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Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

Taps International Winston Morrison in "Bach to Miles," at the Peter Jay Sharp Theater on Thursday as part of the New York City Tap Festival.



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THAT RAT-A-TAT-TAP, IN RHYTHMS OF MANY NATIONS

By BRIAN SEIBERT

During the inaugural season of [the New York City Tap Festival](#) in 2001, the “Tap Internationals” program came with many surprises. Who knew there was tap in Estonia? During this year’s “Tap Internationals” at Symphony Space on Thursday, the surprises were fewer and fainter. The festival regulars outshone the international guests, but in a manner that suggested how the rest of the world has affected tap in New York.

Felipe Galganni, from Brazil, presented himself in a trio that alternated between “The Girl From Ipanema” (again?) and Gilberto Gil’s “Aquele Abraço.” Despite a clunky arrangement, the singer Jackeline Ribas sounded pleasant, and the choreography stayed pleasant, too. Mr. Galganni looked freer when he stopped tapping to samba silently.

Similarly, Jaime Moran, from Cuba, showed himself to be a fine rumba dancer dabbling in tap. Winston Morrison, from Australia, had stronger chops, but there was nothing distinctive about his solo, so casual it barely registered. Flavia Costa, another Brazilian, did very little with a big umbrella in her meandering version of “Singin’ in the Rain.”

Kazu Kumagai, a festival regular from Japan, is a true tap artist, and there was novelty in his use of a Björk song and distorted electric guitar (played live, as all the music was on Thursday). His solo was both insufficiently focused and too formulaic, a less inspired version of what he’s done before, but his eruptions of intensity were welcome in an evening heavy on gentleness.

Claudia Rahardjanoto, a festival regular of Chinese-Indonesian descent, born and raised in Germany, danced to a gamelanlike piano piece by the Indonesian composer Jaya Suprana. A profusion of quick taps played against single piano notes, and steps created by the American master Jimmy Slyde translated nicely into a foreign context.

Chikako Iwahori — Japanese, but a member of the New York tap scene since 1995 — danced with her husband, the Moroccan musician Hassan Hakmoun. Mr. Hakmoun drew low sounds from a three-stringed lute called a sintir, sang beautifully and tapped minimally. Though Ms. Iwahori’s tapping was skillful and tasteful, it seemed almost an accompaniment to Mr. Hakmoun’s music.

This is a trend, a shift from tap as music making in the jazz soloist sense to something more communal, collective and friendly. Take “Environments,” by Nicholas Young, an American. Five dancers assembled complex rhythms by means of slaps, claps, vocalizations and stomps in boots, before switching to tap shoes. The pull away from footwork resulted in full-body music rather than full-body dance.

In RumbaTap’s “El Guararey de Pastora,” the dancers mainly stood in a line, singing in harmony and contributing percussion. The music was a delightful vocal arrangement of a famous Cuban song, put together by the group’s absent leader, Max Pollak. And the virtuosic solo at its end, combining intricate tap with mouth clicks in Afro-Cuban clave rhythm, was Cuban tap that far surpassed that of the evening’s Cuban tapper.

That final soloist was Mr. Young. RumbaTap also included Ms. Rahardjanoto and Ms. Iwahori. The hidden key to “Tap Internationals” was the regular who wasn’t there, Mr. Pollak, an Austrian who mastered American tap in New York, then altered it by falling in love with Cuba.