios, small groups and accompanying musicians that could include pairings of veterans and acolytes and end with an ensemble finale. One interviewee strongly advocated that the show's title clearly identify who was vouching for the artists, such as "Savion Glover presents The 2007 Great Tap Reunion with The Apollo All-Stars." 2) *The narrative form*, such as was used in *Noise Funk*, is another possibility, but as one said, "No one [in tap] is taking it further. Hip-hop has figured it out but tap has not yet." 3) *Contextualizing performances* with written materials and pre-show tap films, which could create a powerful package: "Ernie Smith was able to convert more people with film. Use the *Past Forward* model²⁷ and integrate it into the entire performance." 4) *Putting tap on a national scale* through a well-constructed tour or festival, which would be an effective strategy for raising visibility. This would happen in addition to integrating tap into major national gatherings (such as NPN, APAP, Jacob's Pillow, ADF, Live Arts in Philly, TBA in Portland and other newer festivals).²⁸ Another interviewee agreed saying, "I like the gatherings where you tour folks together...It piques presenters' interest more." As one interviewee admitted, before participating in this study, "The visibility was remarkably low. [Before this interview,] I really wondered if there was a next generation, working in a way that is ready for national touring."

Several interviewees thought that having a presenters' subsidy would help to encourage tap bookings. As one described, "If you booked a tap artist, there would be incentive money. It would add some sense of worth – ITA could kick in five percent of the fee." An agent agreed that this strategy would be very influential with presenters, as the National Dance Project is: "If you talk to anyone about NDP, if a company is on their list, it makes a difference. It's the actual dollars... No dance presenter makes any money on what they do. Even if a dance presenter sells out his theater, he still loses \$20,000!! This may be an extreme case but no one is breaking even."

One interviewee provided an example of a young artist, Ayodele Casel, who is putting her own shows together and having some success in getting booked: "[She] does not have a standing company; she has an ad-hoc group of good friends. But she has put together a program and gotten it booked at Joe's Pub and other New York City venues and now in DC. To me, that's a real start for her in terms of breaking into the field...The other side is that here's somebody with a fresh point of view, a new generation and talented, but out here on the West coast what is getting booked is *Tap Dogs!* *Tap Dogs* is not bad, but when it's the only thing it's a problem."

A range of audience development materials could provide context and create richer experiences. The vast majority of interviewees thought that creating and utilizing various audience development materials would help significantly in generating interest in the art form.

²⁷ *Past Forward* was a project of the White Oak Project, produced by Baryshnikov, in which new and archival film projections of major post-modern choreographers segued to live performance on stage. It allowed audiences to contextualize the dance by seeing the work in its original context before seeing it performed live.

²⁸ These are the National Performance Network annual meeting, the American Dance Festival, and the Time Based Arts Festival.

Many were also enthusiastic about the idea of posting materials on the ITA's website, which would be useful for conducting research or providing further information about tap to colleagues. Opinions varied in terms of the degree to which materials would help. One presenter said, "It absolutely does build audiences," to provide contextual materials about tap, and another agreed: "Any kind of materials for a form that is misunderstood are extremely helpful, if not essential. It would help the field to counteract the misunderstanding and lack of knowledge." The lack of knowledge about what to expect is a major problem: "People don't go to shows because they don't know what will happen. When you go to a baseball game, you know what will happen (such as the 7th inning stretch)...When you buy a ticket to Urban Tap, you don't know what will happen. Will it be line dancing? Buffalo shuffle? There is no understanding of the form."

Interviewees discussed the value of a number of specific materials, including:

- **Tap DVD.** There was clear support for the creation of a DVD to help audiences contextualize performances. Interviewees suggested creating a short, brilliant presentation using clips from "the golden age" of film that showcase tap because "You have to be dead not to be able to respond to what's up there on the screen." The DVD could be shown prior to performances to help audiences understand more deeply what they are about to see. One interviewee suggested that a CD-Rom featuring the sounds of tapping alongside a narrator's instructions of what to listen for would give a greater understanding of the form's rhythmic intricacies. Another possibility would be to contextualize tap by showing its development alongside social issues through history and its relationship to other dance and music forms.
- **Guide for Children.** Many interviewees thought that a guide that uses what students already know about music to help them understand the nuances of tap would be a valuable education piece that could be used in schools and prior to performances. As an example of a similar program, one interviewee described a scripted show that one company performs in schools that addresses the relationship between tap dancing, percussion and rhythm, as well as the African American roots of the art form. Another suggested that young people might become more interested if the materials compared tap to hip hop, poetry slams and jazz, highlighting the "friendly rivalries" and competition "to do the most innovative riffs in a duel."
- **Syllabus or Teacher Guide.** An instrument to guide both schools and artists in developing and implementing various in-school and outreach programs would be a great learning tool, said one interviewee: "The reality is that if you bring a tapper, it connects with the kids more than other dance forms. It is a form, style, music...the kids love it. They want to know, see, and do it. In turn, it will make the teachers want to do more of it." Several interviewees thought that a nationally produced guide with learning exercises could be widely used by tap artists, schools and presenters.
- **Interactive Pre-Show Talks and Program Notes.** These methods form a long-term investment in audiences and can include commissioning program notes from well-known, articulate leaders in the field. One interviewee's institution gives pre-show talks before every performance to add context to the work, which are especially successful when led by a "fantastic teacher and resource" such as Dianne Walker: "A talk with Dianne with film clips,

or trying to do the moves... is one of the great experiences that an audience member can have.” As another interviewee said, “On some level, the audience side context has to be more hands-on, where people have an opportunity to participate through doing or seeing someone do, such as in a lecture/demonstration.”

- **Compendium of Tap Writing.** Another interviewee advocated for “an actual effort to gather and edit some of the really good writing on tap dancing in such a way that it would educate a sponsor or presenter...Presenters would REALLY use this, if it was well done.”
- **Tap History.** Even though it would not be a major selling point, most interviewees doubted that a tap history would aid audience development. General consensus seemed to be that though tap’s history is important, it should be incorporated into a more appealing format. On the other hand, one interviewee thought it would be useful for educating staff: “I now make a PowerPoint presentation to staff at the beginning of each season [including] phonetic pronunciations and who the artists are.” This interviewee clearly understood the importance of staff education and the fact that this added knowledge could positively impact ticket sales.
- **Tap Glossary.** A few interviewees supported the idea of a tap glossary containing definitions of fundamental terminology. Others thought that a more effective method would be to work the terms into a more interesting format.

The Tap Community

Like other segments of the dance field, tap has its own sense of community. Like any community, perceptions can draw people closer or discourage them from joining. It was important to learn about the interviewees’ perceptions of the tap community, and the degree to which those perceptions either encourage, or discourage, them from becoming involved.

A Generous, Dynamic, Multigenerational Family

Interviewees believed that the tap community has many unique, positive aspects of which it can be proud, and they spoke with passion about their experiences working with it.

As one presenter recalled about a residency with Savion Glover, “The energy of the [tap] community that was fueling our efforts [was] phenomenal. Once they felt they could trust us, [we were] invited into a family and the cross generational learning and respect with the artists was quite inspiring.” The tap community, particularly at the local level, was described as close knit, “maybe by virtue of being an underdog” and there is “an eagerness to learn and share from one another” as well as an enormous respect for elder artists that is not found in the modern dance community. Working with elder tap artists was a big perk for a number of interviewees: “Of all the dancers I have worked with, the tap dancers are the ones that have personally taught me so much about living, especially the older ones. Through their lives and work and struggles and generosity and wit and dancing, I feel that just being around them was an amazing education.”

The tap community offers its younger generation both genuine concern and enthusiastic support. One educator described, “I do feel proud. They are all my kids [even the ones I don’t know]... They are capable and well-rounded,” with those in college earning degrees in a variety of fields. This interviewee continued saying, “I have all the faith in the world that they will move this [field] forward. I will always be there, like Jimmy, nudging. But I really need to hear more from them as to what they want for themselves... We have made a foundation.” Real relationships between the generations have been created, which the elders take very seriously, “more so than the shuffles, the hops and the flaps.”

Two interviewees specifically highlighted the effect that tap’s improvisatory approach and freewheeling attitude had on them as presenters. One described tap artists saying, “I have always found [tap artists] easy to work with. [They have] a fun attitude about the art form, with people showing each other steps – a love of the art, a much more playful and fun approach that can be used and harnessed as part of an overall program.” Another interviewee found tap’s close connections to the jazz world inspiring: “[I appreciate] not only the sense of improv but the way artists work – the informality, community, family, and fun. These things that I love probably drive other presenters mad.” But as learned from working with tap artists, the spontaneity is what makes it so special. “It’s about the moment. Some would say ‘You miss the rehearsal, you miss the show’.” For this interviewee, tap is a welcome break from “the over-structured, over-planned, rigid elements that our presenting field and produced world of theater wants to layer onto art work.” Though some presenters may be uncomfortable with tap for these reasons, “People miss some of the essence of form, in that when it hits, it will be magical most often. But you have to be willing to go with the flow more so than tightly produced performances.”

Issues within the Tap Community

Though interviewees felt strongly about the tap community’s interest and appeal, they also spoke about a number of persistent issues that are detrimental to tap’s image to the outside world, as well as to its spirit as an art form. Overall, interviewees felt that the tap community needs to insist on its own higher standards of artistry and behavior, rather than issue blanket complaints about its marginalization and expect others to “protect the poor little form,” as one interviewee put it.

The tap community operates on a sentiment of egalitarianism, interviewees said, by insisting that all tap is worth seeing and not demanding a certain level of quality from its artists. Promoting mediocrity and rewarding work that is not innovative spoils outside perception. As one explained, “[People are] constantly mothering the field, and the field can stand to be kicked...It is a strong form of concert dance that gets more performances in festivals and conferences all over the world [than other forms]...It is robust, playful, rambunctious, and needs some very serious talking about how to do it better. But better doesn’t mean more of it. Tap does not need to be nestled against the bosom...People are tapping all over the place. It doesn’t know how to present itself.” The egalitarian dynamic has been encouraged by the ITA and some thought this was to the field’s detriment. Only a few commented on the ITA, and most were grateful for its existence and the dedication of its leadership, calling the executive director a “gem”. But one did speak of the tension that comes from the ITA expecting so much out of tap writers for little

or no pay. The sense that everyone should be willing to donate large amounts of time, for the betterment of the field has left some feeling “hustled” and “used.” The intimation on the part of ITA that their (free) time will lead to worthwhile professional connections can cause further frustration. This is exacerbated when the editorial standards for the publication have not been fully professional and have caused some tension among members of the field.

One blemish on tap’s image is that some artists let their egos get in the way of tap’s success. Some artists complain of being shortchanged in terms of gigs, pay rates and visibility, as compared to artists in other dance forms, but presenters wonder if the tap community knows how little artists in other dance forms are paid. While pay rates for tap are low, as they are for all non profit dancers, as one said bluntly, “I see them getting more gigs than most of the post moderns I know on a per capita basis, but they whine...[and] that’s a holdover from when it was not presented.” Artists’ egos can be particularly challenging to deal with in shows that feature a range of masters and emerging artists because tap has been developed, for the most part, by individual performers. As one described, even something as simple as the billing for performances can be complicated by egos: “There are times when folks are generous and it doesn’t matter and others when you rub people the wrong way.”

Additionally, the tap community is perceived as resistant to accepting help, and has thus to some degree alienated itself from other dance forms and the performing arts field at large. As one interviewee said, “My problem is ‘What is the tap community?’ and ‘How do they fit into the overall dance community?’ I am not sure if they want to fit into it.” One specific issue mentioned is that the tap community relies on and even clings to its history, and carefully guards the videos, photos and other historical documents that exist. Artists store tap materials in their homes, believing they have monetary value and, though they are precious, “In the real world, there is no money to pay.” As one described, major institutions such as the New York Public Library will only take a collection if it has already been processed or comes with a large endowment. Despite this, for some tap artists, the cultural memory of tap’s exploitation is powerful: “They are afraid if they give up their collections, they will feel the materials have been appropriated.” The misconception on the part of the tap community that there is money to be made from their materials may actually be hindering efforts to preserve them and make tap’s legacy available to the broader public. As this interviewee said, “There needs to be an attitude change in the tap community,” citing ballet and modern dance as examples of art forms that have rich histories, yet focus on the future. The problem is, “Tap relies very heavily on their heritage but there is no place to go and find the information. The tap community says, ‘You cannot possibly understand our art form, you don’t know its history.’ Then I say ‘Fine, where do I go to get information? And there’s no place.’”

Interviewees agreed that tap artists do not have the best image in the eyes of presenters, who can likely recall “hokey” tap shows and hearsay about some artists’ behavior, which have tarnished the art form’s reputation. One interviewee described the extremes that exist within the field, such as great performances that are dumbed down by tasteless patter with the audience, or a beautiful award ceremony followed by a chaotic party: “Allowing things to be cheesy is very damaging to the field. That’s not allowing things to be elegant.”

Yet as one interviewee pointed out, there are legitimate ways in which tap *is* undervalued, at dance festivals and other gatherings: “We need to be credible. Everyone knows we are wonderful. We have had to fight for that status...It is really a truly American art form so it’s not fair. I don’t see why we should be at the end of the line in being recognized.” One who was interviewed expressed wonder when Jimmy Slyde received the *Dance Magazine* award, “I read the program, and to see how few tap dancers had been honored in that manner is astounding.” This interviewee also said that tap is underrepresented in many gatherings: “Those things hurt. These are big festivals, such as Jacob’s Pillow, and large promotions. To not have tap on them is demeaning. They have countless modern and ethnic dance groups that are commissioned but no tap. It’s very sad. So we try to perform in places and bring tap to the forefront as much as possible.”

In the past century or more, tap has transitioned from an American art form, through a sometimes racially divisive heyday in vaudeville and on Broadway, to today, when tap can be found across the country, enjoyed by ethnically and racially diverse, multigenerational artists and audiences. In short, tap has lived a complicated history that has left its mark, in the form of divisions in the community and a strong fear of exploitation or under-appreciation. Racial rifts still exist, primarily over who “owns” tap and its history. A lot is built on ignorance: “People are not aware of...where [tap] came from, how it came about, who its practitioners were and frankly, the history of racism that underpins tap...You have an older generation of dancers that grew up with it, who are still alive, who weren’t allowed in the front door of a theater.” Though this history has had a lingering presence in the minds of the tap community, interviewees hoped that the form can coalesce and move forward in order to gain supporters. One interviewee described the inspiration gained from master tapper Honi Coles about the roots of tap:

The way I learned about tap from Honi was that what tap does is offer a neutral ground where black and white could actually mix because it does have heritage in both those worlds. It is neither black or white but something unique unto itself. Most cultures have a percussive dance form. Banging your feet to make noise is not unusual at all; using the heel and toe on the floor is not either. It is the rhythm [that makes it unique]. Close your eyes and you can tell the difference between flamenco, clog and tap. The cutting edge is the rhythm. Tap is so firmly rooted in an African ideology that places percussion at the forefront and reveres a playfulness and non-adherence to absolute rules, but instead an adherence to change within the circle of competition, challenge and improvisation. That’s what I am interested in.

Funding: Context and Ideas

As comments throughout this report have illustrated, the tap field does have many allies who want to help. While only a few of them are funders, it is important to note that many of the interviewees have ample experience at obtaining funding. They offered their ideas and guidance about what they thought would help the tap field succeed in generating support.

Interviewees agreed that favorable funding decisions for tap will likely be made by someone who cares about the art form and wants to invest in its future. Though it will be

difficult, finding one or several funders who will act as champions for tap is an important goal. Interviewees tried to put the issues surrounding funding for tap in context with the overall arts funding situation. As one said, “It might be that the funders have a lot of mouths to feed, [and tap is] not on their list of priorities. They would rather focus on the groups they have invested in over time, and how to sustain them.” This interviewee added, “I don’t think there is enough funding going on to move jazz forward or to move contemporary dance forward. That is not what the funding is for—it’s not about the development of the form. A lot of the funding has moved toward sustaining those organizations that do the work we want to do. A lot of it is giving it to presenters so it can trickle down to artists, or it’s about audience development.” To get on funders’ priority lists, tap will have to become more visible and offer appealing projects to funders; it is highly unlikely that individual artists will get support on their own. As one interviewee said, whether it is a request to support a tap entity or a specific project, “Funders always have to have new candy. If they don’t think tap is new, why do it?”

Interviewees acknowledged with great appreciation that the NEA has been the only consistent supporter of the development of tap. This commitment stems from the fact that “The impulse to preserve and extend and keep a true American form vital is appropriate for the NEA,” said one interviewee, going on to acknowledge that it will be difficult for tap to find another dedicated supporter. As one asked, “How many funders are making decisions based on the passion for any art form right now? Very few [family foundations, which are the future of foundation giving] will come at it the way that the NEA used to, or still tries to.” One interviewee explained that “The NEA was one of the few places that supported tap through fellowships, the ITA and festivals.” As one interviewee who is an artist added, “It is thrilling to me that as an American artist, that somehow the NEA has an appreciation for the field of dance I work in. Many state agencies don’t have anything approaching that.”

Interviewees agreed that most funders lack exposure to tap or its history and this shortfall will need to be addressed in cultivating funding. Describing their awareness as “zero,” interviewees did not know of any funders who support tap, apart from the NEA. As one said, “They need to see it!” Tap is never on the agenda of meetings or a topic of conversation among leaders in the field, said one, and another added that tap artists have not gotten MacArthur’s or other awards because it seen as a commercial rather than classical form. Others said that historically, funders have tended to support carefully choreographed work in “serious” dance forms such as ballet and modern. As one interviewee who is a tap artist said, “I have been doing this for 25 years and... anytime I reach out for funding I have to explain as much as I can about what I do.” One interviewee also noted that tap is not included in some national dance opportunities: “It is so completely sad that the whole generation of artists inspired by Savion, who are great, that none of them are part of the National College Choreography Initiative.”²⁹ Another interviewee spoke of unsuccessful experiences in trying to encourage the inclusion of tap: “My own interest in tap as something that ought to be in the mix was often met with a little sniff of negativity from arts leaders... [I was] talking about things like rock and roll, tap, folk arts, crafts and not feeling it was very welcome.”

²⁹ In fact, Josh Hilberman and Acia Gray were funded through NCCI, and were the only two tap artists who have applied since the program was started. In addition, Bill Evans did an NCCI residency in Oklahoma that incorporated tap.

Interviewees said that tap artists need to become better informed about the process of seeking funding and what appeals to foundations. As one said, part of the reason that funders do not support tap is that “They are not asked to support it. They just don’t get applications from tap organizations. Or if they do, a lot of the applications are not well prepared.” As one who works with many artists explained, “Artists need to understand that they need to become a tidy little box and make an educated choice about that...You have to look good on paper.” A significant part of the problem, several said, is that tap artists are much more familiar with the commercial world rather than the nonprofit sector. Most tap artists do not have companies, are not incorporated and do not have effective administrative systems in place. As one interviewee said, “It goes back to musician culture...To them it’s gigging.” To help artists begin to understand nonprofit funding and navigate dealing with funders, one said, “People had to be willing to write applications for artists.” Similarly, another interviewee felt that arts consultants who do pro bono work were potential sources of solid guidance and could be “effective translator[s] for artists of a certain career level, who could understand how to take on a part of the arts establishment.”

The first step in developing potential funding support for tap is to educate funders, said interviewees, particularly in these areas: the rich history behind this uniquely American form, the innovation within tap and the breadth of participation in the form. As one interviewee said, “If there is an exciting generation, a case needs to be made to funders about them.” To acquaint funders with artists and convince them of tap’s need for support, versions of some of the audience development materials discussed in this study such as a fact sheet, tap history or DVD could be distributed and posted on a website. This direct experience with the art form is what funders are lacking. As one funder said, “To provide context, history and excitement around the form is a great idea with funders.”

In terms of showcasing the scale of tap education and participation (including festivals, studios, artists, school shows, tap audiences, etc.), one interviewee offered a possible model for the tap field. In Chorus America’s comprehensive study about choral participation in America, “They discovered that 28.5 million Americans are involved in choral music nationwide. A few funders’ eyes were opened by this as an important art form but also as something that reaches audiences across the country.” A study of this scale is the kind of “eye opener” that the tap field will need in order to be taken seriously: “It takes some dramatic move to get their eye. If you could talk about participation levels growing over the years, from various geographic and ethnographic points of view, this would be helpful and necessary to break into a funder’s psyche.”

Interviewees highlighted the key messages about tap that might be most appealing to funders, as follows:

- **Tap’s History.** Several interviewees felt that if funders were educated about the history of tap, they would find the art form more appealing. As one said, “If you play it up as a unique American art form, you have a better case. You cannot assume they know anything. You have to educate them.” ITA could pull together “a fun, important and well-written document” to teach funders about tap’s unique heritage.

- **Regional Appeal.** One interviewee suggested that talking to funders about the regional impact of tap might help: “People talk about New Orleans Jazz, Chicago Jazz...Is there something specific about the various cities and how artists [who are] rooted there dance?” In particular, a case history might prove effective for funders in a few cities: “At the end of the day...if we find that of the five tap artists who were significant, half of them came from Philly...this might be exciting.”
- **Local Projects.** One interviewee thought that tap had potential appeal to local funders who support artists in their communities. Perhaps the tap field could develop some smaller scale projects modeled off of the artist residencies that are common in other dance forms. These kinds of local projects could also potentially interest some corporate sponsors that allocate funds to communities through their local branches.
- **Projects that Involve Presenters.** Funders are already familiar with presenting organizations and have a degree of comfort supporting their work. As one interviewee observed, “The national [foundations] are focused on initiatives that select a handful of... leadership organizations...that are doing things that have impact beyond their own community. Often there’s not a place in the national arena to support something like this unless they are supporting the presenter.”
- **Wide Impact of Tap.** Two interviewees strongly supported the idea of showcasing the wide impact of tap through a participation study. The study would assess the scale of tap education and participation (including festivals, studios, artists, school shows, tap audiences, etc.) and could have strong appeal to funders. As one said, “A large share of [tap’s] cultural resources are for-profits. How can we best use those resources and support them and recruit them and partner them, to enliven the form and engage participants?” Funders are most likely not aware of the huge number of tap festivals across the country, which would provide great opportunities for partnership and interest potential supporters. Knowing how many people participate in tap and can identify with the form through their own experiences could be a crucial element in gaining foundation support.
- **Personal Experiences with Tap.** As a result of tap’s wide impact, there is potential for support from individual donors who have had positive personal experiences with the form. As one interviewee asked, “Are there individual donors who might support it? It is a matter of people who are interested in tap, not only that they have a bunch of money.”
- **Multigenerational Artists.** Some funders will be particularly drawn to events that are multigenerational in terms of both artists and audiences. One interviewee described a “really impressive” series of tap events involving all ages: “That was part of the excitement, melding the masters with the young people. It was very powerful.”
- **Capacity to Reach Target Audiences.** One funder described at least some foundations as having “a demand-side approach” meaning that they support artists and arts organizations whose work has the potential to reach certain groups. Rather than sustaining certain art forms, these foundations are “Discipline agnostic – [not focusing] on either presenting or extending canons of work or thinking about the art form in its own right, but rather in how it has potential and interest in targeted groups.”

The Case for Supporting Tap

In relating their experiences with tap and their feelings about the art form, interviewees helped build a strong case for its support. Many felt that creating a high-impact case statement would be useful in approaching presenters and funders, though as one suggested, it should not just be conceptual but supported by a large-scale fact base. Another thought a case statement with a “light-hearted and humorous” tone would help win more supporters, and suggested a format such as ‘Ten Amazing Facts About Tap’ that would be effective in “foiling people’s prejudices in an up-front way.” Interviewees spoke of the characteristics that define tap and make it an appealing art form that deserves wider support, as follows:

- **Tap is one of the few truly American art forms.** This appeal could be particularly effective with funders, especially because of the parallels between tap and jazz music, which has recently found increased national support. As one said, “A funder who was gonna support [tap] would do so because they appreciate the fact that tap is an indigenous American art form that has its roots [in] the melding of African and Irish work, but is clearly so American.” This case has been made successfully to the NEA, which has begun to increase its support to tap artists. Tap is on the “upswing” with a new generation of younger tappers and successful festivals across the country, and as one said, “The appeal for the NEA is that it is an American form [and] broadens the diversity of the dance portfolio” it supports. A similar case can also be made to help secure tap bookings, because as one said, “It doesn’t hurt for presenters to feel pride in that they are helping to preserve and extend and keep thriving a true American form.”
- **Tap is an exciting art form.** Interviewees pointed to a unique energy in tap, and particularly in the innovative work of young artists today, that one described as “some of the freshest and most compelling I have seen in the past 15 years.” One noted that tap is “a multi-sensory, exciting, high-energy art form” with sound and visuals, giving it a different feel than other dance forms, while another felt that the improvisatory nature of some kinds of tap was what made it stand out. Although tap can embody a wide variety of emotions, one interviewee explained, “There is something about tap that is more joyous than any other dance form, both from an individual... and community point of view, and this could be mined.” The anniversary of Tap Day could be used to launch a branding campaign designed to cast tap as ‘America’s joyous art form.’ By enhancing tap’s explosive energy and the pleasure of seeing it, the art form could become more popular because, as this interviewee said, “We are at a time in America when we need joy.”
- **Audiences easily connect with tap performances.** Tap is an art form that is easy to relate to, said one: “When audiences do see it, they are moved powerfully by the athleticism, expressiveness and rhythm...They get taken with it.” Beyond tap’s engaging quality in performance, the form’s ties to commercial entertainment, the widespread study of and participation in tap, and its multiethnic heritage create multiple ways for audiences to connect. Tap was described as “accessible” and “a great audience builder because it reaches out to so many different audiences.” It is also seen as an art form that

anyone can participate in – it doesn't require a lot of money or a particular body type. As one said, "People still have tap shoes in their attics – there is a form to 'get'."

- **Tap has positive ties to the commercial/entertainment industry.** Through Hollywood films, television and advertising, people around the world have been exposed to tap. The tap field should work to break down barriers between the commercial and nonprofit fields and take advantage of tap's place in the limelight by educating funders about tap's "global reach, interdisciplinary nature [and] appeal to audiences." As one interviewee described, "Of all the dance forms, tap has had the most visible and positive crossover to the commercial world...There's gotta be a day to capitalize on that. People see it, know it and have grown up with it." Another interviewee suggested that the tap field should take advantage of the commercial success of stars such as Savion: "There are so many things about tap that would make it easier to sell that they don't use! They need to hit on what already exists, such as Savion. He is an easier sell because of his visibility and commercial backing."
- **Tap has a multiethnic heritage, rooted in a complex and interesting history.** As one interviewee said, "Aside from it is fun to watch, and great, it has probably got the most fascinating social history of any U.S. art. I find it intellectually interesting." As tap can count the dance and music traditions of West Africa and the British Isles on American soil among its major influences, it has a rich cultural history that appeals to people of many different backgrounds. As one interviewee described, "One of the appeals of tap is it is seen as a diversity bridge, something that has connected to multiethnic communities and is multiethnic in and of itself. It is seen as something that can be used as an engager for many people as a way into the broader spectrum of the arts world."
- **Tap is a flexible and intimate art form to present.** As the majority of tap acts are made up of individual artists, tap has a flexibility that is not possible with most ballet ensembles or modern dance companies. One said, "Tap does not have to remain onstage – it can extend into the audience, so it is useful in non-traditional spaces." Music venues, nightclubs and small studio theaters are all alternatives for presenting tap; for some artists, these venues may even work better than a typical concert stage. Tap is also an intimate art form, in which the "fourth wall" that separates performers from audience is often absent. As one interviewee said, "The typical experience is friendly and generous...like a jam session...You are automatically put at ease. Artists talk right back to the audience."
- **Tap has a strong connection to music.** Tap is often performed with live music and is an incredibly musical art form on its own, requiring precision, rhythm, musicality and improvisation from performers. For this reason, "Tap has a way of hooking into music in a way that other dance forms cannot," as one said. Another described how "The message comes right out of the rhythm – you are listening to a thought process, think of it as a conversation." This connection can help draw crossover audiences from the music world and broaden tap's appeal to presenters and funders.

- **Dance is becoming more mainstream and percussive forms are appealing to broad audiences.** Several interviewees mentioned the current trend of some forms of dance becoming more mainstream in the media as evidence that the time might be ripe for tap to appeal for support. Primarily, interviewees cited new television shows such as *Dancing with the Stars*, *So You Think You Can Dance* and *American Idol*, as well as movies like *Mad Hot Ballroom*, as signals that dance is reclaiming its place in popular culture. As one said, “A lot of changes are happening now...Since variety shows went off the air in the mid 1980s, it was hard to find dance on TV, other than videos. For those of us who made our living on dance, as choreographers and dancers, it is gonna benefit.” This interviewee hoped that tap could ride the wave of increasing visibility for dance and create resurgence in interest in the art form. Percussive forms have been successful in recent years through the popularity of Broadway shows like *Stomp* and *Noise/Funk*. As one interviewee argued, “Tap is part of a large percussive family” and perhaps showcasing some of the connections to jazz music, club dancing and hip hop could facilitate tap’s full transition into the mainstream circuit.
- **Tap artists have an engaging presence when working in communities and often teach extensively.** Many interviewees spoke to the generosity of tap artists as teachers and mentors. Artists’ passion for teaching and eagerness to share and learn from one another creates an emphasis on relationships between generations.

National Strategies to Support the Art Form

The next section of the report showcases interviewees’ innovative ideas for taking advantage of tap’s strengths, catalyzing change, and accelerating progress. Interviewees’ ideas for the tap field can be broken down into five basic categories: National Organizations and Advocacy, Marketing, Presenting, Professional Development and Funding.

National Organizations and Advocacy

- **Increase tap advocacy efforts.** Through gathering data about tap participation and its economic impact, tap could be repositioned in a way that creates renewed enthusiasm on the part of presenters and funders. In addition to the example of Chorus America’s participation survey, Chamber Music America redefined chamber music to include a broad range of groups such as jazz quartets and traditional Irish bands, thus increasing its constituent pool. An economic impact study of tap could get press in the form of “thousands of pickups across the country” and human interest stories showing how lives have been changed through tap would also do well in the media. The key to getting national media attention is to focus on the extrinsic rather than intrinsic values of the arts. As one interviewee described, “We’ve done exactly the opposite of the new RAND study, *Gifts of the Muse*.³⁰ We have looked at League of Cities and what its 20,000 leaders think is important: economics, jobs...health, education, race and crime issues. If you connect the art form to those issues, it leads to

³⁰ McCarthy, Kevin F, Ondaatje, Elizabeth H., Zakaras, Laura, Brooks, Arthur. *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*. RAND Corporation, 2004.

money and press.” Also, this interviewee suggested that the tap field should look to existing programs and make a case for the inclusion of tap. Huge advertising campaigns designed to raise awareness and appreciation of the arts, such as National Arts and Humanities Month, could include literature or other materials about tap.

- **Form a new national network for tap organizations and artists.** Many interviewees suggested a national network would create more communication and connections within the tap field. While the kinds of networks that were suggested varied, interviewees spoke of the need for a “national concerted effort” to create opportunities for ongoing dialogue. A convening should bring together a large cross-section of people as well as funders and representatives from service organizations. Several supported the idea of a national network of tap festivals. The Chicago Human Rhythm Project had a successful two to three-day presenters conference that could be replicated. Another interviewee, however, suggested that it is not the presenters but rather the artists and producers of tap events that need to meet to find compelling ways to contextualize tap. Others suggested looking to Dance/USA as a model service organization, or getting tap involved in programs that already exist: “Why not become a part of the NPN? Why reinvent the wheel?” Another offered that perhaps maintaining a listserv to promote tap events would be a simple way to start building a network. Whichever form the network takes, one interviewee felt that ITA could serve as its foundation: “Think of the impact of the first [meeting], which birthed ITA...The ITA can play a big role. With the newsletter it is getting more visible and valuable. The organization is growing and this can be part of it.”
- **Begin to establish a home for tap as a national institution.** Throughout the interviews, Jazz at Lincoln Center was looked to as a potential model for the tap field due to the way that it has dramatically increased visibility and support for jazz. Rather than having “grandiose plans to conquer the country” with tap, one interviewee suggested that “What might be more vital is intense activities, a place where there is a full featured scholarship, education [and] presentation effort...Rather than going everywhere at once, to concentrate in one place to raise awareness.” Interviewees suggested possible tap centers at the American Dance Festival or the Kennedy Center. As one said, “Tap has to be institutionalized for people to get it...It has to be not just a series but a venue that consistently does this, with...high profile folks who are saying this is indeed important.” This interviewee offered three important steps toward institutionalizing tap including: getting President Bush to acknowledge tap as an American treasure and present a National Medal of Arts to a master tapper; finding an institutional home for tap; and working with someone like McCoy Tyner or Winton Marsalis to curate a tap series and develop a National Tap Tour. Another possible idea is to ask artist such as Savion and Winton to create an educational series for children on what to listen for in tap and jazz. In this interviewee’s words, “This would go a long way toward increasing people’s awareness...If you go to the top people there is a lot that can be done.”
- **Support a repertory company for tap dance.** A touring repertory company would act as a national repository for the art form and would help change public perception of tap. Such a company would be “something that that the American public could really see that would show the art form of tap as a serious entity.” Through extensive marketing, “Word would get around the country, they would have a successful tour and people would see there’s a whole

company that is dedicated [to tap] and it's not just Savion." Educational events such as feature films, symposia and public talks with key tap figures could accompany the tour. One interviewee expressed willingness to help: "I would love to present it. And, if we could participate in the creation, it would be really worthwhile." Issues to be addressed include financing the company, identifying an Artistic Director and selecting high-quality dancers.

- **Convene a Tap Heritage Forum and encourage preservation of materials.** Tap's complicated history is in some ways an obstacle for the field because as one said, "Part of the tap community's objection is that too many outsiders are incorrectly assuming their heritage. They need to articulate their own heritage and where the field needs to go." This interviewee suggested having a Tap Heritage Forum to discuss tap's history and identify strategies for dealing with historical materials: "They must let those materials go to a major repository, not only for access but for preservation...They need to be stored in environmentally correct places... Otherwise it will be lost."
- **Establish a fund for elder tappers.** Given the tap field's strong respect for the work of master tappers, a fund for aging dancers and dancers in crisis should be among the field's priorities. One interviewee described how even some of the dancers who were the most financially successful had lived in penurious circumstances in their later years, unable to pay even basic utilities. It was suggested that the field determine the need, look into opportunities through unions and the Actor's Fund, and pool the information together as a resource.
- **Support tap writers.** One interviewee suggested finding fellowship funds to support writers travelling to different festivals and covering performances and classes, as well as their context in tap history. Some critical reviews could be included and the resulting documentation could be compiled in a print or online publication.

Marketing

- **Create a tap DVD for presenters.** One interviewee suggested creating an annual compilation DVD of the year's best tap artists to distribute to presenters. It could be formatted as a half-hour presentation, including three to five minutes of each artist's work, and presented in a contemporary artistic way, rather than as a typical promotional video. Though not as good as a live performance, the DVD could begin exposing presenters to tap and could be distributed by ITA to lend credibility.
- **Develop and/or expand university tap programs.** For the most part, tap is not taught at the college or university level. As one interviewee said, "Tap is often left out of both...dance history and the technique classes." Several advocated for injecting tap into dance departments across the country, via guest tap history lecturers, technique classes, and representation at the American College Dance Festival. One interviewee pointed to the lack of tap scholarship saying, "One [idea] might be to inspire people to think of an exhibition of photos [and] archives to nail down people's perceptions and awareness of its rich history." Another interviewee noted that several universities include tap as a significant part of the curriculum, such as University of Oklahoma City University, University of California at

Riverside, and others like the University of California, Los Angeles offer tap as part of the World Arts and Cultures department.³¹

- **Create and distribute audience development materials.** As covered above, interviewees discussed materials including a summary of tap history, a children’s guide, a tap glossary and a short DVD or film to contextualize performances. In general, interviewees were most enthusiastic about a DVD and the children’s guide, though several thought that all of the materials would be useful. As one said, “For a lot of presenters, it is going to be about who will I attract to see this? Is there something in the audience development arena that would make for connections?” These materials could be included in tap artists’ booking kits to give presenters a better sense of tap’s popularity and history, as well as ideas for how to contextualize performances and create related outreach activities. Materials could also be widely distributed to presenters and funders for educational purposes, and made available on ITA’s website.
- **Develop a residency model that would work for tap.** Residencies could help build audiences for tap at the local level and create new funding opportunities for the art form. Tap artists can look to modern dance and other forms for examples of residency activities such as master classes, lecture/demonstrations and post-performance talks, and then clearly state exactly which activities can be provided in their booking kits. Residencies can involve multiple sites across a region, focused activities in one community, major venues, informal performances, work with special populations (such as children, deaf or elderly), and collaboration with local artists, among other things. Residencies can be long-term, such as an artist-driven community project developed over the course of a year with a public performance marking its completion, or short-term, as when an artist spends one week teaching and interacting with students in a university setting. Though many residencies are focused on students or community members, others are designed primarily to provide artists with creative time, “one of the essential things, which has not been available for tap.” Most tap artists may not be trained to teach in community situations, nor to pitch the idea of residencies to presenters. However, the cost of keeping a full tap ensemble in town for an extra day of outreach work could make the entire project cost prohibitive. One successful long-term project can be looked to as a model. Through Jacob’s Pillow and with funding from the Wallace Foundation, a residency led by Jimmy Slyde and Dianne Walker took place in the community of Pittsfield, MA. The Pillow wanted to improve the dance situation in the Berkshires and started with tap for the greatest accessibility to the community. With many elements including tap classes for all ages and community jams, the positive impact on residents was tremendous.
- **Market tap artists rather than tap as a form.** One interviewee suggested that rather than try to expose audiences and presenters to tap in general, focus should be placed on the most talented artists: “It’s important to promote the art form via the vision of the artist who is working in that form. If you think about ballet, you don’t market ballet as a form, you market the Joffrey.”

³¹ Again, there may be other university programs that include tap. See footnote that appeared earlier in this report.

- **Redefine tap for audiences by highlighting improvisation.** Interviewees said that if presenters can just find compelling ways to market tap, developing new audiences will not be a problem: “But, they have to be in the seats first to appreciate it. You have to get them there.” The public’s limited awareness of tap combined with presenters’ limited understanding of how to market it creates, as one said, “The need for a hook...people need to understand what it is.” The problem is, “[Audiences] have a preconceived notion of it as a form they completely know, rather than one where there is continuing innovation.” Interviewees suggested that presenters highlight tap’s spontaneity, innovation and improvisation in marketing materials, rather than trying to pin down program information as though the show is completely set.
- **Raise visibility for tap via TV spots.** A few interviewees suggested utilizing television to get the word out about tap and one who had a great deal of commercial experience was particularly interested. Another suggested the ITA have a pro bono agency do some fun spots on tap dance, which could play with common perceptions of tap using creative ads, animation and slogans such as “Wouldn’t you love to be tap dancing?” or “Tap dancing around a problem.” or “Got Tap?!”

Presenting

- **Engage and increase visibility for the younger generation of tap artists.** A number of interviewees lamented the lack of public access to the work of younger tap artists. As one said, “There is a great deal of energy in the tap field in preserving the memories of [the masters]. That’s great, but they need to look ahead to... all the protégés coming up, through Savion and others.” As a model, another interviewee offered the example of Jazz Ahead, a program initiated by Betty Carter. As she performed around the country, she identified young artists in each community and engaged them in performing, commissions and workshops. As this interviewee described, “Some of the folks in Winton’s orchestra came out of this...She would select the best musicians to be presented in the workshop.” One interviewee said there is no question that a next generation of exceptionally talented tap artists exists and mentioned by name Kendrick Jones, Jason Samuels Smith, Chloe Arnold, Joseph Wiggan, Ayodele Casel, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Ali Bradley, and Andrew Nemr.
- **Curate a tap showcase at APAP.** Several interviewees thought that a well-produced tap event at APAP featuring high-quality talent would be an important step in increasing visibility for the younger generation, much as the NDP artist roster functions for contemporary dance. The showcase should be ready to tour and could present a theme such as “The New Age of Tap, Tap in the 21st Century [or] Tap, The Next Generation.” As one interviewee said, “It can allow cultural centers – whether colleges, contemporary or mainstream – to reengage with the form. Better yet, if it had Savion’s stamp or quotes from him.” This interviewee suggested that ITA could work to interest producers or raise seed money for the project. However, as one cautioned, simply performing at conferences is not going to make a strong impact on presenters: “It is not just the booth, but the success of the booth depends on the relationships you develop for the year or two before.” Additionally, the tap field should realize that it will be up against high-quality, fully produced work presented by artists and agents who have put a lot of time and money into making their best impression

on presenters. Performances like Global Fest, featuring four to five hours of performance in a nightclub setting, and Under the Radar, which presents theatre in alternative spaces, give presenters a chance to see art work in the unique spaces it is meant to be performed in. In order to be successful at such conferences, tap artists will have to make a strong commitment to creating well-packaged, high-quality performances that are designed to convince presenters.

- **Invest in one or several creative producers to create and tour a major national tap event.** Many tap shows could benefit from the help of a creative producer. As one described, “This person would... put a show together, pick and choose among the works, and determine what would work best with your particular venue and audience.” A creative producer must know the artist’s work, as well as the work of all the major tap artists, and be able to identify possible collaborations, create an evening that flows dynamically and coordinate technical aspects such as lighting, staging and sound. In order to be more successful in booking tap, more strong tourable productions are needed. Several interviewees, including one with considerable experience choreographing tap for the entertainment industry, expressed an interest in filling such a role in the future.
- **Develop a travel fund for presenters to attend tap festivals.** A few interviewees suggested finding money to support a presenters’ travel fund and then using networking opportunities at APAP to get presenters to commit to attending a summer tap festival. One suggested that sometimes the APAP travel fund is not used in its entirety, and perhaps could help support some travel to tap festivals where presenters could meet artists and observe classes.
- **Look at the crossover potential for tap to collaborate with music performances.** As one interviewee said, “Trying to convince presenters to incorporate tap into jazz music is an extremely strategic way to try to get audiences to think differently about tap.” With more emphasis on jazz than ever before, through NEA interest and the new building at Lincoln Center, a greater alignment and cooperation with the art form could serve the tap field well. Tap artists and jazz ensembles could be presented on the same evening, or a collaboration could be the basis of a touring show. Interviewees mentioned Fred Strickler’s performance of the Goldberg Variations, which “took tap into a whole other idiom,” and *Classical Savion*, which sold out, as examples of success in this arena.
- **Recruit theaters to showcase tap and percussive dance.** One interviewee felt that restoring entertainment that harkens back to the vaudeville era in theaters across the country could create a resurgence of interest in tap. In this interviewee’s opinion, tap dance has the greatest chance of becoming popular again through a model like the country western theaters in Tennessee, which continue to support several country music shows today; one of the keys to the success of the country western model is the fact that the theatres are owned by country western advocates.]

Professional Development

- **Recruit mentors to work with younger artists.** To encourage and hone the skills of the next generation of tap artists, one interviewee suggested some form of mentorship. Whereas

Buster Brown and Jimmy Slyde used to work with kids in New York City nightclubs, today what is needed is a program to “give the young artists performance experience in informal settings and...to have someone look at their work and talk about it.” This interviewee knew of at least one artist interested in being a mentor, but funding would be needed to cover basic costs such as airfare. One continues to play roles including “mentor, coach [and] supporter.” This interviewee currently teaches a talented young tap artist, a relationship that began through a six-month project supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council to improve the dancer’s teaching skills.

- **Create recordings of tap.** One interviewee said that tappers have not explored the possibility of tap recordings, both as a tool for improving skills and potentially as a marketable product. When used as part of training, “You can hear your mistakes. So it’s not for all, but for those who really envision and learn their craft well. Musicians can recognize bad notes readily. Tappers can recognize bad tempo, timing and things that are shortcomings...You have to become an artisan and a craftsman and that takes doing.” A Guggenheim award supported Jimmy Slyde’s choreo-audio project which is designed to help young artists fine tune their technique for recording and may one day result in recordings that could be listened to as music.

Funding

- **Create mechanisms funders can support.** Interviewees stressed the importance of creating tap entities or projects that funders can easily support. The key to appealing to funders is requesting support for structures and entities, such as ITA, a big touring event, an organized festival or a Dance/USA for tap. As one interviewee said, “I don’t think it’s that people don’t find tap interesting. They either haven’t been asked to fund it, or when they have, it’s not a mechanism they can support.” Additional obstacles for funders include the fact that the tap field is not unified, but rather made up of “rugged individualists,” and does not have a large, accessible body of scholarly support as other forms do.
- **Look to jazz models and other ideas from the music world.**³² Interviewees offered examples of several successful models within the music world that could be used for tap, echoing ideas for presenting the form to jazz and world music audiences. One funder described the experience of trying to “heighten the profile of jazz in a profound way” via an array of strategies including the Jazz Network, coverage of jazz on Morning Edition, support for National Public Radio, and a grant to the Smithsonian Institution for a traveling exhibition about jazz, including performances by National Jazz Orchestra. As this interviewee summarized, “It was an important project, many of the effects of which continue.” Another interviewee saw potential for replication in the Meet the Composer program: “If you model a branch or a stream that is all about ‘Meet the Tap Artists’ or ‘Connect with Your Inner Tap’, or somehow just make opportunities for tap artists happen without it being membership driven.” As one interviewee explained, “If they could see it,

³² See Appendix I for a summary of the National Jazz Network, a very successful model that received national funding.

understand that it is one of the most creative, original art forms, they might want to support it in the way they support jazz.”

- **Highlight the marketing and “buzz” potential of tap.** A few suggested taking “advantage of the buzz you can create with tap.” This would involve providing funders with guidance on how tap renews enthusiasm for the arts and reaches new audiences.
- **Solicit possible funders.** A few interviewees had ideas for funders that could be approached about supporting tap. One considered LINC [Leveraging Investments in Creativity] to be a possibility, saying that with a roster of 11 artists being supported, “Would [LINC] be interested in expanding that list? Could one be a tap artist?” Another thought that the Doris Duke Foundation might be a good fit with tap because of its interest in supporting American forms, like jazz. The idea of a tap conservatory or two-week intensive that could be taken to performing arts high schools might appeal to funders such as the Surdna Foundation that are interested in teaching and training, said one interviewee.

In this section, the 24 interviewees have provided extensive information and feedback for the tap field’s consideration. They generated a wealth of ideas for specific next steps, which taken as a group, are more than the tap field will be able to pursue in the immediate future. Nonetheless, many of these ideas form the basis for the recommendations section, which follows.

III. Consultant Recommendations

Introduction

This planning process has generated a wealth of information from the tap field, as well as the broader arts field. In addition to tap artists and those who organize festivals and other events, the process proactively engaged agents, advocates, presenters, funders, writers, teachers, historians, commercial managers, and administrators. It resulted in 30 hours of interviews, which generated 210 pages of transcripts; about 400 pages from 33 surveys from 25 artists and tap organizers; and an estimated 200 pages of additional information including meeting notes, reports and grant applications. As indicated earlier, the nature of research conducted in any community is that it generates a variety of viewpoints that do not always agree. While some of the information may have been new to the reader, and even difficult to hear, it was offered thoughtfully and constructively by individuals who collectively have an extraordinary amount of wisdom, insight and experience and who want to help the tap field succeed. The timing of this report is important: interviewees want to know about the findings from this process, and learn more about tap artists and trends; and some of them may be poised to act on certain recommendations.

A national plan is geared around that which cannot be accomplished by any one organization alone, whether a festival, company or service organization. Rather, it is designed to address the goals of a field overall. *Together, the field can realize accomplishments that no single organization could on its own.* Although the extensive research clearly points to a number of needs, the challenge is to identify and prioritize the few recommendations that will be: a) most useful to the tap field; b) doable within the constraints of nonprofit budgets and staffing, even if new funds can be raised; and c) urgent, responding to critical needs that affect the field now.

One reality that has affected progress, to date, is that the tap field operates on extremely limited staff and wears multiple hats. A handful of individuals serve as the chief artistic educators, promoters and advocates for the form. There currently exists only one service organization with modest staffing and resources; it is yet to be determined if, or how, ITA would be involved in the recommendations. And, it is clear that there are limitations to what could be taken on by those who currently staff organizations, including tap festivals. Therefore, it is assumed that the recommendations below will require additional assistance in the form of funding as well as human and other resources.

While the need for funding should not dictate the recommendations, it is important to remember that funders are much more inclined to support well-researched projects that are specific and measurable.

The recommendations below are presented according to the themes that emerged in the report.³³ The timeline to complete them would range from one to five years, though some of them will be ongoing for a longer time period. In some instances, when the recommendations seem of the highest priority and/or time sensitive, the consultant has taken the liberty to suggest initial steps for year one. While they are presented in separate components to provide focus, they are interrelated.

Collaboration/Infrastructure Among Tap Festivals & Other Tap Presenters

Launch a formal network among tap festivals and other tap presenters for the mutual benefit of their own communities and the field overall. The network would hold an annual national meeting for festival leadership; determine other areas for mutual gain; and fundraise collaboratively to cover these costs.

Background

As the research from tap artists and organizers points out—both quantitatively and qualitatively—the tap festivals are the nexus for much of the activity that takes place in the tap field and have supported its growth over the past decade. Moreover, the festivals are the de facto infrastructure for the tap field (which is quite different from ballet and modern dance, which have formed hundreds of professional companies and have a national service organization that provides a range of year-round services and meetings). Though the festivals have limited staff and resources, they are the chief mechanism for the field’s interactions and provide critical opportunities for education, performances, networking and some professional development. And, they are run by trusted and well-known leaders who are dedicated to the field. Yet given the multiple hats that these organizers wear, it is clear that they cannot be the responsible for the level of coordination that hosting national activities would require.

What the festivals lack are a) a mechanism for collaboration, where they can meet and work together to address their own needs, b) a forum for interacting with other dance presenters who are, or may be, willing to present tap, and c) a national identity, which greatly aides in increasing awareness and interest on the part of presenters and funders. The tap field can begin by building on this viable and valuable resource by forming a Tap Presenting Network (TPN) [working title] of the largest six to eight festivals. Other art forms, and even other parts of the dance field, gather regularly to discuss issues of common concern, and funding is sought to address projects that benefit them. Organizations such as the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, National Performance Network, and Dance/USA are examples of the tremendous value of such gatherings and collaborative efforts; in fact, they exist in part to make such gatherings happen. It is important for leaders to take time away from the pressure and distraction of producing the

³³ These recommendations reflect the consultant’s experience as a national funder and fundraiser; her knowledge of, and research on, dance service provision in various cities; and her awareness of national service organizations as models. Where relevant, examples are cited from similar efforts in other parts of the dance field.

festivals, and/or the rest of their seasons, to focus and reflect on what is needed to support themselves. TPN might even serve as an advisory role to mainstream presenters.

Goals for such a network would be to:

- Build and strengthen relationships within the tap field;
- Promote collaboration throughout the year;
- Increase the flow of information around the country;
- Provide a mechanism for joint fundraising, thus increasing resources;
- Provide a sense of power, of strength in numbers—the ability to accomplish as a group things that could not be undertaken individually.

Next Steps

- **Host the first annual meeting of the Tap Presenters Network.** To save costs in the initial few years, such a meeting might take place in conjunction with the National Performance Network³⁴, which meets in early December, or with Dance/USA. Travel costs should be subsidized to ensure maximum attendance (as is done with the NPN). An effective schedule may be to convene one day in advance of the NPN's meeting, and participate in the NPN sessions for at least one day (with their permission). This would provide an ideal opportunity to become familiar with community-based presenters and their issues (keeping in mind the NPN's strict guidelines against self-promotion during the meeting). Perhaps the NPN might be interested in a percussive dance showcase during its meeting. If not, the Tap Presenters Network should hold its own showcase the night before NPN starts, to familiarize some NPN presenters with artists and percussive forms.
- **Tap festivals should commit to providing annual statistics, in order to build a national awareness and fact base for their breadth and impact.** Questions can be drawn from the survey used in this planning process. The information could be presented in the aggregate, anonymously, and would serve as a tremendous resource in documenting the impact and reach of this field. *Such information is critical to obtaining funding for any collaborative activities that might be undertaken.*
- **Provide Tap festivals with an annual fee subsidy to identify and support a small number of touring artists.** An amount could be set, based on budget size, and given to each festival to bring in master artists. The subsidy would likely range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per festival. This might include one younger and one master artist per year. It would be based largely on quality and application. It addresses the need for artists to perform more often and for festivals to have greater access to high-quality artists.

³⁴ The National Performance Network is a consortium of almost 60 community-based cultural organizers, including presenters and some artists, who receive subsidy to present artists and meet annually to discuss issues of common concern. It was set up to encourage touring of under-represented artists, including avant garde as well as culturally specific work.

- **Begin to assess other needs of the Tap Presenting Network as a group and how they might be addressed.** Many of those needs are likely contained in this report. Research other national arts service organizations and make decisions on how to proceed, including meeting structure; staffing; priorities for use of funds; and governance/selection. For example, in order to access services, including fee support, the NPN requires its members to attend the annual meeting, undertake residencies, and submit final reports and annual statistics. Similar guidelines would be critical in the success of the TPN.
- **Explore the model of the Jazz Network for possible replication.** The Jazz Network, which was started by the Wallace Foundation and later funded by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the NEA, was a model of support for this art form that faced many of the same issues as tap. A summary of that program appears in Appendix I; note that it has been modified substantially since its creation and now exists as Jazz Fellowship and Jazz Masters On Tour programs at the NEA. Talk with Sara Picillo, the former executive director of the National Jazz Service Organization, as well as staff of the NEA and others who were involved in both forming and transitioning the Jazz Network.

Year One

- Fundraise for and hold the first annual meeting of TPN. Set as its agenda to review this report and identify priorities from these recommendations, or add new recommendations. Hire an outside facilitator and enlist a documenter. Festival staff should be paid an honorarium of at least \$500 to attend, and their travel should be covered.
- Make initial fundraising inquiries for the subsidy of meetings, artist fees, and annual data collection.

Booking and Presenting

Increasing performance opportunities will require responsibility at all levels over the long-term. The field must commit to undertaking a series of steps to generate bookings for tap dance, including building relationships with presenters and agents.

Background

Much of the research centered on this top concern: to understand more about why tap was not being booked and determine what might be done to increase the amount of professional presenting. In research from presenters, agents and other dance leaders, the barriers to booking were clear. The challenges voiced by dance leaders must be taken into careful consideration, and solutions sought to overcome them.

Presenting tap is affected by overall trends in the dance environment. Generally speaking, dance is more expensive than other art forms, and presenters must meet their financial bottom line, adhere to their mission statement, and remain accountable to their own boards and major funders. Dance presenting is down nationwide, and presenting choices—regardless of discipline—has become safer and more conservative.

Presenters have a host of practical concerns that affect their ability to book dance overall and especially tap. In presenting organizations, one person is responsible for booking many art forms and cannot be expected to stay current on all forms of dance. It is not realistic to expect presenters, or even agents, to do extensive homework on one entire dance form; already each week they are weeding through scores of press kits and DVDs. Added to that pressure are the very few opportunities to see performances of high-quality tap. Most importantly, artists are not giving presenters the kinds or quality of information they need ahead of time, including well-written bios, photos and a better understanding of what will happen in the show. Unlike commercial promoters, most presenters cannot book at the last minute since they rely on funding from grants that must be applied for as long as 18 months ahead of time; they can't "cut deals," but instead have to be able to promote artists in their season brochures, which go out months in advance. Overall, issues such as flooring and cost are less a barrier than might have been thought. Finally, presenters are influenced by the quality of the experiences with tap artists whom they have booked in the past. The bottom line for them is generating an audience who will pay to see the event, and leaving that audience satisfied and motivated to return to the next dance event.

Booking goes hand in hand with quality and awareness of artists. Presenters must be informed of artists of the top quality level. Others in the field will need to educate presenters and even vouch for certain artists. By definition, this means that some artists will be presented and most will not. The philosophy of egalitarianism does not apply to presenting; in fact the tap field would tarnish its own credibility by promoting artists who are not of the highest quality level. Related to this is the perception of tap as antiquated and the need to show presenters that tap is "more than something my grandparents did," as one said. Some presenters are skeptical of its improvisatory nature, and the ability of soloists to sustain an evening. Many presenters are unaware of the innovation that exists in tap (which is understandable since they don't see it). Tap is still perceived as being passé; linked to commercialism; and/or amateur.

Once interviewees had laid out their concerns and described the barriers to presenting tap, they offered a wealth of creative solutions that are worthy of serious consideration. The tap field is at a moment when there is potential. Savion Glover has been enormously successful, as have shows such as *Tap Dogs*. The festivals themselves could play a critical role by generating audiences for presenters if they were willing to share their mailing lists. And presenters might reciprocate by including free ads about the festivals in their brochures. A number of the interviewees want to know more about tap styles and artists. Knowing that the dance field (like the tap field itself) operates on a word-of-mouth basis, the tap field can and should work to form relationships with the handful of presenters and agents who love the form and would work to help it regain its footing in the presenting world.

What also emerged from the research are a host of incentives for presenting tap dance, many of which came from those who used to book it. Tap is an accessible and engaging art form, more so than some other forms of dance. Audiences who view it are immediately drawn in and entertained and it can capitalize on that popularity. Also unlike other forms, it can generate substantial crossover audiences, including young people; multi-generational audiences; music-

goers as well as the thousands of people of all ages who take tap in local studios. It also has strong connections to African American culture.

The majority of interviewees thought that audience materials would help significantly in generating interest in the art form and audiences. ITA's website could be the repository for some of this material, which could be used by all artists. In addition, artists are encouraged to develop their own materials. These specific materials would address the needs of target audiences, including children, teachers, and even agents/marketing staff of presenters, as well as general audiences.

Even if the tap field disagrees with or is frustrated by the perceptions illuminated by the research in this report, it should work to understand them. It is hoped that sharing the findings will be the first step in building that understanding. The more artists can help presenters, the more likely they are to book tap artists—and invite them to return.

Goals for these extensive recommendations are to:

- Increase bookings;
- Enhance presenters' understanding of tap;
- Develop audiences of all ages;
- Bolster artists' capacity to market themselves by arming them with tools and materials;
- Eventually increase public awareness for the art form.

The findings include the creation of materials, professional development and specific strategies or action steps. They are presented in three categories: 1) tasks that individual artists and companies could accomplish on their own; 2) national marketing to support and promote the art form; and 3) national efforts to present a specific group of artists.

1. Next Steps for Artists

- **Artists can share the findings from this report with their peers.** Each festival or artist can host a roundtable discussion in their local area to discuss how to overcome the barriers described in this report. They could invite local presenters or agents or artists who have toured nationally to join them in that discussion. The insight provided by those “in the business” would be critical to building understanding.
- **As a group, artists could adopt a guide for expectations and standards of professional presentation.** Having a written document will build artists' understanding of how the booking process works and what is expected by presenters. It will also allow artists as well as potential presenters to be clear on their expectations for the engagement. This would include when information is to be provided, how booking decisions are made, and how to follow through on commitments; fee structures and payment schedules; and other requirements. This should make clear the differences between presentations and “gigs,” in areas such as payment and timing [typically gigs are booked closer to the date of the event and the per-gig pay rate is higher]. It could be modeled on the NPN's contract that lays out expectations for both artists and presenters. Samples, such as the Dancers' Compact, which was developed by a

group of dancers in New York, or the model contracts that appear in *Dance from the Campus to the Real World (And Back Again)*³⁵ can serve as examples. Dance/NYC could also be contacted for information or guidance. A document would serve as a starting point in negotiation for presentations. It would be important to work with presenters in developing such a document, so that it would be as effective as possible.

- **Artists should invest time and money in their booking materials and work to ensure that they meet presenters' needs.** Materials should be as brief as possible. Artists need to invest in good photos and a well-written bio. They are advised to draft materials and show them to at least one agent or presenter and ask for feedback. (Extremely old reviews, flyers of performances that took place years ago or local workshops may do more harm than good). Materials should address practical concerns such as flooring and acoustic needs and any flexibility the artists can offer. Perhaps a FAQ about presenting tap would help presenters to know their options; questions such as “But don’t I need a certain kind of floor?” could be followed with answers such as “Obtaining flooring is easier than it seems. There are many options. Wooden slats are commonly available at a low cost through [company name] or [state another option for flooring]. And if that seems too hard, we can arrange to rent or bring a floor.” Give a sense that the presenter can choose improv, set choreography, or both. Finally artists should include quotes from presenters who have booked them in the past.
- **Artists are encouraged to create a DVD of their work.** This work sample should show artistic quality and have audible sound. Presenters must see and hear the art in order to even consider booking it. A DVD is a first step in motivating them to come see a performance, especially if getting to the show involves travel.
- **Artists are encouraged to obtain feedback on the quality and appropriateness of their work and performance format.** This should come from objective outsiders who are familiar with the regional and national competition for booking. And artists must realize that a booking kit is just a start and that presenters will never book straight from those materials, regardless of how visually attractive they are. They will need to see the work, assess its performance quality, and believe that they can sell tickets and excite audiences.
- **The overall structure and length of shows needs to be addressed.** Soloists need to pay attention to the length of their shows and not be too long-winded. They should communicate the range of options available to presenters – solos and ensembles.
- **In their own materials, artists are encouraged to address presenters' need for audience development materials.** Artists should understand the difference in what presenters themselves need to know, from what would be appropriate for audiences to know, to help them learn about and engage with artists. Audiences would utilize interactive materials such as listening guides or short histories and profiles of artists. Just having these materials available would encourage presenters to book tap. This topic is taken up in greater detail

³⁵ Callahan, Suzanne (Ed.) *Dance from the Campus to the Real World (And Back Again)*. Dance/USA, 2005. Refer to sample residency checklist on page 29 and the sample contract on page 35.

below.

- **Establish a mentorship program that would offer feedback to artists as they develop their craft and learn about the history of the dance form.** Mentors could travel to work with groups of artists or artists (individually or in groups) could travel to work with mentors during the year or for several weeks as part of summer festivals or intensives. Limitations would need to be set on the number who would be admitted each year as well as their technical level. And mentors would need to be paid for their time and travel costs. Perhaps a course could be established that provides an overview of tap history and is taught by someone like Dianne Walker. In addition, the book about tap history that is being written by Constance Valis Hill should prove extremely useful as a common resource for students and teachers, young and old.³⁶ Writers who are interested in covering tap could attend this program to learn more about the art form, and its history. The need for better writing could be addressed through partnerships with existing organizations/programs like at American Dance Festival, Dance Critics Association, Society of Dance History Scholars, Congress On Research in Dance, etc.
- **Train artists in conducting residency activities in addition to performances and classes.** This might include pre-performance talks, which would be of interest to audiences who are curious about the history of tap, or who generally wish to know more about the art they see. A lecture/demonstration with a local tap artist could form a nice connection for audiences with what is happening in their local community. Improvisation jam sessions could be set up between visiting tap artists and local jazz musicians.
- **Finally, and most importantly, artists need to promote themselves to presenters.** The materials are only the first step. Once artists have done the necessary preparation described above, they must then do their own research (or hire an agent) to determine the most likely presenters. If they don't send out materials, they will likely not be booked. *Artists must send information to these presenters* and follow up with phone calls, emails and even in-person meetings.

Year One

- Artists hold meetings in their local areas around the country
- Artists develop new marketing materials

³⁶ See earlier footnote in the report for details on this forthcoming text.

2. Next Steps for National Collaborative Marketing Materials

- **Develop a number of materials on tap dance that could be utilized by the broader field to encourage bookings and increase audience understanding and interest.** Commission artists, teachers and dance historians to develop materials such as the ones listed here, for use by the broader field. They may be packaged together as a Tap Toolkit.
 - **Piece on the history of tap.** Commission a leading historian/writer to write a short and interesting piece of about two pages in length. Integrate ideas from the case to determine what parts of the history to include and what would be of interest to audiences. There may be two versions, one for presenters and those in the dance field, who desire more in-depth information and another for audience members who know little about dance.
 - **Audience guide for adults.** In addition to the history, this piece would provide interesting facts about tap; the overlap with jazz music; difference between solo and improvisation forms; etc. It might be in the format of a “Top Ten Tap Facts” or some such catchy and fun way to liven up the topic and energize audiences.
 - **Template for a children’s guide.** Draw from ideas in other successful materials, such as the Kennedy Center’s CueSheets, a children’s guide that is used for their school performances. Describe the history of the art form in a manner that young people can understand, including what to watch and listen for in tap performances, and connections between music and tap.
 - **Teacher’s guide.** Using the language arts standards, develop a guide about tap that addresses K12 students at each grade level. Perhaps this could be completed in conjunction with a major national institution such as the Kennedy Center. The guide could talk about how tap connects with young people, citing Savion’s appearance on Sesame Street as an example.
 - **[Optional] Short guide about “how to sell tap performances to your school system.”** This would aid artists in promoting themselves in their local areas and increase school bookings. Often, school administrators don’t see the connection between art forms and academic subjects such as literature, math, and history. Artists could describe tap dancers from their local area; how tap could be used to teach academic subjects; and its overlap with music.
 - **Residency Guide.** A similar guide might help artists book themselves in colleges, orient tap artist to the college environment, and generate interest in tap residencies on campus. Commission several artists and college faculty to write them. Draw from successful models in tap and other art forms, including the residency at Jacob’s Pillow in Pittsfield. Create a template/menu of choices for artists to consider in their negotiation with presenters. It could include a residency checklist that would aid artist and presenters in planning and could be modeled on the one in *Dance From the Campus to the Real World (And Back Again)*.

- **Commission a film or DVD**, by a director who understands how to capture dance on film, such as Margaret Selby or Charles Moulton, along with a writer who can describe the progression of tap dance from television and film to the modern times, and describe the differences in styles. Though this would require considerable resources, it could be used as an audience development tool and before performances.
- **Collaborate with presenters who are interested in booking tap by sharing the mailing lists of tap festivals and other resources.** Just knowing that there's a way to reach a target audience that is interested in seeing tap might influence presenters to book it. Making it clear to presenters that not only does this audience exist, but they can reach that audience simply and efficiently. This would help to build relationships and good will between the festivals and presenters. Mutually beneficial relationships could be developed between tap organizers and presenters, whereby they could co-develop residency activities.
- **Host a series of workshops to review artists' marketing materials.** Conducted by a knowledgeable agent, such as Laura Colby or Ivan Sygoda of Pentacle (a management and booking agency), the agenda for these workshops would review both written materials and work samples. The group might begin by viewing the DVDs and materials of several modern dance artists, to illustrate how much the unfamiliar observer relies on materials when they don't know the artist or their art. A peer feedback system would allow participants to gain insight into how they are coming across to others. Perhaps one or several presenters or funders could also attend and provide their feedback. Sessions could be hosted in New York, through Dance/NYC, and perhaps through the festivals in other major cities.
- **Consider holding a Tap Booking Boot Camp, possibly in conjunction with the Tap Festivals.** This would be a more formalized version of the workshop, which would tour to various cities. A similar gathering was held to help modern dance artists in Chicago understand how to market themselves, and this two-day event met with great success. Share the ideas and information in part one with a larger group of artists, and allow time for peer discussion and feedback. (If the tap festivals meet annually as a group, it would be much easier to plan such an event.) Research Dance/USA On Tour, which is structured in a similar way. Consider partnering with Dance/USA On Tour to recruit tap artists wherever this program is offered. Provide artists who attend with a Tap Toolkit.

Year One

- Select one or two of the above materials and commit to fundraising for and writing them.
- Consider pitching the idea of the materials as a group to a funder [such as Altria, Surdna, Dana or Wallace].
- Discuss the possibility of a Tap Booking Boot Camp with Dance/USA, Ivan Sygoda, and others.

3. Next Steps for National Booking Efforts

It is assumed that the ITA or some other entity would assist with these steps. Perhaps funds could go to a booking agent as well as an education consultant.

- **Compile a DVD of outstanding tap artists to begin to familiarize presenters and funders with current artistry and generate “buzz” for the art form.** Share this DVD with all interviewees who volunteered to participate in this planning process, as well as presenters, agents and funders. Circulate it as broadly as possible to other leaders in the dance community. Artists would be selected primarily for quality, but also diversity of style (jazz, funk etc.), age (younger and master artists) and format (solo, ensemble, improv and set choreography). Artists could be solicited for footage, which would then be edited and compiled on a DVD. The DVD could include basic booking information and it might be based on other models, such as one called “Critical Mass” or those which have been created by foreign governments such as Australia and the Netherlands.
- **Explore the range of opportunities to raise visibility and encourage bookings through the Association of Performing Arts Presenters annual conference.** Such opportunities would enlighten presenters about tap dance, its possibilities in performance and high-quality artists. Just as important, it would also educate artists about the booking process. *Approach the organization as soon as possible about this opportunity*—the next conference is APAP’s 50th anniversary, and its schedule will fill up quickly; perhaps it could be pitched as an appropriate focus on this uniquely American art form.
 - **Two showcases** could feature a small group of outstanding artists, and be held in a two distinct venues that are **appropriate to the art form**, including a night club that would allow rapport to be developed between the performers and audience, and a larger theater with 500-1,000 seats.
 - **A panel** could be entitled *Tap Dance: 1956 to 2006* or *50 Years of Tap Dance* and talk about how the art form developed in the past 50 years. Diane Walker might serve as a guest artist, or even be the feature of an Artist Voice session. Perhaps Baraka Sele from New Jersey Performing Arts Center might serve as a panelist, and speak about her work with Savion Glover and how she has used that to build audiences. A PowerPoint presentation on the appeals of tap could be created for the panel. It might draw from the points made in the case statement in this report.
 - **Release the final version of this Plan** at the conference, as part of the Dance Working Group, which meets the day prior to the start of the conference, and/or at APAP itself, or in some other way.
 - **Identify a group of six artists** who could share the cost of a booth and/or membership in Arts Presenters and someone who could book them. Make a three-year commitment to attend; represent and showcase artists.

- **Explore any opportunities to showcase tap through Dance/USA.** This could take place at their next council meeting or Roundtable in June of 2008, at the National Performing Arts Conference, a multi-disciplinary meeting to take place in Denver. The ITA could offer to host meetings or workshops for tap artists, who should be encouraged to come to network and learn. Because tap is in many ways a form of music, perhaps the participants from the music organizations could be involved. Perhaps the annual meeting of the TPN could be held before or after this conference. (The closing performance of the last NPAC Conference featured Lynn Dally, Jason Samuels Smith and Roxanne Butterfly and tap artists should again be pitched for the opening or closing event.)
- **Host a meeting of the agents, probably in New York, who might be interested in booking tap.** The agenda of that meeting would be to talk in person about their experience with and interest in tap, and to determine if any of them might be willing to take on a tap artist. Agents should be shown the new materials that have been developed and several examples of artists' own new booking materials. ITA [or someone] should show the work of six to eight high-quality artists, on DVD, along with great photos of each one, and a booking kit.
- **Work with a creative producer to put together one or several tap tours, which feature artists of the highest quality.** A presenter/curator/producer, who knows the field well, could develop one or several "packaged shows." Use it as a springboard to involve local tap communities, and generate more awareness. The materials developed above could help in educating audiences, generating interest in residencies and fundraising. Perhaps a corporation would pick up the initial costs and provide some subsidy to presenters. Perhaps several presenters could work together to co-commission artists, seek funding, and develop the related marketing and educational materials.
- **Secure funding to offer a subsidy to dance presenters (other than tap festivals) who book tap dance.** This strategy has worked extremely well in other areas of dance, through programs such as the National Dance Project and the NPN, and a number of interviewees suggested that tap build on those models. This subsidy model could be implemented with very little administrative support; it would be a simple application process and subsidy, with some final reporting about audience figures. Yet those who were interviewed thought it would serve as an incentive to book tap.

Year One

- Hold meeting with agents.
- Have introductory conversations with Arts Presenters about showcases and panels.
- Depending on APAP's response, schedule and produce panel and showcase. (Note that these would be time-consuming projects.)
- Begin to explore how the group of artists might be identified.
- If funding permits, release plan in January 2007 at the conference.

National Advocacy and Infrastructure Development

The ITA and other dance leaders who support the form are encouraged to “infiltrate”—politely yet aggressively—into national gatherings. They should deliver the message that tap is alive and well—that this vibrant art form can boast of high-quality artists, both senior and emerging, and offers many appeals to audiences of all ages.

Background

The findings show that there exists a sizeable gap between the infrastructure for the tap field and other areas of the nonprofit professional arts field. Other areas of the arts field have annual meetings, special interest groups, systems of fee subsidies, granting programs and communication devices. ITA has knowledge of and access to many of these national organizations and their meetings. The level of networking, information sharing and relationship building that happens at these conferences could be extremely useful to the tap field in bridging that gap.

The ITA should launch a campaign to draw the tap field closer to the national service organizations. Because so many people study tap, some of these service organizations will see the value of such relationships. For example, the mission of Americans for the Arts is to represent and serve local communities and “create opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.” Arts Presenters is “dedicated to bringing performing artists and audiences together in every place and way imaginable” and works primarily to connect artists to presenting organizations. The goal of Dance/USA is to support the entire field of professional dance. And, the National Performance Network serves a group of outstanding community-based arts organizations as they present artists, both traditional and nontraditional—the very kinds of presenters who would understand the value of tap and the new messages that this report is setting out. Accomplishing this task of “branding tap” will take the conscious efforts of many tap supporters over a number of years. It is not a quick fix but rather a long-term commitment to the art form.

Finally, the workload that will be generated by pursuing even a few of these recommendations is considerable. The ITA has been grossly under-resourced for decades. The ITA staff largely donates its time (e.g. the executive director’s gross take home pay is \$6,000 per year for over 40 hours per week; work; part time staff make between \$8 and \$12/hour; and the editor makes \$15/hr). The long-term effect of inadequate resources is staff turnover, loss of institutional history, and not being able to take on projects and initiatives. Fundraising requests should be prorated to include adequate salary and overhead. If the ITA is to be responsible for undertaking and accomplishing even a portion of this plan; it will be necessary to develop and secure a healthy operating budget that supports an increased level of activity. And, project budgets should include respectful fees and honoraria to the artists who work for the organization by serving on committees, writing articles, etc. Rates for this kind of nonprofit service vary from \$250-\$750 per day or event. It would be simple to access comparable costs for other service organizations and make budget projections that would retain staff and allow for costs such as technology.

Goals are to:

- Leave service organizations with memorable impressions of tap and encourage them to seek out artists and tap speakers to bring to their home locations.
- Educate service organizations about tap—be sure it is on the radar screen.
- Build relationships with professional dance leaders and the arts field overall.
- Begin to build a support system that can accommodate the increased workload that these recommendations require.

Next Steps

Advocacy

- **Develop a “case statement” that promotes tap dance, and adapt its key messages to a variety of uses, including booking, advocacy, education, and funding.** Using the findings and the ideas in the case in this report, craft the *Top Ten Amazing Facts About Tap*, and also a case in a more serious format. It might also convey a menu of options for presenting tap, so that presenters could begin to develop ideas. Convey its appeal to each of their target audiences, connections with youth culture, specifically the connections between tap (or funk tap) and hip-hop. Tap from the younger generation appeals to the very demographic that some presenters are trying to reach.
- **Experiment with new language to describe the form and the various styles that make up what has been and is now called “tap.”** The word “tap” has such mixed associations that integrating some different language may serve to make the art form more appealing to those who harbor such assumptions. Brainstorm to find language that talks about its innovation, melding of percussive forms, jazz influences, uniquely American roots, and its connections with both traditional and popular culture. It is interesting that most of the successful touring shows use other language, such as *Stomp*, *Noise/Funk*, etc. Even *Tap Dogs* gives a twist to the word “tap.”
- **Aggressively incorporate tap into major national gatherings.** Think creatively about the possibilities for showcasing tap dance in a variety of settings. Examples could be to enlist tap artists to perform at the Nancy Hanks Lecture in Washington, DC, in conjunction with Arts Advocacy Day, as well as the annual conferences of Americans for the Arts, the National Association of State Arts Agencies, Very Special Arts, the American Association of Museums, Theater Communications Group or the Society of Arts and Healthcare. Find out about conference schedules ahead of time, and politely, yet aggressively, offer those service organizations access to outstanding tap artists in the cities where their conferences will be held. (Specific ideas for the Arts Presenters conference appear above.) Pitch the idea of having panels at these annual conferences about tap dance and its artists and heritage. Angles to consider could be: tap dance in K12 school settings; tap dance as a form of music; its multi-cultural heritage and how it developed alongside American history; its flexibility in community settings; models for residencies; how audiences of all ages and abilities react to tap; etc. These organizations do have budgets to pay artists, and the materials developed

above could be distributed on information tables or at panels.

- **Approach Americans for the Arts to explore the most appropriate forms of advocacy.** This might include conducting a study about the prevalence and popularity of tap dance as an American art form. AFTA has extensive experience and success in advocacy, and has amassed a large and impressive amount of research on the arts field. Explore their interest in looking at tap and whether or not they would be interested in undertaking a study, to highlight tap as a strong example of arts participation across the country. Other potential partners would be the Urban Institute and Dance/USA, both of which have conducted studies of the arts field and dance, respectively.
- **Hold a national meeting in the next year, for a select group of interviewees from this planning process, to review the plan and discuss next steps.** As a rallying call around the release of this plan, such a meeting should involve funders and presenters. Ask some of the interviewees from this study to moderate discussions around issues that are relevant and interesting to them. Ask high-quality artists to attend and speak.
- **Hold a Tap Heritage Forum, to address the critical issues of documentation and preservation.** The tap field is at a moment when it is in jeopardy of losing even more of its own history. Already many of the masters have passed on, and more information that has not been preserved will soon be lost. Working in conjunction with the Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) in a half- to one-day session (which might occur in conjunction with Dance/USA or another service organization) address any concerns about ownership and payment, and make clear that this is not a money-making enterprise for anyone. Perhaps several artists or estate managers from other areas of the dance field (such as the Balanchine Trust), could speak about the value of preserving this kind of information, and how it was used once it was placed in a national repository. Work with DHC to disseminate guidelines on how to donate materials to libraries or other repositories. While a national preservation initiative is probably beyond the scope of this plan, perhaps it could be undertaken by DHC with several tap artists or companies as partners.

Infrastructure

- **Consider starting a Tap Council as part of Dance/USA.** Dance/USA does have councils that are specific to dance forms (namely ballet and modern dance). The organization would likely agree to host a tap council, for peer artists and managers in this field. The barrier is often the cost of attending; however, funding could be sought for this purpose and artists and managers could be invited from around the country. Involve a group of no more than 20. Tap artists and administrators could learn about other components of the national dance field, meet their peers in other dance forms, and learn from professional development sessions about areas that would assist them, such as marketing, advocacy, fundraising, obtaining visas, etc. Most importantly, Dance/USA would help to fight the isolation that can exist for the tap field.

- **Closely assess the current capacity and skill base of the ITA and commit to growing the organization or developing the necessary infrastructure in a different organization.** The recommendations in this report involve extensive work, and it has not yet been determined who would carry them out. In order to undertake many of the recommendations, ITA should have at least two full-time staff at professional-level salaries, with additional support staff. And, it should have the resources to pay artists and other consultants who would be commissioned to write materials. There is a divide in the recommendations in this report between national advocacy and presenting, and member services, which might serve as a natural divide in job descriptions. Staff should bring experience in service provision, booking/marketing, and fundraising (with a track record of success). An assessment should also include equipment such as computers and services such as web design and maintenance.
- **Develop reasonable budgets that include a commitment to paying honoraria and fees to artists.** Regardless of where projects are housed, artists and others should be paid for their time and expertise.

Year One

- Assessment of ITA's staffing and budget.
- Conversations with national service organizations.
- Case statement.
- Develop new language.

Quality

The tap field must address the issue of quality carefully yet responsibly. If it desires higher visibility, it must maintain the highest standards for its professional artists and encourage professional development and mentorship for those who are still developing their craft.

Background

Throughout its history the tap field has produced outstanding artists who have inspired countless audiences. Yet throughout all areas of the research—from artists, festivals and national interviews—a consistent concern was raised about the quality level of artists who are promoted as professional. Such discussions are sensitive; having them will require respect, and the contribution of artists/teachers of all quality levels to the development of the field should not be negated. Without an honest assessment of quality, and the setting of some standards, there is little chance that presenters will change their associations with the tap field and begin to book tap. As with any art form, there will always be a small number who are truly outstanding, tour widely, and become famous. By comparison, there are estimated to be over 400 major dance companies and possibly 1,500 companies of varying size and structure,³⁷ in addition to literally

³⁷ Dance/USA projects that the real number of dance companies is much higher; if one includes companies with budgets between \$25,000 and \$99,000 that may or may not have nonprofit status, the number is likely between 1,000 and 1,500, according to John Munger, Director of Research. The NEA study entitled *Raising the Barre: The*

thousands of individual artists; a very small percentage of these are touring to major venues in any given year.

Other dance forms have strategies to recognize quality in a manner that raises visibility. The best example is the Bessie awards in NYC, which are given to artists in contemporary dance and performance art. They are given only to artists of the highest quality through a thorough assessment of performances that goes on year-round. Rather than divide the field, the Bessie's serve as a rallying point and marker of success and pride. The honor of receiving peer recognition from a committee that sees all performances by artists who are nominated, and then discusses and votes on their work, is a meaningful vote of confidence to those who are chosen, who in turn use the Bessie to promote their own artistry. As members of the Bessie's Committee will confirm, the conversations and decisions are difficult, because in any given year some artists are chosen and many are not.

A similar level of rigor should be used with tap to develop a mechanism to assess and promote its own high quality. The setting of standards, either through an annual award, or commissions, or touring subsidies, would give artists something to aspire to and presenters something to watch for. Unfortunately, the days have past when the field can rely on informed press, the NEA or other mechanisms to promote its top quality artists. The tap field must take on this task itself.

The issue of quality has implications for many of the recommendations in this report. Some of the services and programs described above can serve many, while others can only serve a few (at least in the beginning). It is a sensitive moment when the tap field as a whole needs to build trust and relationships with presenters, which means promoting a small group of outstanding artists. Applying rigor now will benefit the broader field later.

Next Steps

- **Establish one or several ways to give national recognition to artists of exceptional quality.** This may be through an awards ceremony or a funding mechanism. Criteria and specific awards might focus on choreography, innovation, technical abilities, improvisation, overall performance quality, and maintaining legacy.
- **Consider developing a DVD of six to eight outstanding tap artists.** Perhaps it could include the artists that are given awards. Duplicate and distribute that as broadly as possible. Perhaps this could exist as a section on the DVD that was described above, or they could be

Geographic, Financial and Economic Trends of Nonprofit Dance Companies (2003) reports that between 1987 and 1997, the number of sizeable nonprofit dance companies in the U.S. grew from 188 to 363, a growth rate of 93%. Smith's study also posits that the growth in dance companies far outpaced the population growth. New York ranked first with 81 companies, and California placed second with 45. However, dance companies became more widely dispersed throughout the country. Average budgets by the end of 1997 were \$663,000. Only half of them report small surpluses in a given year. Contributed resources are down; the NEA funding for dance companies fell from an average of \$5.7 million between 1988 and 1995, to \$2.7 million in 1996, due to the agency's overall funding cuts. Over the same decade, growth in ticket and other sales outpaced growth in contributions.

one in the same.

- **Consider other ways to publicize high quality artists.** Perhaps a public relations firm would be willing to offer pro bono services. Or, corporations such as the Gap might feature young tap dancers in their commercials, since they wear the style of clothing that this corporation sells.

Tap as an Institution

Explore the possibilities of institutionalizing tap in a prominent location. That entity would undertake centralized efforts to promote and serve the art form. The long-term goal is to recognize tap as an important part of American culture.

Background

Both select tap artists/organizers and interviewees hoped that one day a national home or center for tap could be established. A centralized home would work to benefit the field overall. This is not to imply that a new facility be built, but rather a place be found within a major national institution. One artist described in section two what such an institution might accomplish, and its potential to raise visibility for artists and the art form overall.

Among those that might be considered are Jacob's Pillow, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and the American Dance Festival. These institutions would offer built-in performance opportunities; archives; and an audience that draws from the general public and national dance leaders, including press and funders. This would involve considering the pros and cons of: a) having such an institution in a major city that has a high concentration of tap artists (such as New York or DC) versus a more rural area where costs might be lower (ADF or The Pillow); b) multiple entry points for crossover audiences from other disciplines (such as Lincoln Center and Kennedy Center); and c) visibility (including annual audience size, visitors to archives, tourism, etc.)

This would be a five-to ten-year process, and might begin with a performance project or festival. Perhaps Savion could curate a festival at Lincoln Center, or the Kennedy Center could host a series called "Tap at the Terrace" (the name of its more intimate theater).

Next Steps

- **Explore options for, and hold initial discussions with, institutions that might be interested in establishing a tap institution.** Identify one or several people within these institutions who might be open to the idea and have initial conversations with them. Perhaps it could start with a small project, such as a performance series. The Kennedy Center has been holding some cabaret performances in one of its spaces, and this could be one way for tap to be presented in a format that is not appropriate for other dance forms, which require larger space. (Note that the Kennedy Center does have a history of presenting tap in its

larger theaters.)

- **Perhaps a university or service organization could serve as a partner in institutionalizing tap.** A fund for guest teachers could be established, to support master artists to teach in select colleges for a semester. In addition to working with dance and theater departments, it may be possible to create linkages with other departments such as cultural anthropology, African American studies, and music. And perhaps several of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities would want to pursue having tap as part of their cultural studies department. Perhaps it could start with a pilot program in several schools. The National Dance Education Organization or the International Association of Blacks in Dance may be involved; individual meetings could be held to encourage tap representation at their meetings.

Community Building

The tap community as a whole is encouraged to develop and maintain positive working relationships.

Background

The tap community has many assets. Through the festivals, it takes care of its own and nurtures the next generation. Presenters and others were inspired by its sense of family, as well as the lessons they learned—about both tap and life—from the tap elders. Yet, those who have gone on too long in performances or caused other problems leave presenters ambivalent about booking other artists. Like the tap field, the dance field overall operates on word of mouth, and comments (both positive and negative) can be circulated for years.

People have respect for and some interest in the history of tap dance. Hearing that tap has not gotten enough recognition or booking matters to those in the field, but there is a growing sense that *the tap field itself must come up with concrete ideas of what to do, and offer its own help in turning around those perceptions*. The claim that other dance artists are making more money than tap artists is a myth: the average modern dancer who is working with a small company rehearses and performs for free, relying on outside jobs to pay the rent, and fees to the most established dancers in companies that have been around for decades are not a living wage, also requiring them to maintain outside jobs.

Finally, the ITA was recognized and encouraged for all that it has done for the field. But it was cautioned against straining its relationships with the field by expecting so much for little or no fee.

Surveys and interviews conveyed the hope that the field would rise above feelings of competition. Maintaining a positive attitude will be important in implementing many of the recommendations in this report. There is enormous potential for the field to coalesce and grow, if enthusiasm is channeled in productive and innovative ways.

Next Steps

- **Develop guiding principles and standards of conduct for the tap field, and encourage artists and others to sign on to them.** Other professions—from accountants to fundraisers to actors and musicians—have set standards by which they agree to conduct business. These standards are largely shaped around ethics, communication, honesty, accountability and conflict resolution. The tap field could adopt a similar model. Having a set of principles provides a framework for doing business and communicating; it actually protects a field, and raises its integrity. And, it needn't be long or complex. Gather documents from other fields, such as the NPN, and the Dancers' Compact (which was developed by dancers in New York with the support of Dance Theater Workshop), and draft a similar document for tap. ITA might establish a professional membership category, whereby admission into that category requires people to agree to abide by such standards.
- **Circulate the findings from this report to artists and tap organizers.** That would convey that the community's image could be improved. And it would give ideas for how to work together more effectively.
- **Draw from the wisdom and leadership of the elders in the field to instill a spirit of respect for all who make up the tap community.** Honi Coles, Gregory Hines, Jimmy Slyde and Steve Condos often spoke about respect and tolerance, making clear that the enjoyment and sharing of the art was key. Participation in any field requires tolerance coupled with diplomacy. As the expression goes, the rising tide lifts all boats. The tide, in this instance is the art form of tap and all it has to offer artists, audiences and the broader world, across ages, races, and countries.

Funding

The ITA and other groups are encouraged to share this report with funders and aggressively begin to fundraise for select projects.

Background

This report contains a wealth of information, perspectives and ideas about the strengths, impacts, circumstances and needs of the tap field. Such a compendium of information about its impact and needs has not existed before. Within that information, many appeals of the art form are highlighted. Select funders, as well as presenters, would find this information of interest. And, artists and festivals within the tap field should be able to utilize it in making the case for their own local impact.

One finding in the report is that funders lack awareness of the tap field, including its prevalence in local communities; the multiple audiences who see it; and the outstanding artists who are creating work. And, the tap field lacks definitive numbers on its own impact, such as audience size. This report should go a long way toward educating funders who are interested in serving

the arts, and dance field, about the particular needs of tap. Moreover, it gives an overview of the needs of the professional tap field, in ways that can educate funders.

Likewise, most funders require that requests for support be pitched as specific projects, often within a structure that will support a broader segment of the field. In fact, one extremely knowledgeable funder, who knows the tap field well, strongly stated that the reason why tap has difficulty in obtaining support was because it had not found ways to apply for specific projects. For example the NPN, described above, has organized itself in a manner that serves its constituents but also works for funders. Dance/USA as a whole applies for project support from funders for specific elements of its services, such as its council meetings, roundtable, etc.

Next Steps

- **Circulate the draft version of this report with select interviewees.** The tap field is fortunate that a number of interviewees consented to review the final draft of this report and offer feedback. Their generous offer to review it should be pursued.
- **Share this report with national funders and obtain their feedback and ideas.** A number of funders, including the NEA and The Wallace Foundation, agreed to review a final draft of this report. Their feedback will be extremely useful in determining if, or how, tap-related projects might be of interest. Eventually share it with other dance and arts funders, such as Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.
- **Arrange for meetings with some of the interviewees to determine their areas of interest.** Perhaps such a meeting could take place in conjunction with Dance/USA or Arts Presenters, or another national gathering. If that is not possible, host a meeting in New York or Washington, since many of them are based there. Ask them to respond as a group to this report, and determine their interest level and ideas for next steps.
- **Decide on several (one to three) national projects that should be undertaken in the next one to three years.** Develop project descriptions for each one. Among those that might be most appealing to funders are:
 - Tap Presenter Network, including meetings, statistics and subsidy (Tap on Tour).
 - Joint marketing materials (perhaps in the form of a Tap Toolkit).
 - Pilot effort to promote a Tap Artists Partnership (T.A.P.), which would jointly raise funds to subsidize, promote and tour work.
 - A series of discussions to identify an umbrella for a tap center.
 - Tap Advocacy Campaign – to bring tap artists to national gatherings and infiltrate those meetings with information about tap artists.
 - Performance project and/or national tour—a creative producer who would partner with a group of presenters to identify artists and create a tour.
 - Film about tap.
 - Partnership with a college.

- Professional development – (Tap Booking Boot Camp and Tap Toolkit).
- **Encourage tap festivals to utilize the findings from this report to fundraise in their local areas.** Illustrating that they are part of a national network that serves an art form would be appealing to certain local funders. Festivals might address some of the findings in this report within their own region, and fundraise accordingly from local sources.
- **Use the information in this report as a tool to educate funders and advocate for the art form.** The Case Statement will be helpful in building understanding of how the field works. The findings will be useful in stating a rationale for projects for which funding is sought. Because the information comes from artists, tap organizers and influential leaders in the dance field, it should hold considerable credibility in funders' eyes.

Year One

- Share report with interviewees and solicit their involvement.
- Select and seek funding for three projects including developing project descriptions and budgets for them.
- Meet with funders to determine their interest in national support.

Other Ideas

Next Steps:

- The tap community, perhaps through the ITA or festivals, etc. could partner with existing organizations such as DCA, CORD, SDHS, ADF's dance critics institute, oral history organizations, the Dance Heritage Coalition, etc. to encourage the education of people already writing about dance/the arts to write about tap and to encourage the development of new tap writers.
- The ITA could revamp its communications strategies and find funding to upgrade its current publications and ways of communicating with the field including its website, *On Tap* magazine, and the creation of a tap journal.

In addition to what appears in these recommendations, other ideas were offered by interviewees, as well as tap artists and organizers. The committee and broader tap field is encouraged to review those ideas to determine which among them should be pursued and prioritized.

IV. Author's Note

*If you wanna learn to improv, add an "e" to the word. That spells "improve."
- Jimmy Slyde, tap dancer*

Dr. Slyde advises those who want to improvise well on stage to start by improving their own technique. His guidance goes far beyond the tap floor. It can be applied to this planning process. The tap field can utilize its skills, experience, and accomplishments in order to improve its own success nationally. Planning is an administrative improvisation: there is no single formula for it. Rather it is a set of creative decisions that are based on the background, talents and experiences of a group (in this instance the steering committee), and informed--and supported--by the "audience" around them (in this case the tap world and national dance field). Ultimately, like tap improvisation the recommendations are calculated yet creative risks.

As with any production, the artists onstage are backed up by the many people behind the scenes. A group of freelance artists were instrumental in the preparation of this report. Acknowledgements go to Brooke Belott, for assistance with analysis and writing of the interview section; Jane Jerardi, for analysis of data and writing of the survey section; and Ginger Wagg, for administration and data entry. Without them, this plan would not have been possible.

Together, we wish the tap field every success in its endeavors.

- Suzanne Callahan

VI. Company Profile and Authors' Biographies

Callahan Consulting for the Arts

Callahan Consulting for the Arts helps artists, arts organizations and funders realize their vision through a range of services that includes strategic planning, resource development, program evaluation, and philanthropic counsel. Founded by Suzanne Callahan in 1996, the firm has expanded over the past ten years to include strategic partnerships with senior consultants as well as freelance writer/administrators.

The firm has attracted a wide and growing client base of small to mid-sized arts ensembles, large institutions, presenting organizations, foundations, and national associations. Among the company's New York clients have been: Dance Theater Workshop (for the New York State Dance Force), the Joyce Theater, Urban Bush Women, Gina Gibney Dance, Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Its national client base includes Dance/USA, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, the Chicago Community Trust, and The Pew Charitable Trusts. Its local client base includes the Washington Performing Arts Society, the Washington Ballet, Washington Shakespeare Company, World Arts Focus, the Carl M. Freeman Foundation and In Good Company. The budget size of 501(c)3 organizations served has varied from under \$100,000 to over \$6 million. (Philanthropic organizations are significantly larger.) Artistic disciplines have included dance of a wide variety of forms and styles, including ballet, modern, tap, African, Latin-influenced, middle eastern, swing/lindy and stepping; contemporary, experimental and historical theater; spoken word; and orchestral, choral, chamber, gospel and Latin music.

In the past decade, the firm has enjoyed growing recognition. Founder Suzanne Callahan is a regular trainer, college educator, panelist, and guest speaker and her new book *Singing Our Praises* just received a major national award. She has also been published in the areas of fundraising, planning, and philanthropy.

Callahan Consulting for the Arts offers its clients a wealth of experience in national policy and philanthropy; professional certification in fundraising; graduate-level training and trend-setting expertise in evaluation; and a thorough and effective approach to assessment and strategic planning. Most importantly, the firm prides itself on its impressive track record of accomplishment and concrete results in its key service areas, and the strong and trusting relationships that it has developed and maintained with its clients.

Highlights of Planning and Fundraising

- Conducted a planning process for the Washington Ballet, to assist it in opening a new facility in Anacostia, an area of great historical significance to African American culture in Washington, DC. Recommendations are currently being implemented. The enthusiasm about the report resulted in it being disseminated to 125, including other arts partners in the facility.
- Conducted a strategic planning process for the Chicago Community Trust, culminating in a plan for dance service provision. The extensive research illuminated artists' needs to dance leadership in the city, including artists and funders, and the report was strongly endorsed by the dance community.
- Facilitated a planning process for the Hall of Mirrors at Glen Echo Park (MD), to determine the feasibility of rebuilding this facility and a management structure that would support such a campaign.
- Conducted a planning process for Urban Bush Women (NY), to assess and address development, internal operations, staffing, and major donor efforts, resulting in enhanced understanding of these major and new relationships with potential donors.

- Facilitated a national team in planning for the National Performance Network, which culminated in seven figure funding from a major national foundation. Also conducted a successful planning process for Washington Performing Arts Society, culminating in multi-year foundation support.
- Facilitated numerous retreats to build consensus and capacity for national and local organizations such as the National Association of Artist Organizations, the Hurston Wright Foundation (MD), and Washington Shakespeare Company (VA).
- Brings expertise in foundation research and outstanding success in proposal development for organizations such as the Washington Performing Arts Society and The Washington Ballet.
- Provides technical assistance in fundraising for small organizations with limited development staff and teaches fundraising workshops for organizations such as the Smithsonian Institution and the Cultural Alliance of Greater DC.

Highlights of Philanthropy, Evaluation and Dance Research

- Manages Dance/USA's National College Choreography Initiative, a funding program which, as a result of its impact, received renewed funding from the NEA. (2001 to present)
- Developed the curriculum for *Program Evaluation for Arts Organizations*, a course at the Association of Performing Arts Presenters' Winter Institute, in conjunction with Innovation Network, in order to increase organizations' understanding and skills in this important area.
- Conducted research on dance communities in major cities across the country, including Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle and Minneapolis, which was used by funders to better understand the field. Completed a national comparative study on dance communities for The Pew Charitable Trusts in order to illuminate issues facing the dance field and inform policy decisions.
- Trains and advises organizations in evaluation in both one-on-one settings and gatherings such as the Dance/USA Roundtable and Council meetings. Designs, conducts, analyzes, and presents evaluations involving focus groups, interviews, surveys and other qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Publishing

- [*Singing Our Praises: Case Studies in the Art of the Evaluation*](#) (2005). Association of Performing Arts Presenters. Winner, Outstanding Publication of the Year, American Evaluation Association.
- *From the Campus to the Real World (And Back Again): A Resource Guide for Faculty, Artists and Teacher* (2005). Dance/USA.
- *National College Choreography Initiative: Encore—A Year of Success* (2005). Dance/USA.
- *Artist-College Collaboration: Issues, Trends and Vision* (2003). Dance /USA.
- *The National College Choreography Initiative: Supporting the Past, Present and Future of American Dance* (2002). Dance/USA.
- *Reaffirming the Tradition of the New* (2001). National Performance Network.
- *The Art of Evaluation* (2001). Dance/USA Journal. Reprinted in Theater Communications Group's Centerpiece.

Suzanne Callahan, CFRE, Founder

Callahan has served as panelist or site visitor for the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation and the NEA, and was Senior Specialist for the Dance Program at the NEA for nine years, where she gained a broad understanding of dance artists, presenters, and service organizations. A Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), she has spoken and published for national and local arts organizations and funders including, in addition to those listed above, the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers, the Association Foundation Group, and American University's Arts Management Program. Callahan holds an M.A. in Dance Education and a Certificate in Fundraising from George Washington University, a B.A. in Social Policy from Northwestern University, and completed post-graduate study in program evaluation and research methods at George Washington University.

Brooke Belott, Client Associate

Brooke Belott brings experience in dance, administration, writing, research and publishing. Based in the New York City area, she currently serves as Development Associate at Movement Research, is a freelance grantwriter and performs with choreographer/performance artist Ed Tyler. Previously, she worked in development at Second Stage Theatre in New York City and as Publications Assistant at Equals Three Communications in Bethesda, MD. She graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park, with a double major in Dance and English, in 2002. Brooke played a major role in the completion of the book *Singing Our Praises*.

Jane Jerardi, Client Associate

A DC-based choreographer and artist, Jane Jerardi has worked for the past seven years with a variety of organizations to support artists. She served as arts coordinator at the British Council, connecting US audiences to contemporary British artists and now manages programs for the Society for the Arts in Healthcare. Her experience includes strategic planning, grant writing, communications strategy and website development, as well as research and writing. In addition to producing and presenting her own work, she is trained as a facilitator for artists' workshops with The Field and she teaches yoga to adults. She recently received a commission for a new work from the Washington Performing Arts Society.

Ginger Wagg, Administrative Assistant

Ginger Wagg is an artist focused on dance and improvisation who is committed to raising visibility for experimental performance by using alternative venues. In addition to her own work she currently performs with Sharon Mansur/mansurdance (MN), Daniel Burkholder/the PlayGround (DC), and Shua Group (NYC). Wagg has worked intermittently with Callahan Consulting for several years on the National College Choreography Initiative and has been administrative assistant since fall of 2006.

IV. Steering Committee Priorities

Author's Note: The Steering Committee set the priorities noted below after reviewing the initial draft of this report. Since that time, the report has also been circulated to individuals including funders, presenters, and the leaders of service organizations.

Upon reviewing the draft of this report in May 2006, the Steering Committee decided on the following priorities. In light of the findings and recommendations presented in the report, the committee first discussed its vision for the tap field for the next ten years, and then set priorities of what it would like to see accomplished in the next year, in pursuit of their larger vision. In making its determinations, the committee wished to set priorities that were a) clear and b) doable.

Vision for the Next Ten Years

In the next ten years, the Committee envisions the following:

- Innovation in the art of tap continues.
- The history of tap dance has been thoroughly researched, documented, and historical records have been secured. Materials are placed in archives and accessible to the public; rare footage has been viewed by more people in the form; and more texts have been published about the art form.
- Tap is included in schools. It is present through performance and study not only in colleges and conservatories but also K-12 schools.
- New venues for tap have been cultivated. They include jazz music venues, main stage theaters in addition to the tap festival circuit and alternative venues, and recorded forms. (DVDs, films, videos, etc.)
- Tap Center(s) are established and financed. One or several centers would exist in some physical place to fulfill some of the purposes outlined in this report.
- There is an increased media presence for tap on TV, radio and film.
- A central location exists for tap archives.
- A national marketing campaign for tap dance is launched.
- The infrastructure for tap dance, including its artists but also administrators, continues to grow.

Next Steps in Specific Areas

In fulfillment of the above vision, the following steps would be taken in the next year or so.

Quality

- In order to allow artist/students to learn from master artists and improve their craft, festivals would support one- to two-week long intensive workshops, moving beyond single master classes into more formalized in-depth teaching. By providing festivals the

opportunity to apply for subsidy of artists' fees, extended teaching of this kind would be possible.

- Festivals would host residencies with artists who would audition students, create a work and perform it at the festival. This would provide artists an opportunity to create work, and students the opportunity to learn and perform the work of artists.

Fund for Elders

- A core group of known and established elders in financial need would be supported either through collecting money at festivals, or possibly, through selling some kind of DVD of their work (if it's possible to obtain the rights) or through the establishment of a more formalized fund in alliance/cooperation with an existing fund for other artists.

Community Building

- Publish the Executive Summary of this report in *On Tap* and make the entire report available online.

Funding

- Form a development committee should be formed to begin to implement some of the recommendations from this report.
- Approach select funding contacts and potential partners for meetings including the NEA, the Wallace Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the American Dance Festival, the Ford Foundation, the Kraft Foundation, as well as a select group of individuals who may be interested in supporting the art form.

History

- Review the literature on tap and create bibliography of recommended readings of what exists.
- Bring tap historians together at a Tap Heritage Forum, with the following agenda:
 - Show footage.
 - Exchange materials on tap history.
 - Create the tap bibliography.
 - Identify the location for a film archives.
 - Establish a tap archive.
- Write a treatment for a film about tap and its history and approach Ken Burns and others about making the film.
- Support the preservation of rare tap archival footage currently in artists' private collections

- Support the funding of scholars/historians to research the history of tap; ally with other organizations to do so

National Marketing

- Promote the show *Imagine Tap* to dance presenters nationwide, which will open in August of 2006 in Chicago and features many outstanding young tap artists.
- Create a primer/case statement that promotes tap that includes the history and other basic information for critics and presenters (presenters for their own knowledge and to use in their marketing materials to encourage them to present tap). The primer could include what to look for/listen to, how to evaluate quality, etc.
- Join Arts Presenters and sign up for a booth at its national conference to educate presenters and promote tap, tap artists, and tap companies.
 - A booth could accommodate brochures and DVDs for 15 artists.
 - Create and distribute a document called *Top 10 Amazing Facts About Tap*. Conduct a panel about tap during the same Arts Presenters Conference.
- Identify three major presenters and approach them to develop a project that would include creative time, marketing materials, residency activities and performances. This project would serve as a model. Presenters should be familiar with the National Dance Project, and might include Jacob's Pillow or the Walker Arts Center, provided they are interested. Working in such a manner with a producer and artists and allowing allow time to develop the project – perhaps a six month to year-long process – would assure its success.

Infrastructure

- Expand the current steering committee.
- Approach the National Performance Network for possible collaboration.
 - Seek permission to be guests at their meeting, which takes place in the late fall, 2006.
 - If the NPN is interested, identify concrete ways to be involved in the 2007 meeting.
- Assist artists in developing more effective marketing materials to encourage further booking.
 - Arrange ways to critique marketing materials working with individuals such as Ivan Sygoda.
 - Create a directory of presenters who may be willing to book tap.
 - Create a guide for artists about how to get presented.

- Form a tap network (which could include festival and other tap presenters and/or could also include other tap people – a National Tap Council) that would meet annually.
- Consider forming a tap council at Dance/USA; Marda will approach Andrea Snyder about this possibility.
- Assess and reprioritize ITA’s structure.
 - Improve the website.
 - Raise the quality level of *On Tap*.
 - Develop a realistic budget for ITA’s operation, including reasonable salaries.
 - Phase out of doing one-on-one requests for information, in order to take on the larger goals of this planning process.
- Have initial conversations with several national leaders about eventually forming a National Tap Center.

**International Tap Association
National Tap Plan**

April, 2006

Appendices

- L. **Steering Committee Members**
- M. **Interviewees**
- N. **Survey Respondents**
- O. **Cover Letter to Interviewees**
- P. **Interview Questions**
- Q. **Cover Letter to Survey Respondents**
- R. **Survey of Artists**
- S. **Survey of Tap Organizers**
- T. **Summary of the National Jazz Network**
- U. **Summary of Issues for the Tap Field**
- V. **Survey Methodology**

Appendix A. Steering Committee Members

- 1. Chloe Arnold/Jason Samuels Smith**
L.A. Tap Festival
- 2. Bril Barrett**
Founder/Co-artistic Director, Making A Difference Dancing Rhythms
(M.A.D.D. Rhythms)
- 3. Lynn Dally**
Artistic Director, Jazz Tap Ensemble
Adjunct Professor, UCLA Dept of World Arts and Cultures
- 4. Acia Gray**
Executive/Artistic Director, Tapestry Dance Company &
The Soul to Sole Festival
- 5. Marda Kirn**
International Tap Association
- 6. Sali Ann Kriegsman**
Writer, Consultant
- 7. Robert Reed**
St. Louis Tap Festival
- 8. Tony Waag**
Artistic/Executive Director, American Tap Dance Foundation

Chloe Arnold began her career under [Chris Baker](#) (student of the legendary Honi Coles) and as a member of the National Tap Dance Company's Flying Feet. Since then, Ms. Arnold has appeared in Debbie Allen's productions of *Brothers of the Knight*, starring James Ingram, *Soul Possessed*, *Sammy* (the life and times of Sammy Davis Jr.) and was Associate Choreographer for *Pearl* at the Geffen Playhouse. Other performances include Savion Glover's *All Star Tap Revue*, T.A.A.P. in NYC, "The Cotton Club Returns" in Louisiana, The Oneness Awards honoring Michael Jackson, the tour of *The Legacy of Cab Calloway*, and as a member of Jason Samuels Smith's A.C.G.I.(Anybody Can Get It). She was Managing Producer of the [Debbie Allen Dance Academy \(DADA\)](#) 2002-2005 and co-directed the Annual Los Angeles Tap Festival. She holds a degree in Film from Columbia University. Film and television appearances include UPN's "The Parkers", "One on One", Nickelodeon's "Brothers Garcia", The Jerry Lewis Telethon (Emmy Award Winning number), Dean Hargrove's *Tap Heat*, the AMC documentary *Cool Women*, and Outkast's upcoming feature *My Life In Idlewild*. Arnold teaches as part of L.A. Unified School District's L.A.'s Best, the Yo Watts Program, and the Watts Labor Action Committee. She has also taught at the 2005 Black Choreographers Festival, the Broadway Dance Center, P. Diddy's Summer Youth Program, the Henry Street Settlement, Debbie Allen's Summer Intensive, and has toured the U.S. as a guest artist and choreographer. Chloe Arnold continually strives to communicate the language of movement not only through her dance, but through her enthusiasm for film making and her unique ability to positively influence the lives of children.

Bril Barrett is the founder and Co-artistic director of Making A Difference Dancing Rhythms, commonly called M.A.D.D. Rhythms. 5 years ago M.A.D.D. Rhythms began as a volunteer project to give talented young boys an

alternative to "the streets" and has now grown into a full-fledged TAP company with performances in Chicago, Indiana, Michigan, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Canada and Turkey! The company has grown to include an all-tap studio/school called The M.A.D.D. Rhythms tap academy and The Chicago Tap Summit. M.A.D.D. Rhythms Canada is also an important achievement in the growth of M.A.D.D. Rhythms. Bril Barrett has become an advocate for the art form as a whole. Tap should be respected, as it is America's only authentic dance form. The history should be respected as well. The great African-American men and women responsible for creating tap should be held in the highest esteem and honor.

Lynn Dally is celebrating 25 years with the *JAZZ TAP ENSEMBLE* which she co-founded in 1979 with Fred Strickler and Camden Richman. As dancer and choreographer, she has created nearly fifty new tap dance works for the concert stage. She has appeared often in worldwide touring with the Jazz Tap Ensemble and with tap legends Honi Coles, Eddie Brown, Steve Condos, the Nicholas Brothers, Brenda Bufalino, Dianne Walker, Jimmy Slyde, and Gregory Hines in venues from Carnegie Hall to the Apollo. Dally has received many choreographic grants from the NEA since 1976, the California Irvine Fellowship in Dance 2000 and 2001, the City of Los Angeles (COLA) Fellowship 2002 for *Dancing Blues*, and was the first tap artist to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship in Choreography 2001. Commissions include *Ruby, My Dear* for Seattle's Pacific Northwest Ballet; *The Moment* for ETC/ Chicago Human Rhythm Project; *Tribute: A Valentine to Tap Dance in the Movies* for the Palm Beach Festival, *Tribute to Fred Astaire* for the Getty Museum. Now Adjunct Professor in UCLA's Dept of World Arts & Cultures, Dally continues to teach and perform internationally. She most recently enjoyed performing with colleagues Bufalino, Petronio, and Walker in NY Tap City's *TAP DIVAS* as well as Jazz Tap's appearances in the Salzburg Jazz Festival, Lyon's Maison de la Danse, and the Joyce Theater in New York 2004 & 2005. Her first dvd, SOLEA, explores cross cultural rhythms in new choreography for bharata natyam, flamenco, modern, and rhythm tap dancers. Her next dvd project is a tribute to the late great Gregory Hines.

Acia Gray, as soloist, choreographer and master teacher has toured extensively across the U.S. and abroad to include England, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Spain, Brazil, Canada and Austria. In 1989, she co-founded Tapestry Dance Company in Austin, TX with Deirdre Strand and currently serves as Executive/Artistic Director as well as the Artistic Director of *The Soul to Sole Tap Festival* in Austin. A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts/NYC, Gray has shared the stage with such tap greats as Lon Chaney, Chuck Green, Steve Condos, Brenda Bufalino, Donald O'Connor, Fayard Nicholas, Buster Brown, Savion Glover, Gregory Hines, Jimmy Slyde, Sarah Petronio, Dianne Walker and many more. As a principal dancer and managing director of the touring company Austin On Tap throughout the 80's, Ms. Gray was one of 12 dancers to work with the late tap legend Charles 'Honi' Coles at The Colorado Dance Festival in 1989 and then for CDF's residency with Jimmy Slyde in 1990. She is featured in the documentary *A Class Act: The Magic of Honi Coles*, served on the steering committee of The International Tap Association and was featured as a soloist in the 1990 *Dance Magazine* calendar. Gray has danced, choreographed and taught for numerous professional and academic organizations across the U.S. and abroad including Columbia College, The Colorado Dance Festival, International Summer School/Cyprus, TESIS/London, Tanzsommer/Austria, The St. Louis Tap Festival, The Chicago Human Rhythm Project, The NYC Tap Festival, and Le Festival De Danse Encore/Canada. In June, 2002, Gray was inducted as a premiere member of the Austin Arts Hall of Fame chosen by the Austin Critics Table and was nominated for the Alpert Award in the Arts as well as being funded by the NEA & Dance/USA's National College Choreography Initiative. Her critically acclaimed book *The Souls of Your Feet – A Tap Dance Guide for Rhythm Explorers* has been translated in the Czech Republic.

Marda Kirn was the Founding Director of the Colorado Dance Festival, which, during her tenure (1982-96), was considered one of the top three dance festivals in the US, recognized nationally for innovation and quality programming, bringing in artists from around the world for a month each summer to perform and teach. At CDF, she initiated and/or co-developed numerous tap programs: with SaliAnn Kriegsman, the first two-week rhythm tap festival (in 1986) which spawned the tap festival movement, becoming the model for festivals in Houston, Boston, San Francisco, Portland, New York, Austin, Bozeman, and St. Louis among other cities across the US; the first Creative Residencies for rhythm tap ever held (led by Charles "Honi" Coles with Brenda Bufalino and Jimmy Slyde with Sarah Petronio, respectively); the first Tap Conservatory (co-curated and developed by Lynn Dally and Brenda Bufalino); the International Tap Association (co-founded with leading and legendary tap artists); and a variety of tap humanities conferences and activities. Kirn also co-directed a six-part radio series on rhythm tap and was a consultant on *Passing It On*, an award-winning tap documentary produced by Felicia Dryden. Kirn has written for

various publications, has served on and/or chaired grants panels for the NEA, Rockefeller Foundation, and the Western States Arts Federation, among others. She has received numerous awards including the Colorado Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts and Tap City's Tap Preservation Award and has initiated many special projects that have become models for the state, country, and beyond. She is currently the director of the International Tap Association.

Sali Ann Kriegsman has been artistic adviser to the Digital Dance Library project, president of the Dance Heritage Coalition, executive director of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival; director of the National Endowment for the Arts' Dance Program, dance consultant to the Smithsonian Institution, and executive editor at The American Film Institute. She has taught and lectured at universities, festivals and cultural centers in the U.S. and abroad and served on foundation and government grants advisory panels. Her articles and criticism have been published in magazines, newspapers, journals, reference books and on the Internet. She wrote "Savion Glover—Stomp, Slide and Swing: In Performance at the White House" for PBS and was associate producer of a biographical essay on Charles "Honi" Coles for the MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour. In 1986, she co-directed the Colorado Dance Festival's first Tap Festival with Marda Kirn, and has presented and produced tap programs at the Smithsonian (1979-1983) and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (1995-1998), where she instituted a community tap project directed by Dianne Walker and Jimmy Slyde. She is a recipient of the Flo-Bert Award (1997), Oklahoma City University's Heritage Preservation Award (1999), and the NYC Tap Festival's Tap Preservation Award (2002). She wrote the first history of the Bennington School of the Dance, *Modern Dance in America: The Bennington Years* (G.K. Hall, 1981), which *The New York Times* hailed as "a vivid and human picture of a crucial chapter in American dance."

Robert L. Reed, Professor, is founder and executive/artistic director of the internationally renowned St. Louis Tap Festival and the non-profit Robert L. Reed Tap Heritage Institute. He is a much sought after tap teacher, producer, choreographer, and performer and is Artist-In-Residence at Oklahoma City University. He is proficient at teaching many styles of tap and is the protégé of Maceo Anderson, a founding member of the Four Step Brother dance act. His St. Louis Hoofers Club has performed throughout the world and reached the semi-finals on Star Search. He served as dance captain with Riverdance and toured as a principle with Incognito as well as opening for Sammy Davis Jr., Jerry Lewis, Redd Foxx, Cher, the Smothers Brothers and David Hasselhoff, just to name a few. Reed was a featured artist at the Peg Leg Bates Resort and has toured with Cab Calloway and hosted his own television show in Japan named for him Robert Hall, featuring guests Quentin Tarantino and Brittany Spears.

Jason Samuels-Smith (performer, choreographer, director) has emerged in the last decade as a multi-talented leader in the Art form of Tap. He won both an Emmy and American Choreography Award (2004) for "Outstanding Choreography" for the Opening number of the 2003 Jerry Lewis/MDA Telethon in a tribute to the late Gregory Hines. Mr. Samuels-Smith was also awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the City of Los Angeles for creating the First Annual Los Angeles Tap Festival in 2003, a Proclamation declaring April 23rd "Jason Samuels Day" from the City of Shreveport, Louisiana, the "Ivy of Education" from Brainerd Institute, and the "President Kenny Award" from Stony Brook. He was also the recipient of an Arts International Grant. In 2004, Mr. Samuels-Smith co-starred in Dean Hargrove's "Tap Heat", a dynamic award-winning short film available on DVD. Jason is also a featured dancer in Outkast's upcoming feature film "My Life In Idlewild". Debbie Allen has featured his talents in several productions including the AMC television series "Cool Women", Sammy (a tribute to the life of Sammy Davis jr.), and in a leading role of Soul Possessed with Patti LaBelle, Arturo Sandoval and Carmen DeLavallade. Other performance credits include the Tony Award winning Broadway cast of Bring in Da'Noise, Bring in Da'Funk in principal and lead roles, Savion Glover's NYOTs (Not Your Ordinary Tappers), Cross Currents: Turned on Tap at the Queen Elizabeth Hall - South Bank in London, the 2002-2003 Harlem Jazz Dance Festivals, [TAAP: The Art and Appreciation of Percussion](#), the NY Tap Committee/Town Hall's 21Below! with Jennifer Holliday, Thank You Gregory: A Tribute to the Legends of Tap, The Cotton Club Returns: A Tribute to Great Jazz Legends, the American Institute of Vernacular Jazz Dance Darktown Strutters Ball Gala, the Career Transition For Dancers 20th Anniversary Jubilee among others. Mr. Samuels-Smith founded tap company A.C.G.I. (Anybody Can Get It) as well as JaJa Productions band featuring original jazz-influenced hip hop music with appearances throughout the United States.

Tony Waag (executive producer/artistic director of Tap City and Tap City on Tour) In 1986, he founded the American Tap Dance Orchestra with Brenda Bufalino and the late Charles "Honi" Coles and toured with the ATDO

extensively throughout the United States and around the world. From 1989-1995, he co-created and operated, with Brenda Bufalino, Woodpeckers Tap Dance Center. Most recently, he was artistic director and the master of ceremonies for “Thank You Gregory”, a tribute to the masters of tap dance, at the Zellerbach Theatre in Philadelphia.

Appendix B. Interviewees

Last Name	First Name	Job Title	Company Name	City/State
Aldrich	Elizabeth	Director	Dance Heritage Coalition	Washington, DC
Alliger	Jeremy	Executive Producer	Jeremy Presents/Alliger Arts	Jamaica Plain, MA
Baff	Ella	Executive Director	Jacob's Pillow	Lee, MA
Bither	Philip	Senior Curator, Performing Arts	Walker Art Center	Minneapolis, MN
Chan	Kim	Vice President, Programs	Association of Performing Arts Presenters	Washington, DC
Colby	Laura	Director	Elsie Management	Brooklyn, NY
Dally	Lynn	Artistic Director	Jazz Tap Ensemble	Los Angeles, CA
Huber	Melba	President	Melba's, Inc.	McAllen, TX
Kriegsman	Sali Ann	Writer/Consultant		Chevy Chase, MD
Lindsey	Gary	Director	Gary Lindsey Artist Services, Inc.	San Francisco, CA
Lynch	Robert	President & CEO	Americans for the Arts	Washington, DC
MacPherson	Rory	Senior Program Officer	Wallace Foundation	New York, NY
Mann	Anita	Director	Anita Mann Productions	Santa Monica, CA
Rosenthal	Ann	Executive Director	Multi-Arts Projects	New York, NY
Sele	Baraka	Assistant Vice President of Programming	New Jersey Performing Arts Center	Newark, NJ
Shagan	Rena	President	Rena Shagan & Associates	New York, NY
Shepard	Mikki	Consultant		New York, NY
Slyde	Jimmy	Artist		Hanson, MA
Snyder	Andrea	Executive Director	Dance/USA	Washington, DC
Sommer	Sally	Professor	Florida State University	Tallahassee, FL
Sonntag	Doug	Director, Dance	National Endowment for the Arts	Washington, DC
Sygod	Ivan	Director	Pentacle	New York, NY
Walker	Dianne	Artist		Mattapan, MA
Wechsler	Martin	Director of Programming	Joyce Theatre	New York, NY

Appendix C. Survey Respondents

Tap Artists and Organizers

Note: Eight of the respondents submitted both surveys. Some respondents were sent both surveys, but chose to respond to only one.

Last Name	First Name	Company Name	City	ST	Survey Completed
Arnold	Chloe	Debbie Allen Dance Academy	Culver City	CA	Both
Bufalino	Brenda	Artist	New Paltz	NY	Artist
Cornell	Heather	Artistic Director, Manhattan Tap	Toronto	Ont	Artist
Dally	Lynn	Educator and Artistic Director, Jazz Tap Ensemble	Santa Monica	CA	Artist
Frank	Rusty	Artist/Critic	El Segundo	CA	Artist
Goldberg	Jane	Artist/Writer	New York	NY	Artist
Goldberg	Thelma	The Dance Inn Inc.	Lexington	MA	Artist
Goldbetter	Susan	Circuit Productions, Inc.	Brooklyn	NY	Artist
Gray	Acia	Tapestry	Austin	TX	Both
Hoag	Becky	Shuffles Productions Ltd.	Columbus	OH	Both
Hopkins	Lisa	Tap Kids Workshop & Showcase	Tarrytown	NY	Artist
Huber	Melba	Studio Owner/Writer	McAllen	TX	Tap Organizer
Ingram	Germaine	Artist	Philadelphia	PA	Artist
Jablow	Leslie	Southeastern Tap ExPlosion, Inc.	Marietta	GA	Tap Organizer
Kennedy	Arlene	The Kennedy Tap Company	Los Angeles	CA	Artist
Kloss	John	Stepology	San Francisco	CA	Both
Kramer	Katherine	Rhythm Explosion	Miami	FL	Both
McLaughlin	Reggio	Artist	Chicago	IL	Artist
Medler	Gene	NC Youth Tap Ensemble	Chapel Hill	NC	Both
Miller & Ben Ofer	Avi	Tradition in Tap	New York	NY	Both
Mitchell	Debbie	New Jersey Tap Ensemble	Bloomfield	NJ	Artist
Peters	Cheryl and Anthony	Artists/Studio Owners	Seattle	WA	Tap Organizer
Reed	Robert	Artist and Director, St. Louis Tap Festival	Oklahoma City	OK	Artist
Strickler	Fred	Artist/Professor	Riverside	CA	Artist
Waag	Tony	Artist, American Tap Dance Foundation	New York	NY	Both

Appendix D. Cover Letter to Interviewees

Date
Funder/Presenter
Organization Name
Address

Dear [Funder/Presenter/Agent] Name:

The International Tap Association is conducting a planning process for the national tap field, which has been made possible with the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts and So'Dança Shoes and Dancewear. As we look toward the future, our goal at this time is to determine the ways in which a national plan might address the field's needs. Learning from leaders such as yourself is a critical part of that process.

We have formed a steering committee to advise us on this planning process, and their names are attached. We have engaged the services of Callahan Consulting for the Arts to conduct the research and write the plan. Founder Suzanne Callahan specializes in strategic planning and fundraising, and brings 15 years' experience as a national funder in dance, nine of which were at the National Endowment for the Arts (her bio is attached). We are striving to have a wide representation, and to take into account the range of view points that exist.

A major part of this planning process is to gather information from funders, presenters and agents who have a broad perspective on the dance field. We are asking that you be interviewed by Suzanne Callahan so that we can benefit from your advice and ideas as we prepare to move forward. This information will be a critical part of our planning process. All interviews will be conducted anonymously by the consultant. **You will not be asked for anything other than your opinions, suggestions, and advice. Each interview will take about 45 minutes to one hour and will be conducted in person, whenever possible, and at your convenience.** No preparation is required for the interviews and we are purposely interviewing those who are close to the art form as well as those who are not. Finally, Callahan will ensure that the responses are kept strictly anonymous, meaning that care will be taken to protect the identity of all who respond. We want you to feel free to be absolutely candid in your impressions, and the range of opinions and ideas you may have.

We will be calling you shortly to ask if you are willing to be interviewed. If you agree, Suzanne will contact you directly to set a time. Or, if you prefer to arrange a time with her, feel free to contact her at 202-955-8325 or callahan@ForTheArts.org. If you need further information or have any questions, please call me at 303-443-7989.

This information will be used in a variety of ways. It will help to develop more work opportunities for tap artists and to increase public awareness and appreciation of tap. It may set the stage for the creation of a national network to support tap. Finally, this information will be shared with you and other funders as well as artists and administrators in late 2006, in a published report.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you at this exciting time.

Sincerely,
Marda Kirn

Steering Committee:

Chloe Arnold/Jason Samuels Smith, L.A. Tap Festival
Bril Barrett, MADD Rhythms
Lynn Dally, Jazz Tap Ensemble
Acia Gray, Sole To Soul Tap Festival

Sali Ann Kriegsman, Consultant
Robert Reed, St. Louis Tap Festival
Tony Waag, American Tap Dance Orchestra

Appendix E. Interview Questions

Note: Not all questions were asked in all interviews.

Protocol: This interview is part of a national planning process that the International Tap Association is undertaking. We want to look at the support for tap and how a more formalized network might help the field. We ask that you be candid in your remarks. This information is being gathered anonymously by an outside consultant. As a funder or national leader, you are in a particular vantage point to understand the larger dance field as well as the specific issues and needs of specific dance forms. So your perspective is unique and valuable. We will also be gathering information from tap artists, presenters, and the organizers of tap festivals. This interview will take only a half hour. Your feedback will help to build a body of information to help the tap field. It will be shared in a report that will be first reviewed by our steering committee and later disseminated to the national tap field.

Presenters and Agents

Do you book other art forms in addition to dance? If so, which ones:

Do you book other dance forms? If so, which ones:

What, if any, tap artists and groups have you booked/represented? When or over what time period?

If you have booked/represented tap: What was your experience with it? What went well and what were any problems that arose?

If you have not booked/represented tap: Why not? What are the barriers? [give them the chance to answer first]

Then: I'll read a list of factors that might serve as barriers. Tell me which ones apply to you [agents only: or the presenters you work with].

- Audience interest level
- Limited knowledge of tap artists: Rhythm/jazz tappers versus artists such as Keith Terry or Anita Feldman, or Joe Chvala; Have you ever booked percussive artists?
- Limited understanding of tap styles.
- Limited of understanding of tap's history, relationship to jazz, etc.
- Cost
- Improvisational nature vs. choreography?
- Ensemble vs. solo?
- Insufficient information from press kits/ photos/videos/other
- Flooring and other factors related to the venue
- Size of stage (for solo performers)
- Lack of knowledge about how to market it, such as its':
 - relationship to music
 - intergenerational nature

- multicultural heritage and casts
 - appeal to a broader audience than some other dance forms.
- Other factors that relate to the artists or form: such as its':

What is the likelihood that you would book/rep it in the future?

What would it take to make you want to book it in the future? (can they be converted?)

What kinds of information would help you or your audiences? This might be part of press kits or appear in other formats.

What are the benefits of booking tap, as you see it?

What are the elements of successful residencies you've booked with artists? (i.e, could the tap field learn more about what to offer presenters in terms of residences, in their own booking materials?)

Funders and Others

What type of tap dancers do you prefer to see or book– age, race, style, etc.?

How much tap dance do you see? (once per year, 2-3 times per year, or more often)

What is your knowledge level of tap and its roots (How to ask without putting them on the defensive)?

What do you think is the level of awareness among funders/dance leaders of tap, its history and influences?

What is your own level of interest in tap (and why?)

What do you think is the appeal of tap to the funders who do support it?

What does not appeal to those funders who do not support it?

What might make funding for tap artists or projects or their inclusion in national dance networks more appealing?

Knowing the scale of tap education (including festivals, studios, artists who are developing their craft, school shows, tap audiences)?

Developing a case statement based on the talking points?

Having a unified national idea/network that would support the field?

What are your ideas for how tap could draw from models in other dance or art forms?

What are the challenges of increasing the quantity and quality of writing about tap?

Will you read the draft report and provide feedback to us?

Appendix F. Cover Letter to Survey

Note: Different versions of this letter were sent to tap organizers and artists.

January 13, 2006

Artist Name
Address
City, State Zipcode

Dear [Artist Name]:

As promised in a recent letter from Marda Kirn of International Tap Association, enclosed are surveys that are being conducted with tap dance artists and organizations. We want to learn about your needs as an artist and the ways in which a national plan might meet those needs. These surveys are an integral part of the planning process.

I would like to ask that you take a few moments to fill out this survey, either on paper or electronically. We have kept the survey as short as possible. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions asked; we are interested in the array of impressions that artists and tap organizers might have. Feel free to skip questions that either don't apply to you or if you don't have an opinion. Finally, all responses will be kept anonymous. As outside consultants, we will summarize this information for ITA staff. In instances where information may be sensitive, care will be taken to protect the identity of all respondents.

You are unique, in that you play a dual role in the field as an artist and an organizer of tap events. Therefore, we would like to ask you to fill out two surveys, so that we can be sure to incorporate the range of experience and needs you may have:

- 1) Survey of Tap Organizers. This survey asks out about *your needs as an organizer of tap events*, and the ways in which a national tap plan might serve your organization's needs.
- 2) Survey of Tap Artists. This survey asks about *your needs as a tap artist*, and the ways in which a national tap plan might serve your artistic needs.

We would appreciate if you would please submit your surveys by Monday, February 6, 2006. Pick whichever way is easiest for you: Either mail them in the enclosed postage-paid envelope or fax them to my office. We are also sending you this document via email on January 17; if you prefer to work on a computer, just email your finished electronic version to me at TapPlan@aol.com. (This private account is set up specifically for the surveys.)

If you have questions about any aspect of these surveys, please contact me at TapPlan@aol.com or 202-955-8325. On behalf of Marda and the International Tap Association, I would like to thank you in advance for your time, feedback and ideas. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Callahan

Appendix G. Survey of Artists



National Tap Plan Survey of Tap Artists

The International Tap Association is conducting a planning process for the national tap field. We want to better understand your needs and determine the ways in which a national network might address them. You have been selected because of the leadership role that you play in the tap field. Some of the ways in which this survey information might be used are:

- To develop more work opportunities for tap artists;*
- To increase public awareness and appreciation of tap;*
- To develop a case for supporting tap for funders, the ITA and yourself; and*
- Possibly, to set the stage for the creation of a national network to support tap.*

Therefore, this information will be used to help the national field, as well as to address the needs of individual artists.

We have kept the survey as short as possible. It should take no more than **30-60** minutes to complete. (Some who have more to say might spend longer on it.)

There are **no right or wrong answers** to any of the questions asked. And, please feel free to continue your answers for as long as you wish. We want to hear everything you have to say.

Feel free to skip questions that either don't apply to you or if you don't have an opinion.

Responses will be kept anonymous. This information is being collected by Callahan Consulting for the Arts and will be summarized for the ITA staff and steering committee without attribution of who said what. Care will be taken to protect the identity of all respondents. We want you to feel free to be as candid as possible.

Please submit your survey by Monday, February 6, 2006.

There are three ways to submit it—*pick the one that's easiest for you.* You can:

1. Email your finished electronic version to TapPlan@aol.com. (our first choice!)
2. Print and fax your electronic version to 202-955-8324.
3. Fax or Mail this hard copy to: Callahan Consulting for the Arts
1000 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 505
Washington DC 20006

If you respond electronically, don't worry about the formatting or page breaks—please enter as much information as you wish. We'll take care of the rest. The email version will be sent on **Tuesday, January 17.**

If you have questions please contact Suzanne Callahan at TapPlan@aol.com or 202-955-8325.

Thank you!

***By completing this survey, you are providing an important service to the field.
We greatly appreciate your time and insight.***

About You

Please answer these questions as they apply to you as an individual artist.

1. What best describes the tap activity that you do

- performer
- teacher
- choreographer
- improvographer (an artist who improvises in performance)
- mentor/coach
- tap writer
- tap lecturer
- Other please specify: _____

2. Which best describes the types of organizations that support your work by either paying you for performing, teaching, etc. or offering you free services or space. Check all that apply.

- private studio
- nonprofit organization
- other (describe) _____

3. If you teach, what styles of tap and/or other dance? Please describe:

How many tap classes per week? _____

What is the average number of students per tap class? _____

Do you teach master classes? Yes No

4. Which of the following are your primary paid activities?

Please mark as many as apply and fill in the related questions.

- perform**
 - I self-produce shows of my own work.
 - I perform in festivals.
 - I perform in tap jams.
 - I perform for presenters other than festivals.
 - I conduct lecture demonstrations.

I offer other activities.
 Please specify (such as publish a tap journal, run an after school program, etc.):

5. How do you access theater space for your events? Check all that apply.

- own space
- rent space
- share space with other organizations, studios, schools or other community groups
- barter for space, in exchange for teaching, etc.

How You Interact with Other Artists and Your Community

6. How do you get the word out about your events and activities? How much? How often? What outlets?
(Please check all that apply and describe, such as "I do email blasts to a list of 200 each month." or "I invest \$1,000 in paid ads before our festival in the local paper.")

Describe:

- paid advertising _____
- free advertising _____
- direct mail pieces _____

<input type="checkbox"/> email	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> website	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> press coverage	_____
Other: _____	_____
Other: _____	_____

7. **From the list above, what types of advertising are the most effective?**
8. **Have you ever distributed a survey form to your audience or students?** Yes No
If yes, was the information useful? What did you find out?

9. **If you perform, do you hire other artists, such as musicians and dancers?** Yes No

If yes, how many artists do you pay each year? By this we mean how many do you pay a fee, honorarium or salary on a regular or occasional basis? _____

How many of these paid artists live locally? _____

How many of these paid artists do you bring in from other cities? _____

How many of them are master artists? _____

10. **How do you decide which artists to hire for teaching or performing?**
(Check as many as apply.)
- Word of mouth
- Performances
- Festivals
- Booking agents
- Publications/Reviews
- Watching/taking classes with artists

11. **What is the geographic reach/scope of your tap activity (meaning all of the items you check in question 1)? Do you see your activity as a city or state, regional, national and/or international resource?** (Check as many as apply.)
- city/state
- regional
- national
- international

In what ways?

Your Accomplishments

Please tell us as much as you wish here. We want to know what you've been able to do!

12. **What do you see as your major contributions to the growth of the tap field over the past 10 years?** (Please feel free to describe whatever those contributions might be artistically, educationally, historically, administratively, etc.)
13. **Now, what about your contributions over your career? What do you believe your work has done for the tap field?** (Don't hold back-speak as openly as you wish!)

Your Challenges

14. Has your own amount of work/ grown, decreased, or stayed about the same in the last 10 years?
___ grown ___ decreased ___ stayed about the same

What factors have contributed to any growth/decrease in your work? Or, why has it stayed the same?

15. When you think about tap dance across the country, do you think its popularity has grown, decreased, or stayed about the same in the last 10 years?
___ grown ___ decreased ___ stayed about the same

What factors have contributed to that growth, decrease, or steadiness?

16. What would you do if you had more funds to support/invest in your tap activity? How would you use the money?

17. What do you see as some of your greatest challenges as an artist? For each entry, please circle a number below from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least problematic and 5 being the most challenging.

CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH ENTRY	Not a problem		Extremely Challenging			Does Not Apply
	(1)				(5)	N/A
1 Performance Opportunities - <i>having the ability to get paid work</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2 Sharing Tap History - <i>educating younger artists in tap history</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3 Infrastructure - <i>having paid administrative staff and expertise</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4 Audience Development - <i>increasing attendance at tap activities beyond family, friends, and tap artists</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5 Artistic Development - <i>having opportunities to choreograph, mentor or be mentored, receive commissions to create new work, etc.</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6 Production Quality – <i>having resources for staging, dramaturgy, lighting, live music, etc.</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7 Public Awareness and Understanding - <i>making the general public aware of the history and significance of tap</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8 Media Education - <i>increasing coverage by print & broadcast media, and educating those who write about it</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9 Collaborations with Musicians	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10 Booking and representation – <i>finding tap agents, improving marketing materials, & knowing more about booking systems</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11 Copyright issues - <i>securing rights to perform works</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12 Health Insurance - <i>obtaining & paying for a policy</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Other [please specify] _____	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Tell us more here! What makes these <u>challenging</u> for you? What are your circumstances?						

What Might Help

18. **How might addressing the issues below help the tap field? Share with us any ideas you may have. You needn't fill in all of them- pick those that are most relevant to your work.**

1 Performance Opportunities - <i>having the ability to get paid work</i>
2 Sharing Tap History - <i>educating younger artists in tap history</i>
3 Infrastructure - <i>having paid administrative staff and expertise</i>
4 Audience Development - <i>increasing attendance at tap activities beyond family, friends, and tap artists</i>
5 Artistic Development - <i>having opportunities to choreograph, mentor or be mentored, receive commissions to create new work, etc.</i>
6 Production Quality - <i>having resources for staging, dramaturgy, lighting, live music, etc.</i>
7 Public Awareness and Understanding - <i>making the general public aware of the history & significance of tap</i>
8 Media Education - <i>increasing coverage by print & broadcast media, and educating those who write about it</i>
9 Collaborations with Musicians
10 Booking and representation – <i>finding tap agents, improving marketing materials, & knowing more about booking systems</i>
11 Copyright issues - <i>securing rights to perform works</i>
12 Health Insurance - <i>obtaining & paying for a policy</i>
13 Other:

19. Of all the areas listed on the prior page, what are the **top three** that you feel are most important to address? List them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

20. **What could you offer or share with a national network to help build the tap field as a whole?** (some examples: a successful ad, a media kit, audience survey, or tap history curriculum, an approach to teaching or mentoring)

How You Make it All Work

This budget information will be extremely useful to us in making the case to funders about the joint impact and needs of tap artists across the country. It will be kept strictly confidential.

21. What is your approximate annual income, including earned and contributed income?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$50,000
- \$50,000 to \$100,000
- \$100,000 to \$200,000
- \$200,000-\$300,00
- Over \$300,000 (please give approximate amount): \$ _____

Age: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 over 70

Race: Asian/Pacific Islander Black Hispanic/Latino Native American
 White Other _____

22. Please tell us about the ways you make your personal income (check all that apply)

- part time salary full time salary
- paid as a freelancer (on contract or hired on an occasional or project basis)

23. How do you support your tap activities?

- contributed income (*fundraising from sources such as grants from foundations, government sources, corporations, small businesses, individuals*)
- earned income (*such as class income, ticket sales, performance fees, etc.*)
- in kind (donated goods or services, such as costumes, graphic design, catering, etc.)

24. Check all that are usually a part of your revenues on an annual basis.

- Box office revenue
- Performance fees
- Class fees
- Individual donors
- Foundation grants
- Government agency grants:
 - national regional state city
- Corporate grants or sponsorships
- Small Business donations
- Other (please describe) _____
- I am supported in part by the income of another person (such as a spouse).

Final Comments

24. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Have we left out any burning issue, or anything that is really important to your organization—anything that you believe needs to be addressed to help the national tap field?

Appendix H. Survey of Tap Organizers



National Tap Plan Survey of Tap Organizers

The International Tap Association is conducting a planning process for the national tap field. We want to better understand your needs and determine the ways in which a national network might address them. You have been selected because of the leadership role that you play in the tap field, and the amount of activity that you accomplish. Some of the ways in which the information might be used are:

- To develop more work opportunities for tap artists;*
- To increase public awareness and appreciation of tap;*
- To develop a case for supporting tap for funders, the ITA and yourself; and*
- Possibly, to set the stage for the creation of a national network to support tap.*

Therefore, information will help the national field, as well as your own organization.

We have kept the survey as short as possible. It should take no more than **30-60** minutes to complete. (Some who have more to say might spend longer on it.)

There are **no right or wrong answers** to any of the questions asked. And, **please feel free to continue your answers for as long as you wish.** We want to hear everything you have to say.

Feel free to skip questions that either don't apply to you or if you don't have an opinion.

Responses will be kept anonymous. This information is being collected by Callahan Consulting for the Arts and will be summarized for the ITA staff and steering committee without attribution of who said what. Care will be taken to protect the identity of all respondents. We want you to feel free to be as candid as possible.

Please submit your survey by Monday, February 6, 2006.

There are three ways to submit it—*pick the one that's easiest for you.* You can:

1. Email your finished electronic version to TapPlan@aol.com. (our first choice!)
2. Print and fax your electronic version to 202-955-8324.
3. Fax or Mail this hard copy to: Callahan Consulting for the Arts
1000 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 505
Washington DC 20006

If you respond electronically, don't worry about the formatting or page breaks—please enter as much information as you wish. We'll take care of the rest. The email version will be sent on Tuesday, January 17.

If you have questions please contact Suzanne Callahan at TapPlan@aol.com or 202-955-8325.

Thank you!

***By completing this survey, you are providing an important service to the field.
We greatly appreciate your time and insight.***

About Your Organization

Please answer these questions as they apply to your organization.

1. **Which best describes your organization?** Check all that apply.

- private studio
- nonprofit organization
- other (describe) _____

2. **Does your organization offer classes in:**

- tap – what styles of tap? _____
- a variety of dance – which other kinds? _____

3. **Which of the following are your organization’s primary activities?**

Please mark as many as apply and fill in the related questions.

Produce a festival

How many days does your festival run? _____

How many participate in your festival?

of soloists _____

of students/groups _____

of audience members _____

Present performances

What kind? _____

How many per year? _____

(such as quarterly student recitals, professional concerts, etc.)

Offer classes

How many classes per week? _____

What is the average number of students per class? _____

Offer other activities

Please specify (*such as publish a tap journal, run an after school program, etc.*):

4. **How do you access theater space for your events?** Check all that apply.

- own space
- rent space
- share space with other organizations, studios, schools or other community groups
- co-present with other organizations

How Your Organization Interacts with Artists and Your Community

5. **How do you get the word out about your events and activities? How much? How often? What outlets?** (*Please check all that apply and describe such as “We do email blasts to a list of 200 each month” or “We invest \$1,000 in paid ads before our festival in the local paper.”*)

Describe:

- paid advertising _____
- free advertising _____
- direct mail pieces _____
- email _____
- website _____
- press coverage _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

6. **From the list above, what types of advertising are the most effective?**

7. **Have you ever distributed a survey form to your audience?** Yes No

If yes, was the information useful? What did you find out?

8. **How many artists does your organization pay each year? By this we mean how many do you pay a fee, honorarium or salary on a regular or occasional basis?** _____

How many of these paid artists live locally? _____

How many of these paid artists are brought in from other cities? _____

How many of them are master artists? _____

9. **How do you decide which artists to hire for either for teaching or performing?**
(Check as many as apply.)

___ Word of mouth

___ Performances

___ Festivals

___ Booking agents

___ Publications/Reviews

___ Watching/taking classes with artists

10. **What is the geographic reach/scope of your tap activity (meaning all of the items you check in question 1)? Do you see your activity as a city or state, regional, national and/or international resource?** (Check as many as apply.)

___ city/state

___ regional

___ national

___ international

In what ways?

Your Organization's Accomplishments

Please tell us as much as you wish here. We want to know what you've been able to do!

11. **What do you see as your organization's major strengths?**

12. **What have been some of your main accomplishments over the past 10 years?**

Your Organization's Challenges

13. **Has your own organization's tap activity grown, decreased, or stayed about the same in the last 10 years?**

___ grown ___ decreased ___ stayed about the same

What factors have contributed to any growth/decrease? Or, why has it stayed the same?

14. **When you think about tap dance across the country, do you think its popularity has grown, decreased, or stayed about the same in the last 10 years?**

___ grown ___ decreased ___ stayed about the same

What factors have contributed to that growth, decrease, or steadiness?

15. **What would you do if your organization had more funds? How would you use the money?**

16. What do you see as some of your organization’s greatest challenges? For each entry, please circle a number below from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least problematic and 5 being the most challenging.

CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH ENTRY	Not a problem		Extremely Challenging			Does Not Apply
	(1)				(5)	N/A
1 Performance Opportunities - <i>having the ability to provide paid work to artists</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2 Sharing Tap History - <i>educating younger artists in tap history</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3 Infrastructure - <i>having paid administrative staff and expertise</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4 Audience Development - <i>increasing attendance beyond family, friends, and tap artists</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5 Artistic Development - <i>providing opportunities for choreography, mentoring, commissions, etc.</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6 Production Quality - <i>having resources for staging, dramaturgy, lighting, live music, etc.</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Public Awareness and Understanding - <i>making the general public aware of the history and significance of tap</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8 Media Education - <i>increasing coverage by print & broadcast media, and educating those who write about it</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9 Collaborations with Musicians - <i>encouraging collaborations with tap dancers</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10 Booking and representation - <i>finding tap agents, improving marketing materials, & educating artists about booking systems</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11 Copyright issues - <i>securing rights to perform works</i>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Other [please specify] _____	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Tell us more here! What makes these <u>challenging</u> for you? What are your circumstances?						

What Might Help

17. **How might addressing the issues below help the tap field?** *Share with us any ideas you may have. You needn't fill in all of them- pick those that are most relevant to your work.*

1 Performance Opportunities - <i>having the ability to provide paid work to artists</i>
2 Sharing Tap History - <i>educating younger artists in tap history</i>
3 Infrastructure - <i>having paid administrative staff and expertise</i>
4 Audience Development - <i>increasing attendance beyond family, friends, and tap artists</i>
5 Artistic Development - <i>providing opportunities for choreography, mentoring, commissions, etc.</i>
6 Production Quality - <i>having resources for staging, dramaturgy, lighting, live music, etc.</i>
7. Public Awareness and Understanding - <i>making the general public aware of the history & significance of tap</i>
8 Media Education - <i>increasing coverage by print and broadcast media, and educating those who write about it</i>
9 Collaboration with Musicians - <i>encouraging collaborations with tap dancers</i>
10 Booking and representation - <i>finding tap agents, improving marketing materials, & educating artists about booking systems</i>
11 Copyright issues - <i>securing rights to perform works</i>
Other [please specify]

18. Of all the areas listed on the prior page, what are the **top three** that you feel are most important to address? List them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

19. **What could your organization offer or share with a national network?** *(some examples: a successful ad, a media kit, audience survey, or tap history curriculum, an approach to teaching or mentoring)*

How Your Organization Makes it All Work

This budget information will be extremely useful to us in making the case to funders about the joint impact and needs of tap organizations across the country. It will be kept strictly confidential.

20. What is your approximate annual budget size, including earned and contributed income?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$50,000
- \$50,000 to \$100,000
- \$100,000 to \$200,000
- \$200,000-\$300,000
- Over \$300,000 (please give approximate amount): \$ _____

21. Please tell us about your staffing

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF	Paid On Salary		Paid Freelance*	Unpaid Volunteers
	Part Time	Full Time		
Number of Positions				
Approx number of hours/week				

*Refers to staff that are paid on contract and hired on an occasional or project basis.

ARTISTS	Paid On Salary		Paid Freelance*	Unpaid Volunteers
	Part Time	Full Time		
Number of Positions				8
Approx number of hours/week				

22. How does your organization support its activities?

- contributed income (*fundraising from sources such as grants from foundations, government sources, corporations, small businesses, individuals*)
- earned income (*such as class income, ticket sales, performance fees, etc.*)
- in kind (donated goods or services, such as costumes, graphic design, catering, etc.)

23. Check all that are usually a part of your organization's revenues on an annual basis.

- Box office revenue
- Class revenues (i.e., classes that others teach)
- Individual donors
- Foundations
- Government agencies:
 - national regional state city
- Corporations
- Small Businesses
- Income from your own performances and teaching, or other work or personal sources
- Other (please describe) _____

Final Comments

24. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Have we left out any burning issue, or anything that is really important to your organization—anything that you believe needs to be addressed to help the national tap field?

Appendix I. Summary of the National Jazz Network

The following summary of the National Jazz Network and related programs illustrates how a group of concerned individuals can come together to develop national programs for an art form. Although it started small – with a network of 14 presenters – it went on to become a national program in the course of 16 years. It was made possible through the leadership of the Wallace Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Background: National Jazz Planning Study and its Recommendations

Like tap, jazz music is a unique, celebrated American art form, yet major challenges exist including limited public awareness and the lack of a strong infrastructure of support for artists. With funding from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the National Jazz Service Organization (NJSO) and New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) conducted a National Jazz Planning Study between January and September, 1990. This study and the resulting recommendations can provide the tap field with new ideas, as well as an example of a successful national program model for possible replication.

The National Jazz Planning Study had two primary goals:

- 1) To survey and summarize the needs of jazz artists, presenters and audiences in the U.S., and
- 2) To design a program model or models that would address the needs of the jazz community.

To begin addressing these goals, a National Advisory Committee was appointed. The Committee was composed of outstanding representatives from the nation's jazz community, including jazz artists, composers, educators, artist managers, presenters, journalists, record company executives and representatives of public and commercial electronic media. Over the course of three meetings, the Committee reviewed the goals and work plan of the Study, gave guidance on the primary needs and concerns in the jazz field, discussed and refined preliminary program concepts and endorsed the final program recommendations.

Additionally, NEFA and NJSO sponsored six Regional Jazz Forums across the country³⁸. Working with arts organizations in each region, NEFA and NJSO invited a broad cross-section of representatives from the jazz community to discuss needs, concerns and potential solutions. With approximately 100 participants, the Forums included artists, composers, educators, funders, presenters, jazz club managers, journalists and others. The Forums revealed that each region of the country had its own set of strengths and weaknesses in supporting jazz. However, there was remarkable consistency in the major needs and concerns identified across the Regional Forums.

The primary needs identified fell into three major categories: 1) Support for touring, 2) Support for educational programs and 3) Support services for artists and presenters. To address these needs, the Committee recommended that the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund support the creation and development of a National Jazz Network.

³⁸ Forums took place in Amherst, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; Atlanta, Georgia; and San Francisco, California.

Creation of the National Jazz Network

The National Jazz Network was an initiative designed to strengthen support for jazz presentation and attendant community interactions across the United States. In its various facets, the National Jazz Network responded to the primary needs identified in the Study by providing support for touring, community-based education programs and audience development, and ongoing technical assistance for artists and presenters.

The Network was a consortium of 14 presenters and performance spaces representing a broad spectrum of experience and philosophy in presenting jazz to the public, as well as geographic diversity. Members were identified through a nomination process and chosen by a Selection Committee, with special consideration given to jazz-only presenters and those who recognize that jazz music is rooted in the African-American experience and the need to develop support for jazz in African-American communities. The Network's objectives were:

- To increase opportunities for emerging and lesser-known jazz artists to present their work to the public;
- To increase people's involvement in and appreciation of jazz and its heritage through community residencies by jazz artists and other educational programs;
- To increase contact, exchange of information and collaborative planning among presenters and artists in different parts of the country;
- To increase the visibility and prominence of a wide variety of jazz composers and artists.

Each Network member received financial support, ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually based on Committee review of program plans, to conduct the following activities: present three (or more) new jazz engagements annually or significantly expand current programs; sponsor residencies, educational programs and jam sessions with visiting jazz artists, area jazz artists and students; work with the regional arts organization and other area presenters to plan and implement "satellite" engagements/tours in their region and related programs for the presented artists; and attend an Annual Conference of the Network, during which presenters exchanged information about artists and presenting techniques, and plan collaborations.

In addition to the Network members, each of the six regional arts organizations supported jazz programs and activities in over five communities' sites to broaden the reach and impact of the National Jazz Network. The regional arts organizations received support, ranging from \$30,000 to \$45,000 annually based on Committee review, to conduct the following activities: support "satellite" regional touring engagements and extended residencies by the artists booked by the Network members; identify and promote artists who were booked by the Network members, including master jazz artists from each region; sponsor complementary programs which boosted jazz's visibility, presentation and appreciation; and attend the Annual Conference of the Network.

In addition, a variety of support services were provided by NJSO and the regional arts organizations to those artists and presenters involved in the Network. These included:

- Travel assistance for artists to attend the Network's Annual Conference;

- A showcase of live performance and video presentations at the Annual Conference;
- Training programs and workshops, including intensive sessions offered twice a year to artists booked by Network members with workshop topics such as designing community residencies, audience development, publicity, marketing and contract negotiation;
- Access to the National Jazz Service Organization's Technical Assistance program, which provided one-on-one consulting on a wide range of topics;
- Assistance in distributing artists' promotional material and securing bookings; and
- Development of a databank of tapes and information on artists booked by the Network members compiled and managed by the National Jazz Service Organization.

Impact of National Support for Jazz

Looking back over almost two decades after the initial meeting of the National Jazz Planning Study partners, support for and visibility of jazz has been raised considerably. Wallace's initial investment led to expansion of the Network, the formation of other jazz-related programs, and the support of other funders. The JazzNet Program expanded, due in large part to sustained support from 2000-2005 through a partnership between the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and currently has several components. 1) The NEA honors artists annually through the **NEA Jazz Masters Awards**, America's highest honor in jazz. The NEA expanded the scope of the JazzNet Program to all 50 states through the its 2) **Jazz Masters on Tour**; presenters in all 50 states are eligible to apply for funding to present the Jazz Masters. Additional programs broaden the reach of jazz to audiences through television and the Internet, including the younger generation. 3) In **Jazz Legends**, Ramsay Lewis dedicates one television program per year to the Jazz Masters. 4) The NEA's **Jazz in the Schools** multimedia curriculum for high school teachers was developed and produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center with the support of the Verizon Foundation and was released in partnership with The International Association for Jazz Education (www.neajazzintheschools.org).

Even in its original form, the National Jazz Network had a significant impact on jazz artists, presenters and audiences. Each year, not fewer than 14 presenters in communities dispersed across the country received sustained support to upgrade and diversify their jazz presentations and design programs which enables community members to interact with jazz artists. Each year, more than 45 lesser-known and emerging artist ensembles had opportunities to perform across the country in engagements which connected them to communities in meaningful ways. Satellite tours to at least 30 other communities were facilitated by regional arts organizations. New jazz works were presented to the public. Annual conferences brought presenters and artists together to discuss common issues and plan collaborative projects. A variety of complementary programs, including radio networks, educational projects, technical assistance programs and databanks of information extended the benefits of the Network to audiences exceeding one million people.

Now, through the expanded JazzNet Program, from 2000 to 2005, over \$7.4 million was provided to 14 diverse organizations. As gleaned from *An Evaluation of the JazzNet Program* by Dr. Thomas Wolf, Mark Goldring and Jane Culbert, this five-year funding initiative of DDCF and NEA was highly successful. One of the program's main goals – to build endowments for jazz programming – proved to be quite successful; participants placed over \$8.1 million in jazz

endowments. Jazz audiences grew substantially. Even during and following the economic downturn after September 11, 2001, which significantly affected the performing arts, this group of 14 presenters tripled the audience for jazz. The report noted that “the relative success of the JazzNet organizations in one of the most stressful periods in recent history is a true achievement in its own right.” Overall, increased opportunities for jazz artists – measured by the commissioning of new work, artist residencies, community-based projects, and collaborations – were somewhat mixed, but certain organizations used funding to support riskier programming that reached new audiences.³⁹

³⁹ Wolf, Keens & Co. *An Evaluation of the JazzNet Program*, by Dr. Thomas Wolf, Marc Goldring, Jane Culbert, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, October 2005.

Appendix J. Summary of Issues for the Tap Field from Past Decades

Overview of Meetings: A Look Back at Past Accomplishments

In the past three decades, the tap field has gone through substantial development. During that time period, several national meetings helped to open a dialogue, identify pressing issues and establish priorities for the field. Though few and far between, these meetings built consensus around an assessment of the field in terms of opportunities, challenges, resources and needs. Since that pivotal convening of the Tap Summit in 1986, the International Tap Association was formed and new tap festivals have sprung up across the country. Two preliminary meetings in 2004 and 2005 reinvigorated the dialogue and made evident the disparity between increasing tap activity and the minimal support available for the art form, laying the groundwork for the International Tap Association's current National Tap Planning Process.

Tap Summit in Denver, Colorado on June 29, 1986

The Tap Summit was a great initial coming together of the tap community, including artists, scholars, students and audiences. Funded by the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities, the Summit "gave everyone a sense of forward momentum and strengthened individual and mutual commitments to promote, preserve and stimulate the art." The following were the primary recommendations made at the Tap Summit and some of the accomplishments in each area:

1. Repeat the [1986] festival annually in Colorado and encourage efforts to produce similar festivals in other regions.

- After 1986, two-week tap festivals were held at the Colorado Dance Festival (CDF) in 1987, 89, 90, and 92. CDF festivals helped to spawn other tap festivals in many cities across the country including in Portland, Houston, Boston, Bozeman, New York, and St. Louis, among others. Other organizations, such as the Chicago Human Rhythm Project began their own festivals, and from them still more festivals have been inspired. There are now 24 tap festivals and intensives across the world listed in the 2006 April/May/June issue of *On Tap*.

2. Form a national and/or international association to advance the art of tap, and to serve as an advocate and information-giver to the field.

- Based on this recommendation, the ITA was founded the following year to serve tap artists and the art form through advocacy, education, performance opportunities, preservation, and research.

3. Disseminate information about tap in written and visual form, as well as through field-wide conferences.

- Articles about tap were written for the Association for Performing Arts (APAP) newsletter encouraging people to present tap. The ITA created first a journal, then a

newsletter, and most recently a magazine to get information into the field. The ITA has worked behind the scenes to increase media coverage of tap especially with publications such as *Dance Magazine*. Tap festivals have included panel discussions and film and video screenings of great artists. At CDF, Lynn Dally and Brenda Bufalino co-created and directed the first Tap Conservatory. Youth tap ensemble conferences are being held at many tap festivals.

4. Increase diversity and participation at tap festivals by encouraging the participation of women and students in performances, teaching, and conference activities and enhancing black participation in terms of student enrollment, scholarships, and attendance.

- After the 1986 CDF tap festival, women and students were included as main stage performers (as well as men) at CDF and throughout the country. Participation by African American students has increased at festivals and studios. Major tap festivals have been founded and are being directed by African Americans. Special tributes to women tap dancers have been held. Numerous scholarship programs have been created.

5. Initiate national programs that highlight tap artistry by creating a tap hall of fame, touring a mini-exhibit of memorabilia, encouraging new tap choreography via workshops, ensuring a place for tap at the Saratoga National Dance Museum, and exploring the possibility of a national tour of *The Great Tap Reunion*.

- There are now several tap awards programs across the country. Beth Dellarocca at the National Dance Museum organized a major interactive exhibit of child tap performers. The Jazz Tap Ensemble and others have commissioned new choreography from tap artists. Jeremy Alliger at the Boston Dance Umbrella organized the *Great Tap Reunion* tour that traveled to some 14 cities in New England with performances, classes, and conference activities. His show *Cool Heat/Urban Beat* combining tap and hip hop toured to about 24 countries. *Noise/Funk*, *Tap Dogs*, and Savion Glover have toured extensively reaching mainstream audiences. The Gregory Hines Tap Collection at the New York Public Library and the Tap Legacy Project have been founded to expand and centralize historical materials about tap. Major collections of tap films, video and audio tapes, etc. have been donated to libraries by Ernie Smith, Jane Goldberg, Brenda Bufalino, and others. The first program of honorary doctorates was initiated by Robert Reed, Jo Rowan, and John Bedford at Oklahoma City University.

National Tap Plan Meetings

In the spring of 2003, ITA submitted an application to the National Endowment for the Arts, seeking support for the National Tap Field Strategic Planning Process, a year-long effort to assess and serve the tap field. The goals of the project were to:

- Assess the major issues and needs facing the tap field, including opportunities, and gaps in resources and capacity;
- Identify areas where national collaboration would serve the field, and make recommendations about pursuing such collaboration;
- Determine the most effective ways to raise the visibility and understanding of tap dance on the part of the dance field's administrators, funders and others; and
- Ultimately, to lay the groundwork for developing a more formalized structure to support this art form that draws from so many cultures and has flourished on American soil.

The ITA's request was funded, which allowed a consultant to be hired to manage the planning process and provided funds for committee members to travel for meetings. As its primary goal, the committee hoped to establish a national platform for tap dance. By securing national funding and taking on this planning effort, it was hoped that the voices of tap artists and other leaders could be heard and money and visibility could be collectively raised for the benefit of the field.

The first step in the planning process was a meeting in June 2004 in Boulder, Colorado. The group included ITA staff and board, nationally known artists, and several with background in the national dance scene as well as in funding and presenting. Discussion focused on the pressing issues for tap, as well as some potential solutions, and the group began the process of nominating tap leaders to form the Steering Committee. In October 2005, a second meeting was attended by presenters, artists, scholars and other leaders, and kicked off the official beginning of the National Tap Plan. The Committee reviewed the scope of the strategic planning process and then discussed the current state of the tap field, in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Major Issues

The issues raised in these two meetings were remarkably similar and, based on recommendations developed out of both, the Steering Committee decided to focus on the following major issues: *(Note: Bold text indicates issues identified as priorities in October 2005 by the Steering Committee.)*

1. Understanding of Tap History Among Younger Artists. Many young tappers have no idea of what they can, or want to, do with tap. People don't have the time or access to resources on the art form and "wouldn't even think of going to Lincoln Center [Library's archives] to see what might be there." There appears to be an anti-intellectual stance, which, as one said, is "anti-artist" and has created a shunning of the few historical resources that are available.

2. Performance Opportunities. The relative lack of performance opportunities is a major barrier to tap's visibility. While festivals benefit those within the tap community, who both perform and attend, they don't feed into mainstream presenting. While artists such as Savion Glover and blockbuster shows like *Stomp* and *Tap Dogs* have become popular with audiences, they are booked by large venues that are not otherwise utilized for tap, and few venues exist for smaller productions. It is important to match the kind of show with the kind of venue and to consider venues other than the concert stage, in order to broaden the employment opportunities available to tap artists; but these realities are not always apparent to many in the tap field.

3. Infrastructure and Relationship Development. There is currently little infrastructure that exists to support tap artists. While having a national platform for tap is a new idea, it is an outgrowth of ITA, which was founded many years ago to begin the process.

4. Audience Development. There is little understanding among presenters about the ability of tap to attract audiences of all ages, races, ethnicities, and walks of life – as well as appreciators of both music and dance.

5. National Marketing. There is little knowledge of the history of tap – not only its aesthetic sensibilities, but its achievements in being at the forefront of breaking political and racial barriers in the US. This is a history that needs to be better told in order to be better appreciated. There is little understanding about the differences in styles and sensibilities of the various kinds of tap. National appreciation is limited by stereotypes of tap as the nostalgia of a by-gone era or the practice of one or two contemporary superstars.

6. Production Quality. The lack of professionally produced tap shows is a major barrier for increasing performance opportunities and visibility. Though some tap is by nature improvisational, when entire productions are improvised it creates challenges for presenters who need to obtain information in advance for marketing purposes. Presenters are unwilling to commit to shows that they perceive as “not professionally produced.” Tap artists need to understand and accept that, as one said, “You need to come up with a package. This is what it will take to get them to show up.”

7. Artistic Development. There is little understanding among presenters about the ability of tap to attract audiences of all ages, races, ethnicities, and walks of life – as well as appreciators of both music and dance.

8. Media Education. The need for media education is threefold: 1) Working directly with reporters to encourage more coverage; 2) Developing the understanding of tap as a music and dance form; and 3) Developing the kind of language that would describe this dance form to those who are unfamiliar with it. Tap should be represented at press gatherings, as well as at national convenings including the Dance Critics Association, the Society for Dance History Scholars, the Public Radio Network and at music festivals where tap is being presented. Attention should also be paid to heightening visibility for the underground movement in tap.

9. Booking and Artist Representation. Very few tap dancers have agents that can assist with packaging and booking. Though some artists want to be proactive by booking themselves, challenges arise when “there is no place to go to get help or information on booking, production or management.” Experience in these areas is a necessary skill for survival, but young artists are not being trained to handle such challenges. For example, artists need different kinds of videos to properly market themselves to venues, a reality that may take years for them to grasp.

10. Outreach to Musicians. Many musicians do not think tap dancers are “on their level,” as one said. Even among those who are aware of, and have respect for tap, there is a sense that tap artists are passé.

Appendix K. Survey Methodology

The steering committee selected a group of artists and individuals who organize tap events, including festivals (referred to as tap organizers). Separate surveys were then created for artists and tap organizers so that questions could glean information about their ways of working (many of the questions were the same).

In order to increase the response rate the following steps were taken. Marda Kirn mailed a personalized letter giving the recipients notification they would be receiving a survey in the near future. The survey packets were then sent via regular mail with a cover letter describing the intent of the survey. These incentives encouraged the recipients to participate in this process:

- The survey was kept as short as possible taking approximately 30-60 minutes to complete.
- It was stressed that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions asked and all answers given would be gladly received.
- Any question could be skipped if it was not applicable to the recipient.
- All responses would be kept anonymous to ensure the recipients could be as candid as possible. Care would be taken to protect the identity of all respondents.
- There were three ways in which the recipients could submit their completed survey: via e-mail with the electronic version, faxing the electronic version, and returning the hard copy by fax or regular mail.

A postage paid return envelope was also included in the packet.

After receiving this initial survey package a series of follow up requests were made:

- The recipients were sent the package via e-mail. This was followed by a reminder e-mail.
- Marda Kirn phoned each recipient who hadn't yet responded.
- After these phone calls were made the deadline for the completed surveys was extended to allow the recipients more time.
- The surveys were sent out again via e-mail and followed by a reminder e-mail.

Each survey respondent was sent a thank you card with a small premium.