

BWW Reviews: TAP IT OUT Electrifies Times Square

by Juliane Pettorossi



On Saturday, July 13th, the sound of 300 unified tapping feet escalated through the air in the heart of New York City at this year's TAP CITY event, TAP IT OUT. As a dancer with knowledge in the art of tap, the idea of hundreds of individuals coming together to perform outside in the core of one of the busiest cities captivated me. Not only were the performers tap dancers - But of ages ranging from about 5-75, and from countries all over the world. This show was not your typical sit down, wait for the lights to dim, fifteen-minute intermission ordeal. It was about spreading the love of tap dancing to anyone that wanted to join along and enjoy a memorable performance, without any music involved. Luckily enough, I got to be one of those people.

TAP CITY, the free, public event in Father Duffy/Time Square, was the culmination of the week-long annual TAP CITY Festival from July 6-13. The performance space consisted of 100 individual gray, wooden panels that were set up in rows, ready to be danced on. The performers, with their individually customized blue "TAP IT OUT" t-shirts and black bottoms, each took their own wooden board with excitement oozing solely from the smiles on their faces. Artistic director Tony Waag could not have been a better compliment to this group of performers, as their chemistry with him glared from his reciprocated smile and laughter. At 1pm, the dancers switched from their street shoes to their taps, and the magic started right away.

The performance was broken into four different sections, all a cappella. The first was about a five-minute long intro, where the group danced in unison and combined perfectly rhythmical 8-counts with syncopated riffs. The dancers also split up into four groups, each producing their own beat but perfectly matching with the taps of the others. After this introduction, conductor and director Waag (all fancied up in his black tuxedo) spoke to the NYC crowd and introduced the event. The audience grew as the second section of the performance began, and even spread to the people on the top of the tour buses - Simply passing by and taking out their cell phones to catch a quick video of the incredible tap dancers.

In this section, yet again, each and every dancer looked at Tony Waag's waving baton with upmost excitement in their faces. Despite the 93-degree heat, their joy spread throughout the audience with every beat they made. In this section, often times a soloist would start with a simple beat, and then others would join in and create a beautiful roar of rhythms throughout the city. Random words, sounds, and arm movements from Waag and the performers such as "1,2, you know what to do," were the perfect compliment to the sounds already produced from their shoes. In the third section of the performance, the dancers sat on the side of the panels while eight soloists took center stage. Each of these mind-blowing tappers had about a 16-count solo, sometimes seemingly "challenging" one of the other talented soloists. Each of them added their own style and flair to their dancing, and kept in time with the beat of the claves.

For the last few minutes, about 50 younger kids ranging from 5-13 joined in with the group, all excited to have the opportunity to dance in such a popular area. Waag's chemistry with them was heartwarming as well, starting off with the statement, "And we're not going to rush, right?" Although he laughed as they did start to speed up about a minute into their dance, these kids did not disappoint - They kept up with the group as if there were no age difference at all. At the end of the performance, the audience was cheering loudly and each and every dancer looked honored and accomplished. All around Times Square was nothing but happiness.

I smiled, I laughed, I clapped, and I "WOO"ed many, many times. It was one of the most enjoyable performances I have ever attended - Mainly because it was simply a feel-good show. It wasn't extremely professional, nor did I feel as if I had to be quiet and "really watch" the entire time. It was an eclectic mix of different ages and nationalities coming together to emphasize a love of tap dancing. And let me tell you - There is nothing better to watch.