



Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number

Candidate name

School name

Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Dance

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: An Examination of the Influence of Four African American Pioneers on the Development and Evolution of the Time Step in Tap Dance

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature:

Date: 3/3/2015

## Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

's love of dance led her to this topic,  
though her love of dance sometimes kept her  
from being able to focus her topic down  
effectively.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 3/5/2015

## Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number	
--------------------------	--

Criteria	Achievement level					
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3	
A research question	2	2		2		
B introduction	1	2		2		
C investigation	2	4		4		
D knowledge and understanding	3	4		4		
E reasoned argument	2	4		4		
F analysis and evaluation	3	4		4		
G use of subject language	4	4		4		
H conclusion	2	2		2		
I formal presentation	3	4		4		
J abstract	2	2		2		
K holistic judgment	2	4		4		
Total out of 36	26					

Name of examiner 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

IB Assessment Centre use only: B: \_\_\_\_\_

IB Assessment Centre use only: A: \_\_\_\_\_

**An Examination of the Influence of Four African American Pioneers on the  
Development and Evolution of the Time Step in Tap Dance**

Dance

Word Count: 2198

**Table of Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
<i>Abstract</i>	3
<i>Research Question</i>	4
<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>What is Tap?</i>	4
<i>Origins of Tap</i>	5
<i>The Time Step</i>	6
<i>Major Contributors</i>	8
<i>Conclusion</i>	11
<i>Works Cited and Videos Consulted</i>	12

### **Abstract**

The art of tap dancing is a form of personal expression and a show of one's identity. Tap dance itself emerged from the confluence of two types of dance: West African Juba and Traditional Irish Step dance. The mix of the two cultures caused the loosening of the rigid Irish dance, and the tightening of Juba dancing, resulting in modern tap. Through the twentieth century tap had many successes: vaudeville, Broadway, the tap renaissance of the 1980s, "new tap," and more.

A major component of tap dancing is the time step. A time step is a six beat step, with an emphasis on the fifth beat, that is followed by a 2 bar break. "Invented" by King Rastus Brown, the time step, just as tap in general, has evolved a significant amount since its first appearance in 1903. Tappers throughout the twentieth century have developed their own variations on the time step. Some of the most influential were Bill Robinson, Dianne Walker, and Savion Glover. As African Americans, these tappers have a distinct feel for the dance that allows them to explore new steps, styles, and rhythms while still being exceptional. Tap continues to evolve as a cultural tradition that is multiracial, as well as multigenerational.

Word Count: 206

**Research Question:** How have four historical African American pioneers in tap dance influenced the evolution of the time step?

### **Introduction**

Tap dance is a distinctly American dance that has many different origins. Over the past century it has greatly evolved, dropping out of practice, then having revivals. Tap dancing is an outlet of expression used by many to showcase individuality and personality. The time step is a common step used by dancers in improvisational performance as well as in choreography. Four of tap's "greats" who do this best are King Rastus Brown, Bill Robinson, Dianne Walker, and Savion Glover. Each of these performers made a significant contribution to the development of tap dancing, and more specifically the time step.

### **What is Tap?**

Tap dance is a modern American dance, characterized by the rhythmic noises made with special tap shoes. Tap shoes are most commonly stiff leather shoes with metal "taps" on the heel and toe to produce the sounds associated with tapping (Holmes). There are two main types of tap dancing: rhythm, or jazz, tap and Broadway tap. Rhythm tap is the more percussive type of tap dancing. Rhythm tap requires a musical ear to distinguish all the different rhythms, and to put dancing with music. Today, the challenge of rhythm tap is the speed at which it is performed, and the accuracy that the performer has with his/her skills at that speed. Broadway tap is the type usually taught in studios to small children. Broadway tap requires less skill and contains more jazz dancing (more movement of the arms and hips) with the occasional tap move added in.

## Origins of Tap

Beside Native American folk dances, tap dancing is the sole uniquely American dance form. The fusion of many dances brought the beginnings of tap, a term not widely used until 1902. Tap is said to have a “neat triparentage of English, Irish, and African musical and dance traditions” (Hill 2).

West African Juba dancing was a dance brought to America with the African slaves. Made famous by Master Juba, these dances involve rhythmic drumming, stomping, jumping and clapping. Juba dancing is usually associated with people standing in a circle, clapping or patting their thighs or drums, heel clicking, and dancing with one leg raised (“Master Juba”).

Irish dance, the national dance of Ireland, can be performed solo or in groups. Group dances are blocked in straight lines and all movement stays in lines. Rigid back posture, straight arms, and rapid toe and heel movements characterize Step Dance. There are two types of shoes in Irish dance: hard shoes and soft shoes. Hard shoes are similar to tap shoes; except their toe and heel are made of fiberglass and they are much stiffer. Soft shoes resemble jazz shoes, but they lace up and have a hard heel.

Irish steps that can be found in tap include: shuffles, heel clicks, toe hits, and brushes (“A Short History”).



Figure 2: A common end position in tap dance

Figure 1 shows a typical Irish dance move that is almost an exact position in tap as well, as demonstrated in Figure 2.



Figure 1: A common position in Irish dance



When Irish American laborers and African American slaves mixed in the southern United States they formed a fusion of African Juba dances and Irish step dances that resulted in a more formal African dance and a more rhythmic, flexible Irish dance that eventually became the hybrid that is American tap dance ("*The Origin of Tap Dance*").

African Americans (in blackface) performed the earliest forms of tap in Minstrel shows. As time went on, tap evolved. In the 1920s and 30s tap became flashier and added acrobatics. The Nicholas Brothers were well known for their leaping off tall platforms, landing in the splits, and bouncing up straight back into their tap routine. This was called flash tap, and led to the loss of jazz tap in the late 40s. Another factor at the time was the move of tap from performance stages to the newly emerging medium of film. When tap was on-screen it lost much of its appeal because it was being performed by white entertainers, not the people who brought tap to the forefront of entertainment. In the 1950s tap lost its popularity all together due to the music styles changing, and a new interest in ballet.

By the end of the 1980s with the success of Gregory Hines and Savion Glover on Broadway, African American males had helped a new era of tap emerge. In 1989, Congress voted to add National Tap Day to the calendar on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Time Step**

The time step is a changing step that can be varied to match they style of the person performing it. The base of a time step is a 6 beat phrase with an accent on the 5<sup>th</sup> beat. Tappers use the phrase "and I thank you for the bug-gy" as a way to distinguish time steps (Corr). The step usually has a two bar break after 6 repetitions, giving a gate way into their next step. Time steps are a way for tappers to make up their own choreography with something to build on. In improvisational tap dancing, time steps are often used as a way to create a unique style using a well-known step. Often at tap shows, dancers will invite

audience members, who tap, on stage to perform a time step sequence at the end of the show. This demonstrates what an essential piece of tap the time step is.

Early forms of the time step were used to communicate tempos to the dancer's band members. Tappers often would use the time steps to choose their tempo based on skills and ability. This made for many types of time steps, as each tapper had a unique sound (Corr). The original, simplest, and best know time step can be characterized by: *stomp hop step brush step step stomp* and repeated after that. The simple time step also has a double, triple, and quadruple forms, and they get increasingly difficult. The double time step goes as follows: *stomp hop brush step brush step step stomp* and repeat; the triple is: *stomp hop shuffle step brush step step stomp*, and finally the quadruple is represented by: *stomp hop shuffle shuffle step stomp*. All the basic time steps are 6 beats with stress on the 5<sup>th</sup> beat.

Arms for time steps usually are parallel to the body with palms facing the audience, and then rotate as the step is happening, but come back up by the next stomp. However, arms in tap are all personal preferences; some prefer big arms while others prefer to focus on their feet.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

The figures above are screen shots of a woman performing the basic time step, and demonstrate the typical arm movement of the step.

## Major Contributors

King Rastus Brown is often credited with “inventing” the time step. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, Brown moved to New York City in the early 1900s. He became well known immediately for his distinctive (at the time) tapping style. Brown would tap without lots of jumping or winging, as other tappers of the time did. He was also known for his stamina. “Others claim that Brown could tap for an hour straight while standing up, and then continue to tap for another hour sitting down” (Hill 25). His most well known accomplishment, though, was his six beat rhythmic pattern with a two bar break in stop-time which he called “Buck Dancer’s Lament.” King Rastus Brown was a frequent attendee of the Hoofers Club, a small basement where tappers went to compete, and new men went to learn to tap. There he would perform his “Buck Dancer’s Lament” and challenge others to pick up his rhythms. This helped promote the spread of the time step, as well as the variations of today (Hill 87).

Bill “Bojangles” Robinson is one of the most well known tap dancers in history. Born in 1878 in Richmond, Virginia, Robinson became a performer at a very young age. By 1901 Robinson was performing on white vaudeville stages. He had brief partnerships, but his career really took off when he teamed up with George Cooper. They were extremely successful, and even went to London to perform their show. After going their separate ways, Robinson returned to New York to debut his famous stair dance. It was this dance that brought him the title of “World’s Greatest Dancer” (Hill 63). Robinson’s stair dance was allegedly not his original idea, but he was the dancer to bring it to fame. Robinson also attended the Hoofers Club. At the club he engaged in challenges with other tappers, and often they used time steps in their improvisations. Bill’s signature time step, “a back-cycling treadmill riff” (Hill 64), consisted of: *shuffle hop brush step*



Figure 6: Robinson performing time step

*brush step step*. Bill Robinson was the first tapper to use the phrase “and I thank you for the bug-gy”, but in his step the emphasis went on the “thank” and “bug”. He had other variations involving cramp rolls (the shifting of weight from the balls of the feet to heels, sounds similar to a horse gallop) and paradiddles (heel spank step heel). He performed these time steps in his famed stair dances as well as on flat ground (Bill Robinson in Shirley Temple: YouTube). Bill Robinson greatly influenced the variability of the time step, something that has been retained to the present.

Dianne “Lady D” Walker trained with Leon Collins at the late age of 27. She had previously been working as a psychologist, when she became intrigued with tap dance, immediately found a mentor, and began training and performing. Walker is known for being one of the most prominent women in the tap resurgence of the 1980s. She is sometimes referred to as “The First Lady of Tap” (Hill 231). Dianne was a strong believer in helping women find their own rhythmic style from old forms of tap. Her main goal was to separate from rhythm tap that was often associated with the black male, and refashion it into the female vein. Walker’s original style helped shape her time step into something very unique. Dianne Walker was the first of many tappers to do a travelling time step. She said herself, “If your body is not moving along the way of the phrase, it gets in your way” (Hill 338). Her signature travelling time step is known as: *shuffle step shuffle step step step step* (where the tapper travels) *heel shuffle step shuffle step* (Dianne Walker: YouTube). The step is simple, but complicated at the same time dealing with the rhythm and foot placement. Her other well known time step is more complicated, and shows her love for intricate rhythms, and clear-cut, exaggerated steps. The step goes: *cramp roll tap brush step brush step shuffle back-step heel heel toe heel toe heel toe heel*; and the break follows with: *heel 4 tap riff brush ball heel* and then repeats twice (Dianne Walker: YouTube).

Finally, Savion Glover, the youngest contributor, was born in 1973. Glover's style is distinctly "new tap." He makes up part of a new generation of tappers who recycle old moves with new rhythms and new music to create a new sound. He is sometimes called the savior of tap because of his commitment to tap tradition, as well as his timing that made him a big star in the decline of tap. Glover describes his style as "young and funk" (Hill 293). His sounds are hard and loud, and his main teaching goal is how to "hit" which Glover feels is the way to express oneself. A big part of Glover's performance is his clothes, which are very baggy and non-descript. He also wears his hair in long dreadlocks so that they obscure his face while he is tapping (Figure 7). His body style is crouched with no real arm placement, an embodiment of hip-hop (Hill 310).



Figure 7: Glover's clothing and hair

Glover's dancing is supposed to be the embodiment of "sorrow, anger, and the fierce anger of hip-hop's rapping and break dancing culture" (Hill 311). Glover doesn't have a specific time step he is known for, but steps that are specific to his style are: *stomps, toe hits, cramp rolls, paradiddles, spansks, 5 note riffs, stamps, and claps* ("Happy Feet": YouTube).

## **Conclusion**

Tap dance evolved from many cultures, those most prominent being West African and Irish. A uniquely American dance, tap is widely practiced throughout the world now. The time step is an iconic part of tap dance known for its 6 beat rhythm with stress on the 5<sup>th</sup> beat, followed by a 2 bar break. The four African American dancers who had the most influence on the formation and evolution are Rastus Brown, Bill Robinson, Dianne Walker and Savion Glover. Though each has a unique tapping style, they all made the time step their own by incorporating their personal techniques into the base structure. Tap will continue to evolve into a cultural tradition that, though it has a significant African American roots, is multiracial as well as multigenerational. It is very exciting that tap is now receiving its credit for being an art form that embraces individual style and personality.

### Works Cited

Hill, Constance Valis. *Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2010. Print

"Beholders.org." *The Origin of Tap Dance*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2014.

Corr, Paul, and Tony Curtis. "Setting The Stage." *Tap Origins*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2014.

"A Short History of Irish Dance." *BBC News*. BBC, 22 May 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2014.

"Master Juba The Inventor of Tap Dancing ." *Master Juba*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2014.

Holmes, Vance. "All About Tap Dance." *TheatreDance.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2014

### Videos Consulted

*Bill Bojangles Robinson and Shirley Temple*. Perf. Bill Robinson and Shirley Temple. *YouTube*.

YouTube, n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjCFYpWDMfM>>.

*Dianne Walker Shows Us How It's Done*. Perf. Dianne Walker. *YouTube*. YouTube, n.d. Web.

11 Aug. 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt0Uwkevu4Y>>.

*Savion "Happy Feet" Glover*. Perf. Savion Glover. *YouTube*. YouTube, n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2014.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XOwA0fc-dQ>>.

*A limited range of sources; relevant information has been cited in the essay.*

*A good knowledge of the vocabulary of tap dance is demonstrated. The historical context is very brief.*

*The contribution of the 4 pioneers is outlined; however, why choose Glover when he had no significant contribution to the line step.*

*Further research and analysis of these contributions to Jazz Tap & Broadway Tap would have deepened the discussion*