



Tracing Footsteps: Honoring Diverse Voices Through Dance History in NYC

History of Tap Dance: Soul Rhythms

Let's Tap!

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is the second lesson in the 3-5 Tracing Footsteps Module 2 Dance Unit written by Barry Bluemfeld. In this lesson, students will be introduced to tap artist Orlando Hernández, and learn a tap dance warm-up, as well as some basic tap steps. Students will learn a simple tap dance combination and then the teacher will lead them through the process of performing some of Orlando's steps with their own rhythm. The lesson will finish with a sharing of student work, individual and group reflection, and relaxation.

FOCUS QUESTION/S

- What is Tap Dance?
- What kinds of steps are used in tap dancing?
- How can I make my own tap dance?

OBJECTIVES

- Watch a video of tap dance and learn the steps
- Dance a simple series of tap dance steps
- Create a short piece of tap dance choreography

INDICATORS OF STUDENT LEARNING

CONTENT – Students will know:

- How footwear in tap dancing has changed over the years



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- How tap dance utilizes movement of the feet and legs in many different ways
- What it means to change the rhythm of a movement

SKILLS – Students will be able to:

- Perform tap steps such as *steps, heels, stamps* and *shuffles*.
- Improvise different rhythms with the tap steps they learn.
- Perform the same steps with different rhythms.
- Create their own short tap dances combining a learned rhythm and rhythm that they have created on their own.

Warm-up (5:00):

Zoom Tip- For all lessons with rhythmic sound check your audio settings and make sure “Suppress Background Noise” is set to Low. Students should do the same before sharing their work. [Here are directions on how to do it](#).*

- Let’s start with 3 deep breaths.
- Pat your body all over. This time I’m going to pat a rhythm and then you’ll do the rhythm after me, just like last class. After I pat it, you pat it on your body. (Choose a simple 4 beat rhythm that is easy to repeat) Pat it all over your body- your legs, your belly, your back, the top of your head, even lightly on your cheeks.
- Now I’m going to change something. I’ll pat the rhythm, but when it’s your turn, I’ll just count 1-2-3-4, and you do your own rhythm while you pat your body. (Do this multiple times)
- Let's do the same with poking. I’ll poke a rhythm (try a new rhythm) and then you do it on your body. Keep poking in different places. Try poking your feet, your knees, the back of your legs, under your arms, your shoulders.
- *Teaching tip: It’s easy to get in a “rhythm rut.” Here are some ideas for simple four count rhythms*
 - 1 2& 3 4
 - 1& 2 3& 4
 - 1& 2& 3 4
 - 1 2 3& 4&
 - 1 2 3 4&
- Now I’ll do my rhythm, but count 4 while you do yours. (Repeat multiple times)



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- Let's try it with squeezes (continue to call out different body parts, use a new rhythm again, then do it letting students make their own 4 beats rhythm)
- How about we do it with brushes on the body (continue to call out different body parts, use a new rhythm again and then leave 4 counts for them to make their own rhythm).
- Let's wiggle with rhythms altogether. I'll start it and then you join. Wiggle just your head (repeat a rhythm). Now your shoulders (new rhythm). Your hands (new rhythm). Now your hips (new rhythm). Your knees (new rhythm), your feet (new rhythm). Wiggle your hands and your feet (new rhythm). Wiggle your shoulders and hips (new rhythm). Wiggle elbows and knees (new rhythm).
- Stretch your body as wide as you can. Now shrink as tight as possible. Let's stretch and shrink together with a rhythm. That's tricky! (Try alternating stretch and shrink rhythmically, such as : stretch, hold, shrink, hold, stretch-shrink-stretch, hold, hold).
- Let's spin 3 times. Let's spin the other way.

Introduction (6 min):

- Orlando is going to teach us some tap dancing steps today.
- Usually tap dance is done with special shoes. They look like this (photos of tap shoes)
- You can see there is metal on the front of the shoe and on the back. This front part is the toe tap. The back is called the heel tap. You can see they are different sizes and shapes so they fit the shoe.
- Tapping with metal taps started in the 1920's, but before that people danced in different kinds of shoes. Some had wood on the bottom. Some were just regular shoes. Sometimes the metal taps were smaller than the ones we use today. What mattered most of the time was that the floor was wood so you could hear the sound.
- The fun thing about tap is that you don't have to have shoes. You can do it even with your bare feet.
- Here's a video of Orlando tap dancing without shoes. You'll see he can do it fast and with exciting rhythms even though he has bare feet! ([Show video of Orlando tapping with bare feet**](#))



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Exploration: (12:00):

- Orlando is now going to teach us some tap dancing steps. Are you ready? Let's stand up. You don't have to have shoes. You can do it in socks or with your bare feet. (Play [Orlando Hernández Video #1- Introduction to Tap Dance](#)) Below is a time code of the video if you want to jump to a certain section.
 - 00:28 Tap Dance Basics
 - 01:08 Basic Steps (Walking)
 - 01:32 Basic Technique
 - 04:34 Warm-Up
 - 07:55 Let's Dance (Put Together)
 - 10:59 Toe/Heel/Stamp/Dig into Improv/Demo

*** Encourage students to make the sounds of the taps with their voices. It could be a sound like "bap" or "dat" or actually saying the words of the step.**

Development: (8:00):

- Let's try Orlando's warm-up again with me. If you can't hear your feet I have a trick for you. Make the sounds with your mouth while your feet hit the floor. Just like when we did "Rhythms 3 Ways" with Orlando last lesson. It might look and sound like this... (demonstrate by singing the sounds of your feet as they hit the floor). Ok, let's try it together.
- That was fun, but we can also do the steps our own way. Tap dancers are ALWAYS trying to create new steps or do the old ones in new ways.
- Let's change the rhythm of some of the steps Orlando taught us. Remember you can sing your feet while you move.
 - Take stamps, heels, steps, digs and toe-drops and do it with the students with a different rhythm. You can look back at the teaching tips in the warm-up for rhythm suggestions
- Now I want you to try each step with your own rhythm. I'll count us in and then we'll all do our own rhythm at the same time (Do this with each type of step-stamp, step, heel, dig and toe-drop). Don't worry what anyone else is doing. You just listen to me counting 4 beats. Let's try it a few times and see what rhythms we

make. (Count 1-2-3-4 at a slower tempo. You may need to call out the tap steps. Repeat this several times)

- Let's try it now where we do Orlando's rhythm once (just 4 beats evenly), and then do it with your own rhythm the second time. I've got an idea. I'll count and we'll do it together. (Repeat this several times)
- Who wants to share their version? You will do Orlando's rhythm the first time, and then your own rhythm the second time. (Demonstrate).

Culmination/Sharing: (6:00):

- Volunteers share their dances of doing Orlando's rhythm first, then their own.
- Observers use the chat to notice if they changed the rhythm. "I saw _____", "I heard _____", "I noticed how _____" are some possible sentence starters.
- Students can also opt to raise their hand and if called on they can try to sing the rhythm of the performer they just watched as well.

Reflection/Relaxation: (2:00):

- Lie or sit on the floor, couch or chair. Close your eyes and put your hands over your heart. Can you feel your heartbeat? With just one finger can you tap a rhythm that is as long as your breath in, and then a new one that is as long as your breath out? See if you can do it slowly. Now, put your hands down and take one long breath by itself.

EXTENSIONS

- If students are getting it quickly, speed up the tempo.
- Do the development but mix up the steps, having students use a combination of stamps and heels, or steps and digs.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES EXTENSIONS

- All tap dance steps and combinations from this lesson can be performed seated in a chair.
- All steps can also be done with the hands as opposed to the feet.



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RESOURCES

- [Orlando Hernandez tapping barefoot**](#)
- [Orlando Hernández Video #1- Introduction to Tap Dance](#)

**Note that the NYCDOE and the 92nd Street Y do not monitor these external websites.



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