

2004-2005

# Annual Report

**Tappers With Attitude, Inc.**

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Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

301-495-0395

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and performance opportunities  
for dancers of all ages and abilities,  
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# A Message from the Executive Director

Excellence is not about *being* the best, but about doing your best. At Tappers With Attitude, Inc, we strive always for excellence, both personally and organizationally. We are proud of all we accomplish: we celebrate the successes of our newest tap students learning their first steps; we revel in the national reputation of our award-winning youth ensemble; we delight in the excitement of the audiences who show up in throngs to see our performing companies. We take very seriously our roles as “keepers of the flame,” teaching every dancer who comes our way how they are “a link in the chain” that keeps the vibrant, culturally and historically significant art of tap dance alive.

As I write this, Knock On Wood Tap Studio bustles with students; this year, for the first time, we’re adding classes for students as young as age four. This season’s roster of master class instructors will feature both “well-seasoned” artists and emerging artists. We will continue our innovative (and fun!) “Open Mic Night” series, which provides performance opportunities for our own students and company members, as well as to dancers from other studios both locally and regionally.

We’re already hard at work formulating ideas for concerts and choreography for TWA Youth Ensemble’s gala 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, and are also making plans for the celebration of Step Aside Tap Company’s 10th season. Our two repertory companies preserve the works of more than 50 tap artists, many of international-reputation; this body of work represents significant contributions to the world of tap dance, and we are proud to be the repository of so much fine choreography.

Our small staff is hugely appreciative of the contributions of so many community-based volunteers, and the dedication of our hard-working board of directors. In fact, we are grateful for the participation of each and every member of our tap family, and know that they are critical in enabling us to fulfill our mission, and keep the dream alive.

Gratitude is an Attitude, and we have plenty of that!

**Victoria V. Moss**  
**Executive Director**

# Mission

TWA's mission is to provide tap dance education and performance opportunities for dancers of all ages and abilities, to foster pride in our cultural heritage among children, youth, and adults in the communities we serve, and to preserve and promote the uniquely American art of tap dance, ensuring that this art not only survives but thrives. Our objectives supporting this mission include developing a new generation to carry on the art of tap dance as dancers, performers and choreographers; sharing the energy and excitement of tap with audiences across the Washington metropolitan area; and fostering diversity – ethnic, economic and geographic – in our company members, students, faculty, choreographers and audiences.

What began in 1991 as simply a semester-long, after-school dance class at Holton Arms school in Bethesda, Maryland, has evolved and grown over the last 15 years into a multi-faceted, multi-cultural, and award-winning organization called Tappers With Attitude, Inc. (TWA, Inc.). The original dancers named themselves “Tappers With Attitude,” signaling their unique take on an old dance form. The interest and enthusiasm of those original dancers encouraged the founding directors, Yvonne Edwards and Renee Kreithen, to launch a studio devoted to the preservation and promotion of tap dance as a percussive art, and a performing company to foster a new generation to carry on that art. Fifteen years later, with a studio bustling with dancers of all ages, a full schedule of classes, and two locally and nationally acclaimed performing troupes, TWA, Inc. continues to reflect these original ideals.

TWA, Inc. is the umbrella organization for our three programs: Knock On Wood Tap Studio (KOW), Tappers With Attitude Youth Ensemble (TWA), and Step Aside Tap Company (SATC):

*Knock On Wood Tap Studio* (KOW) is the only organization in the Washington, DC metropolitan area devoted exclusively to tap dance. Typically, KOW offers about 25 classes in each of the Fall, Winter and Spring sessions, and about 10 classes during the summer, annually serving over 300 students ages 4 to adult. Small class size allows for individualized attention, especially for beginning dancers. We never cancel a class as long as we can cover our instructor's salary. We strive to increase our student base by 10 percent each year. In addition to regularly scheduled classes, KOW also offers workshops with master artists (“master classes”) and holds “open mic nights” (an “open mic night” is an evening of informal tap presentations) and other performance opportunities for students and other area dancers.

*Tappers With Attitude Youth Ensemble* (TWA) is the organization's critically acclaimed pre-professional youth company, consisting of 30 dancers ages 10 to 18. Last season, TWA Youth Ensemble brought tap dance to more than 30 audiences through performances at numerous local arts festivals, Dance Place, Jazz Appreciation Month at the Smithsonian Institution, the New York City Tap Festival and the Chicago Human Rhythm Project, and developed two of their own concerts - *TWA: Rough Cut* (performed at the Randolph Road Theater), and *This Joint is Jumpin'* (performed at Catholic University's Hartke Theatre). The 2005-06 season can already be claimed as one of the busiest and best, with a wide variety of performance opportunities already confirmed including local arts festivals as well as performances at BlackRock Center for the Arts, Dance Place, and the Kennedy Center, culminating in our 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert, *15 Years of Rhythm* on June 10, 2006 at the University of Maryland's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Unlike adult ensembles, where the members remain generally consistent year-to-year, a youth ensemble presents the natural challenges of maintaining a standard skill level with a new cast of members each year. In 2006, six of our Core Company members will graduate from high school, but we have a strong cadre of younger dancers rapidly moving up the ladder. This phenomenon is a factor in our planning each year.

*Step Aside Tap Company* (SATC) is the organization's well-known adult dance company, whose members include KOW faculty and TWA alumni. SATC has performed locally and nationally, at such major venues as the Kennedy Center, the New York City Tap Festival, the Lincoln Theatre, and the Smithsonian Institution. For the last two years, SATC has operated without a paid director, and has just recently reorganized with a new volunteer director.

Through KOW and TWA Youth Ensemble, TWA, Inc. has achieved national prominence as a training ground for tap dancers. Our class and master class instructors are all experienced tap dancers, including some TWA alumni, all of whom impart a standard of cultural and historical education to their dance instruction. While each level has certain technical criteria that they are required to teach, many dance steps and combinations have historical and cultural origins that the students also learn. As students rise through the levels of tap instruction, and particularly those in the TWA Youth Ensemble, they are exposed to a wide variety of culturally-specific pieces of work, from jazz to Broadway to traditional African dances. Not only do our students learn *how* to tap dance, but they also learn important choreographic and improvisational skills which are tools they can use to preserve the culture, history and art of tap dance.

# Programs

TWA, Inc. encompasses many related, but distinct, programs under its umbrella. Each one is evaluated in unique ways, which at this point are not especially methodical or quantitative. For the most part, we evaluate on soft measures, anecdotal feedback, and observation. While quantitative evaluation would be ideal, our limited staffing situation precludes such an effort. Described below, however, are the ways in which we determine whether we are providing a quality artistic program.

Knock On Wood Tap Dance Studio Classes Our students' progress and enthusiasm are the most important indicators we use to determine whether we are providing quality instruction. Once they begin classes, do they continue to sign up each session? Are they progressing to higher levels? Are they progressing at an appropriate rate? Are they enjoying their dancing? Do they participate in and enjoy the performance opportunities available to them? Do they encourage their friends to sign up and bring family and friends to see them perform? A large majority of our students follow this path, therefore we know that we are meeting our goals.

Master Classes These classes are attended by students from our studio as well as by dancers from the community-at-large, and neighboring states. Over the years, we have brought some of the most well-known tap artists in the country and the world to KOW and those "in the field" have come to trust and value our selection of instructors. Seasoned dancers come each time because they know they will gain a new perspective, a new style, a new philosophy, a new skill, from each guest artist. New dancers gain valuable training from exposure to these masters. The fact that we attract prime artists, and that they teach to full classes, is our most important indicator that this is an artistically sound part of our program. We are proud that so many guest artists ask to be invited back, telling us that our students are well-trained, focused and eager to learn. This component of our program is an important way in which we fulfill our mission of preserving the history and cultural roots of tap dance.

Student Showcases Tap dancers want to perform, and this is the first opportunity we give each and every student who takes a class at our studio. Twice a year (winter and spring), these events give each class the opportunity to "show off" what they've learned to their families, friends and an entire audience of tap dance fans. The room is always packed and the majority of

people stay for the whole show (as opposed to leaving when their child is done) because they get to see what they can look forward to as their dancing progresses.

Open Mic Nights Similar to Student Showcases, Open Mic Nights (OMN) have been called “the best \$7 show in town.” Classes often present their current works, TWA and Step Aside Tap Company are always on the program, and there is usually at least one, but sometimes several, guest performers, who tell us that they love the unique setting and are excited to see the wide range of what KOW students are doing. Recent OMNs have brought full houses to the Randolph Road Theater.

Summer Camp Knock On Wood offers one or two 1-week camp sessions to a small group of students each summer. Originally intended to serve the needs of existing students, it has been interesting to find that several newcomers attend camp, looking for a fun, unique experience. Typically, 1 to 3 of these newcomers sign up for a class in the Fall session.

Tappers With Attitude Youth Ensemble TWA has a unique set of activities that all members participate in as they progress through the Company. In order to make this progression, students are continually being evaluated not only on skill improvement, but overall characteristics such as attitude, respect, showmanship, cooperation, and more. Each of these activities and the areas in which students are evaluated are described as follows:

- *Technique Class* is a basic weekly commitment at which instructors look for a steady increase of skill set.
- *Company Class* requires students to not only work on improving their dance skills, but to open their minds to experience other artistic endeavors that will inform their tap dancing.
- *Master Class* expectations include respect of other professionals’ styles, active participation, and focused learning of new material.
- *Rehearsals* require members to be team players, to focus on the task at hand, and be respectful of their fellow dancers and directors.
- *Independent Study* is the opportunity for members to display their initiative and drive to succeed in their art form. Directors are able to assess whether dancers are working on their own to improve their skill level and master choreography.
- *Choreographic Residencies* are intense educational sessions with master choreographers to learn new pieces of work, requiring dancers to put forth their best efforts with no guarantees that they will be selected to perform.
- *Performances* bring the whole package together, and dancers must be at top of their game for these events. Not only are they evaluated by their Directors

and their peers, but by audience members, as well. This is the ultimate evaluation experience.

- *Road Trips and Gigs* bring dancers into the public eye as representatives of the Company, and are evaluated not only by their dance and stage skills but by their maturity, self-control and ability to be a role model to the public and others in the Company.
- *Progression through the Company* is the goal all TWA dancers have when they audition and are selected for the Company. All dancers start at the Training Workshop level, go next to Workshop, to Junior Company, Apprentice Company and ultimately to Core Company. Each step of the ladder is defined by specific benchmarks of knowledge of material, form, style, stage presence, attitude and ability to be a team player. Decisions are made by the Company's three Directors.

## Activities

During the 2004-2005 fiscal year, members of the companies sponsored by TWA, Inc. have performed in a variety of venues and before a wide range of audiences in the metropolitan DC area. Provided below is a list of those events

Date	Type of Event	Description	City, State	# people
July 6-28, 2004	Summer session of classes	KOW Tap Studio	Silver Spring, MD	34
July 19-23, 2004	Summer Camp	One week camp session, KOW Studio	Silver Spring, MD	9
July 26-30, 2004	Summer Camp	One week camp session, KOW Studio	Silver Spring, MD	13
July 15, 2004	TWA performance	Americans for the Arts Convention	Washington, DC	650
July 20-24, 2004	TWA performance	Wolf Trap, Theatre in the Woods	Vienna, VA	800
August 1-8, 2004	TWA performance	Chicago Human Rhythm Project	Chicago, IL	400
August 11, 2004	TWA performance	Neighborhood Reinvestment Corp. Conference	Washington, DC	350
Sept. 6-Dec. 17, 2004	Fall Session of Classes	KOW Tap Studio	Silver Spring, MD	113
September 18, 2004	TWA performance	Arts on Foot, outdoor festival	Washington, DC	150
September 26, 2004	Master Class	Lane Alexander (one session)	Silver Spring, MD	27
September 27, 2004	TWA performance	Metro DC Dance Awards, Kennedy Center	Washington, DC	
October 2,	TWA	Arts on the	Old Town	200

2004	performance	Avenue, outdoor festival	Alexandria, VA	
October 2, 2004	KOW, TWA, SATC, Lane Alexander, guest choreographer	Open Mic Night Randolph Road Theater	Silver Spring, MD	200
October 3, 2004	TWA performance	DC Dance Festival, Millenium Stage, Kennedy Center	Washington, DC	450
October 9, 2004	TWA performance	Magical Montgomery, outdoor festival	Silver Spring, MD	300
October 30, 2004	Master Class	Derick Grant, two sessions	Silver Spring, MD	41
November 6, 2004	Master Class	Jeannie Hill	Silver Spring, MD	17
November 6, 2004	Master Class	Glenn Leslie	Silver Spring, MD	13
November 20, 2004	TWA performance	Thanksgiving Parade	Silver Spring, MD	300+
November 21, 2004	TWA	Imani Festival, Flowers High School	P.G. County, MD	200
December 4, 2004	KOW, TWA, SATC	Student Showcase, Randolph Road Theater	Silver Spring, MD	139
December 5, 2004	TWA	Dance Place Tap Festival	Washington, DC	160
December 12, 2004	TWA	Hecht's Holiday Party	Arlington, VA	100
January 3-29, 2004	Classes	Jumpin' January	Silver Spring, MD	56
January 9, 2005	TWA	Little Sisters of the Poor	Washington, DC	100
January 29, 2005	KOW, TWA, SATC	Open Mic Night, Randolph Road Theater	Silver Spring, MD	113
January 30, 2005	Master Class	Jason Samuels Smith, two classes	Silver Spring, MD	35

February 16, 2005	TWA	Consortium Health Plan Conference	Washington, DC	450
February 3- June 4, 2005	Classes	Spring Session	Silver Spring, MD	103
February 26, 2005	TWA	Westfield Montgomery Mall	Bethesda, MD	400
March 5, 2005	TWA	<i>TWA: Rough Cut</i> concert, Randolph Road Theater	Silver Spring, MD	210
March 13, 2005	TWA	Capitol Talents, Lincoln Theatre	Washington, DC	400
March 17, 2005	Master Class	Heather Cornell, two classes	Silver Spring, MD	31
March 17, 2005	Master Class	Shelley Oliver	Silver Spring, MD	6
March 19, 2005	TWA	Private party	Bethesda, MD	100
April 16, 2005	KOW, TWA, SATC	Open Mic Night, Randolph Road Theater	Silver Spring, MD	99
April 22, 2005	TWA	Juvenile Justice Conference	Washington, DC	100
April 29, 2005	TWA	Celebrating Duke Ellington, Lincoln Theatre	Washington, DC	400
April 30, 2005	TWA	Jazz Appreciation Month, Smithsonian Institution	Washington, DC	400
April 30, 2005	TWA	Dance Place, Youth Dance Festival	Washington, DC	150
May 14, 2005	TWA	Private Party	Arlington, VA	120
May 15, 2005	TWA	Juvenile Diabetes Benefit	Washington, DC	150
May 21, 2005	TWA	Private Party	Silver Spring, MD	400
May 28, 2005	TWA, SATC	<i>This Joint is Jumpin'</i> Year-end Concert, Hartke Theatre	Washington, DC	450

June 4, 2005	TWA	Imagination Bethesda, outdoor festival	Bethesda, MD	200
June 5, 2005	KOW, TWA, SATC	Student Showcase, Randolph Road Theater	Silver Spring, MD	249
June 18, 2005	TWA	Private Party	Potomac, MD	100
June 29-30, 2005	TWA	New York City Tap Festival	New York, NY	600
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>10,088</b>

Home base for all Knock On Wood, Tappers With Attitude Youth Ensemble and Step Aside Tap Company's activities is the Knock On Wood Tap Studio in Silver Spring. All classes, master classes and camp sessions are held on-site, as well as TWA and SATC rehearsals. All planning for performances at the studio and outside the studio takes place at the KOW facility.

TWA and SATC are hired for performances both inside and outside of Montgomery County.

# Service to the Community

TWA, Inc. serves two primary communities – our students and our audiences. These are in some ways very distinct, and in others very connected. We would obviously not be a dance organization without our students. But dancers want to perform and they need an audience. Our goal is always to please the audience so that they will continue to support us, by signing their children up for classes, by telling their friends about us, and by buying tickets to future shows. It is a hand-in-hand relationship. It is also, to some extent, a self-selected group of people. It is part of our mission, and one of our objectives to attract a diverse population – culturally, geographically, economically, and ethnically. To our great pleasure, we do just that. Our location in downtown Silver Spring brings students from around Montgomery County (as far North as Germantown), from the District, and from as far into Virginia as Alexandria and Manassas. Students currently range in age from 4 to 75. For our Youth Ensemble students in particular, there are important but immeasurable benefits that they receive from the organization, in terms of developing self-confidence, becoming focused, learning teamwork and discipline, establishing life-long friendships, and in some cases, finding a safe, nurturing place to be accepted and successful.

Our audiences often reflect our students, since many times they include family members and friends. On many other occasions, especially with regard to TWA, the audience may be the thousands gathered on the streets for the Silver Spring Thanksgiving Day Parade or patrons at the Juvenile Diabetes Benefit. They have included students and families in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, one of the poorest, most rural communities in that state, and the multi-cultural, standing-room-only audience at our most recent performance at the Rockville Human Rights Commission's Martin Luther King Day Celebration at the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre. It is always our goal to broaden our marketing strategies in order to attract new members to our audiences, who will hopefully become our supporters in one way or another. Since our marketing and advertising budgets are very limited, however, we depend largely on word-of-mouth and the strength of our reputation to draw audiences, potential students, etc.

# Administration

For the last two years, TWA has had three key paid, part-time personnel who direct the various aspects of the organization, along with a part-time desk assistant, dance teachers, and a cadre of volunteers. The key paid, part-time positions are Executive Director/ TWA Youth Ensemble Director, Studio Director, and Administrative Director.

The Executive Director is responsible for directing and developing programs and services that support the organization's mission and vision; directing the overall operations, budgets and capital assets of the organization; directing the overall programming of the organization; managing all permanent, part-time, and contract staff and volunteers; promoting the organization and its programs in the media and to the general public; managing the image of the organization in a senior public relations role; developing and maintaining professional liaison with the arts community, business community, and governmental leaders. At the present time, this position is filled by Ms. Victoria Moss, who reports directly to the Board of Directors.

The Knock On Wood Studio Director is responsible for the daily operations of the studio. Responsibilities include all class scheduling, hiring and training instructors, local marketing for classes and special events, and event planning related to the regularly offered schedule of classes. Currently, Ms. Yvonne Edwards is the Studio Director and also serves as Assistant Director of Tappers With Attitude Youth Ensemble.

Tappers With Attitude Youth Ensemble Director is responsible for all management and artistic direction of the youth performing group, including full integration with Knock on Wood Tap Studio activities, and coordination with the Step Aside Tap Company Director. Specific responsibilities include the selection, training, evaluation, and management of all Company dancers; development and implementation of artistic objectives, including selection of choreographers, guest artists, performances, instructors, and programs; all aspects of concert and event planning; all aspects of scheduling rehearsals and classes; setting the artistic vision for the company including choreography, costumes, light design, stage details, working with professionals in the field to implement this vision; marketing TWA on a local and national level; and being mother, teacher, disciplinarian, and friend to company members and

their families. Currently, Ms. Victoria Moss serves in this position, as well as being Executive Director.

The Administrative Director handles all administrative tasks for the entire organization, including all registrations, database and mailing list maintenance, front desk administration, marketing materials, office management duties, financial (including tax and insurance) records, web page maintenance, and marketing, scheduling and special event planning in conjunction with the Studio Director. At the time of this writing, Ms. Margaret Loomis has just left this position which she held for 16 months; the position will become vacant in early 2006.

Twelve part-time faculty members make up the teaching staff at KOW. Ms. Lisa Swenton-Eppard serves a dual role on the staff as dance teacher and Associate Director of TWA. She is also a member of Step Aside Dance Company.

The Front Desk receptionist is responsible for daily maintenance of the reception area, responding to phone and e-mail inquiries, greeting students and parents as they arrive at the studio, processing registration forms and payment, and providing a cheerful presence and welcoming environment to all who come in to the studio. This position is currently shared by Ms. Denise Coleman and Ms. Rose Peterson.

The jobs of the Executive Director, the Studio Director, the TWA Director, and the Administrative Director are too big to fully accomplish in the part-time hours for which they are paid. The staff and board will engage in a series of facilitated retreats in 2006; this planning process will consider shifting to a two-director management model (Managing Director and Artistic Director) and a re-alignment of job descriptions.

But for for, these professionals continue to work full time and more to accomplish what must be done because this organization is their passion. Assisting them in a myriad of ways is a group of volunteers made up primarily of TWA parents and extended family members, who take on everything from the grunt work of hauling floors and shopping for costumes to creating and operating professional lighting and stage techniques for performances. These volunteers have been operating "loosely" for several years, but in the Fall of 2005, organized themselves into committees in order to ensure that the needs of the organization are being met and that people could contribute in their areas of interest or strength. These committees include: Special Events (i.e. 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert and Reception); Promotion and Recruitment (i.e. increase visibility of KOW and TWA through local marketing); Foundation and Corporate Grants; Individual Donors; Corporate

Underwriting; Small Fundraising (i.e. Sally Foster, plant sale, refreshment sales); Costumes and Make-up; Technical Support for Performances (i.e. lighting, sound, stage set up); Program Book (i.e. layout and design, advertising, printing); Sunshine (i.e. coordinate birthday and other celebrations); Marketing and Publicity (i.e. press releases, media articles, evaluation and updating of marketing materials). Out of 29 TWA families, at least 20 are regularly engaged in volunteer activities.

# Board of Directors

TWA, Inc.'s Board of Directors currently has five members, although it is expected to expand in FY06. The board is not only a governing board, it is also a working board in the sense that board members actively take on projects necessary to the continuance of the organization. Examples include: supervising the accounting of the organization, resolving issues related to unemployment taxes and foreign corporation status, working on revisions to the By-Laws, and filing of form 1023 to apply for tax-exempt status, to name a few. There is currently no committee structure, although there is one standing committee, which is the Search Committee for new board members. The process for nominating new members is for the search committee to conduct initial interviews, and then to recommend candidates to be interviewed by the whole board (not necessarily en masse), after which the board votes on whether to invite the candidate to join the board. The board's involvement in fundraising is primarily through sending out a semi-annual appeal letter and personal giving. However, board members also participate in other ways. Board members help with general fundraisers such as our annual Sally Foster and plant sales, and obtaining sponsorships for the program book. They also attend functions for the purpose of networking, and, ultimately fundraising, such as the Executive's Ball, Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington events, Catalogue for Philanthropy events and AHCMC events.

**Lisa M. Daniel, PhD**  
*TWA Inc., Vice President*  
Term: Sept. 2004 - Sept. 2007

**Jim Lingberg**  
*TWA Inc., Treasurer*  
Term: Feb. 2006 - Sept. 2007

**Robert English**  
*TWA Board Member*  
Term: Feb. 2006- Sept. 2006

**Kimberly Varner**  
*TWA, Inc. Secretary*  
Term: March 2005 - Sept. 2008

**Geoffrey P. Lewis**  
*TWA Inc., President*  
Term: Sept. 2002 - Sept. 2006