

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**Faculty of Theatre and Film**

**Theater and Film Doctoral School**

**Field Theater and Performing Arts**

## **Abstract of PhD Thesis**

***TAP DANCE - A CREATIVE MODALITY OF  
INTERACTION WITH THEATER***

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#### KEY IDIOMS AND KEYWORDS:

-  *Tap Dance*
-  theater
-  *Tap Dance* complexity
-  global analysis of *Tap Dance*
-  artistic improvisations
-  choreography
-  interconnectedness between *Tap Dance* and theater

✚ artistic synergy between *Tap Dance* and theater.

The doctoral thesis “Tap Dance – A Creative Modality of Interaction with Theater” is divided into two parts: “Theoretical Foundation” and “Framework of Critical Approaches and Applied Research” and it includes six chapters.

**Chapter I** – The first chapter is called ‘Diachronic and Synchronic Approaches to Tap Dance’ and it focuses on the evolution of the tap dance phenomenon, i.e. the traditional dance form of the Americans, and its ultimate validation, on a global scale, as a form of both an art and an expressive and sophisticated music.

**Chapter II**, whose title is “The Artistic Complexity of Tap Dance”, discusses the defining elements of Tap Dance that ensure its artistic expressiveness and complexity. Its specificity, complexity and artistic expressiveness are highlighted through analyzing the creative artistic approach, personal style, personal imprint, body language, choreography and artistic improvisation. It has been hypothesized that the multiple artistic status of tap dance is either defined a) as an independent artistic phenomenon or b) as an artistic phenomenon complementary to the theater.

**Chapter III**, entitled “The Contribution of Tap Dance Contribution to Enhancing the Actor's Skills. Insights into the Professional Theater” originates from two basic ideas as follows:

a) The theater represents the space of the actor’s freedom of expression, fantasy, imagination, artistic creativity .

b) The Tap Dance is characterized by its artistic expressiveness and its high complexity. Starting from these premises, the purpose of the third chapter is to analyze and illustrate the main contributions of tap dance to boosting the growth of the actor's skills such as the improvement of the actor’s stage presence, e.g. his/her presentation system, interaction and stage interconnectedness skills, as well as his/her internal and physical actions, the reinforcement of the actor's psychomotor skills – his/her mobility, physical condition, physical appearance, physical posture, the stimulation of the art of improvisation, which is the most important feature of tap dance, the strengthening of the nonverbal communication, and the guarantee of a harmonious convergence of rhythm, musicality and the modeling of the human spirit.

**Chapter IV** – “Tap Dance from the Perspective of Didactics. Particular Approaches” - aims at integrating personal contributions encompassed in the areas of didactics and of Tap Dance methodology and it includes the following:

- original definition of Tap Dance didactics and Tap Dance methodologies;
- series of learning objectives of teaching-learning Tap Dance to the actors, namely a framework for artistic/professional competencies, i.e. artistic competences,

cross-curricular competences, general and specific objectives, and learning outcomes;

- pattern of the stages of preparation and foundation of the basic elements of Tap Dance, the selective presentation of its basic steps, which can be used at the beginners' level of choreographies;
- description of three famous choreographies relevant for the personal repertoire of the dancers and for the tap dance meetings, from the Step Dance festivals or in the jam session;
- reaffirmation of the importance of attention, meticulousness, seriousness, devotion and, namely of the need to pay respect to dancing;
- proposal for methodological recommendations for tap dance choreographies;
- framework for the combined criteria of the multicriteria evaluation of the performance in tap dance, e.g. the quality of technical performance, the volume of theoretical knowledge and the volume of aesthetic knowledge;
- recommendation to build a bridge between Tap Dance didactics and Tap Dance philosophy via analyzing three interdependent assumptions related to Tap Dance, i.e. those of artistic system, symbolic system and semiotic system. All of them can be analyzed from the multiple viewpoints of their artistic, musical, technical, physical, personal / psychological and interpersonal / social impact.

In this chapter, a series of choreographies are algorithmically presented as follows: elements of difficulty, level of performance, description of the choreography, professional competences, learning outcomes, methodological indications and conclusions.

**Chapter V**, “Analysis of Tap Dance As a Creative Modality of Interconnectedness with Theater”, deals with the critical analysis and it features an applied research.

The purpose of the research is:

- To elucidate and to illustrate a trend in the current theater.
- To capitalize and articulate Tap Dance in theatrical productions.
- To study its impact on the enhancement of the artistic message and the improvement of the quality of theatrical art.

The specific premises in the paper are as follows:

**1.** There is a relation of complementarity between theater and dance, which makes them easily integrable and articulated in artistic scenarios, in co-action.

2. The artistic valences of Tap Dance to emphasize / to improve / to increase the artistic expressiveness and quality of the theatrical productions and to boost the quality of the theatrical art.

3. Given the contemporary globalized societies, the cultural hybridization - such as mixing tradition and postmodernity - enables the creation of prolific spaces of cultural and artistic diversity, where the traditional cultural and expression forms are reassessed, redefined and updated, via a creative exploitation of their artistic and spectacular potential.

**The types of research** conducted in a complementary manner were: exploratory research, observational research, historical research.

**A qualitative methodological approach** has been used.

**The research scope** is to construct and illustrate perspectives of multi-criteria analysis of the successful shows on Broadway or Off-Broadway by means of a system of artistic performance indicators, which have been analyzed within the theoretical section of the paper.

**The research objectives are as follows:**

**O<sub>1</sub>** – To elaborate a condensed history of Tap Dance evolution: its origins and precursors, cultural and social influences, highlighted in Chapter I.

**O<sub>2</sub>** – To design a system of artistic indicators for interpreting a musical moment, in particular that of the Tap Dance steps.

**O<sub>3</sub>** – To carry out a critical analysis of two successful shows on Broadway or Off-Broadway, using the system of artistic performance indicators which have been previously developed.

**The research questions** which arise are as follows:

**Q<sub>1</sub>** – What are the dimensions of multi-criteria analysis of successful shows on Broadway or Off-Broadway?

**Q<sub>2</sub>** – What are the artistic evaluation indicators corresponding to the dimensions of multi-criteria analysis of the successful shows performed on Broadway or Off-Broadway?

**The system of research methods** also included information and documentation methods, observation method, self-observation method, comparative method and historical method.

**The research tool**, which was designed according to the author's personal conception, consisted of a grid of analysis of choreographic moments, which is based on a system of artistic indicators, organized on four dimensions:

1. the performance dimension;

2. the technical dimension;

3. the dimension of entertainment;
4. the aesthetic dimension.

**The Sample of Content** encompasses the following elements:

- a) the syllabus (Step Dance steps) included in the theoretical research (see subchapter IV.3.);
- b) relevant choreographies included in the theoretical research (see subchapter IV.4.);
- c) two successful musicals performed by the Broadway music industry, on which the research instrument is being conducted, i.e. *Jelly's Last Jam* și *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*.

**Chapter VI**, which is called “**Conclusions and New Upcoming Directions of Action**” has two parts:

**a) The research conclusions**, structured as follows:

- conclusions regarding the origins and evolution of Tap Dance;
- conclusions regarding the artistic complexity of Tap Dance;
- conclusions regarding the Tap Dance contribution to the development of the actor's abilities;
- conclusions regarding the contributions of the thesis to the process of teaching-learning Tap Dance for actors;
- conclusions regarding the contributions of the thesis to the process of analyzing Tap Dance as a creative way of interacting with the theater.

**b) The general conclusions and recommendations** regarding the valorization of the theatrical heritage, organized at both the macro-culture and micro-culture levels.