



krannert center

**YOUTH  
SERIES**

**18-19**

SCHOOL DAY PERFORMANCES  
FOR PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND HOME  
SCHOOLS, GRADES PreK-12

**DORRANCE  
DANCE**





## ABOUT MICHELLE DORRANCE

Michelle Dorrance (MacArthur Fellow, Bessie Award winner, and Doris Duke Artist Award winner) is one of the most sought-after tap dancers of her generation and “one of the most imaginative tap choreographers working today” (*The New Yorker*). Under her direction, Dorrance Dance upholds the traditions of tap dance, a uniquely American art form, while propelling them forward rhythmically, technically, and conceptually. Michelle grew up performing with the North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble and was mentored by Gene Medler. She went on to perform with the internationally touring show *STOMP*, Savion Glover’s *ti dii*, and many others. In addition to her work as a dancer, choreographer, and artistic director, Michelle loves to teach young people about the art of making music with your feet.

**A 2015 winner of a MacArthur fellowship, Dorrance has given tap a new physical profile.**

—Lewis Segal, *Los Angeles Times*

**Dorrance . . . pushes the boundaries of tap while exposing its true nature: that it is music**

—*The New York Times*

## ABOUT THE SHOW

This highly interactive performance introduces students to the art of rhythm tap through an engaging mix of performance, conversation, and get-up-on-your-feet participation. Dorrance Dance aims to honor tap dance’s uniquely beautiful history in a new, dynamic, and compelling context. The company’s inaugural performance garnered a Bessie Award for “blasting open our notions of tap,” and the company continues its passionate commitment to expanding the audience of tap dance, an original American art form.

## IMPACT

This season we invite school communities to explore the performing arts through a selection of topics that reveal the IMPACT of the Arts for Youth.

- Introduction to the arts
- Meaning and cultural context
- Production
- Art-making and creativity
- Careers
- Training

## M IS FOR MEANING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

### Tap Roots

The history of tap dance is deeply rooted in the history of America. The rhythmic tap dancing of Dorrance Dance can trace its beginnings to colonial times and the resulting collision of cultures from Europe, Africa, and Indigenous America. The millions of Africans who were brought to America and enslaved brought their languages and cultures with them. After an uprising in 1739 in South Carolina, many states adopted laws that banned the playing or owning of drums among enslaved peoples as an attempt to stamp out African and African-American cultural life, which was centered around drum circles. Although the drums were banned, the rhythms remained, and people found innovative ways to express and perform them through dance and through patting their hands on their bodies (a practice called *juba*). Another important African cultural element that endured was the call and response form, which continues in many music and dance traditions today.

In the busy port city of New Orleans during the 1800s, the ruling French and Spanish Europeans followed a practice of a Sunday sabbath, which gave a day of rest even to enslaved people who gathered in Congo Square to sing and dance. From this place, jazz music was born. New York City in the 1800s saw the mixing of freed African-Americans with immigrants from Ireland in the Five Points district. At this time, American minstrelsy arose from the practice of white English and Irish performers performing stereotyped renditions of African-American songs and dances, which managed to popularize and preserve some traditions, although in a distorted way.

A dancer by the name of William Henry Lane is usually credited as the father of tap dance. He was known as Master Juba and blended African rhythms with elements of Irish clogging and jig and reel dances. He became an international celebrity and won numerous dance contests and challenge matches, and was the first African-American artist to tour with a white minstrel group.

In the 1900s, John Bubbles introduced the dropping of the heel into his steps as a way of adding a bass sound along with complex syncopated rhythms that were unique to his style, which earned him the designation of “Father of

Rhythm Tap.” At this time, there emerged two main tap styles in America—Broadway Tap, which drew on the upright stance from the Irish influence, and of course highly choreographed dances; and Rhythm Tap, which was most closely aligned with the jazz swing music of the Harlem Renaissance and utilized call-and-response forms and improvisation.

As jazz music changed in the second half of the 20th century, tap dancing changed with it. Dancers like “Baby Laurence” Jackson and Chuck Green (and the Copasetics) adapted to the bebop style of jazz, bringing the dance form into a deeper musical conversation through extended improvisations. Gregory Hines brought tap into the modern era by exploring funk music alongside a return to traditional African rhythms.

Want to learn more? Check out the American Tap Dance Foundation ([atdf.org](http://atdf.org)) and its International Tap Dance Hall of Fame for the stories of many more influential dancers in the history of tap. Also keep a look out for the film *American Tap* by Mark Wilkerson (available at the University of Illinois library).

## BEGINNER BASICS



If you’ve ever looked at a pair of tap shoes, you’ll note that there are two “taps” (metal plates) attached to the bottom of each shoe: one under the heel, and the other under the ball and toes of the foot (the part of the foot we stand on when up on “tip-toes”). Even if you don’t have a pair of tap shoes, you can still learn a few basic moves.

**STEP-HEEL:** this is a little like walking, except that you put the ball of your foot down first, followed by the heel. Set a steady beat, and see if you can walk across the room using the step-heel. Bonus: can you figure out how to do a heel-step?

**BRUSH:** This is a small movement you can learn by standing in place. Balance on your left foot with your right leg slightly bent at the knee. Swing your right foot forward, lightly brushing the ball of your foot on the floor as you go. The heel of the right foot should not touch the floor.

**STRIKE:** This is the opposite of the brush. Stand on one foot with the opposite leg extended in front of you. As you swing your leg back toward your body, lightly brush the ball of the foot on the floor.

**SHUFFLE:** combine the brush and the strike and you have a shuffle!

## GIANTS OF TAP

Tap into the history of this American art form by researching one of the following dancers. Find out about your dancer’s main contributions to the development of tap dance as well as any details of their lives that interest you!

**William Henry Lane**  
“Master Juba”

**Aida Overton Walker**

**Bill “Bojangles” Robinson**

**John Bubbles**

**“Baby Laurence” Jackson**

**Fred Astaire**

**Chuck Green**

**Eleanor Powell**

**Brenda Bufalino**

**Gregory Hines**

**Savion Glover**

# ON THE MAP

DORRANCE DANCE COMES FROM . . .  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

NEW YORK CITY,  
NEW YORK



## Dorrance Dance

**Thursday, March 14, 2019, at 11am**

Tryon Festival Theatre

Approximately 60 minutes

Recommended for grades 4 and up

### Public Marquee performance

Thursday, March 14, 2019, at 7:30pm

*Dorrance Dance appears courtesy of Selby*

*Artists Management, selbyartistsmgmt.com*

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GREENING THE ARTS

## LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

Krannert Center has also partnered with Champaign Public Library and The Urbana Free Library to help expand your students' Youth Series experience. Our local libraries have placed materials that relate to *Dorrance Dance* on display, and librarians are prepared to help your students immerse themselves in the wide-ranging subject areas that are covered by the production. These resources will be available approximately two weeks before through two weeks following the performance.

We hope that you are able to take advantage of these exciting partnerships with our local libraries!

[www.champaign.org](http://www.champaign.org) | [www.urbanafreelibrary.org](http://www.urbanafreelibrary.org)

## SPURLOCK MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE: THURSDAY, MARCH 14

Drop in for a self-guided, interactive visit before or after the performance. Museum guides in each room will offer hands-on object studies and gallery-based challenges for students tied to the themes of *Dorrance Dance*. The Spurlock Museum also has a variety of resources for classroom use. Contact Kim Sheahan at [ksheahan@illinois.edu](mailto:ksheahan@illinois.edu) or 217.244.3355 for information on available artifacts and lesson plans.

