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THE BELLA TAPPERS

Local dancers celebrate National Tap Dance Day

By Mary Anne White

National Tap Dance Day received official calendar recognition in 1989 when President George H. W. Bush signed it into law. Intended to be a one-time

performances with Vaud-Villities. They participated in dance workshops instructed by Columbus native Randy Skinner, a well-known Broadway tap dancer and choreographer. Skinner, who went to Up-

and later moved to New York where he established his career. His tap dancing can be heard in numerous recordings and, in 2016, he won a best choreography Tony Award for Dames at Sea.

ment stages of minstrel shows and vaudeville. The bottoms of the original wood-soled dance shoes were eventually altered by hammering nails, pennies, or bottle caps to them to create a sharper



The original Bella Tappers, including tap instructors Sandy Hull and Mary Bova-Ervin

observance, May 25th was chosen as the date in honor of tap dance legend Bill "Bojangles" Robinson's birthday.

Talented tap dancers from the Columbus area will be celebrating locally. The Bella Tappers are a dance troupe that performs at events, nursing homes, and other venues including a recent performance at the Columbus Arts Festival. They practice tap routines at the Grandview Parks and Recreation Center.

The group is led by former New York professional dancer Mary Bova-Ervin and her friend Sandy Hull who offer classes to senior women—with or without previous tap dance experience. They developed their talents in prominent Columbus dance studios like Jimmy Rawlins and Arthur Murray, and in per-



A current Bella Tappers class/rehearsal

per Arlington High School and graduated from The Ohio State University, performed professionally with the Kenley Players

Bova-Ervin and Hull each shares her passion and tap dance style with the dancers. Bova-Ervin loves the Italian word bella and christened the dance troupe as the Bella Tappers. Hull shares her perspective on the value of tap dancing: "We've got to keep moving in life. Moving helps give length and quality to life."

Immigration in the 1700-1800s introduced a blend of cultures. The Irish jig, Scottish clogging, and rhythmic African step dancing joined to create a new distinctly American dance style. From Southern plantations and Northern cities, the dance style moved on to the entertain-

and louder sound. When jazz made its appearance in the 1920s, the additions to the wooden soles were replaced by metal plates called taps on the heels and tips of leather shoes—which provided tap dance with its name.

William Henry Lane, a black American actor and dancer who performed under the stage name of Master Juba, is considered to be the "Father of Tap Dancing." He is also known as Boz's Juba because Charles Dickens (whose pseudonym was Boz) describes seeing Juba's dance style performed by a black dancer in a New York slum in the writer's



Tap instructor Mary Bova-Ervin

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