

## Portland's National Tap Day Celebration

By Sue Ceswick

Dancing nuns, a Beatles "Tapology", a family dance troupe all grown up, Shoehorn the tapping sax player and our Grande Dame of tap, 83-year-old Lorraine Sheahan, were some of the featured acts at Portland Oregon's 8<sup>th</sup> annual National Tap Dance Day celebration.

The event took place on May 29<sup>th</sup> (in order to fall on the Sunday before Memorial Day so we can all remember the date!) at the downtown Tiffany Center ballroom and featured a class on the traditional B.S. chorus, a tap jam and a stellar roster of performances.

Organizers, local tap dancers and teachers Dede Priest and Cindy Brenn, reported that over 350 tappers and fans attended this year's celebration.

Portland tap dancer Aaron Wheeler Kay showed his magic touch in leading tap jams by inviting dancers of all levels to show off their steps in a supportive setting. Matt Allegre on drums and Ricky Salrdeau on bass kept the pulse for the improvisers.

Dede and Cindy's next planned segment was to give tap teacher Judy Tibbles an award for her tireless support of the art form. But to their surprise Judy trumped them by bestowing her own certificate upon the Tap Day organizers! Judy's award to Cindy and Dede included the poem "Lines for Gene Kelly to Dance to" by Carl Sandburg.

Two area high schools with dance performance troupes strutted their stuff with Beaverton's Dance West tapping to "Jelly Last Jam" choreographed by Terry Brock and the Jefferson Dancers doing "Three Four" created for them by Jason Samuels-Smith.

Local studios plus Parks and Recreation groups were well represented including Multnomah Arts Center, Tualatin Hills, Billings School of Dance, Hollywood Dance Studio, Classic Tap Studio, Multnomah Athletic Club, Yellow Rose Dance Ensemble, Northwest Academy, Skylark Tappers, Terry Brock Studio and Danceevolve.

A fixture on the Portland scene since they were tiny tappers, the Hot Shot Tap Dancers (Carl, Bethany, Lloyd and Kyle Massey) were reunited at this event and shocked everyone They still dance great, and now they are all so tall!

The world's only tap dancer who plays horn at the same time, Shoehorn, entertained the crowd. Then Lorraine Sheahan brought down the house with "Hey Mr. Jessie", while Jefferson Dancer alums Erin Lee and Aaron Wheeler Kay and Damon Keller demonstrated their growing virtuosity.