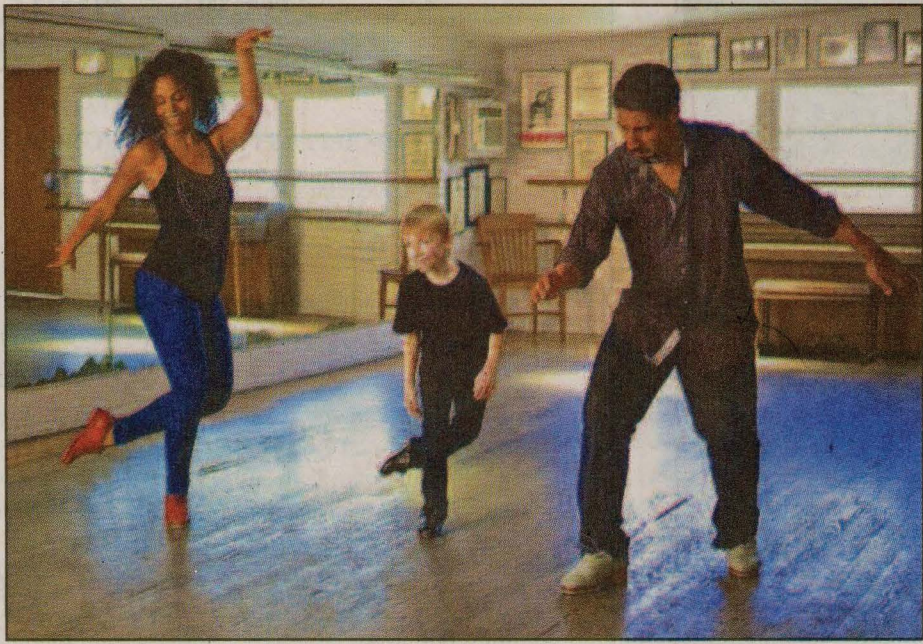


Movie Review: Tap World

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

At one point in this sweet gem of a documentary, two tap dancers from different parts of the world define the joy and philosophy of tap dancing: "Dance to express, not to impress," says Chloe Arnold of the U.S. "I dance, therefore I am," states Arthur Benhamou of Paris. Those basic acknowledgments are probably why tap dancing, which one might assume is strictly an American phenomenon, is so loved around the world and a thriving, inspiring performing art.

The roots of tap dancing can be traced to Irish dancing and Juba dance. The latter was originally from West Africa and transformed into a plantation dance, which used the tap sounds as codes. Strains of the dance came from the Caribbean and the Southern United States, eventually evolving into the traditional Broadway tap, seen in musicals, and the more improvised Rhythm (Jazz) tap, which like jazz music is



Chloe Arnold and friends in the dance documentary "Tap World."

more fluid.

We often think of sports as a vehicle for young people who need a focus that will propel them forward. This highly enlightening film showcases dancers from nine to 91, who use tap as a means of expression, a driving force, and are welcomed into a nurturing community. In New York's Hell's Kitchen, long before it became gentrified, Jason

Samuels

Smith lived with his single mom in a five-floor walkup apartment with two rooms that were always filled with more than two people. He had no father figure, until he gravitated to some older men in the neighborhood who taught him how to tap dance and be a man.

Joshua Johnson grew up in the projects in Harlem and witnessed a peer getting shot and dying. He moved out of his broken home

when.

he finished high school. Then, he couch-surfed, kept his possessions in a storage locker and relied on tap dancing as a source of income. He tap danced in subway cars for loose change, and his courage and determination landed him a piece in the *New York Times*, an appearance on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and tuition for Penn State University.

Vickie Riordan, a

single mother, started a tap dance class in Harrisburg, Pa., which attracted a lot of women who were dealing with domestic issues. Her son helped her market her class, which turned into the America's largest adults-only tap group with 500 women and men, students who she calls Tap Pups.

Tap dancing kids from fevelas in Brazil, a tapping troupe in Taiwan, a soloist who performs on the streets in Paris, urban tappers in Tokyo — they all follow the same pattern. Tap dancing, self-discovery, determination and exhilaration.

Executive producer/director Dean Hargrove started with a short film called *Tap Heat*, which paralleled two tap dancers, one traditional and one a street stylist, who melded the two styles to enhance the art form. *Tap World*, an extension of that effort, uses footage from all over the globe, which focuses on the community of tap dancers. Interviews with dance historian Constance Valis Hill add gravitas. The technical

aspects — editing, cinematography — are fine and don't block the spirit of the artists who lift this film up with their performances and anecdotes. Though it is great to see these unknown disciples of tap, it seems odd that the legacy bearer of Rhythm tap, Savion Glover, who passes on a tradition that goes back a generation to Gregory Hines and further back than him, is not present or even the narrator.

It's hard not to smile when a young tap dancer, who loses a leg to cancer, gets a peg leg and continues doing what he loves because he can follow in the footsteps of physically challenged dancers such as the legendary Peg Leg Bates. And it's touching when African American dancer Chloe Arnold heads to Japan to perform with dancers in Tokyo; there is not culture clash, it's a mesh of cultures.

You wouldn't have known that tap dancing is as international as Coca Cola, until you saw this thoroughly heartwarming film.

Bill Cosby's Art Collection To Remain On View At Smithsonian

By Brett Zongker
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - Over the past seven months, as sexual misconduct allegations against Bill Cosby mounted, a top Smithsonian official met privately with museum directors across the sprawling complex on the National Mall to decide what to do about an exhibit showcasing Cosby's private art collection.

While many companies and universities were distancing themselves from the comedian, Smithsonian

officials ultimately concluded the exhibit should continue.

"First and fundamentally, this is an art exhibit," Richard Kurin, the Smithsonian's undersecretary for art, history and culture told The Associated Press. "So it's not about the life and career of Bill Cosby. It's about the artists."

About a third of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art's 50th anniversary exhibition came from Bill and Camille Cosby's extensive African-

American art collection, and two-thirds came from the museum's own collection.

Most of the Cosby collection had never before been seen by the public. It includes paintings by one-time slaves, pieces commissioned for the Cosbys, a piece by Cosby's daughter and quilts made in tribute to Cosby and his slain son, Ennis. The exhibit also includes images of Cosby and quotations from him.

Even without the assault allegations, the exhibit raised concerns. Some critics frown on showcasing a private collection in a prominent museum because it can enhance the artwork's market value. Also, Camille Cosby sits on the museum's board and initiated the loan, which raises questions about conflicts of interest.

Now the Smithsonian has revealed to The Associated Press that the Cosbys also funded the exhibition with a \$716,000 gift, which virtually covers the entire cost. Museum

industry guidelines call for museums to make public the source of funding when an art lender funds an exhibit, but the Smithsonian did not reveal Cosby's financial gift until Friday, even though the exhibit opened in November.

Noah Kupferman, an art market expert at Shapiro Auctions who has taught about the economics of fine art, said such financial arrangements are not unprecedented, but museums must be transparent about them.

"It just raises a little eyebrow that a trustee of a museum is lending (her) own collection, funding part of the exhibition and the exhibition is highlighting works ... by less well-known artists whose work is considered by some to be undervalued," he said. "Repositioning these artists' works as suddenly important could have significant positive effect on their economic value."

The exhibit has drawn 150,000 visitors so far, according to the Smithsonian.

A promotion for the exhibit is prominently displayed on Cosby's website even as his reputation has collapsed in recent months amid accusations of sexual misconduct by more than two dozen women.

Some art critics have called for the Smithsonian to stop showcasing Cosby's art collection.

The Smithsonian defended the exhibit on its artistic merits.

"We certainly don't condone his behavior," Kurin said. "We're just as deeply disturbed and disappointed as I think everybody else. But it's not about Mr. Cosby. This is an art exhibit."

In the past, The Smithsonian has removed some controversial pieces of exhibits under pressure, but "we've never taken an exhibit down," said Kurin, who has worked at the museum complex for decades.

In 2010, the Smithsonian was accused of censorship when it removed a video from the National Portrait Gallery exhibit about how sexual orientation and gender identity have shaped American art after complaints from a Catholic group and members of Congress.

An outside review concluded that unless there is an error, changes should not be made to an exhibit once it's opened without a full consultation with curators, museum directors and the Smithsonian's

governing board.

For many museum experts and scholars, removing the Cosby exhibit would set a dangerous precedent.

"You'd be sort of stomping all over the curatorial integrity of what you've put up," said Jack Rasmussen, director of the American University Museum. "I think if museums had to investigate the morals of every lender, that would be kind of a new and very difficult situation. Really, it's about the art."

Museums have displayed privately held art collections for decades because they can complement a museum's own collection, said Martha Morris, assistant director of museum studies at George Washington University.

"The only thing that could possibly be a criticism is that once a private collection is on display in an art museum ... it begins to add to its status," Morris said. "That could potentially add to its value if the collector wanted to sell something, for example, or even give it away to a nonprofit for a tax benefit."

But an art loan could also lead to a donation of artwork to a museum, Morris said.

Smithsonian lawyers reviewed the Cosby loan and determined any increase in the artworks' value was a non-issue, in part because the Cosbys did not intend to sell the art, Kurin said.

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