

Tap Ties Dance and Fitness Festival 2016 ~ Guest Faculty Bios

Baakari Wilder is internationally known for starring in the Broadway musical “*Bring In Da Noise, Bring In Da Funk*”. He received a Bessie Award for his performance, and later assumed the lead role for a year. Baakari's dancing has delighted audiences around the world in places such as the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, France, Africa, Brazil, Germany, Japan, and Russia. Baakari has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theatre. He appeared as an actor/tap dancer in Spike Lee's “*Bamboozled*”. He shares his knowledge of tap dancing through his role as assistant artistic director of the Washington D.C. based company “*Capitol Tap*”. Baakari recently received the **Pola Nirenska Award for achievement in Dance by the Washington Performing Arts**.

Shelley Oliver has over twenty years' experience as a professional tap dancer in which time she has appeared internationally with some of the legends of the tap world. She is a founding member of noted dance ensemble, *Manhattan Tap* and was a co-artistic director/choreographer with the company for two years. She has toured extensively throughout Europe, China, the Caribbean, Canada and the U.S., performing with such tap notables as Savion Glover, Jimmy Slide, Buster Brown, and Chuck Green.

Her television appearances include *Tap Dance in America* with Gregory Hines and Star Search, in which she was a finalist. Ms. Oliver has performed with many jazz greats including Slide Hampton, David "Fathead" Newman, and Kenny Washington. A noted dance educator Ms. Oliver teaches jazztap at Muhlenberg College, choreographs for the theater, and is Director of the Muhlenberg Jazz Tap Ensemble. She has conducted workshops and residencies for Lincoln Center, New York City Public Schools and universities throughout the United States. She is the featured tap soloist with the *David Leonhardt Jazz Group* touring jazz festivals and concerts worldwide and is the author of the CD "Tap Music For Tap Dance"

Lynn Schwab is a member of Max Pollak's *RumbaTap* and was a founding member of Tony Waag's *Tap City on Tour* and *Barbara Duffy and Company*. With these groups, Lynn has had the opportunity to perform throughout the world and at such notable New York venues as Town Hall, The Duke on 42nd Street, Judson Church, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, Joe's Pub, The River-to-River Festival, Off Broadway's La MAMA, Central Park's SummerStage, Studio 54, Symphony Space, The Joyce and The Joyce SoHo Theatres.

Lynn had the pleasure of performing at The Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse as a guest artist with Billy Siegenfeld and Jeannie Hill's *Jump Rhythm Jazz Project* and has choreographed for and performed at **Jacob's Pillow**. With members of *The Tap Collective*, she choreographed and performed the Morton Gould Tap Dance Concerto with the Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra and as a soloist, performed with *The Chamber Orchestra Kremlin*.

She teaches and performs at festivals and workshops throughout the U.S.A., Europe, Brazil, Japan and Taiwan, and is the Assistant Director for *Tap It Out*, the annual out-of-doors event of New York's *Tap City*. Presently, she is on faculty at The American Tap Dance Foundation and at Steps on Broadway in New York City.

Vanessa Sonon is a Broadway Actress, Singer, Dancer, with a world-wide career spanning over 15 years with a teaching history of over 20 years! Her Broadway credits include *Anything Goes Revival* (Erma u/s Swing), *Spamalot* (Lady of the lake u/s, Ensemble), and *42nd St* (Peggy Sawyer u/s, Ensemble), as well as Multiple First National Tours and Roles spanning across the country and the globe.

Rochelle Haynes is a native of Dallas, Texas, where she began her dance training at the age of three. She attended Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. Miss Haynes continued her dance training in Philadelphia while attending college at the **University of the Arts**, where she received her BFA in modern dance.

Rochelle joined **Tap Team Two and Company** as a principal dancer in 1997 where she traveled throughout the United States teaching the history of tap and promoting tap dance as an American art form. Tap Team Two was able to promote their show, “*Hoofing In America*”, through an organization called **Young Audiences**. In 2000 –

2001 Young Audiences named Tap Team Two as Artist of the Year. She has been teaching tap throughout the Pennsylvania and New Jersey area for over 20 years. Rochelle has also taught master classes in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Maryland, Louisiana, New York and Prague, Czech Republic. She is currently in her tenth year as the Guest Artist in Residence at Moravian College. Miss Haynes has been on faculty at the University of the Arts since 2005. She taught the tap classes at the Summer World of Dance for two years, Pre-College Program and at the High School Dance Festival which was held at the University of the Arts. Rochelle was the Tap choreographer for five years for the Garden State Dance Festival.

Miss Haynes has studied with and taken classes from the Masters of tap for over 14 years. Her studies have taken her within the United States, Brazil and Prague, Czech Republic. She has been fortunate to perform in the Philadelphia area for over 19 years and has taken the stage with tap greats Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Nicole Hockenberry, Germaine Ingram and Dorothy Wasserman of the movie TAP. She performed the choreography of Germaine Ingram in "**Danceboom 2005**", Philadelphia Folklore Project's "**Dance Happens Here**" 2006 and 2008, the "**Tap Extravaganza**" in New York City, and at the University of the Arts in 2005 and 2008 which were special tribute performances to the late great LaVaughn Robinson. In 2011 she had the wonderful opportunity to perform original choreography of Bill BoJangles Robinson and Charles "Honi" Coles of the Copasetics in New York at the Symphony Space Theater. One of her favorite performances was "Prague-DC-Philly" in Prague, Czech Republic.

Germaine Salsberg is one of the most popular and influential tap dance teachers in New York today. She has been on the faculty of **Broadway Dance Center** for over 20 years, where she teaches a complete tap program of basic to intermediate levels. Her students include cast members and choreographers from Broadway & Off-Broadway shows, National tours, the **Rockettes**, tap companies, as well as people who "just love to tap". In addition she teaches tap for Musical Theatre Majors at **New York University's Steinhardt School of Education** where she teaches technique to her students as well as giving them a historical perspective of tap and its masters. She has previously taught for New York University's **Cap 21**, at **Steps on Broadway**, and at **Dance Theatre of Harlem**. She has taught and participated in the **Tap City Festival** in New York since it started in 2001. One of her goals is to incorporate the values of rhythm tap into the theatrical tap milieu and has completed her 2nd year of teaching and choreographing at the Broadway Dance Theatre Workshop in Santa Fe NM.

As assistant to Tony Award Winner **Danny Daniels**, she helped train the boys for the Broadway and National tours of "**Tap Dance Kid**". Besides her own concert work, Germaine has used her unique style in creating original choreography in productions of "**George M!**" "**Anything Goes**", as well as five successful productions for Muhlenberg Summer Theater including "**42nd ST**", "**Anything Goes**", "**Crazy For You**", "**George M!**" and "**Dames At Sea**". In 2000 Germaine performed in **Edmonton's Fringe Festival** with an hour long tap show called **Toe Jamm**, which delighted audiences for the run of the Festival, and was thrilled to perform in the "**TapCity Festival**" in New York City.

Prior to teaching, Germaine began her career as an actress, appearing on radio and television in her native Canada. She became a founding member and soloist with the **Toronto Dance Theatre** and performed and toured with that company for 7 years appearing in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. In New York she and her husband co direct "**A & G Dance**". They have produced concerts at the **Riverside Dance festival**, **DTW's Bessie Schoenberg Theater**, **New York University**, and for various school programs including **Lincoln Center's Meet-the-Artist** and **Hospital Audiences**. They have performed together in Canada and Europe. Most recently they were part of the **Soho Arts Festival** in New York City, and created and performed in a very successful show entitled "**Not Fade Away: dancing Over 40**" which was premiered in New York in 1996, and performed in Pennsylvania in July 1997 and 1998. They completed a new performance series of the "**Not Fade Away Project**" which was presented at the **Merce Cunningham Studio Theater** in November 1998 to sold out houses.

"Germaine is a wonderful teacher. She is filled with imagination and great fun to work with. I enjoy every minute I spend with her in a dance studio."..... Liza Minnelli

Karen Callaway Williams is known for being both the first African-American female tap dancer and dance captain in **RIVERDANCE - THE SHOW** and the only African-American female tap dancer and dance captain in

RIVERDANCE - ON BROADWAY. Other Broadway credits include the Tony Award nominated Duke Ellington musical **PLAY ON**. She is currently featured on the cover of Flow Magazine and in the wonderful current documentary **BEEN RICH ALL MY LIFE the story of the Silver Belle, a group of Chorus Girls from the 1930's and 1940's**. She is currently a Second Generation Silver Belle and the Artistic Director of this group.

Karen has toured extensively performing in 32 States and 13 countries having recently returned from a two and a half month run of **HINTON BATTLE'S AMERICAN VARIETY BANG** in Osaka, Japan. She has also traveled to Zurich Switzerland for the fourth time as instructor for the Zurich Tap Festival, The United Arab Emirates (Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Al Ain) with the Duke Ellington Big Band, Armenia and Romania with **TAP CITY ON TOUR** through the United States Embassy, the **ALL THAT TAP TAIPEI** festival in Taiwan, on Canadian soil with **TAP GIANTS** and Tap TEL AVIV and in Beijing, China, Canada and North America with the RIVERDANCE Flying Squad and RIVERDANCE, Boyne Company.

Karen is mentioned several times in the Tap History book **TAP DANCING AMERICA** by Constance Valis Hill, was featured in a Black History edition of ESSENCE Magazine, which highlighted four female African-American tap artists and on the recording of Music From The Sacred Concerts Edward Kennedy Ellington as performed by the Princeton University Concert Jazz Ensemble as the Tap Dancer in David Danced Before the Lord a role not commonly performed by a female dancer. She reprised this role in April 2015. She was also interviewed on **BOJANGLES THE LEGACY** for **SHOWTIME** as well as in a special guest spot on "**SESAME STREET**". A graduate of Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia, she is also an alumna of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center (AAADC) in New York.

In 2013, Karen was a Flo-Bert Honoree and received the Florence Mills Award and was awarded in July 2015 with the **Hoofers Award from the American Tap Dance Foundation**. DANCE MAGAZINE heralded her as "*a graceful dream with taps as happy as a song*" and the New York Times called her "a gifted traditionalist with laughing eyes". Karen is a Featured Artist and was the first Dance Captain and charter member of the **NEW JERSEY TAP ENSEMBLE**, having recently celebrated 20 years with the company. In addition to performing, Ms. Williams has established herself as a prominent tap instructor.

Karen is the Producer of Rhythms for Ruby (the show) and the author of Gabriella's Tap Shoes (book 1) Gabriella and the Tap Dance Floor (book 2) and Rhythms for Ruby (book 4) (in print and audio book) is working on her fourth book for children "Gabriella the Girl who lost her Shuffle (book 3 in order). All books are available on Amazon.com.

Jill Kenney is a New York-based dancer, teacher, and choreographer. She is currently on the Tap Faculty at Broadway Dance Center and the 92nd St Y. She has also been on faculty at NYU Steinhardt and has guest taught at Steps on Broadway. On Long Island she teaches children of all ages and directs the early childhood program at the Dream Center Dance Academy.

Jill has worked with Germaine Salsberg for many years, as her tap assistant at Broadway Dance Center and as a member of her company, Les Femmes. With the company, Jill has performed at Symphony Space, Lincoln Center, The Friars Club, Brooklyn College, and Boston's Regent Theatre. She has appeared in numerous festivals including the Dumbo Dance Festival, Tap City, Stam-Pede, and the Tap Extravaganza. For numerous years, Jill has been a team leader for ATDF's Tap it Out—an outdoor concert directed by Tony Waag and Lynn Schwab. Other performance highlights include the Highline Ballroom, LG Electronics, Disney Cruise Lines, and the tour of Dancin' on Common Ground (choreography by Jared Grimes). She has also performed with the Andrea Torres Dance Company and Carlos Donan's Folktap.

Originally from Rhode Island, Jill grew up training in various forms of dance under the direction of Lisa Mailloux and also at the Newport Academy of Ballet. She has studied at the 92Y Dance Education Laboratory and holds a B.A. in Dance Performance and Education from SUNY Empire State College, as well as an A.A. in Dance from Dean College in Franklin, MA.

Melody Kline – is a graduate of the High School of the Performing Arts in NYC and has studied with many dance masters over the years including Paul Draper, Bob Audy, Charles Kelly, Shelley Oliver and Germaine Salsberg. She was the Owner/Director of Melody's Dance Studio in Brodheadsville, PA for more than 30 years

and has received an award for her contributions to dance from the Monroe County Arts Council. Melody was a performing member of T.A.P. Company under the direction of Nicole Hockenberry from 1997-2005. As a founding member of Tap Ties, Melody was a performer and instructor with the company for 9 years until her retirement to Florida in 2015. She continues to perform with the company when she is back in the Lehigh Valley and of course she could not hang up her dancing shoes in retirement, so she continues to teach in several locations in Florida.

Justin Ballasy - is a professionally trained tap dancer, honing his skills since age 4 when he asked for his first pair of tap shoes. He continues to study with leading tap dancers and regularly attends classes in hip-hop and ballet, as well as works as a teacher and an emerging choreographer. Dedicated to routinely studying and learning, all aspects of tap, including the choreography of the masters, Justin travels the east coast to perform and receive instruction by world-renowned tap masters, most often including distinguished tap dancers Omar Edwards and Karen Callaway Williams. As a young "hoofer," Justin is known for his sensational improvisational ability, stylistic choreography, and notable performance skills. From the start of his tap career, Justin's feet have been described as "well beyond his years."

In addition to studying towards his B.A. degree at Muhlenberg College, Justin is currently a performing member with Philadelphia-based Tap Team Two, was a 6-year member of the Tap City Youth Ensemble in New York City, through to July 2011; and a former member, 2008-2009, of the New Jersey Tap Ensemble, NJTAP2, a pre-professional performance group of young people ages 12 to 18 under the direction of Deborah Mitchell. He is an Apollo Theater 2008 Star of Tomorrow and winner of the title Philadelphia Tap Challenge Idol 2007, and has appeared on Nickelodeon ME-TV, MTV-MADE, America's Got Talent and was a Team Street - Las Vegas finalist in Season 12 of So You Think You Can Dance.

Justin especially enjoys the company of tappers of any age! Legendary tappers recognized his skill early on: Dr. "Sir" Jimmy Slyde dubbed him "a young man to watch" and LaVaughn Robinson commended him for his style, remarking "Your feet tell the whole story." Tap Master Harold "Stumpy" Cromer encouraged Justin in his studies when he first saw him dance at NYC's Swing 46 in early 2005. Justin hopes to follow in the footsteps of these tap icons, and other distinguished tap dancers such as his mentor, Omar Edwards, and Bill "Bo Jangles" Robinson, The Nicholas Brothers, Gregory Hines, Savion Glover, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards and Jason Samuels Smith, aiming to keep authentic tap alive. Justin describes tap as instinctive and necessary; "It is like breathing to me."