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Shoot Me While I'm Happy: Memories from the Tap Goddess of the Lower East Side

By Jane Goldberg
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www.janegoldberg.org

Jane Goldberg has dedicated her life to tap. A brilliant dancer, she learned from the great old hoofers, going on to find as many ways as possible to promote them in concerts and festivals, like her popular video documentary *By Word of Foot*. She could count among her close friends Gregory Hines, Honi Coles, Jimmy Slyde, and Savion Glover. It wasn't an easy route; tap was just emerging from a slump when she jumped on the bandwagon in the 1970s as a young hippie modern dancer who had planned a life in journalism. Nonetheless, in a field dominated by men and African Americans, she won enormous respect for her drive to perfect her artistry.

In her autobiography, *Shoot Me While I'm Happy*, she delivers a rich array of colorful stories, from an ailing tapper and his wife making the effort to attend a seder with her family to a particularly moving scene in a studio where Slyde offered her priceless coaching. Turning off the lights, he listened to her in the dark, occasionally saying, "brush," "shuffle," "slap," or "riff," speaking the names of steps as she did them. He taught her that genius lay simply in how clearly you made your sounds—a very Zen experience.

With this charmingly straightforward memoir, Goldberg shows herself once again to be one of tap's most appealing and effective advocates.

—Valerie Gladstone