

VANCOUVER TAP DANCE SOCIETY ANNUAL 2008 REPORT

Vancouver Tap Dance Society (VTDS) strives to be a leader in the promotion of tap dance in Canada and is dedicated to developing awareness of the art form. VTDS delivers a broad range of programs and is governed by eight board of directors. VTDS tapped through another successful year in 2008, under the guidance of Chair Barbara Stewart's leadership and Treasurer Les Puskas' financial stewardship. It was rich with a roster of performances, extensive outreach programming to B.C. schools and numerous educational opportunities throughout B.C.

Over 15,000 tap dance fans were entertained in a variety of venues across the province; from the complex rhythm tap routines performed by TapCo; the youth and adults in our tap programs and the professional artist faculty members and guest artists who performed at the Festival.

VTDS's evolution continues to celebrate the rich history and deep roots of traditional tap dance and its ties to jazz, while exploring the exciting and innovative paths this dance form can take. The theme this year was "Dancing Through the Times", a seamless connection between the history of the past, the creativity and energy of the present, and the innovation and vision of the future. The goal was to delight the current legion of tap fans, while developing new audiences, programs and activities that would entertain, train and educate.

To that end, we continue to welcome and encourage collaboration between VTDS and members of the international tap community. Artist-in-Residence Tasha Lawson, touring international solo artist, and former Artistic Director of *Visions in Rhythms*, (Austin, Texas), shared her expertise with our youth ensemble TapCo and other advanced performance groups during her nine-day residency. Our staff will reap untold future benefits from her vision, critiques and unending support, as we proudly showcase her artistic footprint in our presentations.

VTDS welcomed the participation of tap dancers from Maple Ridge's Peggy Peat's Dance Studio into our community development outreach program. Vancouver native and three-time North American Irish dance champion Joel Hanna dropped in after his successful New York run of "Revolutions" to share his unique style with Da Boyz. Joel Hanna and Mika Komatsu collaborated on creating a "winning" piece at the festival competitions.

VTDS Artist-in-Residence Gene Medler, Artistic Director of the *North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble* will be bringing some of his dancers to co-present a tap concert with TapCo on January 10, 2009 at the Norman Rothstein Theatre. Everyone at VTDS is excited about this much-anticipated cultural exchange.

The Tap Academy

Raise the barre; the studio continues to glow with the ongoing efforts and improvements from Rocko Vaugeois, who maintains and improves Vancouver's tap home. Our newly laid floors have quickly taken on the aluminum alloy hue of tap dust as the wood has absorbed a gazillion hits; as the dancers strive for excellence, the shouts of pure tap dance joy are prevalent in the studio.

Over 200 students dedicated to studying the art of tap dance showcased their accomplishments in the year end recital "Tap Collage" at the Centennial Theatre under the production guidance of Anna Kramer and artistic leadership of Mika Komatsu.

In addition to the September-June schedule of classes, a summer array of sessions were delivered, including the full one-week “Boot Camp” delivered by Shelley Stewart Hunt and Terry Brock, which primed students for their forthcoming year of tap training.

The 2008 Vancouver International Festival

The 9th Annual Festival was ushered in by dance greats Dianne Walker, Chester Whitmore, Brenda Bufalino, Jason Janas, Michelle Dorrance, Heather Cornell, Matt Shields, Tasha Lawson, Travis Knights, Dr. Jeni LeGon, Mika Komatsu, Troy McLaughlin, Dayna Szyndrowski and Tony Waag.

Over 40 classes shaped the comprehensive and highly successful program, such as Chester’s “*Central Avenue Breakdown*”, Lady Di’s “*Step by Step-A Teacher’s Wisdom*”, Michelle Dorrance’s “*Marathon*” and Jason Janas’s “*Rapid Fire*” were fully supported by the participants; many of whom travelled from the U.S. and outside B.C. to attend.

TapCo welcomed everyone on the first evening of the festival, Friday, August 29, with their standing “O” presentation of *Just in Time*. Following the performance, the faculty involved with choreographing and training youth ensembles engaged in a vibrant discussion on tap dance – the past, present and future.

Skip to Sunday night, August 31, and the most delightful and eclectic presentation of 15 unique performances was staged by professional and emerging artists, each showcasing their individual talents with direction from choreographers such as Tasha Lawson, Jessie Sayers, Mika Komatsu, William Orłowski, to name a few. Our very own Tap Pups brought the house down!

Monday afternoon, September 1, we presented “Tap Passages”, the finale of our festival events and the jewel in our crown, at the Vancouver Playhouse. The performances exceeded expectations and 400 + audience were thoroughly engaged participants in the electrifying two-hour rhythmic show.

A jolt of hometown pride was felt throughout the hall with the Canadian ensemble presentation of *Rhythms of 2010*. This magical and supremely innovative ensemble fused the rhythms, sounds and images of Olympic winter sports, with figure skating, curling, speed skating, snowboarding, downhill skiing and ice hockey into an adrenaline-drenched, gold medal performance. Under the artistic direction of Heather Cornell, *Rhythms of 2010* is the showpiece of the new Canadian dance ensemble of Tasha Lawson, Matt Shields, Mika Komatsu, Dayna Szyndrowski, Troy McLaughlin and Travis Knights.

Outreach Program

VTDS was happily challenged with trying to keep up with the demand, which exceeded our supply of used tap shoes that facilitate this outreach program. Over 500 youths were introduced to the joys of tap dance at the Children’s Festivals in Vancouver and on Vancouver Island, as well as weekly programs to several elementary schools in Vancouver. Lindsey Galaugher and Amanda Buckingham are gratefully acknowledged for this very successful program.

Have Tap Shoes will Travel

VTDS took to the road, with a trip to Seattle in February to see Acia Gray’s fabulous recreation of masters work *Soles of our Feet*, performed by Tapestry. TapCo attended workshops delivered by some cast members.

Mika Komatsu, Director Youth Programs and Executive Director Sas Selfjord attended Lynn Dally's Women in Tap Conference in LA. The conference attracted many women in tap who gathered to share their perspectives and discuss relevant issues impacting tap. Collectively, they laid a foundation of inspiration that will last until the next conference. It was a valuable networking and education opportunity for VTDS staff.

Hitting the Wood

Floors, floors, and floors were the prominent topic of discussion for purchases for 2008. Gaming Commission provided VTDS a grant to build a "mobile" tap floor. In addition, VTDS purchased wood floor covering for master classes held in the carpeted ballroom at the festival, and then the wood was reinstalled into our studios. A portable floor to tap on and travel with was made possible by Rocko Vaugeois, our sound techie, studio maintenance, and floor designer extraordinaire. If you see Rocko in our studio, say hi and thank him for making your studio feel like home.

Performances

If there was a stage, VTDS was there, shuffling.....

PNE Community Stage; Dance Center's "Discover Dance Series"; Vancouver Island Childrens Festival; Gabriola's "Dancing Man Music Festival"; Bell Performance Centre, SOS Childrens Village Fundraiser; Hellenic Hall, Variety Club's Christmas celebration; Westcoast Tap Collective's "National Tap Dance Day"; Roundhouse Theatre "Just in Time; Tap Passages, Vancouver International Tap Festival; and over 21 performances to Elementary schools in the Lower Mainland and 2 schools in Kamloops and Vernon.

VTDS dedication to excellence was validated over and over by judges at this year's roster of competitions. by awarding Mika Komatsu with the overall judges choice choreography for 'Devil and the Deep Blue Sea' performed by Supreme Tap. The Tap Pups and Da Boyz went on to the finals in Dance Power with the Pups taking a first place and Da Boyz in second. Dem Gurls and JR tap placed in the top 3 in their competitions.

Governance

The Board of Directors provides support in the following ways: financial stewardship, leadership in the development of initiatives and policies that support VTDS operations, the implementation of a variety of fundraising programs, and support at our many special events. The board will embark on an Organizational Assessment review that will include all staff, board, volunteers and stakeholders in early 2009.

A Heartfelt Thank You

VTDS programs and activities would not be possible without the support from the following funders: BC Gaming Commission, BC Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Vancouver, Burnaby Arts Council, Canadian Heritage.

Judith Rabinovitch, Bill Buckingham, Charlie Hodgson, Sasha Hodgson, Tsukasa Aria, Rick Kilburn, the MacKinleys and everyone who volunteered at the festival celebration at the Scottish Hall, parents and volunteers for your donations and support.

A hallmark at VTDS is the amazing staff and their dedication, professionalism and talent is emulated in each layer of programming.

VTDS looks forward to forging new relationships, creating innovative programming and creating performance opportunities for emerging and professional artists that will all collectively engage, inform and inspire!