

Appalachian Clogging

A brief History

Appalachian Clogging is a fun and lively form of percussive step dance from the Appalachian Mountain region on the East Side of the USA. When the English, Scottish and Irish settled there, they took with them a rich tradition of music, dance and song. Some of the step dance traditions were thrown into the melting pot of the multi-ethnic community along with dances from Africa brought over with the slaves and some of the native Cherokee Indian ritual dance steps. Out of the pot has come a truly American form of step dancing that, at present, is enjoying a healthy return to some of its original sources in Britain, and back again on an exciting exchange, proving it to be a thriving, living tradition!

It is essentially a solo freestyle and improvised form of dance, although it has become a very successful team and performance dance form since the folk revival in the 1930's. Traditionally dancers wore the hard leather soled shoes of the time, dancing on porches and wooden floors to 'Old Timey' music of fiddle and banjo. Nowadays tap shoes are often worn for performance. Clogging is very much about accompanying the music and being the percussion in the band. Although the music is always in 4/4 time, many syncopated steps have evolved enabling the dancer to really bring out the best percussive elements of any tune.

The term 'clogging' is said to have originated in 1939. President Roosevelt was entertaining British Royal guests with a performance by the Soco Gap Appalachian dancers. The then Queen Elizabeth (the late Queen Mother) commented on the similarity to English Clog dancing and since then the dance has been called 'clogging'. It is also known in its various forms as; precision clogging, flatfooting, buck dancing and hoofing.

