

## Artistic Viewpoint Essay

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Whether I am primarily functioning as a student, teacher, dancer, choreographer, writer, filmmaker, or director, my artistic principles remain the same. I am concerned with preserving the invaluable contributions of other artists who have brought tap dance this far while simultaneously contributing in my own way to further the innovation of the form. Accessibility is of utmost importance to me in these endeavors. Not only do I want to speak to the ever-increasing tap dance community, but I also hope to reach others not so immediately connected to the form, be they dancers, musicians, or simply audience members and supporters. I am also highly concerned with sustainability. Rather than working on piece after piece for showings in one or two concerts each, I prefer to invest in work with a longer lifespan, like books, films, websites, and live shows with prolonged engagements. In this way, the art of tap dance and my work in it can extend beyond the immediate.

The general public still absorbs most of its information from the screen. In conjunction, technology is rapidly increasing the avenues we have as artists to express ourselves and dialogue with one another. By using media as a tool for connecting and communicating, educating and entertaining, I plan on finding new and different ways for the art form of tap dance to exist and thrive.

My current work with media and technology involves researching and gathering words, images, and sounds to support all these ideas. I build modularly, in short, succinct clips that communicate one of several general ideas, in the hopes of garnering enough material to sustain several projects. A feature-length documentary is at the center of these individual explorations, all of which are accessible via the internet. In utilizing technology, this film about the tap dance community can grow right out of the tap dance community. One of the ideas I enjoy most about tap is its egalitarianism. Anyone – any age, any size, any color – can participate at any time. There is room for everyone and everyone has a voice. We interact and support each other as a family, united by a common respect for the dance as a living, evolving entity. My website is now functioning as a vessel for this, a studio space and conference room in which any person living anywhere can comment, post, create, or re-create. This is a technological twist on the best of tap dance's traditions: cyber improvisation, online trades, digital step stealing, and jamming. In addition to the film, future projects include commercials, instructional productions for DVDs and downloads, accompaniment for live performances in concerts, interactive tools for lecture/demonstrations, press and public relations materials for fundraising, and more.

The website also serves as an educational resource. Such a medium breaks down communication barriers like language, time, and space. Because it disseminates information in a variety of ways, several learning modalities are simultaneously accommodated; highly visual thinkers might find the videos most helpful, while verbal thinkers will get the most out of text and interviews. In short, each audience member can dictate the terms in which he or she experiences the work.

Through all this, a product is being made of the process. In addition to creating new works, digital technology is a very practical way of documenting creative development. Work-in-progress material is also helpful in generating public interest and financial support. Throughout whatever artistic paths I find myself traveling in the near future, I would like to lay bare the steps I take along the way, like pulling back the wings of a stage during a performance and exposing the work behind the scenes. Opening the doors and clearing paths for others is artistry in and of itself. Many have done so for me; this is one way I can give it back.